

SCIENCE | SEX | SOCIETY

SALVO

Issue 73 Summer 2025 — Your Quarterly Reality Check

MONKEY WRENCHED

SCIENCE VS. RELIGION?

THE *SCOPES* "MONKEY TRIAL" TURNS 100

BRYAN UNREFUTED

Rick Townsend

INTELLIGENT DESIGN 3.0

Casey Luskin & Brian Miller

DARWIN UNCONFIRMED

Hugh Ross

RED IN TOOTH & CLAW

Bob Perry

SCOPES IN REVERSE

Casey Luskin

INHUMAN DESIGNS

Bryan Just

THE MYTH CONTINUES

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METHOD OR MATERIALISM?

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DARWIN'S TOXIC MEN

Nancy Pearcey

UNNECESSARY CONFLICT

Tom & Elizabeth
Siewert

EVOLUTIONARY JEOPARDY

Richard W. Stevens

WHENCE FREE WILL?

Thomas Williams

WHENCE MORALITY?

Douglas Groothuis

DOVER VS. ID

Jonathan Witt

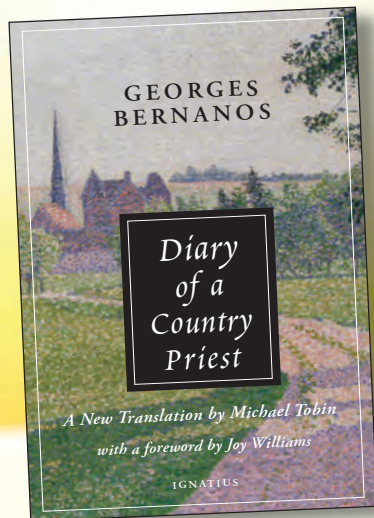
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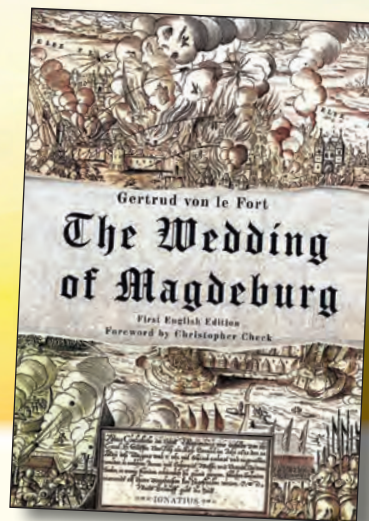
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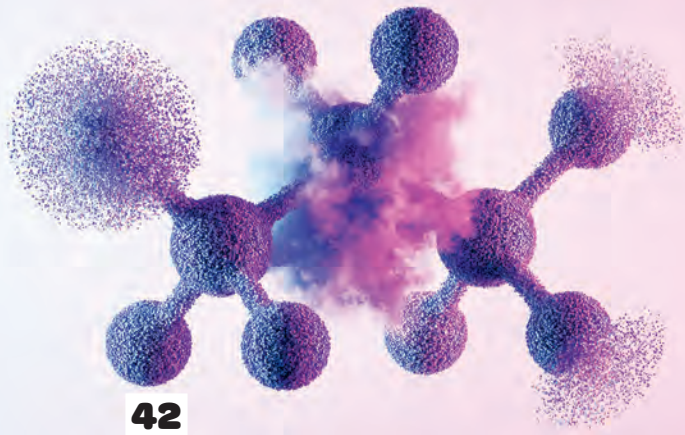


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salvo n. (săl'vō)

1. A group of shots fired simultaneously for effect
2. A forceful verbal or written assault

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HIRED GUNS

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Monkey Business

A Preposterous Myth Continues

by James M. Kushiner

Sometimes new ideas take a while to catch on. In 1773, English writer Samuel Johnson and his younger sidekick and future biographer James Boswell toured the Hebrides, the Western Isles of Scotland. In a letter to a friend, Johnson reported:

We...dined at Lord Monboddos, the Scotch judge who has lately written a strange book about the origin of language, in which he traces monkeys up to men, and says in some countries the human species have tails like other beasts.

James Burnett, Lord Monboddos, a Scottish judge and scholar, was considered quite eccentric, "touched in the head." Boswell recorded in his Hebrides journal:

Dr Johnson said, "It is a pity to see Lord Monboddos publish such notions as he has done; a man of sense, and of so much elegant learning. There would be little in a fool doing it; we should only laugh; but when a wise man does it, we are sorry. Other people have strange notions; but they conceal them. If they have tails, they hide them."

Nonetheless, Monboddos's works, especially *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, were read by many, including Charles Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin. By 1859, his grandson's

idea of man being a descendant of monkey-like creatures was no longer ridiculed as preposterous among the intellectual classes. Millions of years of small changes, Charles proposed, could give rise to new species.

By 1925, that idea had caught on. The trial of John Scopes was hyped by the national press and the American Civil Liberties Union into the Scopes Monkey Trial. The "trial of the century" pitted Darwinian evolution against the creation of man by God, "science" against the Bible and Christianity. Those who did not accept Darwin's idea were ridiculed as bigots and bumpkins. The tables were thus turned: *Question* man's descent from apes and you will be considered "touched in the head."

Monkey Scripture

Lord Monboddos also had an idea about language. Boswell recorded that he and Johnson dined with several scholars in Edinburgh; at one point the conversation turned to primates:

We talked of the *Ourang-Outang*, and of Lord Monboddos's thinking that he might be taught to speak. Dr Johnson

treated this with ridicule. Mr Crosbie said, that Lord Monboddos believed the existence of everything possible; in short, that all which is in *posse* might be found in *esse*.

As an example of "anything is possible," consider the infinit monkey theorem: a monkey typing randomly on a keyboard, given infinite time, could produce a work of Shakespeare. The argument has been put forward to defend evolution by blind, random forces: no monkey is aware of what he is typing, but it's theoretically possible he *could* type out Hamlet by chance. Then again, time is not infinite, so given the history of the universe, this is not possible.

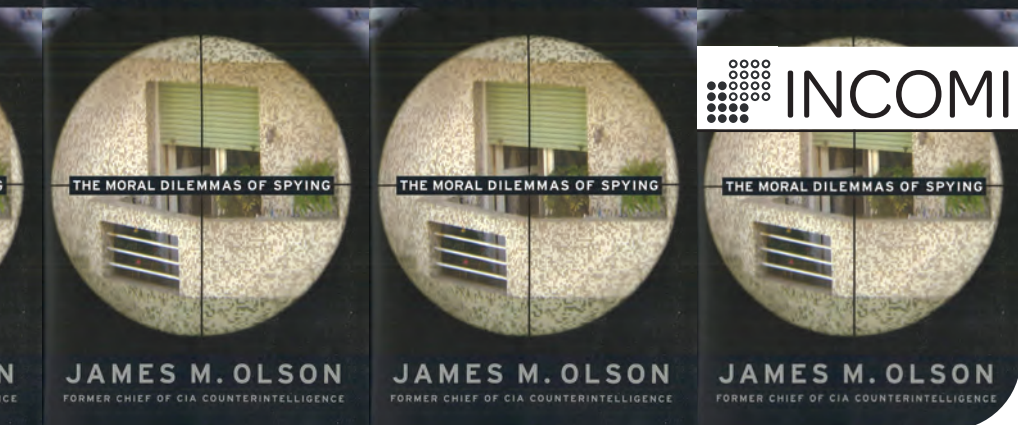
Of course, the monkey theorem could be blended with Darwinism to assert that, given enough time, clueless animals could evolve into playwrights. In 1955, two playwrights typed out *Inherit the Wind*, a fictionalized play about the Scopes trial which was made into a Hollywood movie in 1960. But that didn't happen by chance, either.

Competing Tales

Realistically, some things will *never* happen. In light of recent discoveries that life is more information-rich than we ever imagined (and we are still learning), the likelihood that coded DNA instructions were typed into an executable script to create Man (or a playwright) by billions of random chemical keyboard strokes really is preposterous.

Sadly, the tale of "random" creation is still being told, while the "new" idea that Intelligent Design best explains the data about the world around us is routinely ridiculed among the intellectual classes.

We trust that this special issue of *Salvo* marking the 100th anniversary of the "Monkey Trial" will help set the record straight. ☉



INCOMING



Salvo welcomes letters in response to articles and blog posts or raising matters of interest to readers. Letters may be edited for space; please keep them under 200 words.

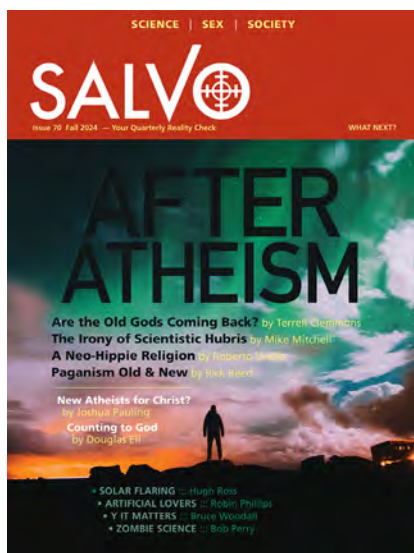
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Questioning Spycraft

I submit my first letter to *Salvo* after reading my first issue. What I found most helpful was the fluidity of the writing, the breadth and length of the articles (not too short, not too long), and many of the issues covered. It was quite an education. Thank you.

But I have a strong disagreement with the author of "Spy for Life" (*Salvo* 70, Fall 2024). Bob Perry reports that CIA couple the Olsons "lied every day of their lives" and that this is somehow justified because they were opposing the "Evil Empire." While spying is a dirty business, especially during a time such as the Cold War, daily lying can't be justified from a Christian perspective. What if Jim Olson were spying for the CIA during the so-called War on Terror? Would torture be justified because he was fighting "Islamic terrorism"?

—Kenneth Reynolds, New York



Reply:

Thank you, not just for being a *Salvo* reader, but for taking the time to challenge me on this issue. *Salvo* exists to help Christians think more clearly about our place in the world, so I appreciate your doing that. I also understand your negative reaction to the idea that Jim Olson and his wife claimed to have "lied every day of their lives" while serving during the Cold War as spies in the CIA. My initial reaction was the same as yours. But I think a little reflection reveals that your critique not only misinterprets the point Mr. Olson was making but is also a little uncharitable toward the Olsons and how their world-view impacted their service.

First, spying is not unbiblical in and of itself. In Numbers 13, Moses sent 12 spies into the land of Canaan to scope out the enemy they faced there. Likewise, Joshua enlisted two spies to assess Jericho before he attacked that city. The

prostitute Rahab who abetted them implicitly became a spy herself and blatantly lied to the king's guards about them. But she wasn't condemned for any of it. She is not only an ancestor of King David and eventually Jesus, she is also listed in Hebrews 11 as one of the heroes of the faith.

Second, I think you're misinterpreting Jim Olson when he says he "lied every day" of his life. Mr. Olson is not claiming to have actually told lies to people every day. He is simply saying that living life as a spy *is the lie*. He was not the diplomat or statesman he led his opponents to believe he was. And he was not the businessman his family thought he was. His status as a spy effectively made his entire life a "lie." But it in no way makes him a "liar."

Finally, your hypothetical assertion that by the same logic, Jim Olson would have condoned torture during the War on Terror lacks any evidence to substantiate it. Being a spy entails living a shadow life. But that is not in any way parallel to actively engaging in a program of torture. In fact, in the paragraph following the one from which you quote, Olson specifically spells out his view that "what constitutes acceptable moral behavior has too often been left to the judgment of individual intelligence officers, their supervisors, or other senior officials" and that he find this *unacceptable*. Olson actually lobbies for more formal oversight for people working in the kinds of positions he held for reasons that I suspect you would agree with.

I contend that Jim Olson's respect for objective morality is clearly evident not only in his service to the nation, but also in the way he approached his profession and in the way he has lived his entire life. I believe Christian charity requires that we owe him a debt of gratitude and a great deal of respect, not condemnation. All the best,

—Bob Perry

Method or Materialism?

by Rick Reed

SCIENCE: knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws

Derived from Latin *scientia*, “knowledge,” the Old French *science* referred to the body of human knowledge. Until about the 14th century, *science* meant the knowledge gained from theology and philosophy. The word first appeared in the Middle English work, *Apocalypse of St. John: A Version*.

Its meaning actually began to shift in the 13th century, when Albertus Magnus (d. 1280) asserted a distinction between revelation and experimental science. Around the same time, Roger Bacon (d. 1292), a Franciscan friar, challenged unquestioning acceptance of Aristotle’s teachings, which relied more on reasoning without physical evidence. Later, Renaissance scholar Francis Bacon (d. 1626) articulated the scientific method, which requires the application of inductive reasoning to observation of the world, and Isaac Newton (d. 1727) applied mathematics to the process, inadvertently feeding the materialism that dominates scientific understanding today. These men were all devout Christians whose interest in science stemmed from their desire to understand God’s creation, but by the 1800s, the definition had shifted to apply to natural and physical science, knowledge of the *material* world alone.

Science or Scientism?

The scientific method involves the development of hypotheses, experimental inquiry, and revision of theories. Curious people have applied it to study every aspect of the world. Though some theories have become well-established through tests and observations, all are—or should be—subject to challenge in light of new evidence that contradicts earlier conclusions.

Yet, materialists increasingly speak of “settled science.” In popular media, the phrase seems attributable to any statement by a favored scientist. Ironically, many materialists hold certain scientific theories in the same regard as people of faith regard Scripture. Thus, science evolves into *scientism*, which Merriam-Webster defines as “an exaggerated trust in the efficacy of the methods of natural science applied to all areas of investigation (as in philosophy,

the social sciences, and the humanities).” Such was the case with social Darwinism, which applied Darwinian principles to social science. In *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis critiques scientism for asserting that scientific methods are the sole legitimate ways of understanding the world.

Scientism takes science from a method of expanding understanding to an ideology that limits it. For example, lawn signs that proclaim, “in this house we believe in science” bind scientism with political allegiances and anodynes that serve as a credo implying anyone who disagrees with one statement must disagree with all. This credo also serves the false notion that science and faith are distinct and opposed to one another. Thus, the materialists who shun faith—perhaps inadvertently, perhaps not—remake science into scientism, which itself becomes a false religion. What Christians created out of desire to understand God’s handiwork, materialists have applied to exclude the Creator.

Light Shining in the Darkness

However, the scientific method rests on a foundation of testing and retesting current understandings. As scientists have learned more about genetics and the finely tuned universe, for example, it is clear that Darwinian evolution is far from settled.

In *Light of the Mind, Light of the World*, Spencer Klavan writes, “the world described by science increasingly looks like the world revealed by faith.” From the Big Bang, to finely tuned forces, to intricate microscopic bio-mechanisms, evidence of an intelligent designer has grown ever more persuasive. Though materialists resist any notion of an Intelligence greater than their own, science itself traces its roots to intellects who humbly sought to understand the Designer’s cosmos. ☉

History 250

In anticipation of America's 250th birthday in 2026, HISTORY250, a project of Cana Academy, is producing short documentary films covering important events in American history. The approach is described as "the liberal approach... observational and sympathetic, not anachronistic or moralistic; narrative and fully contextual, not fragmentary; unitive, not divisive. By liberal we mean free as in the freedom achieved through a genuinely liberal education." Events covered range

from the political to the religious to moments in arts, sports, economics, and technological innovation. They include both the regrettable (the Trail of Tears) and the aspirational (the Gettysburg Address and "I Have a Dream"). The videos (around five to eight minutes each) are ad-free and can be viewed online or downloaded. The site also houses a catalog of documents, maps, and podcasts with historians. We must remember

history accurately or we risk capitulating to falsehood in the present—which can have grave consequences in the future. •



Source: <https://www.history250.org/>

Keeping Faith

"The rumors of Christianity's demise appear to have been greatly exaggerated," writes tech entrepreneur Rod D. Martin,

reporting on a recent Pew Research survey. The long-running decline in Americans identifying as Christian has come to a halt. His explanation is blunt: "You left the faith if you were a leftist...not because conservatives were 'mean' or 'lacked

winsomeness.'" As if that weren't blunt enough, he continues: "the fakers have left. There's no longer any benefit to your business, or to your personal prestige, that derives from pretending to be a Christian." Another data point indicates that it may be young conservative men who are driving the stabilization, as they embrace Christianity as a part of a broader rejection of anti-Christian ideologies. "The church may have been battered," Martin concedes, "but it is far from broken. In fact, it may be on the brink of something extraordinary." •



Source: <https://www.rodmartin.org/p/christianity-s-decline-in-america>

Pride Downsized

The theme for San Francisco Pride 2025 is "Queer Joy is Resistance," but queer joy resistance may be a bit more subdued this year. Five corporate donors, including big-ticket supporters Comcast and Anheuser-Busch, have pulled their sponsorship, leaving

organizers on their own to raise \$1.3 million if they're going to meet their \$2.3 million budget for the two-day festival. Pride St. Louis, too, lost Anheuser-Busch support after 30 years and launched its own fundraising campaign.

Organizers connected the cutbacks to changes in political winds regarding institutionalized DEI, but blaming sponsor pullback on "social

hostility" and "political attacks" indicates a victimhood-based blindness on their part. "We will not pay for your party" is a very different stance from "You cannot have your party." The shows will go on, but this year the prideful may have to pay more of the expenses for their own party. Subdued pride means a move toward health and well-being for men, women, and children everywhere. •

Sources: <https://www.foxnews.com/media/san-francisco-pride-takes-financial-hit-after-major-companies-pull-sponsorships-amid-dei-fallout>; <https://www.stlpr.org/culture-history/2025-03-25/anheuser-busch-pulls-support-pridefest-after-30-years>

Millennials & Gen Z on Life

A 2025 poll of U.S. Millennial and Gen Z voters conducted by the Demetree Institute for Pro-Life Advancement found that almost seven in ten support some limits on abortion. Respondents

also showed concerns about abortion pills, with more than

nine in ten supporting protective measures such as ultrasound screenings, in-person consultations to prevent misuse, and studies on the environmental impacts of the medical waste involved. Just under

half (48 percent) supported federal funding for Planned Parenthood.

"Media and politicians often claim that this critical demographic, now almost HALF (48.5%) of the electorate, are solidly on the side of abortion," stated the report. "The facts tell a different, nuanced story." •

Source: <https://www.instituteforprolifeadvancement.org/demetree-institute-for-pro-life-advancement-yougov-survey-usa-2025-poll-results/>

Pro-Procreation

As birth rates decline across developed countries, pronatalism is becoming a subject of public conversation. In 2024, the



Institute for Family Studies launched its Pronatalism Initiative to conduct research and craft recommendations for policymakers seeking to address plummeting birth rates and encourage healthy fertility. Then there was NatalCon 2025, held in March in Austin, Texas. Hassan Khan of *The Texas Horn* reported three distinct categories of attendees in order of numbers present: (1) Christians, mostly Catholic, who see having and raising children as a way of serving God; (2) Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, who are concerned about civilizational decline; and (3) Nietzschean (think Darwinian) domineering-warrior

types, who were, thankfully, few in number.

Mainstream media, who apparently don't know what to make of these developments, reported on NatalCon using boilerplate, overworked slurs such as neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and eugenicists. Clearly, NatalCon is a mixed bag, but these newly launched conversations present an opportunity to showcase natural marriage and family as the optimum social institution for long-term civilizational flourishing. As Peachy Keenan said at NatalCon 2024, it's a good time to "'seize the means of reproduction' and out-reproduce the Left." •

Sources: <https://ifstudies.org/blog/ifs-launches-the-pronatalism-initiative-under-new-senior-fellow-lyman-stone>; <https://thetexashorn.com/2025/04/07/eugenicists-in-austin-the-texas-horn-goes-to-natalcon-2025/>

Food Fight Watch

In the face of elitists moving to control agriculture under the guise of saving the planet, Dr. Meryl Nass, a Maine physician and medical freedom advocate, organized a two-day symposium to call attention to threats to global food systems. "Attack on Food and Farmers and How to Fight Back," held in September 2024, brought together doctors, journalists, researchers, farmers, and politicians "to discuss what's happening to the global food system and to outline...strategies...

to return control of the food system to the people." Topics included pesticides, agricultural vaccines, genetically engineered food, and policies affecting land use and food production, delivery, and sales. Sessions also relayed strategies farmers and consumers can implement to push back against global would-be oligarchs. "It is very important to understand we're fighting, not just for our freedom," said Catherine Austin Fitts of the *Solari Report*, "but we are fighting to make sure that we are not the victims of famine

either because we will not be able to get food or because we will be able to get food that is not worth eating." A program guide and videos of sessions are available online at DoorToFreedom.org. •



Source: <https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/attack-on-food-and-farmers-symposium-chd-door-to-freedom/>

Human Egg Farms

With the help of Interpol, the Pavena Foundation is helping women escape from what can only be called a human egg farm. Three Thai women rescued earlier this year described being housed like cattle on four large properties with about 100 other women and fed hormones by a Chinese criminal organization that is harvesting their eggs and selling them on the black market for use in in-vitro fertilization (IVF). The women had responded to a “job offer” on social media to “work” as

surrogates for couples who could not have children. The prospective “employer” had paid their passport and travel expenses to Georgia in Eastern Europe.

The Center for Bioethics and Culture (CBC), who was an early voice sounding the alarm about women being exploited by “Big Fertility,” commented, “At the CBC, we always knew that bad actors existed in the fertility industry, but we’ve entered a whole new level of Dante’s Inferno....In the state of California, home to the CBC, men use an egg from one woman and a womb for another to have a child. No doubt, one (or more) of these

eggs, from one of these enslaved women, was used in a surrogacy arrangement. A child was created and likely two women were exploited in the process—the child’s biological mother and birth mother.” •



Sources: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14372569/Women-slaves-human-egg-farm-gangsters.html>;
<https://cbc-network.org/2025/02/human-egg-farm/>

Soft on Pedophilia

A bill passed last year in the German Parliament lowers minimum sentences for possession of child pornography from a felony crime to a misdemeanor. Voices objecting included Rainer Becker of German

Children’s Aid, who said that it could put Germany in violation of an EU directive against child pornography, and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), who said possession of such material “must, in principle, remain classified as crimes.” Voices praising the bill included Dieter Giesecking, founder of a

pro-pedophile activist group known as K13. Giesecking, who has a long history of child porn charges, has also called for the age of consent to be lowered to 12 and for a change of attitude toward pedophiles. “The taboo of pedophilia must finally be broken at all levels of society,” he said in a 2014 interview with *Taz Online*. •

Source: <https://reduxx.info/pro-pedophile-activist-group-celebrates-as-germany-decriminalizes-child-porn-possession/>

Ideological Zealotry in Preschool Ed

LifeSiteNews reports that a child of age three or four was suspended from a U.K. state school during the 2022–2023 school year for “abuse against sexual

orientation and gender identity.” It appears this disciplinary action is not an outlier event. According to the same report, 94 primary school children were suspended or expelled that year for “homophobia” or “transphobia.” A U.K. Department for Education spokesperson commented, “All pupils and staff should feel safe

and protected at school and should never face violence or abuse. The Education Secretary...expects school leaders to enforce good behavior.”

“The spokesperson didn’t comment on whether it was abusive to suspend a toddler for bigotry,” noted LifeSiteNews author Jonathon Van Maren, dryly. J. K. Rowling’s response was more expressive: “This is totalitarian insanity. If you think small children should be punished for being able to recognize sex, you are a dangerous zealot who should be nowhere near kids or in any position of authority over them.” •



Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/uk-nursery-suspends-toddler-over-transphobia-no-this-isnt-satire/>

Averted Life

Alex Marlow reports that a Colorado Democrat noted that birth is more expensive

than abortion and that abortions are now being called “averted births,” as if the birth of a child into the world is a contributor to economic disaster and abortion is the means of averting the disaster.

“This is anti-human,” Marlow said, “if you’re talking about, basically, the life of a human being as just an economic problem. Remember this, that the left sees everything as a money issue.” •

Source: <https://www.breitbart.com/clips/2025/04/07/alex-marlow-sinister-democrats-rebrand-abortions-as-averted-births/>

Power Meltdowns

Outcry: *Alchemists of Rage* is a short documentary that follows photographer Whitney Bradshaw as she photographs women screaming. The film came out in March, and at that time she had photographed more than 500 women screaming. This is not an SNL comedy skit. “One of the goals is, I make a beautiful portrait of your power. But I also want the photographs themselves to become a collective act of resistance,” she explains in the film’s trailer. “I wanted to use this project as a way to continue to propel the #MeToo movement, by encouraging womxn to speak up and out for themselves in any situation,” she told UC Berkeley News. “I wanted womxn to practice expressing themselves, taking up space and being heard.”

No doubt, some of the “womxn” have been mistreated by men, but they would do better to grow up and turn a critical eye to modern liberal feminism. Victor Joecks at *Hot Air* lists the results of several studies showing that conservative women consistently report being satisfied with their lives in higher numbers than liberal women. Feminists have disparaged marriage and religion as tools of the patriarchy and children as obstacles to a fulfilling life while portraying promiscuity as free love. Many who followed that script ended up lonely or abused or both.

This visage of grown women

screaming like angry toddlers does a disservice to women everywhere. The fact that it’s cast as female power is a travesty. Perhaps, suggests Joecks, “the best thing modern feminists could do for women is tell them to reject feminism.” •



Sources: <https://www.thecollegefix.com/catholic-professor-promotes-feminist-scream-sessions-to-oppose-pro-life-laws/>; <https://outcryfilm.com/about/>; <https://hotair.com/victor-joecks/2025/03/02/modern-feminism-makes-women-miserable-n3800307>

Spiritual Babel

According to George Barna’s 2025 American Worldview Inventory, American adults hold a baffling plethora of ideas about “gods, spiritual deities, supreme beings, higher powers, or supernatural authorities.” Six in ten (59 percent) identify Jesus Christ as a member of that set, but 14 percent place “The Universe” and 12 percent include “Mother

Earth” in that same category. About three in ten (29 percent) express either agnosticism or atheism about such beings; this category, which Barna calls the “don’ts” (for “don’t know” or “don’t care”), is the fastest growing segment of American adults.

Sadly, the data also reveal marked confusion among professing Christians. Of those who identify as “Born-Again Christian,” many still put The Universe and Mother Earth in that category (nine and six

percent), and only 60 percent of them identify the “God of the Bible” as belonging in it. •



Source: <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CRC-Release-AWVI-1-Feb-18-2025-Final.pdf>

TIES that Blind

Teachers Training Students to Reject Competing Ideas

by Emily Morales

The teaching of evolution in government schools has expanded since the early 20th century, gradually replacing the earlier creation-based model of life. By 1939, about half of high school biology teachers taught evolution as a central principle of biology, and by 2019, only 12 percent offered the creation narrative as a valid alternative to evolution.

To further entrench the Darwinian story in education, the Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science (TIES) was founded in 2015 as a project of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, which later merged with the secular nonprofit Center for Inquiry (CFI). Adopting the motto “teachers helping teachers,” TIES offers resources in the form of workshops, webinars, lesson plans, articles, and books focused on teaching evolution and answering critics based upon Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). TIES holds that “people who understand evolution are more likely to accept it.”

Reason for Surveillance

While TIES provides resources for up to 12th grade, its primary focus is on equipping elementary and middle school teachers, many of whom, it says, feel ill-equipped or fear backlash from religious

parents. It is notable that TIES focuses on reaching younger children, given that elementary and middle school learners lack mature cognitive resources to critically evaluate the sweeping and often-times fallacious claims of Darwin proponents.

For example, in an interview with TIES director Bertha Vazquez, podcaster and author Rick Coste likened the evolution of *organisms* to the evolution of *technology*. Coste also explained how the evolution of flight, from the Wright brothers’ 1911 motorized flyer to the 1969 moon landing, is his favorite model of how technology evolves and changes under selection pressures, just like organisms. Those who understand the theory of intelligent design will immediately recognize the fallacious nature of Coste’s analogies—that such developments are the product of the collective intelligence of teams of engineers.

The “evolution” of these technologies actually reflects products of *intelligent design*, not naturalistic evolution, but younger children are not likely to recognize the flaws in these analogies. Worse, with analogies such as these, undiscerning ears are inoculated *against* recognizing the latent design inference in Coste’s examples, or in any others.

Most Recent O ense

One lesson TIES recommends is called “Addressing Science Denial with Cranky Uncle.” Students are informed that “the modern world was built by science,” but that some people “deny science” because it conflicts with their “deeply held beliefs.” By playing Cranky Uncle, students earn points by denying outrageous claims—the “sillier or more outrageous the better!”, says the instructor, who suggests starting with “gravity is a hoax.” The game is problematic in many respects. Not only does it imply that any non-consensus view isn’t “science” (fostering groupthink), but it also trains students to respond to alternative ideas with ridicule. Apart from the rudeness and immaturity of such a response, this is inconsistent with good scientific thinking. For elementary and middle school students—who tend to be highly sensitive to peer perception—the Cranky Uncle game only heightens their fear of being labeled a “denier.” The fact that no one holds “gravity is a hoax” as a “deeply held belief” is apparently lost on the instructor.

Educators who push the evolution-only story—not only refusing to consider alternative explanations but ridiculing those who do—ultimately teach students to be poor scientists. They condition students to accept theories without critical inquiry, rather than encouraging genuine scientific exploration. One might even say they set students up for science denial. ☹



Degraded Conceptions

Does Darwinian Evolution Select for Toxic Men?

by Nancy Pearcey

The vice president of a California school board recently proposed a resolution titled “Recognition of the Essential Role and Needs of Young Men in Society,” which criticized use of the term “toxic masculinity.” Parents were outraged. At a school board meeting, nearly a hundred parents denounced the resolution as “offensive,” “embarrassing,” “insensitive,” and “tone deaf.”

Where did the idea come from that masculinity is toxic? Why does the secular world get its idea of masculinity so wrong? Surprisingly, a major source was Darwin’s theory of evolution.

We think of evolution as a theory in biology, but in fact it had an enormous impact on secular views of masculinity. Already in Darwin’s own day, sociologist Herbert Spencer applied the idea

of natural selection to human behavior in a theory known as social Darwinism. Spencer argued that survival of the fittest weeds out all but the most aggressive men:

In the course of the struggles for existence among wild tribes, those tribes survived in which the men were not only powerful and courageous,

but aggressive, unscrupulous, intensely egoistic. Necessarily, then, the men of the conquering races which gave origin to the civilized races were men in whom the brutal characteristics were dominant.

According to Spencer’s logic, these “brutal characteristics” were not moral flaws but represented normative traits for manhood. The authentic male nature was said to be ruthless, savage, barbarian, and predatory.

How did women survive in relationships with such ruthless men? Spencer’s answer was that women needed to develop the “ability to please.” It would help if they also acquired the “powers of disguising their feelings” in order to hide the sense of “antagonism produced in them by ill-treatment.”

The lesson of evolution, apparently, was that men are brutal beasts—and that women must appease and placate them, while learning to hide their resentment of “ill-treatment.”

In an earlier age, Christians had urged men to live *up* to the image of God implanted in them. By contrast, the Darwinian worldview urged men to live *down* to their presumed animal nature—“the beast within.” Books appeared arguing that civilization is a thin façade over men’s primitive instincts. *Savage Survivals* (1916) said, “Civilization is only a skin. The great core of human nature is barbaric.” *The Caveman Within Us* (1922) claimed that the human organism has only “a slight coat of cultural whitewash, which may be called the veneer of civilization.”

Are Men “Pigs”?

Today social Darwinism has reappeared under a new label—it’s called evolutionary psychology. But it sends the same message about men. A bestselling book by Robert Wright called *The Moral Animal* says:

Human males are by nature oppressive, possessive, flesh-obsessed pigs. Giving them advice on successful marriage is like offering Vikings a free booklet titled "How Not to Pillage."

The allure of evolutionary psychology is that it transforms sin into inexorable biological impulses.

An older book with a similar theme was recently reissued titled *Men and Marriage*. The author, George Gilder, claims that "Men are, by nature, violent, sexually predatory, and irresponsible." Their "most profound yearning" is not for a wife and family, but for "the motorbike and the open road, the male group escape to a primal mode of predatory and immediate gratification."

Are you seeing the origin of the Andrew Tate phenomenon? Intellectuals have been creating the secular script for masculinity for a long time. Tate brags about making money as a "pimp" producing "pornography." He sneers at anyone not rich or successful, calling them "losers" whose ancestors would have been "taken care of by natural selection and evolution."

If you tell men often enough that they are naturally irresponsible brutes, captive to ancient caveman urges, they will start acting like it.

This is a severely stunted, shrunken, truncated view of human nature. From the time of the classical Greeks and Romans, virtue had been defined as the restraint of the "lower" passions by the "higher" faculties of reason, spirit, and moral will. But Darwinism was taken to mean that humans had triumphed over the other species not by reason and moral restraint but by the fierce, fighting urges. In a stunning reversal, the animal passions and instincts were held up as the core of masculinity.

Putting Women Lower on the Evolutionary Ladder

Any list of toxic male behavior includes disrespect for women, and Darwin bears some responsibility for that as well. He was convinced that males are superior to females—that man attains "a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman." He concluded that "the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman."

Darwin explained men's alleged superiority by proposing that among social animals, young males have to pass through many contests to win a female—and many additional battles to *retain* their females. Over time, he said, natural selection will favor the more dominant, combative males. Although modern men do not literally fight for a mate, he wrote,

yet they generally have to undergo, during manhood, a severe struggle in order to maintain themselves and their families; and this will tend to keep up or even increase their mental powers, and, as a consequence, the present inequality between the sexes.

By contrast, Darwin argued, because women stay home to care for the young, they are out of reach of natural selection. Thus, they have evolved more slowly and their mental powers are lower. (In his day, it was assumed that males pass on more of their traits to their sons, and females, to their daughters.)

Darwin did acknowledge that women have "greater tenderness and less selfishness" than men, and even greater "powers of intuition, and rapid perception." But he

dismissed these traits as "characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization." Even women's positive traits were devalued as evidence of inferiority.

Darwin's theory thus gave supposedly scientific support to the idea that women are intellectually inferior to men—that women have no ideas or insights that warrant male respect. Women were relegated to a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder.

If you tell men often enough that they are naturally irresponsible brutes, captive to ancient caveman urges, they will start acting like it.

Many leading scientists of the day agreed with Darwin that women are less evolved than men. Anthropologist James McGrigor Allan held that "physically, mentally and morally, woman is a kind of adult child." Thomas H. Huxley, dubbed Darwin's Bulldog, said even education could not lift women to intellectual equality with men. Since women's inferior abilities are a product of *natural* selection, he argued, they are not "likely to be removed by even the most skillfully conducted *educational* selection."

There was no hope, apparently, for women to escape their inferior position.

In reality, of course, the survival of the human species depends just as much on characteristically female activities like giving birth and nurturing the young. Nevertheless, evolutionary thinkers preferred to exalt the more typically male activities like hunting

and fighting as most important for the progress of the species.

Attack on Transcendent Values

The impact of Darwinism went even deeper, however. His theory was thoroughly naturalistic. It proposed that natural forces acting alone had the power to create everything that exists—that God was not necessary in any way to explain the world. And if God was not needed to do any creating, then he was out of a job. The *idea* of God might still be helpful for some people, but only for those who need that kind of emotional crutch. Christianity was reduced to the status of subjective feelings.

Historian Glenna Matthews describes how Darwinian naturalism continues to have an impact even in our own day:

Men and women living in a modern secular society are under a handicap in dealing with transcendent values. Darwinism helped create a secular and materialist outlook. As a consequence, reflective people now lack a vocabulary for talking about love, nurture, or the social importance of home without sounding sentimental and faintly ridiculous.

In short, Darwinism led to the rejection of any transcendent values that would call men to a higher ideal of what it means to be a man.

Universal Darwinism

In our day, Darwinism has been extended into an entire world-view—what some are calling Universal Darwinism. In books like *The Evolution of Ethics* and *The Origins of Virtue*, ethics are said to be a product of natural selection. In books like *How Religions Work* and *Religion Explained*, religion is reduced to an illusion. Evolution



is being applied to politics in *Darwinian Politics* and to economics in *Economics as an Evolutionary Science*. It has been applied to medicine in *Evolving Health* and *Evolutionary Medicine*. Even art and literature have been reinterpreted within a Darwinian framework in *Literary Darwinism* and *Evolution and Literary Theory*.

So it should not be surprising that evolutionary thinking has also shaped the secular script for masculinity. One reason it is important to highlight the failure of evolution as a *biological* theory is that it has been extended far beyond science to construct a *complete* worldview.

Let me end with a story: I recently received an email from a former graduate student who now teaches at a high

school. "All my male students are fans of Andrew Tate," she wrote. "They are even using quotes from Andrew Tate in the yearbook."

"Where do you teach?" I asked.

"At a classical Christian school."

The sobering lesson is that even Christian boys and young men are being drawn in by online influencers like Andrew Tate. We need to provide them with a critical grid to recognize the Darwinian roots of the secular

script for masculinity—and fortify them with a healthy, aspirational, biblical view of what it means to be a man. ☉

—This article is based on Pearcey's most recent book, *The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes*.





Unnecessary Conflict

Why the Age of the Earth Is Irrelevant in the Creation-Evolution Debate

by Tom & Elizabeth Siewert

In 1980, PBS launched “Cosmos: A Personal Voyage,” a TV series written and hosted by Carl Sagan. Each episode opened with Sagan’s lyrical phrase, “The cosmos is all that *is* or ever was or ever *will be*.” The implied foregone conclusion is that Science (with a capital “S”) gives us the truth—biblical teaching need not apply.

Has this conflict between the Bible and science been ongoing since ancient times? The simple answer is, *no*. After the Roman Empire fell, much of “science” was dominated by Greek and Roman philosophies; the gods controlled the fates of men. But as Europe emerged from the Middle Ages, there was a rapid increase in scientific research. Many of the scientists were Christians, and so for the most part, science and the Bible coexisted peaceably. There were only two controversies that mattered.

Controversy One Geocentric or Heliocentric Solar System?

Prior to the 1500s, almost everyone believed that the earth stood still, and the sun and planets revolved around it. This made intuitive sense. To one standing on the earth, it was obvious that the sun moved and not the earth. In addition, the Bible supported this idea in passages such as:

- “Its [the sun’s] rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them” (Psalm 19:6);

- “The world is firmly established; it shall not be moved” (Psalm 93:1); and
- Joshua’s famous command that the sun stand still: “so the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies” (Joshua 10:13).

In addition, scientists, then known as natural philosophers, had adhered to an Earth-centered universe for centuries.

Then Nicolaus Copernicus, while working on the problem of the relative motions of the planets and the sun, realized that a lot of the problems he was struggling with could be resolved if the sun were the center of the solar system rather than the earth. He delayed publishing his work, as it contradicted all accepted science and plain readings of the Bible, but he finally published *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* in 1543, the year of his death.

In fact, the disagreement got entangled with the Protestant Reformation, as Copernicus remained in the Catholic Church, while former friends, also scientists, were part of the new Protestant movement. Martin Luther stated, “This fool [Copernicus] wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the Sun to stand still, and not the Earth.” Philipp Melanchthon, a reformer and collaborator with Luther, wrote, “Some people believe that it is excellent and correct to work out a thing as absurd as did that astronomer [Copernicus] who moves the earth and stops the sun. Indeed, wise rulers should have curbed such light-mindedness.” Fortunately, Copernicus’s work was mostly accepted within eight years of his death, when astronomical tables were published and accepted by many of the scientists working in the field.



Controversy Two Young or Old Earth?

The only other (major) conflict between the Bible and science is that of the age of the earth. At the time when Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859), no one had any idea of the incredible complexity of biological systems. The cell was thought to be a simple bag of protoplasm that had emerged in some “warm little pond,” as Darwin postulated, and had developed by gradual random processes into all the diversity of plant and animal life. In addition, geological investigations pointed to an earth much older than 6,000–10,000 years, which gave even more credence to Darwin’s theory of evolution.

As Darwin’s ideas gained mainstream acceptance, the young earth interpretation of the Bible became a central touchpoint for those opposing this godless theory. Early in the 20th century, Christian leaders became vocal about the earth indeed being young and how evolution could not be true for that reason. Later in the 20th century, organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research (1970) and Answers in Genesis (1994) were formed specifically to provide evidence for a young earth. If the earth were only 6,000–10,000 years old, the argument went, surely that was not enough time for Darwin’s theory to be true.

Enter ID

Ironically, while these Christian organizations were promoting young earth creationism in opposition to evolution, the field of molecular biology was rapidly developing. New techniques such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR), invented in 1983, were employed to synthesize customized DNA that could then be inserted into the genome of *E. coli*, a type of bacteria. The machinery in the *E. coli* would then “read” the modified DNA,

translate the information in the inserted DNA into its corresponding sequence of amino acids, and produce the protein encoded in the inserted segment along with all the proteins encoded in the naturally occurring DNA. These and other techniques made it possible to learn how cells “worked.” The more molecular biology techniques advanced, the more researchers were able to discover the multitude of molecular machines, sophisticated control systems, exquisite feedback signaling systems, etc., inside a cell. It became very clear that the cell was *not* a simple bag of protoplasm. However, these discoveries were only being reported in research journals, and thus, the general public was unaware of these spectacular advances of knowledge.

In 1991, Phillip E. Johnson published *Darwin on Trial*. Johnson was a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Chicago Law School and was then a professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley. As a lawyer skilled in the use of language, he “took up the study of Darwinism because he saw that the books defending the theory were dogmatic and unconvincing. He wrote this book to give Americans the information they need to make up their own minds.”¹ *Darwin on Trial* was instrumental in launching the scientific movement now known as intelligent design (ID), and in 1996, the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture was founded specifically to promote ID, a

scientific theory based, in part, on new discoveries about the incredible complexities inside the cell.

Still Not Enough Time

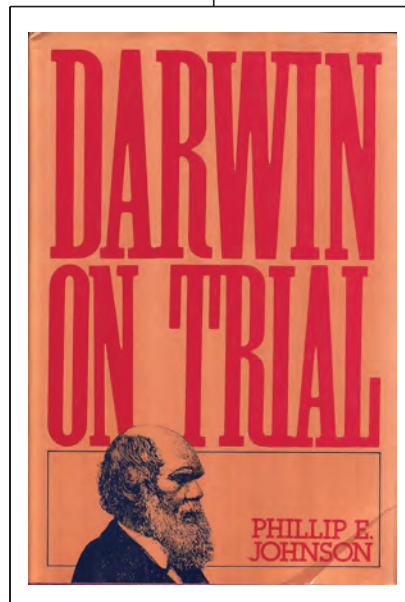
Today, the disagreement over the age of the earth continues. Many Jewish and Christian scholars estimate the earth to be about 6,000 years old. Mayan astronomers calculated the age of the earth to be approximately 5,000 years, and some Hindu texts say it is more than 150 trillion years old. Scientific calculations indicate that the earth is about 4.5 billion years old and that the universe is about 13.8 billion years old. However, none of these calculations—*none of them*—allow

enough time for natural processes alone to produce the complexities now known to reside within the cell.

What this means is that a young earth is no longer “needed” to argue against the theory of evolution. Advancements in science have disqualified Darwin’s theory on other grounds. The question that remains to be answered is, “Will the age-of-the-earth controversy go the same way as the earth-is-the-center-of-the-universe controversy?” As more data and viewpoints on this issue are developed, it will be interesting to see whether a consensus can be reached. Meanwhile, it seems that the age of the earth is still an unsettled question. ☉

Note

1. “Phillip [sic] Johnson’s *Darwin on Trial*,” *Physics Forums* (May 12, 2005).





HAZMATS

equals character and uttered some fiction of their own.⁵

It was in this milieu that support for eugenics, social Darwinism, and racial hierarchy were deemed progressive positions to hold, thanks to the credibility lent them by "science." "The vogue of natural selection," says Barzun, "bred the doctrine that nations and other social groups struggle endlessly in order that the fittest shall survive. So attractive was this 'principle' that it got the name of Social Darwinism."⁶

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Darwinism created racism (racism is much too ancient for that) or that Darwinism is even the main cause of racism (human-kind is much too good at "othering" for that). My point is that, as Darwinism swept through science, academia, and society at large, racism took on a more "enlightened" tinge. Cloaked in the scientist's lab coat, Darwinism lent an air of respectability to racism.

As just one example, it was the early 1900s that saw the massive extension and widespread social acceptance of the KKK, as it grew to its largest membership ever and expanded its targets to include not only blacks, but also Jews, immigrants, Catholics, and others who didn't fit in the WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) category. The ideas and patterns of living of this era made the KKK an intuitive and plausible—even popular—group to join. This social environment also justified the little-known outrage of human zoos.

Man as Spectacle

In 1859, the famed entertainer P. T. Barnum placed William Henry Johnson, a black man, on display at the American Museum in New York City. Johnson was billed as a missing link between apes and humans and drew huge crowds. Johnson was part of a larger fascination with "freak shows" of the era, which frequently featured

Zoogenics

Social Darwinism & Racist Science

by Joshua Pauling

I taught American history in a large, diverse, public high school for 13 years. Almost every year, students were shocked to hear of America's experiments with eugenics and the widespread acceptance of scientific racism. What they previously thought were aberrations—the Nazi regime and the Holocaust—they came to realize were in fact the outworking of a widespread movement of the modern world that was considered an enlightened, progressive, and scientific position to hold. The story is complex, but it certainly intersects with the rise of Darwinism and its stepchild, social Darwinism, which was a variegated attempt by several thinkers to apply the principles of evolution beyond biology to social and cultural matters. One of these figures, Herbert Spencer, coined the term "survival of the fittest," which was incorporated into later editions of *On the Origin of Species*.¹

Darwinian Dominance

Even before Darwin stepped aboard the *HMS Beagle*, the mood of science was moving in an evolutionary direction. As historian Jacques Barzun explained in his magnum opus, *From Dawn to Decadence*, science had been advancing "a bold hypothesis based on the comparative study of animal forms: evolution."² Thus, when Darwin published *Origin*, it was not so much the idea of evolution that was new, but his mechanism for it, natural selection. "Darwin proposed a purely mechanistic operation," Barzun states, that "made the old idea of evolution fit under physics by means of the idea of Natural Selection."³ Worth noting here as well, is Darwin's use of the phrase "favoured races" in his subtitle. Barzun explains that in using this phrase, Darwin was simply "referring to the varieties of any

animal species. But another group of scientists and publicists, using the same words, meant specifically varieties of men."⁴

This brings us to the connections between Darwinism as a scientific paradigm and racism as a social system and way of thinking. Barzun notes:

The 19th century was the heyday of physical anthropology, which divided mankind into three or more races. It was taken for an exact science in spite of its conflicting statements, and it was also the playground of historians, social theorists, and politicians.... Not all who argued about race... believed the same solemn fictions, but almost all educated westerners believed in the root idea that race



A. K. Punta Arenas, de Magallanes - Chile.

some sort of exotic human. Another example was Krao, who was put on display in the 1880s as living proof of the link between man and monkey. Krao merely suffered from hypertrichosis, a rare condition that leads to the overproduction of hair on the body. Such shows were more than just a fringe curiosity or historical oddity; they were gaining purchase as justifications for racial hierarchy, and they began to take on even more sinister forms at the great temples to human progress known as the World's Fairs. In fact, these global events were frequently designed around scientific racism and evolution.

In 1893, Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition in celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World. At the center of the massive complex was the "White City," with stately buildings illuminated by electric light. But on the fringes of the fair were exhibits displaying non-white peoples. Perhaps most revealing was "an exhibit featuring sixty-nine Fon, black African people colonized by the French. Onlookers gawked at these human beings, and one journalist remarked on their 'barbaric ugliness.'" Black leaders like Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells decried this blatant display of "racial hierarchy."⁷

But such displays continued, nay, intensified. Eight years later, the entire 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (the fair where President William McKinley was assassinated) exuded the social Darwinist mood. Central areas and buildings highlighted the accomplishments of whites, while the fringes of the fair hosted exhibits like "Darkest Africa," in which indigenous people were presented as backwards curiosities or evolutionary inferiors.⁸

For much more on this memory-holed era of racist ideology masquerading as science, see John West's documentary, *Human*

Zoos: America's Forgotten History of Scientific Racism (available on YouTube). *Human Zoos* draws special attention to the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, where thousands of indigenous people from all over the world were imported and displayed as evidence for human evolution, with whites presented as the pinnacle. Perhaps most offensive is the story of Ota Benga, an African pygmy who was placed in an exhibit in the Bronx Zoo. Hundreds of thousands of zoo-goers came to see the man on display. Clergy especially protested the spectacle, but zoo and government official ignored them.

Despite his eventual release later that year, within a decade, Ota Benga was found dead by suicide. While the era of human zoos came to a close, the documentary also draws attention to the eugenics movement that grew to prominence in that era, with countless Americans undergoing compulsory sterilization. Many states passed sterilization bills and created eugenics programs and boards which were discontinued more recently than we'd like to admit.

These are the dark places to which man goes when he views himself as just material, a mere brute struggling to survive. Such sordid parts of our past remind us



Ota Benga, Bronx Zoo, 1906

that we must never give up on the dignity of each human being, for each human being is made in the image of God. ☉

Notes

1. The term first appears in the 1869 edition. "Survival of the Fittest," *Britannica* (Jan. 29, 2025).
2. Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 1500 to the Present...500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (2001), 502, 455.
3. *Ibid.*, 570–571.
4. *Ibid.*, 577.
5. *Ibid.*, 577–579.
6. *Ibid.*, 571–572.
7. Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (2019), 111.
8. "Murder at the Fair: The Assassination of President McKinley," directed by Joe Berlinger (2006: *The History Channel*), DVD.

The Monogamy Miracle

Marriage & the Founding of Democratic Self-Governance

by Nicole M. King

A study just released out of Australia claims to find that polyamorous and monogamous relationships are equally satisfying. The study is actually a literature review examining 35 research papers. “Across a number of populations, consistent evidence was found to indicate that monogamous and non-monogamous individuals experience equal levels of relationship and sexual satisfaction,” the authors report. They speculate that greater openness and communication, as well as the ability “to have a wide variety of needs met” by various partners, might be factors in the participants’ relationship satisfaction.

I remain skeptical, in part due to research design. Data was self-reported, and the researchers admit, “the majority of participants included in this review were recruited via social networks and online snow-ball sampling and were therefore not representative of the population in which they were drawn.” They continue, “it has been hypothesized that non-monogamous participants who self-select into studies are open to sharing their experiences and may therefore be less likely to have had negative experiences.” In other words, the data comes from those likely already highly satisfied with their relationships.

The second source of my skepticism is history. Literally all of human history bears evidence that polyandry, polygyny, and other forms of partner sharing are associated with abuse, subjugation, and violence on a truly massive scale. (And to be clear, polyandry—a woman having multiple husbands—is extremely rare. One study of pre-industrial societies found that only 0.5 percent permitted polyandry.¹ So much for female sexual empowerment.)

Polygamy, Slavery & Violence

The violence characterizing such polygamous societies is part of the argument of *Sex and the Citizen*, by Conn Carroll. Carroll, currently the commentary editor for the *Washington Examiner*, was formerly the communications director for Utah Senator Mike Lee.

and importance of our associational life—namely our families, communities, workplaces, and religious congregations.”² Carroll had always had a vague awareness that marriage was better for everyone involved, he writes, but he never appreciated the overwhelming depth and conclusiveness of the research until this new assignment.

Furthermore, he reports, the “monogamy isn’t natural” argument is pure bunk. Carroll, writing from a purely secular perspective, traces the development of monogamy all the way back to apes and then observes as it is carried into early hunter-gatherer societies. For early peoples, who literally carried all their worldly possessions from one spot to the next, having more than one spouse simply wasn’t feasible. Only the development of agriculture allowed a man to amass enough wealth to support more than one woman. The real change came with war and slavery. When one people defeated another and then transported the conquered people back home as slaves, they could also kill all the men and keep the women for themselves. And they did.

Carroll then traces the practice of polygamy over several millennia and continents, including early Mesopotamian peoples, the Romans, Asian peoples, the Vikings and other barbarian tribes, and finally to the Americas with the Aztecs and Mayans. The similarity in these stories is startling. Each of



While Carroll was serving in that role, Senator Lee created the Social Capital Project. The Project’s goal was to “investigate the evolving nature, quality,



these civilizations was ruled by a powerful few, who brutally enslaved other peoples, taking thousands of concubines as a means to solidify their power and grow personal wealth. As a stunning illustration, consider Genghis Khan, who produced so many children with thousands of women that roughly eight percent of modern Central Asian men can trace their lineage directly back to him.³

Math tells us that if there are roughly as many men as women in the world, and if the richest and most powerful men were taking several wives, then at the bottom you're going to find a lot of young men unable to get a wife. Notably, skeletal evidence from Viking longships shows that most of these marauding Norsemen were between the ages of 18 and 25. A recent DNA analysis of modern Icelanders shows that while 80 percent of the men who founded Iceland were Scandinavian, over half the women were Celtic. In other words, hordes of those Vikings had stolen wives from other lands and then sailed on to Iceland.⁴

Sexual servitude, rape, murder, and other forms of torture and bloodshed were all parts of these stories.

The Christian Difference

So what changed? How did we transition from powerful and bloody oligarchies founded on nonconsensual relationships, including slavery, to the modern standard of monogamous households and representative government?

One word: Christianity.

Carroll finds what many others have found before him—including perhaps most famously Rodney

Stark in *The Rise of Christianity*. The Church was truly radical in its protection of women, the poor, the sick, and others less fortunate. And these profound individual protections, he argues, laid the foundation for democratically governed societies. For the first time in human history, a man was expected to marry one wife, remain faithful to her, love her even, and take care of her and her children. He was to be fair to his household, including slaves (and eventually, Christianity's emphasis on true human equality led to the abolition of slavery). He was to treat others as he himself wanted to be treated, lay down his life for a friend, and sacrifice his own desires for the good of his family, his church, and his community.

The modern (Marxist) line goes something like this: "Marriage is an institution created by men and the church to subjugate woman and take her earning potential for himself." But this couldn't be further from the truth. Before Christianity, polygamy was the norm, and it held no protections for women. There was almost no concept of a man's faithfulness to his wife; unless he slept with another man's wife, he would face no consequences for adultery. Sleeping with slaves, concubines, prostitutes—all were licit. For a woman, however, unfaithfulness to her husband in any form was mostly punishable by death. Her children, likewise, lived or died by her husband's decree.

But the church ended all of that, and in so doing, created a world in which "the least of these" were protected. This was the foundation upon which stable, monogamous households began to blossom and bear fruit (i.e., children), while wealthy polygamous households failed to thrive in spite of all of the sex that seemed to be happening. This was the foundation for the guilds, and then some types of limited government, and finally, full-fledged representative government. You cannot have democracy without monogamy, Carroll argues.

So what do we make of research which seems to find "polyamorous" households are doing just fine? We can recognize, first, that the self-selected and self-reported nature of this research leaves much wanting. We can also recognize that, human sexuality and human jealousy being what they are, these arrangements are unlikely to represent more than a small blip in modern history. And we can appreciate the record of history. Far from being oppressive, chauvinist, or elitist, the biblical laws are the best tools we have for channeling the power of human sexuality into proper, fruitful, harmonious ends. ☺

Notes

1. Rosemary L. Hopcroft, "The Problem With Polyamory: A Social Scientific View," Institute for Family Studies (Feb. 7, 2024).
2. Conn Carroll, *Sex and the Citizen: How the Assault on Marriage Is Destroying Democracy* (2024).
3. *Ibid.*, 61.
4. *Ibid.*, 59.

Inhuman Designs

Eugenics Old & New

by Bryan Just

To most 21st-century ears, “eugenics” is a dreadful word, calling to mind racism, sterilization, and the horrors of Nazi extermination programs. We would like to think that society has moved on from eugenics, but the truth is we have only abandoned the term, not the underlying ethos. Many developments we see today are implicitly eugenic; some go so far as to promote a new eugenics to ensure the future of humanity.

Eugenics Comes to America

The “science” of eugenics originated with the work of Francis Galton, a 19th-century British anthropologist and cousin of Charles Darwin. Its meaning is “good in birth,” and its origin traces directly back to Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. Discomfited by the randomness of natural selection, scientists like Galton sought ways to take control of human evolution by applying principles used in animal breeding to produce “better” humans.

In the U.S., eugenics gained popularity in the late 19th–early 20th century. According to the tenets of eugenics, most of society’s problems, including poverty, criminality, alcoholism, sexual deviance, certain diseases, and “feeble-mindedness”—a catch-all term that included mental illness, low intelligence, and diseases such as epilepsy—were caused by inferior genes. To certain moral reformers the imperative was clear: the problems of poverty and vice could be solved by improving the human gene pool. Simply aiding individuals who were of lower intelligence or trapped in poverty was not good enough, it was thought, as these efforts did not get to the root of the problem—they treated symptoms rather than the underlying cause, which was defective genes.

This tied in quite nicely with the era’s push for “scientific philanthropy”: applying the cutting-edge findings of contemporary science to charity work in order to be as efficient as possible in helping the poor and sick. What could be more efficient than eugenics, which promised to end poverty, disease,



and criminality by improving the gene pool such that charity work would

become unnecessary?

The American eugenics movement applied both positive and negative eugenics. *Negative* eugenics referred to preventing the “wrong” types of people from reproducing, such as through requiring a health certificate before two people could marry. These became popular in many states, including Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. More extreme measures included sterilizing criminals, the infirm, racial minorities, or the feeble-minded—anyone deemed a “threat” to the gene pool. Following the 1927 Supreme Court case *Buck v. Bell*, which upheld the right of states to sterilize individuals deemed unfit for reproduction, an estimated 70,000 Americans were forcibly sterilized.

Positive eugenics, on the other hand, encouraged the “right” types of people to marry and have children. In the 1920s, parents could enter their children in Better Baby competitions, where they would be judged and ranked to see which family had produced the “best” children. Pastors were enlisted to spread the message of eugenics in their congregations, and the American Eugenics Society even sponsored eugenic sermon contests.

Though eugenics was popular, it was not universally supported. Many, including evangelical Christians and Catholics, opposed eugenicists’ efforts to control human evolution as immoral and perhaps impossible. Eugenics, and the social Darwinism that lay behind it, became a key point of opposition in the fight against Darwinism and the theory of evolution more generally.



Carrie Buck (left), involuntarily sterilized in 1927

Eugenics, Scopes & “Scientific Breeding” of Humans

Concerns over eugenics and social Darwinism were at least partially responsible for the 1925 passage of the Butler Act in Tennessee, which prevented teaching human evolution in schools receiving public funds. Unlike neighboring Virginia, Tennessee had resisted eugenics and refused to pass compulsory sterilization

***A Civic Biology* explicitly promoted eugenics, positing that “it is not unfair to ask if the health and vigor of future generations . . . might not be improved by applying to them the laws of selection.” This was of huge concern to William Jennings Bryan.**

laws. Tennesseans were suspicious of progressives and recognized that, as country people, many of them would have been grouped among those the eugenicists wanted to sterilize. The Butler Act was, at least in part, an attempt to curb the pernicious ideas of eugenics and social Darwinism.

It is largely unacknowledged that the textbook used by Scopes, George William Hunter’s *A Civic*

Biology, did not just teach evolution, but also social Darwinism and eugenics. It divided humanity into five groups and claimed that the Caucasians were the “highest type of all.” It described families with a history of sexual immorality, illness, and feeble-mindedness as “parasites” who “do harm to others by corrupting, stealing, and spreading disease,” while also being a drain on public resources. The author’s proposed solution is chilling:

If such people were lower animals, we would probably kill them off to prevent them from spreading. Humanity will not allow this, but we do have the remedy of separating the sexes in asylums or other places and in various ways preventing intermarriage and the possibilities of perpetuating such a low and degenerate race.

The textbook explicitly promoted eugenics, positing that “it is not unfair to ask if the health and vigor of future generations . . . might not be improved by applying to them the laws of selection.”

This was of huge concern to William Jennings Bryan, prosecutor at the *Scopes* trial. Bryan thought that Darwinian evolution was not just contradictory to the Bible but a threat to public morality because of the way it promoted the elimination of the weak. In a speech Bryan intended to give at the trial but that was not published until after his death, he lamented that

Darwin reveals the barbarous sentiment that runs through evolution and dwarfs the moral nature of those who become obsessed with it.... Darwin speaks with approval of the savage custom of eliminating the weak so that only the strong will survive, and complains that “we civilized men do our utmost to check the process of elimination.” How inhuman such a doctrine as this!¹

Bryan condemned evolution as having only one method for improving humanity: “scientific breeding, a system under which a few supposedly superior intellects, self-appointed, would direct the mating and the movements of the mass of mankind—an impossible system!”²

Our understanding of the *Scopes* trial is incomplete if we fail to recognize its connections to eugenics. There was very real fear about this dehumanizing

system of thought, which saw its logical conclusion reached in the Nazi extermination programs. Fortunately, eugenics fell out of favor in the U.S. before it went down the same path. Western horror at the Nazis' embrace of eugenics further discouraged its pursuit for several decades.

Eugenics Today

Today, however, eugenics is being quietly, or sometimes not so quietly, revived. It does not look exactly the same; few would argue for compulsory sterilization. And yet, through birth control, abortion, and prenatal genetic testing, as well as commercialized IVF and other reproductive technologies, our society continues to attempt human improvement through the elimination of the weak.

Birth control is frequently put forth as a method of poverty reduction. Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, wrote that birth control "is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or those who will become defectives."³ Today, many claim that the best way to lift families out of poverty, both in the U.S. and globally, is to enable them to stop having children, whether through birth control or abortion on demand. Though it's never said out loud, the implication is that it is better not to exist than to be born into poverty. Since poverty disproportionality affects minorities in the U.S., the push for poverty reduction has at times taken on racist undertones. Advocates rarely go so far as to say that birth control or abortion should be mandatory, but their approach is still essentially eugenic: attempting to improve society through limiting the reproduction of the "lower" classes.

Another commonly accepted practice that is essentially eugenic is the use of genetic testing. Couples pursuing IVF are encouraged to eliminate any embryo with a genetic defect. Even when children are conceived naturally, prenatal screening is frequently used to identify and abort children with unwanted conditions such as Down syndrome. In Iceland, for example, nearly all Down syndrome diagnoses end in abortion.

If genetic testing leads to a negative eugenics of preventing births of those with disabilities, there are those who support positive eugenics as well. Helping people create better, "designer" babies is a matter of course with IVF, which frequently encourages prospective parents to try to select for certain desirable traits in the embryos created during the process. This push is becoming more explicit as advanced genetic tests designed to rank embryos become ever more common.

Some have taken eugenics even further. Many in the pronatalist movement, concerned about declining fertility rates, have embraced a supposed duty

to have as many of the "best" children possible in order to secure and improve humanity. Perhaps the best-known pronatalist is Elon Musk, who, through extensive use of IVF and surrogacy arrangements, has fathered 14 children with four different mothers.

Just as the early eugenics movement embraced "scientific philanthropy," contemporary pronatalists use terms like "effective altruism" and "long-termism," framing their movements as efficient philanthropic efforts seeking long-term, rather than immediate, solutions. Unsurprisingly, the eugenicists of today are often connected with transhumanism, the idea that humans should make full use of technology to direct the next stage of human evolution toward something more than merely human. The first transhumanists, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Julian Huxley, were both committed eugenicists, as have been many of their heirs, including Nick Bostrom, John Harris, Julian Savulescu, and Jeffrey Epstein.

Pronatalists and transhumanists reject the coercive and at times murderous methods of the early eugenicists. And yet, they are fully on board with the aims of guiding evolution for societal improvement. Their position has been called "hipster eugenics," as it merely takes the attitudes and goals of the old eugenics and dresses them up in contemporary, politically correct packaging.

A Better Way

The idea that we humans can become masters of our own destiny through eugenics has appealed to many people for the past 150 years. And yet, its legacy, from forced sterilization to mass murder to the systematic elimination of the disabled through abortion, has consistently been one of coercion and suffering. The great irony of eugenics is that, in supposedly promoting humanity, it consistently dehumanizes people, ranking them against one another and declaring some unfit to be counted among the human family.

The antidote to eugenic thinking is to shift our gaze away from an abstract, utopian view of the future of humanity and focus instead on the needy who already surround us. All humans—born or unborn, healthy or disabled, rich or poor, law-abiding or criminal—possess inherent dignity and are worthy of our care and compassion. Caring for the lowest among us might not be "efficient," but it is far more human—and can even transform us into better people. ☉

Notes

1. John Thomas Scopes, *The World's Most Famous Court Trial: Tennessee Evolution Case* (The Lawbook Exchange, 2008), 335.
2. Scopes, 334.
3. Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (1920, repr. Project Gutenberg, 2021).



SCOPES IN REVERSE

A History of Evolution Education in U.S. Public Schools by Casey Luskin

S*copes v. State* did not happen by accident. Earlier in 1925, Tennessee's state legislature had passed a "Monkey Law," which criminalized the teaching of evolution. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) then put out an advertisement seeking a teacher willing to test the law and go to trial for having committed the "crime."

It's not clear that Mr. Scopes ever actually taught evolution, but for his defense attorneys working with the ACLU, that wasn't crucial. They wanted to overturn the Monkey Law, arguing that it was unconstitutional to force a teacher to present only one view of humanity's origin—the biblical account of creation.

Eventually Tennessee's high court upheld the law, stating that because the prohibition of evolution did not establish an official government religion, the law did not violate the Constitution. Mr. Scopes's conviction was later overturned on a technicality.

THE *INHERIT THE WIND* STEREOTYPE

Scopes v. State is undoubtedly the most famous court case in the history of the evolution controversy—some have called it the "trial of the century." But the facts behind the case were simple, and its long-term legal import relatively small. So why the infamy?

First, the widely publicized "Monkey Trial" was a colossal cultural moment. When the forces of modernism and the forces of fundamentalism clashed in

a humble courtroom in Dayton, Tennessee, a media circus ensued. New radio technology allowed the entire country to tune in and debate evolution versus creation. Although *Scopes* "lost," the public widely perceived that the pro-evolution side had won after prosecutor and Darwin critic William Jennings Bryan took the witness stand to be examined by lead defense attorney and religious skeptic Clarence Darrow. It didn't go the way you might think (more on that in a moment).

Second, the notoriety of *Scopes* expanded in 1960 when a stage play, *Inherit the Wind*, was turned into a movie loosely based on the trial. The film made no attempt to hide its agenda to depict the Darwin skeptics as ignorant, backwards, close-minded, power-hungry, intolerant, religious bigots, while casting the evolutionists as enlightened, winsome, progressive, freedom-loving scientists and educators. (See "Art in the Service of Falsehood," p. 47.)

The film also distorts history. The character representing Darrow (named "Drummond") easily humiliates the Bryan character (named "Brady") with simple questions about the Genesis creation account that Brady was seemingly unable to answer. In the actual trial, this never happened. Even Stephen Jay Gould, the late Harvard evolutionary scientist, recognized the historical inaccuracies:

The most celebrated moment—when Darrow supposedly forced Bryan to admit that the days of creation might have spanned more than twenty-four hours—represented Bryan's free-will statement about his own and well-known personal beliefs (he had never been a strict biblical literalist), not a fatal inconsistency, exposed by Darrow's relentless questioning.¹

Cultural memory has thus recorded a version of the *Scopes* trial that differs sharply from reality. U.S.

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia called this portrayal the “beloved secular legend of the Monkey Trial,”² while UC Berkeley law professor Phillip Johnson dubbed it the “*Inherit the Wind* stereotype.”

Nonetheless, the film has been shown in countless college and high school classrooms, embedding this stereotype deep into our cultural psyche. It continues to be perpetuated by the media, as the story of enlightened Darwinian scientists and educators humiliating unsophisticated religious rubes riles up emotions and sells newspapers just as well today as it did back in 1925.

THE ROAD TO DOGMATISM

With the hindsight of history we can make a much more sober analysis about the impact of the trial and its subsequent cultural retellings.

The Monkey Law that formed the basis for it was arguably the most misguided attempt by Darwin skeptics to address this issue in public education. Though highly flawed, evolution is a scientific theory, and teaching about scientific theories should never be banned or criminalized. In *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968), the U.S. Supreme Court overruled *Scopes v. State* and guaranteed the legality of teaching evolution. This was good, but it began a line of cases that disallowed challenges to teaching evolution dogmatically, banned alternative views, and ultimately led to where we are today: one-sided teaching of *only* the pro-Darwin viewpoint in most public schools.

One of the most recent cases, *Kitzmiller v. Dover* (see p. 50), ruled in 2005 that intelligent design (ID) is religion and thereby unconstitutional to teach in public schools. Because the decision was issued from the lowest level of the federal courts and was not appealed, it is therefore binding precedent only in the middle district of Pennsylvania. On a national level, the constitutionality of teaching of ID thus remains an unsettled legal question; however, the effect of this case was to fan the flames of intolerance against Darwin skeptics. Even Justice Scalia

once wrote that we now live in an era of “*Scopes-in-reverse*,”³ where viewpoints that do not bow to the evolutionary consensus are suppressed through misguided law and a climate of fear and intimidation.

ID GETS EXPELLED

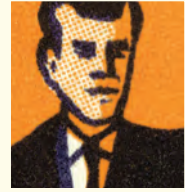
The years during and after the *Dover* case saw an intense spike in persecution of scientists and educators who challenged Darwin and/or supported ID. ID critics in some arenas became so intolerant that in 2007, the Council of Europe—the leading European “human rights” organization—called ID a potential “threat to human rights”!⁴ A 2008 documentary, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, told the story of some of these discrimination cases—but it really only scratched the surface. Some noteworthy incidents include:

- Richard Sternberg was a research biologist at the Smithsonian Institution (SI) until he allowed the publication of a pro-ID scientific paper in the SI’s biology journal in 2004. Though the paper was properly peer-reviewed, he was accused of thought crimes and subsequently lost access to his research space. He was demoted, transferred to a hostile supervisor, and eventually forced to leave. An investigation by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel found it was “clear that a hostile work environment was created with the ultimate goal of forcing you out of the SI.”⁵
- In 2005, the president of the University of Idaho instituted a speech code in which “evolution” was “the only curriculum that is appropriate” for science classes.⁶ This was done in retaliation against a biologist at the university, Scott Minnich, who had just testified in favor of ID as an expert witness in the *Dover* trial.
- In 2009, paleontologist Günter Bechly was a fossil curator at the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart, Germany, when he was asked to oversee the museum’s “Darwin Day” exhibit. He

In *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968), the U.S. Supreme Court overruled *Scopes v. State* and guaranteed the legality of teaching evolution. This was good, but it began a line of cases that disallowed challenges to teaching evolution dogmatically, banned alternative views, and ultimately led to where we are today: one-sided teaching of *only* the pro-Darwin viewpoint in most public schools.



In contrast to the Scopes era, when Darwin critics sought to ban evolution, today leading ID groups like the Discovery Institute argue that evolution *should be taught*—including both its scientific strengths and weaknesses.



began reading books by ID proponents and became convinced that they were right! In 2015, he publicly came out as an ID supporter and subsequently faced a hostile work environment. He recounted that the museum viewed him as “a big threat to the credibility and reputation of the museum” and he was “no longer welcome.” He, too, was forced to resign.⁷

- In 2011, Jerry Coyne, an evolutionary biologist and atheist blogger, stated that “adherence to ID... should be absolute grounds for not hiring a science professor.”⁸ Coyne tried to make good on those threats in 2013, when he collaborated with the Freedom From Religion Foundation to attack Eric Hedin, a physics professor at Ball State University (BSU) who was teaching an interdisciplinary honors seminar on “The Boundaries of Science,” which briefly covered ID. Hedin was eventually barred from further teaching about ID, and BSU’s then-president issued a speech code declaring that ID “is not appropriate content for science courses.”⁹

It may sound like all is bad news, but it isn’t. Isaac Newton taught that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, and sometimes the best thing you can do to spark interest in an idea is to tell students they aren’t allowed to hear about it. So even while some have attempted to suppress ID, its research program has blossomed. (See “ID 3.0: The Scientific Renaissance of Design Research,” p. 42.)

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

There’s even more good news in the educational arena.

In contrast to the Scopes era, when Darwin critics sought to ban evolution, today leading ID groups like the Discovery Institute argue that evolution *should be taught*—including both its scientific strengths and weaknesses.¹⁰ Since 2000, about a dozen states have adopted policies endorsing this approach, with approximately ten having such a policy now on their books.

And what exactly are these weaknesses? To name only a few, students could learn about how:

- random mutation and natural selection struggle to

build many complex biological features;

- the fossil record shows abrupt explosions of new life-forms that contradict Darwinian expectations;

- conflicting DNA evidence has failed to yield a grand “tree of life”;

- evolutionary biology wrongly led many scientists to anticipate that much of our genome is “junk DNA”;

- many scientists readily admit we don’t understand how life could have arisen via chemical processes on the early earth.

Darwin defenders sometimes deny that these weaknesses even exist. During the heat of a curriculum debate in Texas in 2009, leading activist Eugenie Scott declared, “There are no weaknesses in the theory of evolution.” But many scientists disagree. Over 1,200 PhD scientists have signed a statement declaring they “are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life” and that therefore, “Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged.”¹¹

Undoubtedly there will be more court cases and curriculum battles in the future over how to teach evolution. But one outcome is guaranteed: legal edicts won’t change the evidence. And this should give us hope. Despite decades of attempts to suppress the debate, the scientific case for design in nature has grown stronger with each passing year. We should also expect this trend to continue into the future. ☺

Notes

1. Stephen Jay Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (Ballantine, 1999), 137.

2. *Tangipahoa Parish v. Freiler*, 530 U.S. 1251, 1255 (2000).

3. *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578, 634 (1987) (Scalia, dissenting).

4. “The Dangers of Creationism in Education,” (Sep. 17, 2007).

5. “Locked Out, Demoted,” *Free Science*.

6. Timothy P. White, “Letter to the University of Idaho Faculty, Staff and Students,” (Oct. 4, 2005).

7. “Marginalized, Shown the Door,” *Free Science*.

8. Jerry Coyne, “New Antievolution Bills,” *Why Evolution Is True* (Mar. 17, 2011).

9. John G. West, “Ball State President’s Orwellian Attack on Academic Freedom,” (Aug. 1, 2013); Seth Slabaugh, “Ball State President Gora Calls Intelligent Design Religion, Not Science,” *The Star Press* (Jul. 31, 2013).

10. “Discovery Institute’s Science Education Policy.”

11. “A Scientific Dissent from Darwin.”

STILL UNREFUTED

William Jennings Bryan's Key Arguments Against Darwinian Theory

by Rick Townsend

It took the Great War we now call World War I to make William Jennings Bryan get serious about his anti-evolution campaign. As you might imagine, there is a backstory.

Bryan was one of the most famous Americans of the early 20th century. He ran for president as the Democratic Party nominee in 1896, 1900, and 1908, losing all three elections, but gaining a large, loyal constituency that never lost its devotion to him. He was influential in national politics from 1890 until his death in 1925. It is hard for people living in the 21st century to grasp how influential he was and how effectively he advocated for his beliefs.

— THE GREAT COMMONER

Bryan supported causes as varied as women's right to vote, the federal income tax, and regulation of railroads. But he is best remembered for his role in the 1925 *Scopes* trial. His work on *Scopes* was a part of his last campaign—one he thought would be his most important: opposing the teaching of Darwinian evolution to students in public schools and universities.

Bryan was known as “The Great Commoner” because he was able to break down complex issues into terms that the common man could understand. He used personal stories of people he met to frame his intellectual arguments and enhance their effectiveness. He worked hard to become a skilled orator and routinely spoke to thousands of people in the days before microphones and amplification. He was quick on his feet and loved turning hecklers' attacks to his advantage. He also thought independently and used folksy logic with impeccable diction and grammar. Think Ronald Reagan or John F. Kennedy as a communicator. Or perhaps the outside-the-box thinking of Donald Trump, but with complete sentences and eloquent speech. And tact.

Before World War I, Bryan was convinced that Darwinian evolution was a speculative and unproven theory, but he did not push hard against it. He said in a 1913 lecture,

“

I am not yet convinced that man is a lineal descendant of the lower animals. I do not mean to find fault with you if you want to accept the theory; all I mean to say is that while you may trace your ancestry back to the monkey if you find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree without more evidence than has yet been produced.¹

”



Bryan's live-and-let-live attitude changed, however, with the events of the war. From the late 18th to early 20th century, many thought society in general was improving in the age of modernism and technological progress. All of that changed with the barbaric violence of World War I.

For Bryan, the war displayed a danger associated with the prevalence of materialistic thinking associated with Darwin's theory. The beliefs that everything happened by chance and that death determined the most-fit species' survival had led, at least in part, to grotesque violence. Those factors changed Bryan's ambivalence into action. He saw Darwin's theory to be the causal force driving societal decay; it had to be opposed. A 1922 booklet revealed his changed attitude:

“

As the war progressed, I became more and more impressed with the conviction that the German propaganda rested upon a materialistic foundation. I secured the writings of Nietzsche and found in them a defense, made in advance, of all the cruelties and atrocities practiced by the militarists of Germany.²

”

Bryan thus changed his attitude from letting bygones be bygones to direct opposition to the teaching of what he saw as a dangerous force opposing Christianity and its emphasis on peace and reconciliation.

Opposition to teaching evolutionary theory grew out of several lines of reasoning. Bryan opposed the theory on moral, religious, and scientific grounds. The focus here will be on key scientific arguments Bryan made. They have been ridiculed, and they have been ignored, but they are as coherent today as when he made them a century ago. Four specific challenges will be described, along with current scientific evidence showing that his questions still have not been answered. None of these arguments have been refuted, a full century later.

Bryan is typically portrayed by his detractors as egotistical, shallow, and bombastic. As recently as 2023, in a book on the *Scopes* trial, he is introduced as “plump and wiping the sweat off his ample face.”³ This characterization sets the tone for the author's portrayal of Bryan in the worst possible stereotypes. The same negative image emanated from press coverage of the trial, when East Coast newspaper reporters descended on Dayton, Tennessee, to cover the drama. They characterized the town and its people as backwoods yokels, to the delight of their elite, “sophisticated” readers.⁴ The negative stereotypes found their way into the trial itself, exacerbating an already tense situation.⁵

— ARGUMENTS & EVIDENCE

ARGUMENT 1

Origin of Life. Bryan saw this as a major hurdle, one Darwin brushed aside with a rhetorical flourish as he theorized a “warm little pond.” Bryan was not convinced.

“

Those who reject the idea of creation are divided into two schools, some believing that the first germ of life came from another planet and others holding that it was the result of spontaneous generation. Each school answers the arguments advanced by the other, and as they cannot agree with each other, I am not compelled to agree with either.⁶

”

Bryan clearly did not agree that the case was closed on the origin of first life.

• **Status of Current Research:** Origin-of-life research is notoriously difficult. Bryan intuitively understood that scientists in his day were grossly out of touch with these difficulties. Researchers today are no closer than they were in Bryan's day. An essay published in 2016 by the prestigious Royal Society summarized the problems that still exist in this field a century later.

A detailed understanding of [the origin-of-life] process will have to wait until ongoing studies in systems chemistry reveal both the classes of chemical materials and the kinds of chemical pathways that simple replicating systems are able to follow in their drive towards greater complexity and replicative stability.⁷

In other words, we don't have a clue how it happened.

Synthetic organic chemist Dr. James Tour is more direct in his assessment: "Those who think scientists understand the issues of prebiotic chemistry are wholly misinformed. Nobody understands them. Maybe one day we will. But that day is far from today."⁸

ARGUMENT 2

Genetics & Morphology. Little was known about how genetics worked in Bryan's lifetime, but Mendelian genetics had morphed into the neo-Darwinian synthesis incorporating genetic mutation with natural selection. The "neo-Darwinian synthesis" terminology became standard usage after Bryan's passing, but the concepts were being circulated in his lifetime. Bryan didn't buy it and used a watermelon illustration to explain his doubts.

“

I was eating a piece of watermelon some months ago and was struck with its beauty.... One [seed], put into the ground, when warmed by the sun and moistened by the rain, takes off its coat and goes to work; it gathers from somewhere two hundred thousand times its own weight, and forcing this raw material through a tiny stem, constructs a watermelon. It ornaments the outside with a covering of green; inside the green it puts a layer of white, and within the white a core of red, and all through the red it scatters seeds, each one capable of continuing the work of reproduction. Where does that little seed get its tremendous power? Where does it find its coloring matter? How does it collect its flavouring extract? How does it build a watermelon?

Until you can explain a watermelon, do not be too sure that you can set limits to the power of the Almighty and say just what He would do or how He would do it. I cannot explain the watermelon, but I eat it and enjoy it.⁹

”

Bryan's argument was that a watermelon seed contains "power" (which we now know to reside in the genetic code) to build a specific fruit, another watermelon. The structure of the plant and its fruit are the morphology (shape and structure) of the vine that produces the watermelon. And Bryan knew that the process was unexplained.

• **Status of Current Research:** We know today that DNA codes for proteins and regulates many biochemical cellular functions. But the body plan (morphology) of plants and animals remains a mystery to current researchers. What is known is that non-coding regions of the genome are involved in some way, but scientists have yet to crack the code on how it all works. Articles frequently describe the idea that "a deeper understanding of how genetic architecture influences phenotypes ... can help explain" complex features of life.¹⁰



William Jennings Bryan, 1913

FEATURE

But they never get around to showing that such ideas actually *have been* explained. That is because at present, they have not.¹¹

ARGUMENT 3

Chemistry Does Not Explain Evolution. One early idea about nature's ability to generate new complex features was that the chemistry of life naturally tended toward such complex coding. Bryan doubted that was the case. He wrote this comment in his planned closing argument, later published after his death:

“

Chemistry is an insurmountable obstacle in the path of evolution. It is one of the greatest of the sciences; it separates the atoms, isolates them and walks about them, so to speak. If there were in nature a progressive force, an eternal urge, chemistry would find it. But it is not there. All of the ninety-two original elements are separate and distinct; they combine in fixed and permanent proportions. Water is H₂O, as it has been from the beginning. It was here before life appeared and has never changed; neither can it be shown that anything else has materially changed.¹²

”

In short, Bryan said that there was no chemical imperative to life.

• ***Status of Current Research:*** A century later, no chemistry research has ever been shown to move toward a life-defining capability. Those who advocate for a natural, accidental advance in chemical capabilities also admit (in obscure journals and scientific jargon) that chemistry does not “explain the origin of new species or even the origin of new genes. Instead, ‘present theory tacitly assumes the prior existence of the entities whose features it is meant to explain.’”¹³ In other words, chemistry cannot do the heavy lifting of complexifying life and originating new features, just as Bryan claimed. To argue in the way these things are typically explained amounts to circular reasoning.

ARGUMENT 4

No Defin tive Proof of Origin of Any New Species. Bryan discussed the problem of an organism's deviating from the tendency toward stasis—the continuity of features and body plans found in previous generations of a species. He suggested that no evidence had been presented to validate the claim of new species arising naturally. He cited a letter in which an acquaintance had claimed that “nearly all scientists seemed to accept Darwinism.”¹⁴ Bryan countered that “many evolutionists adhere to Darwin's conclusions while discarding his explanations.... [They] accept the line of descent which [Darwin] suggested *without any explanation whatever* to support it.”¹⁵ To paraphrase, Bryan said there was no convincing evidence to support Darwin's theory of species arising through materialistic, undirected means.

• ***Status of Current Research:*** A 2016 meeting of the Royal Academy in London addressed the lack of progress the scientific community had made in validating the mechanisms of microevolution leading to macroevolutionary change, in accordance with the modern synthesis. (The term “modern synthesis” became scientific common parlance in the 1940s. It carries the same meaning as “neo-Darwinian synthesis,” but typically uses more technical language, such that it sounds more authoritative.) Candid passages are occasionally buried deep within carefully phrased qualifications typical of journal articles, but several admissions appear in the keynote address from that meeting. They point to a lack of clear and convincing evidence that Darwin's theoretical framework can do the heavy lifting

required to form new species. Conference leader Gerd Müller, a respected evolutionary biologist, summarized the problem in writing: “The real issue is that genetic evolution alone has been found insufficient for an adequate causal explanation of all forms of phenotypic complexity, not only of something vaguely termed ‘macroevolution.’”¹⁶ In layman’s language, *no one knows how evolutionary processes resulted in species change*. Nonetheless, Müller assures his readers that natural processes did indeed accomplish speciation; we just don’t yet know how. So he proposed a new combination of features working together in a yet-to-be-discovered harmony of creative work that is now called the “extended evolutionary synthesis.”

— CASE RESTED

In other words, in this area, as well as in the others cited, Bryan was correct. A century later, Bryan’s evidential intuition proved basically correct, and it seems he was ahead of his time in all of these issues. Maybe the Eastern press had him all wrong, after all. ☉

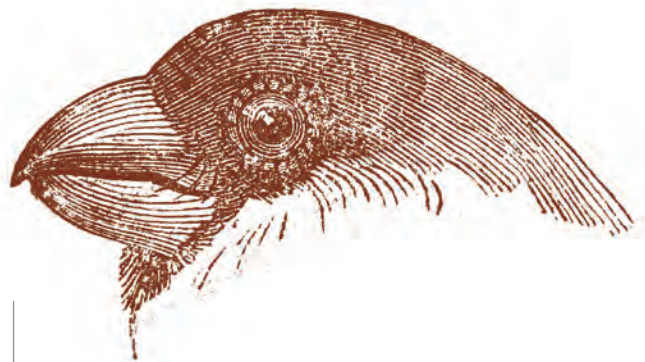
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STILL UNEXPLAINED

Third Way Evolution & the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis by Casey Luskin

In the decades following *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin’s vision of evolution driven by natural selection acting upon random variations—“Darwinism”—gradually infiltrated biology. Then, in the first half of the 20th century, Darwinism incorporated new discoveries about chromosomes,



Mendelian inheritance, genetics, and DNA, which led to the “neo-Darwinian” model of evolution, sometimes called the “modern synthesis.”

Things were generally peachy until the late 20th/early 21st century, when some biologists began to acknowledge that neo-Darwinism had a glaring explanatory deficit: the origin of biological novelty. Neo-Darwinism is well-suited for explaining small-scale changes in gene frequencies due to changing selection pressures—“microevolution”—but is ill-suited to account for the origin of new complex biological features

like wings, eyes, or body plans—“macroevolution.” For growing numbers of biologists, Darwin’s quest to explain the “origin of species” remained unresolved, leading to the oft-quoted phrase that the modern synthesis “explained the *survival* of the fittest, but not the *arrival* of the fittest.

Over the past few decades, evolutionary biologists have increasingly broken with neo-Darwinism and have begun coalescing around alternative evolutionary models. Sometimes called the “Extended Evolutionary Synthesis” (EES) or “Third Way” evolution, these models are ultimately entirely blind, materialistic accounts of the history of life that reject intelligent design (ID). But there are some positives.



A SMORGASBORD OF ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

In my experience, because they have often faced mistreatment and censorship at the hands of neo-Darwinists, Third Way evolutionists tend to be far more open to dialogue, pro-free speech, and candid about weaknesses in evolutionary models. Last year, Oxford University biologist Denis Noble, who founded TheThirdWayofEvolution.com, declared, “Neo-Darwinism is dead,”¹ and University of Chicago biologist James Shapiro acknowledged that “The ID argument has a valid point with regard to the explanatory limits of neo-Darwinism.”² In another instance, leading EES proponents admitted in *Nature* that the field of evolutionary biology uses unhealthy practices to keep intelligent design at bay:

The mere mention of the EES often evokes an emotional, even hostile, reaction among evolutionary biologists. Too often, vital discussions descend into acrimony, with accusations of muddle or misrepresentation. Perhaps haunted by the spectre of intelligent design, evolutionary biologists wish to show a united front to those hostile to science.³

But anyone hoping Third Way evolutionists will unify around some clear, simple idea that can serve as an alternative to Darwin’s vision of “evolution by natural selection” is going to be sorely disappointed. Not only do Third Way evolutionists reject ID, but they will usually officially say their models incorporate the centrality of natural selection. Where they often depart from neo-Darwinism is in rejecting claims that mutations are

random and that evolution is undirected or “purposeless.” Ultimately, what Third Way evolutionists offer is a smorgasbord of ideas intended to supplement or buffer natural selection in the quest to explain evolution in totally materialistic terms. These include:

- Evolutionary developmental biology (evo-devo), where mutations that occur early in development might have great effects downstream that can greatly change the body plan. Think saltations (abrupt changes) producing hopeful monsters. But the evidence shows that early developmental mutations kill embryos before they can produce new body plans.
- Natural genetic engineering, where organisms increase mutation rates or target sections of their genome with transposable elements in response to stress, in blind hope that something useful might evolve.
- Neutral evolution, where biologists actually do de-emphasize the role of natural selection in favor of the view that random “neutral” changes build biological complexity ... somehow.
- Neo-Lamarckian inheritance, where epigenetic changes acquired during an organism’s lifetime can be passed on to offspring
- Horizontal gene transfer, where organisms can receive genes from neighbors, rather than only from parents.
- Symbiosis, where new types of organisms evolve by cooperation rather than competition.
- Niche construction and teleonomy, where organisms purposefully reshape their environments.



STILL NO ENCHILADA

There are other ideas too, and ID theorists see many of them as interesting proposals that may have limited explanatory capacity. For example, natural genetic engineering and epigenetic changes suggest pre-programmed mechanisms where organisms appear intelligently designed to respond to environmental cues and “evolve” within limits. But ultimately, the big enchilada—the origin of new complex biological features—remains just as unexplained by the EES as it was under neo-Darwinism. •

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RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW

Racism, Eugenics & Other Bad Ideas from the Intellectual Descendants of Darwin

by Bob Perry

ON JULY 21, 1925,

John Scopes was found guilty of teaching Darwinian evolution in a state-funded high school in Dayton, Tennessee. He was fined \$100. Scopes had ostensibly lost his battle with the state. But the side he represented was winning the greater war. I don't say that because Scopes's verdict was later overturned on a technicality. My contention is that the ideology he helped unleash on the public has been the source of more human oppression, suffering, and death than anyone in that Dayton courtroom could have imagined.

As it turned out, there was some question as to whether Scopes had ever actually taught evolution. But he agreed to claim that he had for a greater purpose—to ignite a national debate and deliberately attract attention to the fight. And it worked. The

real tragedy of the Scopes trial was not that it in some way authorized the teaching of evolution, but that it cemented in the public mind acceptance of a deeper pathology. It popularized the idea that there was a war between science and religion and that religion was

the losing side. In other words, it was successful at mainstreaming scientific materialism. At its core, a materialist mindset removes all restraint from the human tendency to misuse science. Darwinism was just the idea that made it seem reasonable, and the *Scopes* trial made it go viral.

Both during and after the trial, the news media, led in large part by H. L. Mencken, mocked prosecutor William Jennings Bryan and his Christian faith. At one point, Mencken put it this way:

One somehow pities him, despite his so palpable imbecilities.... But let no one, laughing at him, underestimate the magic that lies in his black, malignant eye, his frayed but still eloquent voice. He can shake and inflame these poor

**SANGER, GALTON, STODDARD, GRANT,
and THE NAZIS are all connected to the same
monster—a strand of dehumanization and
death that runs from the materialist Greek
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chambers of Dachau and stainless-steel
killing fields of Planned Parenthood.**

ignoramus as no other man
among us.¹

The press played along, describing the people of rural Tennessee as backward “boobs and bigots,” “peasants,” “yokels,” and “morons” who were hopelessly behind the times. The descriptions reflect the tendency of those defending science’s all-encompassing reach to abhor the “other.” History shows that those who label opponents of the “enlightened, scientific elite” in such degrading ways aren’t just trying to get laughs. Their dehumanizing bent is not a byproduct of their scientific materialism; it is one of its most prominent features. And it has a way of leading to horrific ends.

A CIVIC BIOLOGY

Hidden behind the mythology and revisionist history of the “Monkey Trial” is a centerpiece that seems to have gotten lost in all the noise: the textbook from which Scopes was teaching, *A Civic Biology*. John G. West notes that

If any teacher in America tried to teach Evolution using *A Civic Biology* today, the teacher would be stopped just as surely as John Scopes, and not merely because the book’s science is outdated.... The goal was to equip students to be good citizens, and it is the social and political agenda of the textbook that most dates it. For example, the textbook enlists evolutionary science to justify white supremacy.... Even more pronounced than the book’s racism is its advocacy of eugenics in the chapter on “Heredity and Variation.”²

Racism and eugenics are evil twins of the same pernicious source, spawn of thinking that originated long before *Scopes* and that continues to this day to rot everything it touches. Darwinian evolution has been used to justify both. But if Darwinism is about descent with modification, it has failed miserably at modifying the materialist mindset that has claimed millions of victims by brutalizing those whom the powerful consider “unfit.” History is replete with examples.

EUGENICS, RACISM & HITLER’S BIBLE

In 1921, Margaret Sanger organized the first American Birth Control Conference in New York City. Sanger’s overt racism and advocacy of eugenics were in perfect keeping with *A Civic Biology*.³ Here is Sanger in her own words:

The government of the United States deliberately encourages and even makes necessary by its laws that breeding—with a breakneck rapidity—of idiots, defectives, diseased, feeble-minded, and criminal classes.... Year by year more money is expended ... to maintain an increasing race of morons which threaten the very foundations of our civilization.⁴

Sanger was one of the dehumanizers’ greatest champions. She believed that the way to protect “the very foundations of our civilization” was to choke off the upcoming glut of “morons” by whatever means necessary. Her primary means of choice was “birth control,” a term she coined.

Sanger was greatly influenced by Havelock Ellis, a British lover she took while in self-imposed exile to England to escape prosecution for sexual deviancy laws she had broken in New York City. Ellis, the architect of England's sexual revolution, had been mentored by a man named Francis Galton. Galton's family was intertwined with another British family through their common memberships in various elite academic and scientific societies. But the two families weren't just connected socially; they were related through a common grandfather named Erasmus Darwin. Francis Galton was Charles Darwin's half-cousin. Galton was also the man who coined the term "eugenics," which he defined as:

applicable to men, brutes, and plants. We greatly want a brief word to express the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had.⁵

Galton's eugenics was nothing but a modernized application of Thomas Malthus's contention that there were just too many people in the world and that this "problem" could be addressed by actively eliminating undesirables:

If we dread the too frequent visitation of the horrid form of famine, we should sedulously encourage the other forms of destruction, which we compel nature to use. Instead of recommending cleanliness to the poor, we should encourage contrary habits. In our towns we

should make the streets narrower, crowd more people in the houses, and court the return of the plague.⁶

Returning to Margaret Sanger, make no mistake. When she touted her ideas about eliminating "defective" humans, she was not talking only about the poor and uneducated. She also specifically sought "the gradual suppression, elimination, and eventual extinction of defective stocks, those human weeds which threaten the blossoming of the finest flowers of American civilization."⁷ That was the goal of "The Negro Project," which she launched in 1939.

One of the board members of that project was Lothrop Stoddard, a high official of the Massachusetts Ku Klux Klan, whose 1920 book, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, applied eugenics to what he called "scientific racism." Another friend, advisor, and co-advocate for scientific racism with Sanger was Madison Grant. Grant was instrumental in placing an African man, Ota Benga, in a cage alongside apes and chimps in 1906 at the Bronx Zoo to "demonstrate evolution."⁸

Darwinian connections to eugenics and racism didn't end with Sanger or the men who shared and promoted the same ideas. When she founded the American Birth Control League (eventually renamed Planned Parenthood), Sanger shared offices in New York

City with the American Eugenics Society and invited eugenicists from around the world to publish articles in her magazine, "Birth Control Review." Stoddard and Grant not only wrote for the magazine but also published their own books on the subjects. Those books reached readers across the Atlantic Ocean. Stoddard's *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under-Man* introduced the term "under-man" into certain German leaders' conception of race. For that reason, Stoddard was later considered one of the "spiritual fathers" of Nazi Germany. And Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History* was also well received. Originally written in 1916, Nazi leaders ordered it reprinted when they came to power. None other than Adolf Hitler said he considered "this book [to be] my Bible."⁹

DARWIN'S DEMON

Pinpointing Charles Darwin as the God-hating atheist responsible for all this is too easy. Charity demands that we consider the whole story. There is some evidence that Darwin saw his theory as being compatible with Christian theism. After all, he repeatedly made a point of referring to the "Creator" and "creation" in his writings, denying that his analyses should shock anyone's religious views. And he ended every edition

MARGARET SANGER was one of the dehumanizers' greatest champions. She believed that the way to protect "the very foundations of our civilization" was to choke off THE UPCOMING GLUT OF "MORONS" by whatever means necessary.

of his infamous *Origin* published after 1860 with this line: "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one."¹⁰

We can also have empathy for the grief he suffered after losing his 10-year-old daughter to scarlet fever. Her death hung over him for the rest of his life, overwhelming him with the most common and debilitating question human beings have asked, "How could a good God allow this?" Maybe, in Darwin's mind, his theory was not so much an attempt to eliminate God altogether, but to let him off the hook as the Designer responsible for a world where seemingly cruel things happen.

Charity allows that we can extend Darwin the man some grace, even as we reject his conclusions. But what we cannot do in good conscience is deny that the philosophical foundation on which his theory was based gave philosophical cover to his intellectual descendants. And that is what allowed them to carry out some of the most diabolically evil practices in human history.

HEADS OF THE HYDRA

Sanger, Galton, Stoddard, Grant, and the Nazis are all connected to the same monster—a strand of dehumanization and death that runs from the materialist Greek philosophers, through the work of Charles Darwin, and straight into the gas chambers of Dachau and stainless-steel killing fields of Planned Parenthood. Darwinian evolution, racism, and eugenics are all simply different heads of materialism's hydra. Darwin let that monster out of its cage, and 127 years later another Englishman, Richard Dawkins, triumphantly thanked him for "[making] it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."¹¹

But if racism and eugenics weren't enough, the monster

continues to grow heads. Today, we have "thought leaders" like Yuval Harari who extrapolate science to assure us that human rights are just an illusion:

The idea of equality is inextricably intertwined with the idea of creation.... "Created equal" should therefore be translated into "evolved differently." Just as people were never created, neither, according to the science of biology, is there a "Creator" who "endows" them with anything. There is only a blind evolutionary process, devoid of any purpose, leading to the birth of individuals ... there are no such things as rights in biology. There are only organs, abilities, and characteristics.¹²

From there, it's an easy path to justify all forms of "mercy killing" as ways to end the life of an evolved organism with "dignity." Or, if death isn't your thing, the similarly motivated transhumanists promise immortality if you're willing to wait in cryogenic timeout until technology permits them to upload your brain into "the cloud" to be downloaded into a mechanical host.

SOULLESS SCIENCE

Scopes was the cultural moment that gave the monster a public platform. And once its ideology

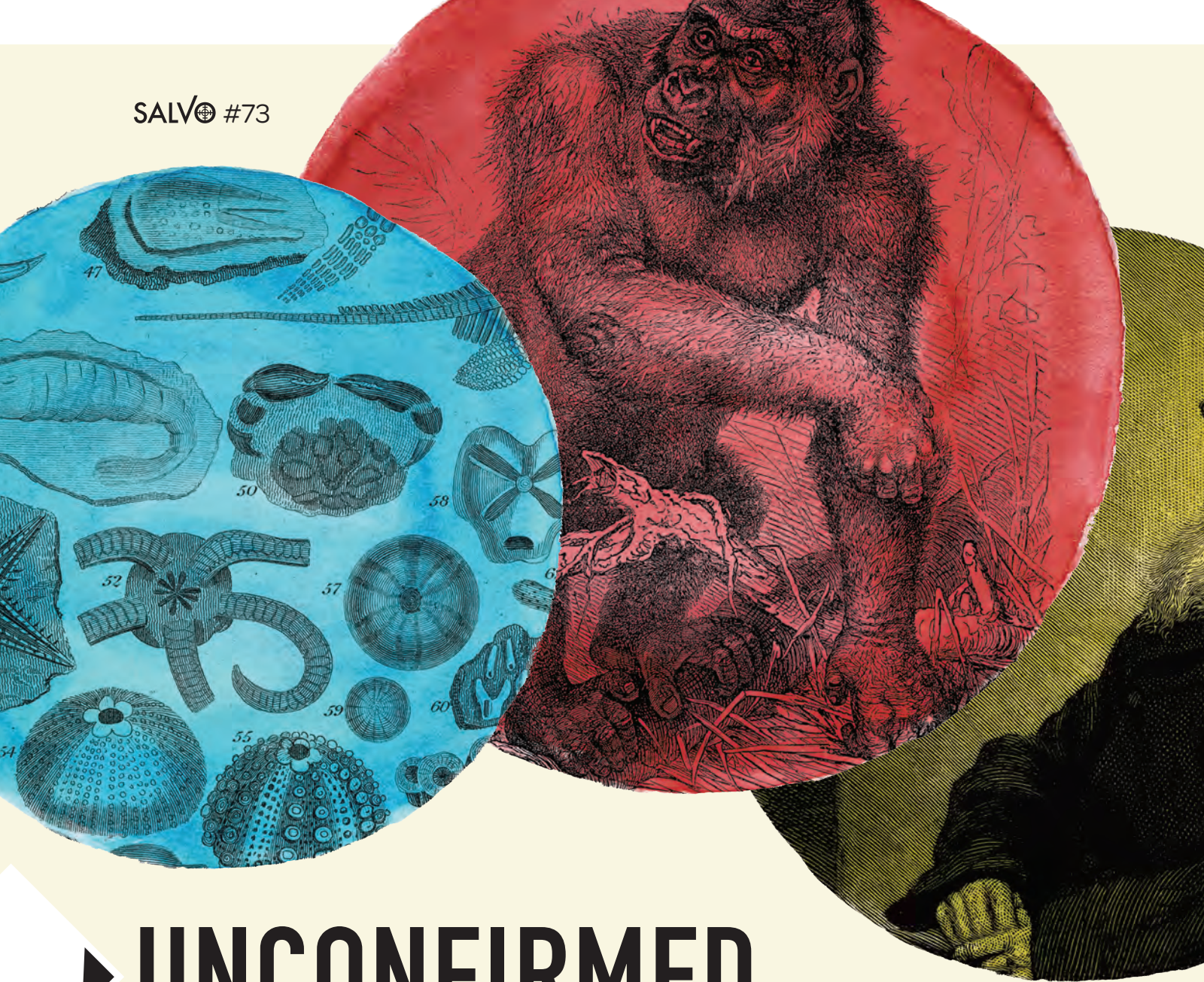
took root, it promised to finally remove the scourge of religious irrationality from society's thinking and usher in the blessings and triumphs of scientific materialism. After the Dayton showdown in the so-called "war between science and religion," our post-Scopes culture never looked back. Today, it embraces the monster and chastises any moronic rube who refuses to blindly "trust the science."

Most who champion the methods and goals of scientific materialism either don't understand, or don't have the courage to acknowledge, that the ideology they worship is loveless because it reduces love to a series of chemical reactions; that it is purposeless because it renders final causes a mirage; that it is irrational and deterministic because it dismisses consciousness and free will as illusions; and that it is amoral because it offers objective morality no foundation (see p. 58).

Somehow, they smile and nod as rationality, purpose, love, and moral virtue get removed from the human equation, missing the fact that all they have left is power—a power so enchanting it scorns any limitations on its use. The powerful have a world to run, morons, rubes, defectives, yokels, and useless eaters be damned. If there ever were a clearer illustration of the axiom that "ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have victims," it is hard to imagine what it might be. ☹

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► UNCONFIRMED

Darwin's Own Tests Fail to Validate
the Darwinian Model
by Hugh Ross

Charles Darwin's 1859 book *On the Origin of Species* is considered by many to be the beginning of the ongoing creation vs. evolution debate. Surprisingly, the controversy started much earlier, in 50 BC, with the appearance of Lucretius's book, *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things). Darwin's book deserves credit, however, for catapulting the conflict into the public arena. The Scopes Monkey Trial helped popularize the dispute.



What often sparks a heated exchange on the subject is either an evolutionist's claim that biological evolution is a "proven fact" or a creationist's comment that evolution is "just a theory." With such salvos, a needless battle begins—a war of misused and/or misunderstood words.

Seeing that life has become increasingly diverse and complex since it began approximately 3.8 billion years ago, biologists can rightly declare evolution a "proven fact," since the simplest definition of evolution is "observed change over time."

How life originated and progressed from relatively simple to enormously complex remains an ongoing scientific debate between those who attribute the changes to natural processes alone and those who acknowledge the necessity of intelligent causation or supernatural intervention.

People who cast aside evolution as "just a theory" make light of what scientists mean by *theory*. In everyday use it often refers to a guess, but among scientists it means much more. A theory emerges from substantial observations and rigorous testing to offer a reasonable explanation of some physical phenomenon. To use the term as if it means a mere "hunch" is insulting to scientists' integrity.

ATTEMPTS TO TEST THE *HOW*

When Albert Einstein published his theories of relativity, he identified tests that could confirm or deny his theories. Within a few years, several observations did so. To his credit, Darwin also identified tests that could affirm or refute his claim that natural processes can account for all life's changes. Oddly, scientists delayed performing these proposed tests for more than a century.

Darwin noted that according to his naturalistic theory, animals that look most like humans should be most like humans in their intellectual capacity.

Any scientific model's validity is tested by how well the model fares as relevant data and understanding increase. Does the evidence supporting the model grow stronger or weaker?

. . .

Not until 2009 was this hypothesis tested—and shown incorrect. Biologists observed that ravens and crows exhibit far greater intellectual prowess than chimpanzees and monkeys.¹

In his book, *The Descent of Man*, Darwin attributed cognitive differences between human and nonhuman animals to a natural, continuous progression. In a 2008 paper titled "Darwin's Mistake," a team of psychologists reported that humans, alone, manifest the capacity to invent and use symbols in their communication and, thus, to develop abstract thinking and writing.² In the researchers' words, "This symbolic-relational discontinuity [between anatomically modern humans and all other animals] pervades nearly every domain of cognition."³

. . . A survey of the scientific literature reveals that naturalistic models for mass speciation events have grown more problematic.

Only four natural processes are known to produce changes in the morphology, behavior, and genetics of life-forms: natural selection, mutations, gene exchange, and epigenetics. Evolutionists and creationists agree that these four mechanisms can and do generate microevolutionary changes. Naturalists go on to claim that microevolution, given sufficient time, can produce macroevolutionary change.

Macroevolution refers to the emergence of novel organisms, organs, and/or body structures by natural processes alone. Familiar taxonomic ranking purports to show the progression of ongoing change. For example, 16 species of foxes belong to the *Vulpes* genus. These 16 differ in body size, structure, and internal and external organs, enabling them to thrive in a widely diverse range of ecosystems. The next larger taxonomic rank for foxes is the Canidae family, which includes all dogs, wolves, coyotes, jackals, dholes, and foxes. The next rank is the Carnivora order, to which all mammalian carnivores belong. This rank is followed by the class Mammalia for all mammals. All foxes and other creatures included in Mammalia belong to the phylum Chordata, which includes all vertebrates and invertebrates having a hollow dorsal nerve cord.

One intractable problem for the naturalistic view arises from the discovery that in many instances, such as in the Avalon and Cambrian explosions, enormous macroevolutionary changes occurred rapidly; then, later, over long time spans, mere microevolutionary changes occurred. Diversification of phyla occurred first and in no time, while diversification of species and genera occurred over eons. In the journal *Evolution*, paleontologists noted, "The major pulse of diversification of phyla occurs before that of classes, classes before that of orders, and orders before that of families."⁴ The fossil record reveals the reverse of what naturalistic models would predict. However, that history reveals precisely what a biblical perspective would anticipate.

Another challenge to naturalism comes from the observation that the most dramatic macroevolutionary changes occur as soon as physical and chemical conditions permit. For example, Avalon animals need eight percent oxygen in the atmosphere to survive. However, in the geologic moment when atmospheric oxygen jumped from two percent to eight percent, the Avalon phyla appeared.⁵ Likewise, the moment atmospheric oxygen jumped from eight percent to 10 percent, more than 30 distinct Cambrian phyla appeared.⁶

Decades ago, naturalists assumed that the most primitive Cambrian phyla appeared at the beginning of the Cambrian era, with more advanced phyla appearing gradually over the following 50 million years. Paleontology now establishes that the Cambrian phyla appeared simultaneously. The most advanced

phylum, Chordata, to which humans and vertebrates belong, appeared with the most primitive phyla at the beginning of the Cambrian. Included among the chordates were vertebrate fish and creatures with complex eyes.

While 30 or more animal phyla appeared at the beginning of the Cambrian, only 30 remain today.⁷ Of these, at least 28, including bryozoa,⁸ appeared at or near the beginning of the Cambrian.

Any scientific model's validity is tested by how well the model fares as relevant data and understanding increase. Does the evidence supporting the model grow stronger or weaker? A survey of the scientific literature reveals that naturalistic models for mass speciation events have grown more problematic. According to a paleontologist team's review paper, "Elucidating the materialistic basis for the Cambrian explosion has become more elusive, not less, the more we know about the event itself."⁹

WHAT DARWIN DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SUN

In Darwin's day, scientists thought the Sun's radiation was constant. So, understandably, solar radiation received no attention in the development of Darwin's origin-of-species theory. What would have seemed irrelevant then has become highly relevant today.

Astronomers now know the Sun's energy comes from the nuclear fusion of hydrogen into helium. Because helium is denser than hydrogen, ongoing nuclear fusion causes the Sun's core density to increase. This increasing density results in increasingly efficient nuclear burning. Today, the Sun is 20–24 percent brighter (more luminous) than it was when life began.

Even a mere two percent change in solar luminosity would be deadly to *all* life, whether through runaway freezing or runaway evaporation of Earth's surface liquid water. Such a catastrophe has been prevented by a perfectly measured and timed reduction of Earth's greenhouse gases, coordinated with a perfectly measured and timed alteration of Earth's albedo (reflectivity). As the Sun has grown brighter,





atmospheric greenhouse gases have decreased. Earth's albedo has also altered, keeping Earth's surface temperature optimal for life.

Two processes are responsible for this timely reduction of greenhouse gases: the silicate-carbonate cycle and organic carbon burial.

In the silicate-carbonate cycle, rain catalyzes a chemical reaction that converts silicates (continental building blocks) and atmospheric carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) into carbonates and sand.¹⁰ Different organisms regulate how much silicate rock is exposed to water and how much rain falls from clouds.

Microbes, plants, and animals all take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to manufacture carbon compounds. Burial of these organisms by floods, landslides, and volcanic eruptions prevents the decay of their bodies and subsequent release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

The existence of a just-right diversity and abundance of life at the just-right times and locations guarantees that greenhouse gases will be removed from the atmosphere at just-right rates to compensate for increasing solar luminosity. Also, because life impacts Earth's albedo by altering cloud cover and surface reflectivity, this process must be precisely coordinated. In short, organisms have played an "orchestrated" role in compensating for the Sun's increasing luminosity.

The type of radiation emitted by the Sun has also changed, and so have its flaring activity and luminosity. These alterations affect what kinds of life can thrive on Earth under what conditions—a challenge for ensuring the presence of just-right life to compensate for the Sun's brightening.

Unless all these compensating factors operated at just-right levels throughout the past 3.8 billion years, life would have become extinct. Natural selection, mutations, gene exchange, and epigenetics possess no inherent "knowledge" of ongoing solar dynamics. Only a Mind with awareness of the changing physics of the Sun, Earth, and Moon can know which life-forms must be present on Earth and when. For life to persist on Earth requires an understanding of the past, present, and future physics of the Sun, Earth, and Moon, as well as the ability to remove certain life-forms, those no longer able

The fossil record reveals the reverse of what naturalistic models would predict. However, that history reveals precisely what a biblical perspective would anticipate.

to compensate for changes in the Sun, and replace them with just-right life-forms at just-right times and locations in just-right abundance and diversity.

Neither Darwin nor the lawyers arguing in the *Scopes* trial knew of these life-essential features of the Sun and how they point to the existence of a Mind. The fossil record bears witness to this Mind. So does our ability to see and understand what this mindful Being has accomplished to make possible our existence. We are here by no accident of nature but, rather, by the intention and agency of a supernatural Creator. ☉

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INTELLIGENT DESIGN 3.0

The Scientific Renaissance of ID Research

by Casey Luskin & Brian Miller

In the *Scopes* era, religious fundamentalists tried to ban evolution. In the subsequent decades, Darwinian fundamentalists worked hard trying to ban intelligent design (ID). But one thing that has quietly grown over the years is a community of research scientists who simply want to know: *Is there evidence for design in nature?*

The most popular strategy for suppressing the case for design is to claim, “It’s not science!” For many critics, it boils down to two claims: ID doesn’t use the methods of science, and ID has no research program. As scientists working at Discovery Institute, the leading ID think tank, we know these claims are false because we use ID on a regular basis to guide research and to manage a vibrant community of scientists who are conducting scientific research to explore the evidence for design.

WHAT IS ID?

If we’re going to argue that ID is science, we should first define the term.

Intelligent design is a scientific theory which uses the methods of historical sciences to infer that many features of nature are best explained by an intelligent cause rather than an (apparently) undirected cause like natural selection—because those features exhibit forms of information and complexity which

in our experience only come from intelligence. First and foremost, ID is a scientific theory of design detection, but it’s also a scientific theory that can be applied to guide research investigating how the natural world operates.

As a theory of design detection, ID uses information as a reliable indicator of whether an object or natural feature was intelligently designed. We call this complex and specified information (CSI).

Roughly speaking, something is complex if it is unlikely. But this alone is not enough to infer design. To understand why, imagine you visit Mount Rainier. You don’t infer design simply because Mount Rainier has a unique, complex, and unlikely shape. Why? Because unlikely things can occur naturally.

But then you visit Mount Rushmore. This mountain also has an unlikely shape, but it’s also *specific to match a pattern*—the faces of four presidents. From experience, we know this combination of complexity and specification happens only by design.

SCIENCE DOES HISTORY

Crucial to detecting design are the methods of historical sciences, which study present-day causes and apply them to explain the past. Based upon present-day experience, we observe that intelligent agents alone generate high CSI, and that natural mechanisms such as random mutation and natural selection cannot generate high CSI. This means that when we find high CSI in a natural object, we can make a “design inference.”

ID thus seeks to find in nature the kind of information—CSI—that we know from experience is produced only by intelligent agents. By studying the actions of human intelligent agents and the properties of known designed objects, we can construct positive, testable predictions about what we should find if design is present in nature.

A SNOWBALL OF ID RESEARCH

The outline above sketched out how we can use methods of science to detect design. Some critics will then complain that ID just says, “Goddidit,” or “ID-didit,” and quits. Yet ID is far more potent than they appreciate.

Having established evidence for design in nature, we can then model and predict what natural systems should look like if they were designed—effectively applying design-detection criteria to *discover how natural systems should function and operate in the present.*

This sketch also hints at two basic types of ID research:

- **Pure Design Research:** Investigates whether design is the best explanation for the origin of natural features.

- **Applied Design Research:** Applies design reasoning to better understand how natural features work in the present day.

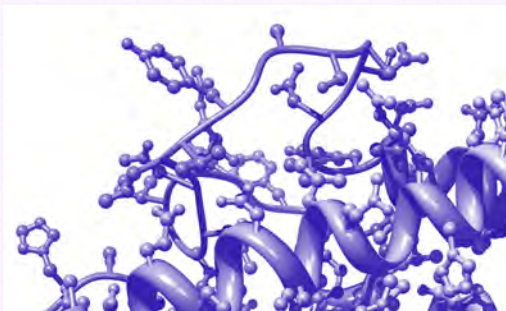
ID research has basically progressed in three phases, which we like to compare to a snowball.

During **ID 1.0** (1985–1999), the snowball was small but witnessed the development of core ID concepts like CSI and irreducible complexity as hallmark indicators of design.

Then came **ID 2.0** (2000–2015). The snowball picked up mass as researchers began testing fundamental ID questions like protein evolvability, i.e., whether natural mechanisms can produce CSI, and strengthened the theoretical groundwork for detecting design through making “inferences to the best explanation.”

Since 2016, we’ve been in the phase we call **ID 3.0** (2016–present), where the groundwork is laid, the predictions are made, and ID is being applied to make new scientific discoveries that were unexpected on an evolutionary paradigm. Over 100 peer-reviewed, ID-inspired research papers have been published during this time. The snowball has rapidly grown and picked up speed to the point where we’re struggling to keep up with the mad rate at which new scientists are joining our community! That’s our problem, not yours—so let’s review some examples of Pure Design and Applied Design research.

— PURE DESIGN RESEARCH —



Protein Origins: Protein scientist Douglas Axe published the results of mutational-sensitivity experiments on the beta-lactamase enzyme which showed that only 1 in 10^{77} amino acid sequences would yield a functional domain (i.e., an

independently folded region) in a typical protein.¹ This result demonstrates high CSI in proteins.

Later, Axe, along with biologists Ann Gauger and Marci Reeves, published multiple experimental research papers showing that modifying one protein so

that it could perform the function of a highly similar protein would require more mutations than could possibly arise over the entire history of the earth.² Their results further confirmed high CSI in proteins.

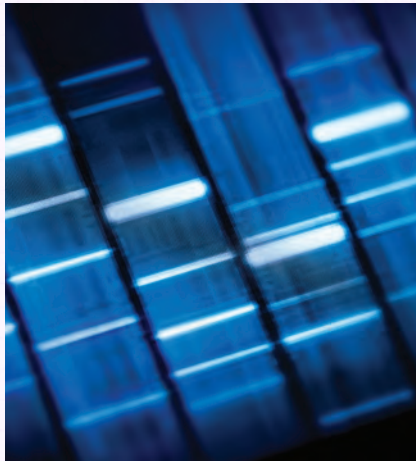
EXAMPLES

- **Protein Origins**
- **Orphan Genes**
- **Systematics**
- **Evolutionary Waiting Times**



Orphan Genes: According to evolution, genes evolve from other similar genes. Yet as more genomes are sequenced, it’s

become apparent that many genes are unique—as much as 10 to 30 percent of a genome for many organisms might consist of these “orphan genes.”³ Orphan genes were predicted by ID because they show informational discontinuity, something evolution can’t handle. ID researchers are studying orphan genes and creating improved tools for identifying them.⁴



Systematics: Evolutionists claim that species are related through universal common descent in a “tree of life.” ID allows for

common ancestry, but also considers common design, where similarities result from a designer re-using components in different species. Computer scientist Winston Ewert has developed a “dependency graph” model of organismal relationships based upon his observation that programmers often re-use coding modules.

Ewert compared the distribution of various gene families and found they fit a common design-based “dependency graph” 10^{3000} times better than a Darwinian tree!⁵ He then studied echolocation, a complex trait found in bats and whales. Common descent can’t explain why this trait is shared by distantly related species, so evolutionists resort to “convergent evolution.” But Ewert has shown that a common-design-based dependency graph is superior for explaining the unexpected distribution of echolocation traits among highly disparate mammals.⁶



Evolutionary Waiting Times:

This project is evaluating whether the geological record allows enough time to evolve mutations required for new complex biological features. This is a direct test of whether standard evolutionary mechanisms can produce the information in life—or whether design is implicated. The team has published two papers developing a mathematical model⁷ and is currently studying the evolvability of whales. Their results demonstrate that the maximum time available for major transitions (according to the fossil record) is far too short for an undirected process to generate the required new information. Only a mind could create the information so quickly.

— APPLIED DESIGN RESEARCH —



Junk DNA: Evolution has long predicted that our genomes are filled with useless “junk DNA.”

2002 paper in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*.⁸ Jonathan Wells’s 2011 book *The Myth*

But because we observe that intelligent agents make things for a purpose, ID proponents have long predicted that “junk DNA” is functional. It’s now known that ID was right! Biologist Richard Sternberg was an early vanguard critic of junk DNA, publishing a

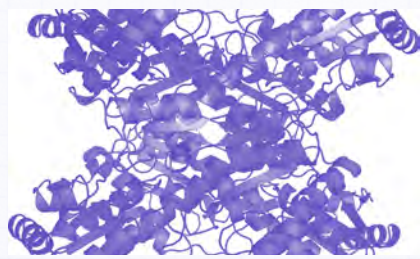
- EXAMPLES
- **Junk DNA**
 - **Brain Blood Flow**
 - **Glycolysis Efficiency**
 - **Vertebrate Limb Design**
 - **Systems Engineering Analyses**

of *Junk DNA* continued this trend. Today the ID community boasts multiple scientists investigating functions for junk DNA, and we’ve launched a “Junk DNA” workgroup to foster research collaborations on this topic!

Brain Blood Flow: Your heart pulses blood through your brain, but if these pulses aren’t carefully controlled, blood flow would burst the brain’s fragile capillaries. Applying the assumption that

the brain is a “designed system,” Dr. Michael Egnor, a professor of neurosurgery at Stony Brook University, has sought to understand how our physiology allows blood to flow smoothly into and through the brain.

By carefully measuring blood flow, his team has found that brain capillary blood flow is controlled by a band stop filter, and cerebrospinal fluid flow is controlled by a band pass filter—features known from electrical engineering. This reveals intelligent design of the brain. They have published papers in *BIO-Complexity*⁹ and the *Journal of Neurosurgery Pediatrics*,¹⁰ and Egnor anticipates his ID-inspired model could lead to improved treatments of brain bleeds!



Glycolysis Efficiency Glycolysis is a universal metabolic pathway that performs vital functions such as producing energy or helping to synthesize life’s building blocks. Led by biochemist Emily Reeves, this project published a paper applying “reverse systems engineering” to understand why glycolysis works the way it does:

Biological systems exhibit features that are traditionally associated with good top-down requirements-driven system engineering practices, such as modularity, optimality, robustness, common protocols, and design reuse.

Although “the near-uniformity of central metabolism across life has traditionally been attributed solely to universal common descent,” they found that “from a systems engineering perspective” this

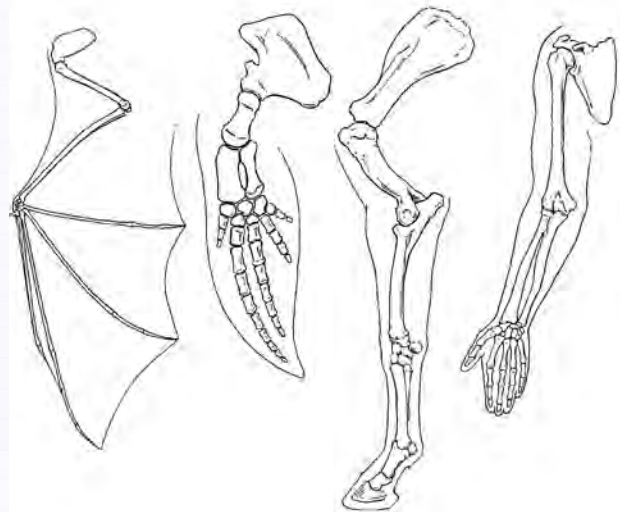
“uniformity might be expected” due to its functional elegance: Glycolysis pathways “maximize thermodynamic efficiency and use “recyclable waste products” which “simplify maintenance of ecosystem homeostasis.”¹¹ The structured sequence of steps in glycolysis reveals a meticulously prearranged design, ensuring maximal efficiency in energy production and the synthesis of essential building blocks for organisms.

Vertebrate Limb Design: Almost every biology textbook contains a drawing of vertebrate limbs, claiming that the similar skeletal structures of the limb of a bat,



whale, horse, and human show their common ancestry. But what if there are good functional design reasons for their skeletal similarities that have nothing to do with common ancestry?

Engineer Stuart Burgess published a paper in *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics* showing that the vertebrate limb structure is reused because it is “highly versatile and optimal not just for arms and legs but also for flippers and wings”



Various vertebrate limbs, including the wing of a bat, the flipper of a porpoise, the leg of a horse, and the arm of a human.

and uses “networks of segmented bones that enable smooth morphing of shapes as well as multifunctioning structures” which “fine-tune motions and mechanical advantage.”¹² He recommends humans mimic its structure in our own designs: “The vertebrate limb has significant potential for the bioinspired design of robotic and prosthetic limbs.”

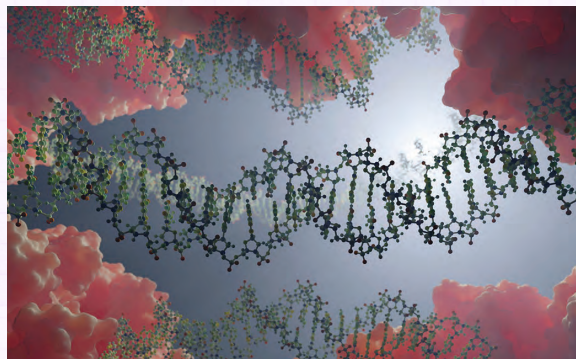
Burgess demonstrated that the limbs of each vertebrate are precisely suited to each animal’s environment and functional needs. For example, birds’ wings are engineered for efficient flight while the flippers of whales are specialized for aquatic locomotion. In contrast, human forelimbs are optimized for dexterity and precise manipulation. This pattern of highly specialized and efficient limb structures aligns with the expectations of intentional design yet contradicts evolutionary predictions. Evolution, as an unguided process, would be expected to produce suboptimal, makeshift adaptations rather than the finely tuned structures observed in nature.

Systems Engineering Analyses:

Arguably the largest ID research project is the “Engineering Research Group,” where biologists and engineers are collaborating to explore how biological systems employ design patterns known from human engineering, including control feedback loops, signal transmission protocols, and just-in-time delivery of materials for manufacturing. The sensory systems in animals implement complex strategies to achieve signal processing, risk management, efficient transmission of energy across interfaces, and adaptation to changing environments.¹³ ID researchers have applied systems engineering modeling tools to biological systems to illustrate their

top-down design logic.¹⁴ In short, biological systems were designed according to the same principles employed by systems engineers.

Evolution glibly predicts that biological systems resemble Rube Goldberg devices in which components appear haphazardly linked to inefficiently bungle into some function. In contrast, ID predicts that biological systems should demonstrate the same top-down design seen in human engineering, where a complex system is planned in advance such that multiple sub-systems work



together, engineered to optimally achieve the overall purpose. And the latter is precisely what we see in the human body.¹⁵ No undirected process could achieve the high efficiencies seen in life if a mind did not plan everything in advance.

GET INVOLVED!

We’d love to go on telling you about ID research, but we’re out of space. For more information, visit Discovery Institute’s ID 3.0 Home Page at [Discovery.org/id/research/](https://discovery.org/id/research/) or see our list of 150+ peer-reviewed pro-ID scientific publications at [Discovery.org/id/peer-review/](https://discovery.org/id/peer-review/). Both pages are necessarily incomplete, as some projects and papers

cannot be discussed publicly because this could jeopardize the careers of the researchers involved.

Yet even what we can say publicly about ID 3.0 research more than suffices to show that ID not only uses scientific methods but has an active and fruitful scientific research program—guided by a paradigm which says life was intelligently designed. New scientists are joining our research community on a regular basis—to get involved, contact us at Discovery Institute! ☺

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Art in the Service of Falsehood

Inherit the Wind

by Anthony Esolen

Can a superb work of art be evil? Can it tell lies about the human condition and still be splendid in its execution, its intelligence, the coherence of its parts, and the power of its presentation?

This question is not easy for me to answer. I have encountered works whose greatness in one respect or another has struck me, yet afterwards I feel the uncanny sense of having been deceived, or of being seduced along a path that leads to contradiction and chaos. In this category—and I hesitate to name them, because I freely admit that I may be missing something—I would place Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*, with its hatred of tradition and family life and the pieties we owe to our forebears; so also George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, for its reducing religion, both Christianity and Judaism, to the political and racial; and so also this film I am discussing here, *Inherit the Wind* (1960), directed by Stanley Kramer.

It is not that I dislike Kramer's work. His *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961) is a powerful defense of the natural law written on the hearts of men, the Law to which all human law must defer. He produced *High Noon* (1952), the story of a courageous sheriff who risks his life for the sake of law and the welfare of a town whose people are not worth his commitment. In both cases, and in other of his films, he admires people who stand athwart the cries of the crowds; you will not find any kindness toward ordinary people, not even in his zany comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963).

But that is the problem with *Inherit the Wind*. Ostensibly, it is a film about the notorious Scopes "Monkey Trial," where two former friends—the statesman, three-time loser in presidential elections, and outspoken Christian William Jennings Bryan and the agnostic lawyer Clarence Darrow—came to Dayton, Tennessee, the former to prosecute John



Scopes, the latter to defend him. The trial made headlines around the world. That was no surprise, since H. L. Mencken of *The Baltimore Sun* was behind the uproar. He it was who brought Darrow to Tennessee in the first place.

Gross Fictionalization

In the film, these persons are both present and not present. The account is fictionalized, and sometimes in grossly abusive ways, while still being offered up as a faithful account of the events in question. The names themselves are but thinly veiled: Clarence Darrow is one Henry Drummond (Spencer Tracy); William Jennings Bryan is one Matthew Harrison Brady (Fredric March); H. L. Mencken is E. K. Hornbeck (Gene Kelly); and John Scopes is Bertram Cates (Dick York).

Kramer and his screen writers Nedrick Young and Harold Jacob Smith said that the film was not about any battle between science and religion, but rather about McCarthyism and the freedom to think and to speak one's mind. I will deal with that issue shortly. The problem is that you cannot watch *Inherit the Wind* without sensing the conclusion you are meant to come to, which is that the Scriptures—for that is what stands in the crosshairs, not some all-including "religion"—are absurd, if they are interpreted literally, and thus that everyone who does so interpret them is an idiot. The real William Jennings Bryan did not believe that the six days of Creation were

periods of twenty-four hours, as his parodic counterpart Matthew Harrison Brady believes. The real Bryan offered to pay any fine that the court imposed upon Scopes. He was not a gibbering moron, as he is sometimes portrayed by March. The real people of Dayton, Tennessee, did not rise up in fury against the reporters but welcomed them. They did not threaten to torch the court.

In the fictionalized trial, Brady-Bryan puts the fiancée of Cates-Scopes on the stand and savages her, getting her to admit that Cates-Scopes left the church over the question of whether a drowned baby that had not been baptized would be excluded from heaven. There was no such fiancée, and the question seems to have been chosen precisely to embarrass Christians while avoiding the range of answers that Christians themselves have given to it. In the fictionalized trial, after the guilty verdict is given, Drummond-Darrow demands an appeal, after which a blubbing Brady-Bryan collapses to the floor with a heart attack after having been denied the chance to enter a summative speech. But Darrow was the one who *demand*ed a guilty verdict so that he could appeal it, and so that he could block Bryan from



Inherit the Wind (1960)

entering his speech. Bryan died in his sleep several days later.

These are not “inaccuracies.” They are not exercises in poetic license, invented to get at the heart of the events without distraction. They are lies. Fredric March—an actor I admire—plays Brady-Bryan as a fool. Spencer Tracy—another actor I admire, but

ALLEGED

BY JOSHUA PAULING

A welcome contrast to *Inherit the Wind* is the 2010 movie *Alleged*, which offers a different take on the *Scopes* trial. Putting the two movies in conversation can be a helpful way to complicate the science-versus-religion narrative which says that science vanquishes superstition and bigotry, always and forever advancing the cause of truth. Anyone who knows a lick about the history of science knows that science is a much more contingent enterprise than that, one that is filled with fits and starts and once-reigning hypotheses that proved to be quite wrong and were eventually overthrown.

In fictionalized form, *Alleged* brings home this reality in relation to the famous trial that framed much of the 20th century’s evolution-versus-creation debates.

Alleged provides a more variegated picture of the trial, hinting at the gaps in Darwin’s theory while highlighting the power of the media more generally. Famed journalist H. L. Mencken plays the villain in *Alleged*, pushing a local reporter, Charles Anderson, to distort the truth and paint the fundamentalists as backwards Bible-thumpers. Lured into Mencken’s inner ring, Anderson goes along for a while. But thanks to his fiancée Rose, he eventually comes to his senses as he sees the connections between Darwinism and eugenics. While this storyline represents artistic license, it does provide a powerful counterpoint to *Inherit the Wind*, which exercises plenty of artistic license in the opposite direction.

The movie ends happily ever after, as Anderson both takes the high road in journalistic truth-telling and marries Rose.

Frequently, I must admit, I find “Christian movies” (whatever that means) overbearing and off-putting—and just generally second-rate. This movie didn’t come across that way, which is no small feat. There were a few parts of it that I found historically implausible for the time period (the way race relations are depicted perhaps too serenely, for example). But putting this movie in conversation with *Inherit*

the Wind is a worthwhile exercise that reminds us of the power of media, the fact that history is always an argument about the past, and that every story has at least two sides. •



not in his roles as a political grandstander—plays Drummond-Darrow as a folksy old friend of brave thinkers everywhere. The screenplay allows him to surprise Hornbeck-Mencken in the end, by setting the Bible and *On the Origin of Species* together, as if the man were somehow still a Christian, deep inside. The film thus keeps Hornbeck-Mencken at arm's length—no surprise, since the real Mencken loathed political liberalism and democracy.

Gross Dishonesty

As for the film's being *really* about the McCarthy era and the Hollywood blacklist, I doubt very much that a single moviegoer out of a hundred would have made that connection. Language is not a private thing. If you say to a man, "You are a liar and a thief," you do not get to defend yourself by saying later on that you *really* meant that his neighbor Joe was an adulterer.

There is one thing that the McCarthy hearings, along with those of the House Un-American Activities Committee, have in common with the people of Tennessee who passed the law against teaching human evolution. They were aimed at preserving something the people believed was good, which they perceived to be under threat. I am not here defending their means, nor do I here make any claim about the biological origin of species. That is beyond the scope of this article. But I will note that the most terrifying political experiment against human freedom and the mind of man was going on full-bore in the world of Kramer, Young, and Smith: namely, the miseries of living behind the Iron Curtain, such offenses as make the worst of the Hollywood blacklists look like a schoolyard bully who filches the cupcake from your lunch bag. I will also note that the focus on McCarthy to the exclusion of real

traitors is a neat way of averting the issue. For there were Soviet moles high in the ranks of the American government, as McCarthy contended, particularly in the State department: Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White, for example.

I will also note that to imply of the Tennessee law that it was simply lame-brained stuff coming from knuckle-dragging rednecks is to beg the question and to avert the issues, which have to do with being sure that something you teach schoolchildren really is the truth, and, if it is still open for debate, whether such matters and their social and intellectual implications are fitly addressed in a public school. I know from my old copies of *The Century Magazine*, in my experience the broadest-based and most rewarding of all American periodicals, that theological discourse was carried on at a very high level. It is true that the judge at the *Scopes* trial did not permit Darrow to call in scientists as witnesses for the defense. Nor is it clear to me that the judge should have done so, since the law itself neither compelled nor permitted evil action; a county courthouse is not the place to adjudicate the prudence of a law enacted by the duly elected legislature when the worst that can be said about the law is that it is too timid, that it prevents something good from being done, whose goodness is questionable even so.

Demagoguery & Liberal Self-Flattery

Inherit the Wind is worth watching for the brilliant performances of Tracy and Kelly, for reminding yourself of the dangers of demagoguery, and for seeing on full display the flattering unctious that American liberals lay to their souls.

The free speech movements on American campuses in the 1960s had little to do with freedom of inquiry in the classroom, but rather with protests and forms of behavior corrosive to civility and the common good. Most of those champions of free speech, when they came to power, were quick to impose an all-ambitious program of political orthodoxy that we are far from getting out from under. Try to say, at any public school or college in America, that you believe that a man cannot conceivably marry another man, that it is a biological and anthropological absurdity, and that accepting the absurdity has brought harm to family life, to social analysis, to political discourse and action, and to the common good, and then see how many admirers of *Inherit the Wind* will come to your defense. Try to say at a high school any of a thousand things that liberals themselves once took for granted as common sense. H. L. Mencken might have defended you, if for no other reason than that he suspected that all mass movements were founded in stupidity. Bryan would have defended you. Darrow? Kramer, Young, and Smith? I'd like to believe they would have, but I doubt it. ☉

Drummond-Darrow
& Brady-Bryan



A Parade of Darwinian Errors

Judge Jones & the Dover ID Trial

by Jonathan Witt

This year marks both the centennial of the 1925 *Scopes Monkey Trial*, immortalized in the Hollywood movie *Inherit the Wind*, and the 20th anniversary of the 2005 *Kitzmiller v. Dover* intelligent design trial, which I attended and reported on.

The *Dover* trial was a modest affair. The judge in the case, John E. Jones III, had little if any training in either science or the philosophy of science, and his ruling was never appealed, so it only applies to the middle district of Pennsylvania. But the media spun the case as a watershed moment in the history of American public science, so it's worth revisiting.

In some regards *Scopes* and *Dover* were polar opposites. In *Scopes*, the teaching of Darwinism was banned. In *Dover*, Darwinism was the favored child, and intelligent design was banned. The *Scopes* attorneys were famous orators; the *Dover* attorneys, relatively obscure.

At the same time there are striking parallels between the two trials. Both pitted Darwinism against a view that the living world is the work of a designing mind—at the *Scopes* trial, biblical creationism; at the *Dover* trial, the theory of intelligent design. Also, in the *Scopes* trial, pro-evolution attorney Clarence Darrow cross-examined his lawyer opponent, William Jennings Bryan, while Darrow himself evaded cross-examination and thus avoided having to defend evolutionary theory from the witness stand. Similarly, in the *Dover* trial the pro-evolution ACLU and its plaintiffs succeeded in removing from Dover Area School District biology classrooms any challenge to evolutionary theory.

There was also an explicit connection. At one point early on, the *Dover* trial judge told the press he



planned to watch *Inherit the Wind* for "historical context." This was troubling. The 1960 movie starring Spencer Tracy is widely acknowledged to be a grotesquely inaccurate depiction of the *Scopes* trial, and one flagrantly biased in favor of Darwinism (see "Art in the Service of Falsehood," p. 47).

Nor did one need to be an expert historian to know this. An eminently accessible popular book about the trial, *Summer for the Gods*, winner of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize, had made this abundantly clear. Judge Jones could have learned this from two minutes of investigation.

That he had, in essence, recommended the fil for historical context meant either that he wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, or that he hoped to get the press to view the *Dover* trial through the same distorted pro-Darwin lens that *Inherit the Wind* had trained on the *Scopes* trial.

Hope in Harrisburg

Yet I still hoped Judge Jones would give intelligent design a fair shake. I had three reasons. First, he had been appointed by President George W. Bush, and that summer Bush had voiced support for open inquiry and opposed a longstanding policy of teaching Darwinism as unquestionable dogma.

Second, in a previous case Judge Jones had ruled in favor of free speech, and hey, the *Dover* trial was a free speech case. The *Dover* school district was being tried for having a statement read in biology classes, encouraging students to keep an open mind about Darwinism and noting that if they wanted to learn about an alternative theory, intelligent design, there were books about it in the school library. Was the school district not free to so inform students?



Third, as I sat in the courtroom press section during the trial in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Judge Jones occasionally looked my way, and his expression seemed full of sympathetic fellow feeling, as if he were telling me, “Don’t sweat it. I’m all about free speech and open inquiry. I’ve got your back.”

Later the obvious occurred to me: Judge Jones had no idea who I was. His expressions of fellow feeling weren’t specifically for me; they were for the press pool, whom he had every reason to believe were, in the tradition of *Scopes* newsman H. L. Mencken, very much in Darwin’s corner. Also, I noticed that he didn’t look at pro-ID biologists Michael Behe and Scott Minnich in the same way. As they testified, plunging into the necessary scientific details to argue for intelligent design over Darwinism, his eyes would glaze over or wander the room.

This was not a man, I realized, eager to master even the rudiments of this scientific debate. He wanted an easy way out.

False Facts, Copied

When Jones published his ruling, it was clear he had found it. His decision—against the school district and intelligent design—was lauded by the mainstream media as a careful, independent, and “masterful decision.” But the pivotal part—a 6,000-word section arguing that ID isn’t science—was lifted practically verbatim (more than 90 percent of it) from the “Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law” earlier submitted to him by the ACLU, who represented the plaintiffs in the trial.

It gets worse. Judge Jones copied into his ruling several erroneous factual claims made by the ACLU, errors exposed in the trial itself. As Discovery Institute’s Robert Crowther reported:

For example, Jones claimed that biochemist Michael Behe, when asked about articles purporting to explain the evolution of the immune system, responded that the articles were “not ‘good enough.’” Behe actually said the exact opposite: “It’s not that they aren’t good enough. It’s simply that they are addressed to a different subject.” Jones’ misrepresentation of Behe came directly from the ACLU’s “Findings of Fact.” Again copying from the ACLU, Jones insisted that “ID is not supported by any peer-reviewed...publications.” But, in fact, the court record contained evidence of several such publications.¹

So much for careful, independent, and masterful.

Is Intelligent Design Science?

In his ruling, Judge Jones decided to move beyond the narrow legal issue of whether the Dover school board had a legitimate secular purpose in briefly alerting students to the theory of intelligent design, and instead he took it upon himself to tell scientists,

As one legal scholar I spoke with at the time commented, “It is worse than horrible, if that is possible. Essentially, what the judge has concluded is that if one is a religious citizen who offers an argument for a point of view consistent with your religious worldview, you will be segregated from the public square.”

science educators, and philosophers of science what is and isn’t science and, specifically, why intelligent design, in his opinion, isn’t science (even while conceding that ID arguments may be true).

According to him, intelligent design was merely “Reverend Paley’s” early 19th-century watch analogy updated for the modern era.² In this, Judge Jones deftly combined two fallacies in a short space: ad

hominem and guilt by association. In essence, he was saying *Paley was a reverend arguing for God, so all design arguments, then and now, are just religious arguments.*

Judge Jones offered three slightly more substantial reasons for his conclusion, but all three collapse under even the lightest pressure.

The first reason: "ID violates the centuries-old ground rules of science by invoking and permitting supernatural causation." No. Design theorists argue that an *intelligent cause* is the best explanation for certain features of the natural world. Whether the intelligent cause is supernatural or not is a separate issue. Jones countered this point by noting that most design theorists believe in the Christian God. But some design theorists do not, and in any case, Judge Jones is here committing the genetic fallacy, dismissing an argument based on its source.

As one legal scholar I spoke with at the time commented, "It is worse than horrible, if that is possible. Essentially, what the judge has concluded is that if one is a religious citizen who offers an argument for a point of view consistent with your religious worldview, you will be segregated from the public square. But not because your argument is bad, but because of your beliefs and the company you keep or may have kept. I can't believe this could happen in America."

Lest anyone accuse the judge of bowing to "the hobgoblin of little minds" (consistency), Judge Jones also noted that the Dover school board emphasized that even British philosopher and former atheist Antony Flew came to embrace certain ID arguments. Their point was that even respected scholars who are not Christians, or even theists, have examined intelligent design arguments and found them cogent. Judge Jones somehow twisted this into evidence that the Dover policy was all about religion; otherwise, why would they mention that Flew was a former atheist!

Judge Jones was also unfazed by the fact that design theory emphasizes that ID reasoning cannot identify the designer, and that any such insight must come from other lines of evidence and modes of inquiry—e.g., theology.

A Straw Man Refuted

A second reason Judge Jones gave for concluding that ID isn't science: "The argument of irreducible complexity, central to ID, employs the same flawed and illogical contrived dualism that doomed creation science in the 1980s."

The "contrived dualism" he referred to goes something like this: "If one can punch enough holes in Darwinism, then creationism must be true." But this is a straw man. ID doesn't reason that way. Consider Stephen Meyer's article published in the

Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington the year before the trial, one of the peer-reviewed ID articles that Judge Jones claimed didn't exist. There Meyer examines neo-Darwinian, punctuationalist, self-organizational, and structuralist theories for the Cambrian explosion of new animal forms in the fossil record. After exposing fatal flaws in each theory, he makes a positive case for intelligent design.³

Meyer also sets forth five explanatory categories that exhaust all the live and formerly live possibilities for explaining the Cambrian explosion: (1) We don't need to explain the origin of the Cambrian animals, because they didn't originate; rather, they existed for eternity past. (2) The Cambrian forms emerged by chance. (3) They emerged through lawlike natural processes. (4) They emerged by a combination of chance and lawlike processes. (5) They emerged by a process involving an intelligent cause. These options really do cover all the bases. Meyer demonstrated the inadequacy of the first four, and then made a case for the fifth, intelligent design.

Meyer doesn't argue that he has proved his case in the way a deductive syllogism proves its conclusions. Building on the work of mainstream philosophers of science, he shows that scientific models are routinely advanced as *arguments to the best explanation*, and he argues from the evidence that intelligent design is the best explanation for the Cambrian explosion.

A third reason Judge Jones offered for concluding that ID isn't science: "ID's negative attacks on evolution have been refuted by the scientific community." Not so. ID has merely been denounced by the governing bodies of various scientific organizations. Where Darwinists have mounted actual arguments against intelligent design, typically they have merely attacked straw men, such as the judge's misleading depiction of ID as just a negative argument, devoid of positive evidence for design.

The Logic of Intelligent Design

ID holds that we have broad and detailed experience with intelligent causes. Intelligent agents, unlike a blind evolutionary process, can look ahead to a future goal and arrange parts to achieve that goal. Such purposeful activity often leaves behind telltale features in the designed systems, a fact recognized in various scientific fields, including forensics and archaeology. Meyer explains:

The scientists arguing for intelligent design do not do so merely because natural processes—chance, laws or the combination of the two—have failed to explain the origin of the information and information processing systems in cells. Instead, they also argue for design because we know from experience that



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systems possessing these features invariably arise from intelligent causes. The information on a computer screen can be traced back to a user or programmer. The information in a newspaper ultimately came from a writer—from a mental, rather than a strictly material, cause. As the pioneering information theorist Henry Quastler observed, “Information habitually arises from conscious activity.”⁴

Judge Jones attempted to dismiss this line of reasoning by quoting an ACLU expert witness who noted that the comparison between design in human artifacts and in natural structures is not perfect. But no design theorist ever claimed it was, nor does the design argument depend on their being identical.

Imagine if someone unfamiliar with British culture said, “Basketball, football, and baseball are all sports, possessing such-and-such common features. It’s very probable this strange activity among the Brits called cricket is also a sport, since it involves these same telltale features.” If we went off the logic of Judge Jones and the ACLU’s expert witnesses, we would find ourselves convinced that we couldn’t reason from the other sports examples to the conclusion that cricket is probably a sport. Why? Because there are some differences between cricket and the other three sports. That is, there is not “a perfect identity.” The reasoning is ludicrous.

The Courtroom of Nature

Judge Jones made many other incorrect assertions and illogical arguments, including the charge that ID isn’t science because it isn’t testable, a claim he discredited by elsewhere insisting that ID had been tested and refuted. (You can’t make this stuff up.)

Judge Jones’s 139-page opinion was a parade of ignorance and illogic. But even if the decision had been more carefully reasoned, it would have amounted to little. The debate between Darwinism and intelligent design will not be settled by courtroom judges. It will be settled on the scientific evidence. And that evidence continues to mount in favor of the view that nature is the work of a designing intelligence—and indeed, a most ingenious one at that. ☺

Notes

1. Robert Crowther, “Study Shows Federal Judge Copied ACLU Text in Dover Intelligent Design Ruling,” *Evolution News & Science Today* (Dec. 12, 2006).
2. Paley argued that if you came across a watch on a heath, you could reasonably infer that it was purposively designed, even if you were a primitive who had never seen a watch and didn’t know humans made them. You could infer design from the finely tuned arrangement of parts, assembled just so for the purpose of keeping time. He said the fine-tuning evident in living things bespoke design in the same way.
3. Stephen C. Meyer, “The Origin of Biological Information and the Higher Taxonomic Categories,” *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, 117(2) (2004), 213–239.
4. Stephen C. Meyer, “Not by Chance,” *National Post* (of Canada) (Dec. 1, 2005).

Gaslighting Atheists

The Darwinian Ploy to Obscure Obvious Truths

by Thomas Williams

We've all seen videos of amazing robots that walk, jump, pick up objects, avoid obstacles, keep their balance when hit, right themselves when they fall, and even engage in conversation.

These incredible machines seem to think and make rational choices, but in reality, they have no options in their behavior. They merely do as their programs direct and make automatic adjustments to their movements and actions in response to built-in sensors that continually monitor their environments.

Denying Free Will

According to Richard Dawkins, robots are not the only automata on planet Earth. He asserts that the above description of how robotic machines operate applies equally well to humans: "We, and all other animals, are machines created by our genes." He claims we have no power of choice. Every action is dictated by the highly sophisticated computer we call a

brain. The late physicist Stephen Hawking concurred, saying, "Free will is just an illusion."

The name of this philosophy which denies free will is *determinism*. Its followers claim that all our actions are pre-determined, dictated by previous actions, external stimuli, and mental conditioning. Determinists believe we have no capacity for choice. Everything we do is as inevitable as the trajectory of a billiard ball struck by a cue.

Despite the claims of determinism, when we make a decision, whether it involves selecting a tie, a car, a career, or a mate, we feel that we are choosing freely from alternatives that we could just as freely reject. Often, we agonize over our choices and vacillate between them before finally settling on one. This assumption that we have free will is infused into us. Hawking admits that we all share this feeling and explains why: it's because nature hid from us the awareness that we are automata and gave us instead the illusion of choice. This illusion is necessary, he says, because to survive we must act *as if* we have free will, even though we don't. Hawking admitted that "even people who claim everything is predetermined and that we can do nothing to change it, look before they cross the road.... one has to adopt the effective theory that one has free will and that one is responsible for one's actions."

Hawking understood that to adopt determinism openly would destroy society. Determinism undermines order and justice by eroding responsibility for antisocial or destructive behavior. We cannot justly punish a murderer if he's merely a robotic machine that cannot help doing whatever it does. What Hawking and Dawkins do not explain is how evolution, which they see as the blind, undirected force that created us, managed to plant into humans an illusion necessary for survival even though it contradicts their deterministic theory of reality. It seems clear that Dawkins, Hawking, and their Darwinian colleagues are attempting to gaslight us.

The term "gaslighting" comes from the 1944 film *Gaslight*, a story set in the Edwardian era of England in which an abusive, avaricious husband distorts reality in an attempt to force his wife to question her own judgment and intuition. A recurring phenomenon in the film is the flickering of the

house's gaslights, which he uses to convince her that she is imagining things that are not really happening in an attempt to gain control over her mind.

Determinist Darwinians are gaslighting us by saying, in effect, "You must ignore what seems blatantly obvious—that in every decision you make you seem to be exercising free will. The facts are the opposite of what they appear to be. You do not have free will; your every decision is dictated by internal conditioning and external stimuli over which you have no control." We are expected to trust them in this matter, suspend our own judgment, and believe that what they are telling us is true, as they have appointed themselves as authorities on this subject.

Denying Design

Determinism is not the only example of Darwinian gaslighting. Dawkins, a staunch and vocal atheist, admits that everything in the universe strongly appears to have been designed. But because he believes that no grand designer exists, he asserts that this appearance

of design is another illusion. He tells us that all the diverse elements in our universe came into being and evolved blindly into their present forms via natural processes. This claim requires that we deny several scientific truths long affirmed by evidence and reason.

For example, despite the scientifically and historically demonstrable fact that life does not emerge from nonliving matter, Darwinians assert that it did. They tell us that, without plan or purpose, a highly complex and intricate cell capable of bearing life somehow formed itself through random processes, perhaps in a primeval pool where it was then shocked into life by a stray electrical current.

They also tell us that, despite the fact that chaos cannot produce order, it did. They explain that a sudden expansion of an incredibly dense pinpoint of primeval matter scattered atoms throughout space, where, without plan or direction, they ordered themselves into a highly structured and finely tuned universe.

Though logic says that non-rational matter cannot produce reason, the Darwinians tell us that it did, that man's reasoning mind emerged spontaneously from insentient matter. Darwinian gaslighting offers a universe built on logical impossibilities that defy both reason and basic tenets of science. Yet they deride Christians who believe the universe was created by a supernatural God—a belief they label as medieval, irrational, anti-scientific, and rooted in blind faith.

Engaging with Reality

Since the universe appears to be designed and science cannot support any rational alternative, it is highly likely that the appearance

of design reflects reality. The universe and everything within it, from the precise order of planetary movement down to the code-filled DNA molecule, attest to the existence of information, and the origin of information requires a mind. Since we appear to have free will—and even Darwinian atheists admit that we must act as if we do—isn't it highly likely that free will is also a reality? As the old syllogism says, if it looks

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suspend our own
judgment, and believe
that what they are telling
us is true, as they have
appointed themselves
as authorities.

like a duck, walks like a duck, flie like a duck, and swims like a duck, it's likely that it really is a duck. We must not let the gaslighting Darwinians deceive us with their quacked-up claims that free will and our intuition of design are illusions.

According to the book of Genesis, our universe was designed by an omnipotent, supernatural designer, and free will is a vital and defining attribute of humanity that gives us the power to choose our destiny. The sense of freedom we experience each time we make a decision exposes determinism as a lie at war with reality. It is imperative that we use our free will for its intended purpose—to choose the right side in this great cosmic war that involves us all, whether we realize it or not. ☉





Evolutionary Jeopardy

A Field Report from Peterson Academy's "Evolution Inference"

by Richard W. Stevens

Ever wonder if the Discovery Institute authors and other Darwin critics are knocking down a "straw man," or a weak, tired, obsolete version of neo-Darwinian theory (NDT)? Or if some cutting-edge version of NDT overcomes the ID challenge? To find out, I enrolled in Peterson Academy's 2024 online course, "Evolution Inference."

What a fascinating eight-hour presentation! Taught by nationally known evolutionary biologists Drs. Heather Heying and Bret Weinstein, the course promised to "explore the fundamentals of the biology of evolution, providing tools to interpret the natural world through the lens of evolutionary inference." I enjoyed learning about animals and plants from all over the world that are uniquely tailored to prosper in their environments. But does "Evolution Inference" present a new or improved NDT that sprints ahead of its critics?

An Awkward Incoherence

NDT typically says that all species of life-forms on Earth exist as products of evolution from earlier common ancestors. Evolution proceeds in four basic phases:

1. An organism's genetic material is modified—"mutated"—by an undirected process;
2. The mutation gives the organism an advantage so that it survives and reproduces more readily in the environment than the non-mutated ones;
3. The mutation is "heritable," i.e., it is passed to the organism's offspring; and
4. The process of "natural selection" occurs as the mutated organisms increase in greater numbers compared to their non-mutated cousins because they have greater "fitness."

The course scarcely mentions NDT in this way, however. Instead of relying on the so-called "blind, pitiless, indifference" of material processes, it says that:

Every single creature that has ever lived, and presumably every creature that has evolved on any other planet that might have them, has the same purpose.

What is that common purpose? Quoting Dr. Weinstein:

The actual purpose is to lodge one's genes as deeply into the future as you can get them.... the goal of all evolved creatures is to lodge their genes as deeply into the future as they can.

A couple of times the speakers deny they are "trying to ascribe consciousness or forward-thinking to evolution," but in teaching that all biological organisms have a "purpose," they are not holding to a "mindless-random-mutation-plus-natural-selection" vision of evolution. So as it turns out, the course awkwardly holds to the usual materialist worldview—that lifeforms are just matter and energy—while also saying all lifeforms have a purpose, which isn't consistent with materialism.

"It Just Happens"

The course advises that biological evolution really should be called "adaptation," which is "a combination of two things": (1) "selection," i.e., "a filter that lets certain things through," and (2) "heredity," i.e., the means by which new or modified "traits" will "come together" to "successfully allow creatures to lodge their genes into the future."

New and modified traits are crucial to NDT, but the course never explains *how* traits are encoded or modified. The standard terms "mutate" and "mutation" only appear a total of three times (combined) in the course's more than 80,000 spoken words. The lesson discussing macroevolution (large-scale changes) condenses the entire NDT engine to:

Mutations happen, and then selection hits, and we end up with, often, a process by which complexity evolves.

I heard this statement and wondered, *Is that all they're going to say about the evolution inference?* Alas, indeed, little more was said.

The course teaches that natural selection “filters” out traits that aren’t helpful to the organism’s “purpose” of deep-future gene transmission. Yet a *plan* to preserve genes into the future is only coherent within a theory that presupposes some form of intelligence behind the goal.

A Game of Begging the Question

The speakers taught the course using their coined term, “evolutionary jeopardy.” Like the TV game show, they give the answer first. The “answer” is a description of a certain animal’s specialized feature or function. The students are then to formulate the “ecological question” that the adaptation “answers.” Here’s one example based on a behavior exhibited by leafcutter ants:

Leafcutter ants cut leaves. What is the question to that answer? That is an evolutionary answer to some ecological question [leafcutter ants] are presented with. What might they be answering?

For background, leafcutter ants haul leaves into the colony, where fungus grows on them; the ants then feast on the fungus. Before I share what the right “question” is, consider this teaching method. The given “answer” is a fully formed and operational hardware and software system that exists *now* and which serves the animal’s survival and reproduction. Evolutionary jeopardy starts by observing the animal’s *functions* and then the students are to

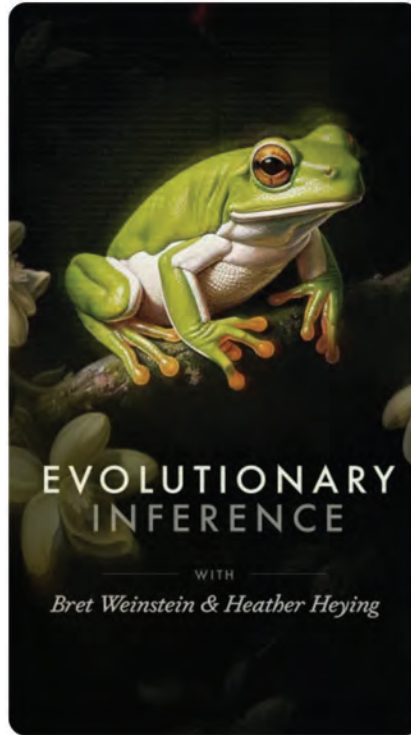


figure out *why* or *how* these functions benefit the animal.

In this game, the right “question” won’t be, “How did evolution *produce* this system?” or, “How did a series of random genetic mutations over the course of thousands or millions of generations lead to this fully functioning system?” No, in this game the teachers say the “right question” is, “How does this animal’s special feature effectively solve the challenge of its environment?”

Notice that neither the question nor the answer in this game shows how NDT works to build new body plans, organs, limbs, or the fully functional subsystems within systems we observe today. The “question” that the ants’ leaf-cutting operation “answers” is: “How might a beneficial farming system feed the colony?” In this way, the leaf-cutting behavior is implicitly put forth as “proof” that evolution solved the problem of feeding the colony.

Behavior Is Software

The course concedes what I and others have been writing about

for years: animal behaviors are software. The speakers themselves presume pre-engineered software exists when they describe baby sea otters, for example:

A software program is built for the offspring after they are born. And that software package allows it to be tailored to the specific piece of environment where that offspring is going to live.

But the course never describes how an animal’s behavior software is coded, stored, retrieved, decoded, or executed, let alone modified to carry out new functions in changing situations. Referring to how some bats build residential tents, one speaker admitted:

I suspect we will never know how much of the [behavioral] program is being handed off genetically. Do these animals have an impulse to make these tents that they then fulfill through trial and error as they tear at leaves and they collapse not quite? [sic] Don’t know. Or is it entirely cultural?¹

Evolution Inference left that necessary-behavior part of animal evolution entirely unaddressed.

Still Unexplained

In this course, I loved learning about plants and animals with ingeniously designed features and behaviors. As of 2024, however, it appears that evolutionary biologists cling to a materialist worldview and still cannot explain how neo-Darwinian evolution produced, modified, or refined ancient hardware and software to produce the species we see today. ☹

Note

1. Some bats build a home by strategically chewing the underside of a large leaf until it partially collapses over them, creating a tent. The instructors contend the behavior evolved, but they do not explain anything about how.



Escape from the Acid Bath

Can Darwinism Support Morality?

by Douglas Groothuis

The late atheist philosopher Daniel Dennett claims in his book, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, that Darwinism is "a universal acid" that dissolves all elements of objective purpose in nature and culture. How could a theory of the origin of species possess such corrosive force? Dennett argues that Darwinism is not only a naturalistic account of the evolution of life, but also a worldview that is universal in scope and unsparing in its effects. In a sense, he is continuing Nietzsche's declaration that when "God is dead," nothing remains the same.¹ All the beliefs and practices supported by a Christian worldview must die along with God. Dennett cites atheist philosopher Karl Marx, who was exultant about Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*:

Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history. One has to put up with the crude English method of development, of course. Despite all deficiencies not only is the death-blow dealt here for the first

time to "teleology" in the natural sciences but their rational meaning is empirically explained.²

With the death of teleology comes the death of any moral ordering of the natural world according to a divine plan or an objective standard. This acid eats

through any moral law, whether based on the Bible or on what can be known about reality by virtue of being human—otherwise known as the natural law (see Romans 2:14–15).

Morality Without God & by Evolution

A welter of atheist writers claim that morality can be rooted in Darwinian evolution and needs no supernatural assistance.³ Although I will mention a philosophically telling comment by Darwin, I will address Darwinism more as a naturalistic and atheistic worldview. According to Darwinists, evolution provides us with a standard version of morality supported not by religion, but by science. We can be good without God, and we can know what is good without God. In other words, morality can be naturalized and fit into the secular evolutionary narrative.

Those naturalists who want to support the dignity of humans, some modicum of human rights, and the need for altruism often appeal to biological and social evolution as their basis. As their story goes, reproductive success (the engine of evolution) requires more than organisms of one species dominating those of another species in an egotistical "survival of the fittest" wherein nature is "red in tooth and claw" (Alfred, Lord Tennyson's phrase). Group selection demands that individuals work for the good of the group—the species or some other subclass—in order to promote fitness. Species may also need to get along with each other, not just consume each other, in order to survive and reproduce. However, this coevolution is not all sweetness and light, since the predator-prey relationship is part of it and species may engage in an "arms race" against each other's threats of attack.

So in the long biological and social evolution of humanity, certain moral norms were selected for

the good of the species. Among these are cooperation, mutual respect, altruism, and other positive traits, none of which need any theistic or immaterial scaffolding. Of course, along the way, history has been repeatedly seized and savaged by war, racism, slavery, female subordination, planned famines (Stalin's Holodomor, for example), genocide, and lots more nastiness and cruelty. It is not just nature that is often "red in tooth and claw." Humanity is stained as well. From a biblical viewpoint, nature itself is fallen and is thus not an adequate basis for morality.

The upshot is that mere nature as construed by materialism—the collection of all physical things and processes, describable by natural science, and organized by mindless natural laws, plus nothing—has, in itself, no normative properties, neither with respect to moral obligation nor with respect to virtues (and vices), nor with respect to intrinsic value.

And, as such, the universe does not care, issue commands, punish evil, or reward the good. As Richard Dawkins wrote,

In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other

people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.⁴

The Moral Problem with Darwinism

A naturalistic account of nature (with neo-Darwinism as the reigning theory) can only describe what *is*, not what *ought to be*. As C. S. Lewis wrote,

From propositions about fact alone no *practical* conclusion can ever be drawn. *This will preserve society* cannot lead to *do this* except by the mediation of *society ought to be preserved*. *This will cost you your life* cannot lead directly to *do not do this*: it can lead to it only through a felt desire or an

Certainly, morality based on the character of a self-existent, eternal, and personal being provides a better foundation than to posit immaterial moral principles that are inexplicably just there in the twilight zone of a godless world.

acknowledged duty of self-preservation. The Innovator is trying to get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premisses in the indicative mood: and though he continues trying to all eternity he cannot succeed, for the thing is impossible.⁵

If we appeal to nonhuman living nature for moral guidance we find predation, cannibalism, and deception—as well as beauty and cooperation. Human history is a jumble of the same, plus all the uniquely human contributions, such as pettiness, racism, and genocide. As Aristotle said,

For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice. For unrighteousness is most pernicious when possessed of weapons, and man is

Statue of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels



born possessing weapons for the use of wisdom and virtue, which it is possible to employ entirely for the opposite ends. Hence when devoid of virtue man is the most unholy and savage of animals, and the worst in regard to sexual indulgence and gluttony.⁶

“Law and justice” are not simply read off the record of human or nonhuman history. A purposeful human nature (based on a design plan) and a normative moral standard are required, neither of which atheism can provide. So the evolutionist’s problem is threefold.

(1) There is no standard to decide what behavior and values ought to be conserved from the vast array of biological possibilities. Social Darwinism advocated letting the “favored races” succeed and the others fail. Few would accept this today, but if not, why not?

Typically, Darwinists take something as good, then consider how to produce it and preserve it. So in *The Moral Landscape*, Sam Harris specifies what he takes as good for humanity and then advocates what ought to be done to further these conditions. However, he never justifies the initial judgment of value. He cannot do so on Darwinian grounds. He must philosophically cheat to retain morality.

(2) Even if principles for behavior are found that are conducive to survival, these principles would not necessarily be morally good. Surviving and being good are two different things. Darwin himself thought nature could have been otherwise.

If...men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty

to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering.⁷

In this macabre alternative scenario, the human conscience would look quite different than it does today. On this account, our deepest moral convictions about human dignity and proper treatment would be rendered mere happenstances of biology. This is counterintuitive, to say the least. We need a better explanation for conscience and its contents.

(3) If we must make moral decisions based on instinct, we are left with an unreliable faculty for moral judgments, since our instincts are often in conflict. Should we save ourselves or give ourselves to others? Should we favor family or country? We may be torn, but without an appeal to objective moral value, we are left to our biological drives. As Lewis argued, we need a standard above our impulses.

Now this thing that judges between two instincts, that decides which should be encouraged, cannot itself be either of them. You might as well say that the sheet of music which tells you, at a given moment, to play one note on the piano and not another, is itself one of the notes on the keyboard. The Moral Law tells us the tune we have to play: our instincts are merely the keys.⁸

According to Lewis, conscience has access to “objective moral value,” which can adjudicate between competing instincts. But this notion ill fits naturalism.

Some atheists embrace Darwinism but posit the existence of objective moral facts independent of the natural world—a view

sometimes called atheistic moral realism. Of course, this far-flung and ad hoc metaphysics has nothing to do with Darwinism; it rather exposes Darwinism’s intrinsic and inexorable inability to ground anything like a coherent or livable morality on its own merits. But certainly, morality based on the character of a self-existent, eternal, and personal being provides a better foundation than to posit immaterial moral principles that are inexplicably *just there* in the twilight zone of a godless world.

No Acid Bath

If Darwinism were true, it would, as Dennett claimed, dispense a universal acid, eating through all traditional morality and all objective meaning and purpose. Darwinism can provide no basis for moral principles that transcend nature. But given our knowledge of basic morality, we can see that Darwinism must not be true—even apart from the scientific evidence against it. We can avoid the acid bath by affirming the existence of objective morality and by finding a sure support for it in the Judeo-Christian tradition. ☉

—This article was adapted from *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, by Douglas Groothuis, pp. 341–345.

Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Gay Science,” 125, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1968), 95.
2. “Marx to LaSalle in Berlin,” 1860; I have given the fuller quotation than the one Dennett gives.
3. I am not considering those who try to combine some form of evolution with theism, but rather philosophical naturalists.
4. Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 133.
5. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 43.
6. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a, Perseus Digital Library.
7. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 102.
8. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis Signature Classics (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), 12.

Believe



FEATURED BLIP

Believing Is Seeing

A Review of Believe: Why Everyone Should be Religious by Ross Douthat

by Joshua Pauling

For generations, it has been assumed that the inevitable march of scientific and technological progress would vanquish religious belief. Yet, despite great advancements in man's knowledge and material condition, religion persists, even in secularizing societies. It may take on different forms (utopian political dreams, conspiracy theories, psychedelics, UFOs, transhumanism), but the religious impulse of man remains. In his new book *Believe*, Ross Douthat makes the case that traditional religion still offers a robust, reasonable, beautiful pathway for exercising our religious impulse in ways that are conducive to human flourishing

Douthat has been on the front lines of these discussions in his professional and personal life. As a *New York Times* columnist who doesn't hide his conservatism nor his Christianity, he gets countless letters and emails from skeptics and believers alike. And the circles he moves in means that he has personal relationships with many folks who represent the various views discussed in the book. His own life experiences grant him further credibility: a religious journey spanning everything from the Episcopal Church to charismatic Christianity to Roman Catholicism, along with a lengthy, continual struggle with intense personal pain and suffering from Lyme disease.

The Best Explanation of Reality

Douthat begins his case for traditional religious belief by challenging the science-versus-religion mindset that has been so common since the Enlightenment and since Darwin. "The habit of thinking that regards scientific progress as perpetually diminishing the reasonability of religion has things backward," he writes, and "the long arc of science, which initially seems to bend away from religion...ultimately bends back by confirming humanity's unique position in a universe strangely suited to both our bodies and our minds."

In such a universe, Douthat argues, religion explains the data

points best. Order, design, hard-to-explain numinous experiences, suffering—all are best explained within a religious framework. The historic, systematized religions probably deserve our respect and consideration, he writes, since they have been tested and refined by the best thinkers and mystics over time. Do you think you could craft your own religious system, or mix and match one that does better? Douthat argues that's highly unlikely if the goal is to find actual truth. What you'd more likely end up with is a god made in your own image and practices that make you feel good about yourself.

Then he turns specifically to Christianity and how it offers a rich bounty that satisfies both mind and soul: a blend of rationality and mystery; a grounding in historical events in a way that roots mystical experience in revealed truth; and practices that anchor us in reality and connect us to the God who has come into the world in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Warranted Belief

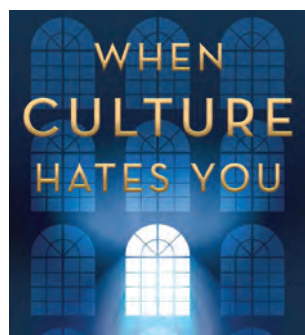
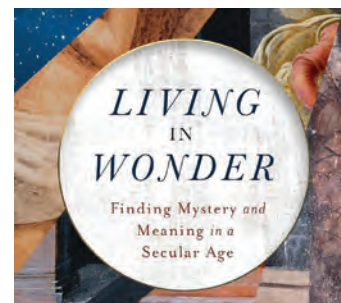
While you probably won't agree with everything in the book, the final chapter is worth the price of admission, in my opinion. Douthat explains why he is a Christian, weaving together an accessible apologetic and intuitive account of how Christian truth claims hold up to scrutiny and make the best sense of reality. His case is equal parts ethos (ethics), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic), which makes it relatable, reasonable, and compelling.

Yes, even in 2025, Christianity is warranted belief. Not only that, but it also makes the most sense of what we see and experience. It gives us eyes to see. To turn a phrase on its head, believing *is* seeing. Christianity is what allows us to see reality as it truly is. And that ultimately satisfies the religious impulse we all have. ☺

Living in Wonder: Finding Mystery & Meaning in a Secular Age by Rod Dreher

Although materialist narratives have deeply affected our perception of the world, all life possesses ultimate, transcendent meaning, and the heavens and earth are brimming with signals of it. Writing like a tour guide of weird and

wonderful things, Dreher helps us relearn how to perceive the numinous and engage with the living *Logos* so that we may have “the wherewithal to endure chaos and breakdown... without losing hope and confidence in the future.” •



When Culture Hates You: Persevering for the Common Good as Christians in a Hostile Public Square by Natasha Crain

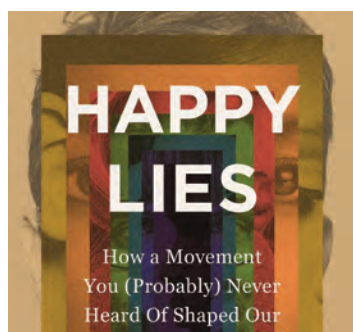
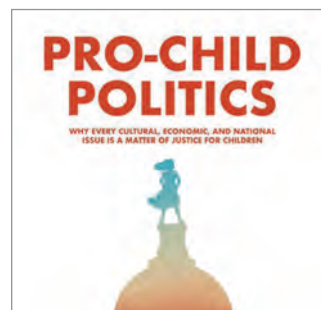
Christians holding to certain biblically orthodox positions face heightened pressure to go along with cultural tides. But when a culture embraces darkness, it's more important than ever that Christians faithfully, courageously, and graciously let their

light shine *for the benefit of the world* (even when the world doesn't want it). Ultimately, it's not Christians that the dark forces hate; *it's God*. This book will encourage you and help you to confidently let your light shine in the face of darkness. •

Pro-Child Politics: Why Every Cultural, Economic & National Issue Is a Matter of Justice for Children edited by Katy Faust

This book explains how a multitude of issues tied up with public policy affect children. Life, family, religious liberty, gender, sexuality, race, the economy, taxes, debt, energy, technology, foreign policy, law enforcement, border security—children

have no say in how any of these matters are regulated, but the choices adults make have massive effects on them, for good or ill. This book will equip you to use your voice and votes to prioritize children's interests over the desires of adults. •



Happy Lies: How a Movement You (Probably) Never Heard Of Shaped Our Self-Obsessed World by Melissa Dougherty

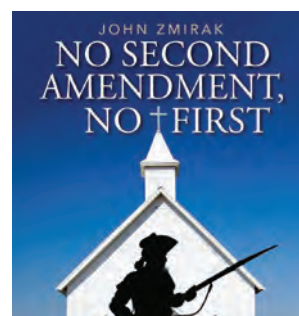
Dougherty traces the lineage of “New Thought,” a 19th-century philosophy that interprets traditional Christian teachings through a “metamystigorical” (her word) looking glass, which has led to expressions of “Christianity” ranging from

spiritualized, works-based self-help to the occult. The way she examines ideas and then unpacks them with compassion (and just a touch of light-hearted snark) makes this a delightful, edifying, and necessary read for Christians in a post-truth culture. •

No Second Amendment, No First by John Zmirak

Judeo-Christian tenets made possible the founding of America as a self-governing, free republic. Zmirak argues that the biblical view of man and natural law philosophy directly imply a right of self-defense as articulated in the Second Amendment. As the last bulwark against tyranny,

it is crucial to the preservation of all other rights. From Lenin's Russia to Mao's China to Chavez's Venezuela, the first move of authoritarians has been to deny citizens the ability to defend themselves against the government. This book is aimed at preventing that from happening in America. •





The Lunatic Farmer

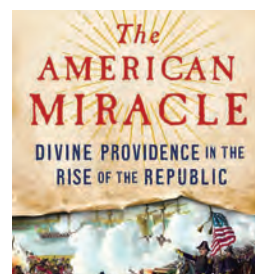
Joel Salatin has farmed nearly all his life. Although his farm services more than 5,000 families, 10 restaurants, and five retail outlets, his farming methods are intentionally natural and hands-on, not industrial. A self-described “Christian libertarian

environmentalist capitalist,” he has also been called a “lunatic,” a “bio-terrorist,” and a “world-class bigot.” Part biopic and part farm tour, this delightful film serves up a refreshing slice of healthy, sustainable 21st-century farming in America. •

The American Miracle

Hosted by Michael Medved, this inspiring film recounts and reenacts strange and wonderful aspects of the rise of the American republic, placing special emphasis on turns of events which, unless you’re an avowed skeptic, can only be described as *providential*. “A long

chain of seemingly haphazard, but consistently beneficial, occurrences suggests a pattern or design,” he concludes. In a day when Marxist sympathizers falsify history, this film recovers a story of divine blessing purchased for posterity at great price by sacrificial fathers and mothers for liberty. •



Join or Die

Voluntary civic and social engagement is vital to making democracy in America work, says sociologist Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone* (2000). Yet community involvement has declined to the point of threatening our wellbeing, both

individually and collectively. To thrive, we must connect and engage. While this film occasionally hints that government is a form of “community,” the concept of “join or die” applies across the board, including to the church, and this is an otherwise healthy call to do so. •

Eternal You

A new market in AI entrepreneurship involves creating avatars and chatbots from the digital “remains” of the deceased for bereaved loved ones to interact with (for a fee, of course). Project December, HereAfter.ai, and YOV (You, Only Virtual)

are just a few of the start-ups turning grief and the quest for immortality into a business. These developments reveal a cultural vacuum in desperate need of the ministry of the church and her answer to the problem of death found in Jesus Christ. •



The Unseen War

Victor Marx of All Things Possible Ministries is dedicated to setting captives free physically, emotionally, and spiritually, primarily in war-torn regions in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. This documentary focuses on the

battlefield of the human mind as the place where the Enemy’s lies threaten to thwart God’s purposes in the believer’s life. More than just a documentary, this film is a call to engage in the unseen global war against evil. •



Disinheriting the West

Science & the Specter of Private Truth

by Denyse O'Leary

All the participants in the *Scopes* trial took one thing for granted: public truth. Gravity, for example, is a public truth. What goes up must come down. Defying the law of gravity is a byword for folly.

Scopes and his patrons regarded Darwinian evolution as truth of that sort. In *Summer for the Gods* (1997), Edward Larson quoted a lead story in *The New York Times* which asserted that Clarence Darrow “bearded the lion of Fundamentalism today, faced William Jennings Bryan and a court room filled with believers of the literal word of the Bible and with a hunch of his shoulders and a thumb in his suspenders defied every belief they hold sacred.” The *NYT* writer, too, assumes that there is such a thing as public truth, and it is not Fundamentalism. The Darwinists thought that their (true) public truth, taught in the schools, would replace the Christian view of human origins, and for nearly a century, they were largely successful among the educated classes.

But the landscape in which science flourishes has greatly changed. A rising power threatens

even popular science staples like Darwinism. I call that new power *private truth*.

Cancel Culture Comes for Darwin's Faithful

Evolutionary biologists have come under assault from a quarter they hardly expected. Their public truth that says humans accidentally evolved as unusually brainy apes requires acknowledging the sex-binary nature of primates. But as transgenderism became a mass intellectual movement, the idea took hold that a human being could be “born in the wrong body.” Sensing a contradiction between biological reality and passionately held private truths such as this, elite institutions have begun to deplatform biologists who speak out.

The evolutionary biologists are the most vulnerable because they have the biggest stake in our kinship with the great apes. For

example, Richard Dawkins lost his Humanist of the Year title for refusing to agree that humans can change sex. Colin Wright left academic life, tired of the constant attacks on his doubts about current gender ideology. Last summer, he was abruptly ejected from a taxpayer-funded National Institutes of Health webinar for no apparent reason—he had not even so much as submitted a question in the Q&A chat window. Evolutionary biologist Carole Hooven, author of *The Story of Testosterone* (2021), left her position at Harvard and appears to have suffered a nervous breakdown. University of Chicago's Jerry Coyne found that anything other than total surrender was rejected. Thus, a recent *Washington Post* article announced, “Trump says there are ‘two sexes.’ Experts and science say it's not binary.” Right. Those experts who say it is binary get canceled.

In a world of private truth, science has no one to plead its case. This problem is certainly not limited to evolutionary biology. We hear claims that witchcraft should be taken seriously and that the pursuit of correct answers in math is a form of oppression. We face a very different intellectual world from the one in which Bryan and Darrow sparred.

A Noxious Liberation

During the birth of early modern science, long-held European folk beliefs were often upended. Belief in noxious vapors as a cause of disease, for example, eventually gave way to germ theory. But that happened in a world that held to public truth. Much has changed.

The trend to private truth has recently begun to face more criticism, but, in my view, it is more entrenched than some commentators suppose. Many people experience a vast liberation when they are freed from the constraints of logic, reason, and evidence. They will not part lightly with their new freedom. ☉

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ALL
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to accomplish increasingly difficult combinations.

Can you get all twelve numbers to turn up in one roll?

CONGRATULATIONS! YOUR ADVENTURE BEGINS!

**BANG! LIGHTNING
STRIKES THE POND!**

WHAT ARE THE
ODDS!? **YOU'VE
REPLICATED
YOURSELF!**

YOU'RE OUT OF THE
pRIMORDIAL SOUP!

YOU'VE GOT A NEW
POWER! **TIME TO
LEG IT!**

SIMIAN SUCCESS!
NOW THINGS WILL
REALLY GET HAIRY!

**YOUR MONKEY'S
GONE
NEANDERTHAL!**
BUT DO YOU HAVE
THE TOOLS TO
REACH THE NEXT
LEVEL?

**YOU'VE REACHED
YOUR FINAL FORM!**
DARWIN HIMSELF!

YOU BOARD THE H.M.S.
BEAGLE A HERO AND
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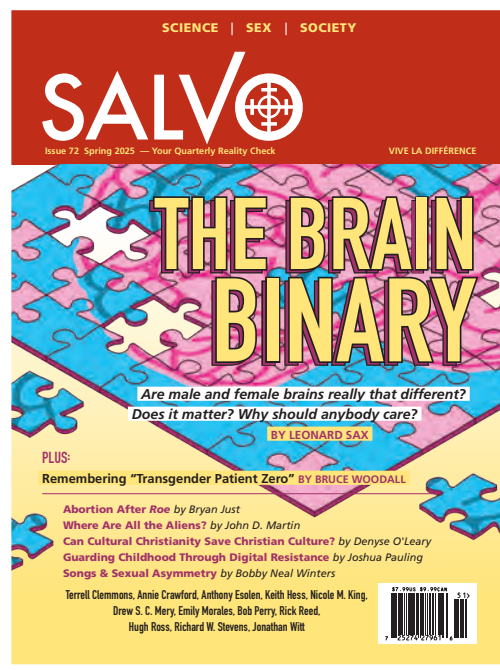
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