

CUI BONO: WHO BENEFITS?

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Scientific things first caught my attention when I was a little boy. The world was a wonderful place—especially the parts of it that I did not understand. These parts of the world possessed a great deal of mystery, and, to the annoyance of my elders (except for my mother), I insisted on getting answers to all of my questions. Early on, I became convinced that the people called “scientists” could provide me with the most satisfactory explanations. Later, it dawned on me that although these “authority figures” had a good grip on reality, of more importance was the way that these scientists told me what they believed to be true about the world and how, or by what methodologies, they came to their conclusions. Their ideas had the ring of reasonableness and were self-correcting. Their honesty and fairness in stating their arguments, and especially in entertaining criticism about their work with regard to alleged insufficiencies, made their fabric complete in my mind. Fred Hoyle once remarked that in science and mathematics, the important thing is what is being said, not who is saying it. Take a moment and meditate on who benefits from what I call “Hoyle’s dictum.”

Perhaps I am still naive, but these qualities I just described are the qualities that I demand of myself and my colleagues, many of whom are no longer very congenial, especially after I, apparently in the role of a heretic—or was it an apostate?—sinned by appearing as an expert witness against their “party line of scientific correctness,” in what they refer to as “Scopes II.”¹ Not all of these folks are infidels like me. Oh no—many often identify themselves as Protestants of one kind or another, who have declared their eternal hostility to what Isaac Asimov has called the fundamentalist “Army of the Night.”² I worry about that problem too—on my list of worries, I put it way down there around number 678, together with ATMs that occasionally fail to give me a

* “Utility, advantage, or self-interest considered as the determinant of value or motivation.” AMERICAN HERITAGE COLLEGE DICTIONARY 336 (3d ed. 2000).

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¹ See *McLean*, 529 F. Supp. 1255.

² ISAAC ASIMOV, *THE ROVING MIND* 5-15 (1983).

proper receipt. Of more immediate and obvious concern to thoughtful people should be the institutionalized evil of deliberately restricting the information given to students in public schools to only one line of polarized thinking. This exclusionary menace is especially important when the matter under scrutiny is of serious philosophical concern to the taxpaying public and not merely something fancied by certain representatives of the "public interest."

I emphasize public schools because these are paid for out of taxes— involuntary assessments—from nearly all people in the general population. If we are to have statist schools, then, regardless of how things are being done at the present time, simple constitutional fairness dictates that we correct our current practices. Public schools have had their original mandates, which were arguably reasonable at one time, vastly enlarged. They are now far more vulnerable to coercive special interest groups that would use the schools as though they were factories on a one-way street that are dedicated to "social engineering" and "mind molding." Private schools should be left free to deal with subject matter as they see fit; we must allow them to flourish or, alternatively, twist in the breeze as a linear function of the sustainability of their paradigms.³ (This sounds a bit like an evolutionary model— survival of the fittest and all that.) Apart from people with a specific ideological axe to grind, who would not fail to benefit from my modest suggestions?

Models of "origins" of life in general and of mankind in particular are inherently controversial not just to the general public but among scientists as well. This controversy exists because, as Ernst Mayr has so eloquently written, a major consequence of Darwin's work has been to enthrone a secular view of life in the place previously occupied by Bible-based Christianity.⁴ Inevitably, we must confront matters of the utmost concern—the nature of man and the meaning (if any) of this life, as well as the way we are to behave. These topics cannot be value free. Logical argument can lead to differences in belief, agnosticism, or even atheism. Indifference is not included as an option in my definition of a civilized human being. So what should we do at public expense? At the very minimum, we must embrace a civil approach, one that is inarguably polite, courteous, mannerly, and free of ridicule. I am convinced that if we are going to do anything worthwhile in formal education, we must put at the top of the list— stimulation of objective critical thinking. The

³ Clarence Darrow presumably would agree. During the *Scopes* trial, he commented, "If you can take a thing . . . and make it a crime to teach it in the public schools, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in the private schools." *THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS COURT TRIAL: TENNESSEE EVOLUTION CASE 87* (Reah County Historical Society 1978) (1925).

⁴ See Ernst Mayr, *Darwin's Influence on Modern Thought*, *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, July 2000, at 78, 81.

pedagogical strategy of more than one working hypothesis has yielded fine results with many subjects of academic interest, e.g., genetic recombination, mechanisms of enzyme action, biogenesis of the mitochondrion, binding of oxygen by hemoglobin, the structure of cell membranes, the nature of the coupling relationships between electron transport and ATP synthesis, the nature of chemical bonding, the relatively sudden extinction of the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous, the decline and fall of civilizations, the root sources of human cultures, instruction in the teaching of young children to read, etc.

Unfailingly, interesting consequences—in the classical Chinese sense of the word—rise to plague agnostic biochemists who employ a libertarian point of view in their defense of the inalienable rights of an unfashionable “minority group”: fundamentalist Christians. My fellow evolutionists, you may be in the driver’s seat right now, but chew upon this: In public schools, who, other than fascists, over the long term, really benefits from restricting instruction and amicable discussion on controversial topics to only one line of factual evidence and inquiry? Do you really want to “meet the monkeys coming the other way?”

To be true to its promises, science must be based upon honorable activities and eschew injustice, intolerance, and the arrogance that all too often accompanies political power. Most regrettably, many people who possess technical skill—even genius—especially in writing and speaking, when they find themselves at the top of the intellectual or professional totem pole, cannot resist the temptation to play the role of a despot. Thus, even in the scientific enterprise, we can find execrable individuals who benefit by imposing their hubristic ideology on the rest of us through the power of the state. The evolution/creation controversy boils down to two underlying issues that become very much intertwined:

Question #1. Are either or both of these “models” of origins scientific, or sufficiently scientific, and non-religious, to be a reasonable component in the study of biology?

Question #2. Who should decide who teaches, and what is taught in a public school classroom? Or, even, as an extension, in any classroom anywhere?

The answer to the first question is: Any proposed model of origins can be as scientific or nonscientific as the person at the podium is capable of making it. Formulate the contract, and hire your instructors accordingly. Currently fashionable notions of academic freedom notwithstanding, no one possesses a constitutionally guaranteed right to teach.

The answer to the second question is: Whoever is paying for it makes the decisions, and under our current form of government, in a public school, a minority of “ONE” must be accommodated.

These answers are quite straightforward and simple; unless you choose to make them so, they are not simplistic. You see, the following hypotheses remain unproven:

- (1) For the safety and prosperity of our nation, we must have a statist system of compulsory formal education.
- (2) Since I dearly love theoretical biology, it has been revealed to me that I have a legal—yea, even a moral duty and right—to compel others to worship at my altar.

Legislation that I supported, and testified on behalf of, in both the Arkansas and Louisiana trials,⁵ disallowed all specifically religious material in a public school classroom during the course of instruction in biology. It really would not bother me if such information were presented in biology class since its scientific underpinning is rather limited. I happen to be comfortable with the notion that phenomena amenable to scientific investigation must ideally be falsifiable and capable of empirical verification. The science of origins is ultimately historical, not experimental. Therefore, its acceptance is totally dependent on a specific model laying claim to the status of “the most currently-acceptable narrative.” Despite having absolutely no legal credentials, I am able to read the fairly straightforward English in our Constitution, and it is obvious to the meanest intelligence that our Supreme Court has gone wildly astray in its interpretations of (at least) the First Amendment. Our future in America is dim indeed, if the practical understanding of our Constitution requires the mastery of an arcane system of knowledge that is revealed only to the licensed elite. Who benefits from such usurpation of the legislative function by the judiciary?

We lost the Louisiana case before the High Court, 7–2.⁶ Rehnquist and Scalia dissented,⁷ and, it appears, were the only judges who took the trouble to read our brief, listen to Mr. Bird (who argued the case for Louisiana), and not create new law.

A court of law is no place to resolve the scientific aspects of this dispute. But, it does become a most appropriate battlefield when certain inalienable rights of our people are immediately in jeopardy as a consequence of the efforts by not-so-well-meaning people, such as the ACLU, to re-write history and cleanse us of our Judeo-Christian heritage, and to enshrine militant atheism as our national doctrine. I agree with Alan Keyes: “We have a battle in front of us, and we have to stop shrinking from it. . . . [A]s [a people] we are going to have to fight

⁵ See *McLean*, 529 F. Supp. 1255; *Edwards*, 482 U.S. 578.

⁶ See *Edwards*, 482 U.S. at 579.

⁷ *Id.* at 610.

the battles that will establish integrity, and stop running from them. . . . [I]t's a battle for the soul of this nation and [our] children's future."⁸

Speaking only for myself, I am persuaded by the overwhelming evidence currently available in favor of saltational evolution, with the qualification that by evolution one means "descent with change," together with all of its attendant ramifications. A short list of ideas that I find most interesting, and from which I believe students would profit is:

- (1) the closely-argued suggestions regarding "sudden origins" by Jeffrey H. Schwartz;⁹
- (2) the influence of singular environmental factors as described briefly by Francis Hitching, and, more completely and dramatically by that "nemesis" of biotechnology, Jeremy Rifkin;¹⁰
- (3) the excellent criticisms of currently-accepted laboratory models of abiogenesis by Charles B. Thaxton, et.al.;¹¹
- (4) the contemplations of Francis H. C. Crick with regard to the evolution of mind, even "soul";¹²
- (5) considerations and implications of "intelligent design" that have been advanced by William Dembski; and last but not least,¹³
- (6) the courageous writings by Fred Hoyle and N. Chandra Wickramasinge that force us to include God in our scientific efforts to understand what John Harrington referred to as "the nature of nature".¹⁴

What are my detractors worried about? Does the logical possibility of a "deity" or "overriding intelligence" mean that we all must go to Sunday school? Will I be denied my Jack Daniel's? Must I be married in a church? Who benefits from our being told that we don't have time for all of that stuff? Besides, the First Amendment prohibits it—right? Really, come on now fellows . . . in whose best interest is it that young people remain in the dark about the empirical fact that scientists think about God and that many subscribe to an organized system of formal belief?

⁸ Alan Keyes, Address to the Iowa State Republican Party Convention (June 12, 1998) (transcript available at http://www.keys2000.org/issues_and_speeches/transcripts/980612iowa.shtml).

⁹ See JEFFREY H. SCHWARTZ, *SUDDEN ORIGINS: FOSSILS, GENES, AND THE EMERGENCE OF SPECIES* (1999).

¹⁰ See FRANCIS HITCHING, *THE NECK OF THE GIRAFFE: DARWIN, EVOLUTION, AND THE NEW BIOLOGY*, (1982); see, e.g., JEREMY RIFKIN, *ALGENY* (1983).

¹¹ See CHARLES B. THAXTON, *THE MYSTERY OF LIFE'S ORIGIN: REASSESSING CURRENT THEORIES* (1984).

¹² See FRANCIS C. CRICK, *THE ASTONISHING HYPOTHESIS: THE SCIENTIFIC SEARCH FOR THE SOUL* (1995).

¹³ See WILLIAM A. DEMBSKI, *INTELLIGENT DESIGN: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY* (1999).

¹⁴ See FRED HOYLE, *THE INTELLIGENT UNIVERSE* (1983).

All hypothetical constructions that are worth talking about, possess anomalies. By focusing on these pieces of empirical evidence that do not appear to fit into formally accepted schemes of explanation, we may hope to construct improved models of our world.

Now, what should we present to students who would like to learn what we savants think we know about the history of life on this planet, and just what it all may mean? Well, assuming the obvious limitations of time and the human attention span, give them an overview of what is "generally accepted" but include a healthy shot of the anomalies, as well as what we know we do not know—no oxymoron or pun is intended. Don't be afraid to include what scientists believe, for it is often a major intellectual motivation behind their quest for understanding. Such a strategy based on critical thinking might result in intellectual stimulation, in many more minds of the young than the anti-fundamentalists are willing to concede. These ideas seem reasonable to me, who benefits from us not doing this?

In Little Rock,¹⁵ I listened to the testimony of Dr. William Mayer, who helped develop the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study program. Dr. Mayer pronounced that a "two-model approach" could not be used successfully in the teaching about origins in biology. Perhaps Mayer and his clones were incapable of such an effort, but I testified to the contrary and was ignored by the assembled media mavens, except for Cal Beisner of the Pea Ridge Country Times.¹⁶ During my stint at Concord College, 1968-1970, we achieved this "difficult" goal in an effortless fashion by using Mayer's own excellently developed pedagogical materials. I hasten to add that our biology department consisted of two Christians and seven infidels. Our departmental chairman was an intellectual open-minded atheist who believed in the utility of dialog and inquiry as instructional tools. We benefited from Dr. Mayer's published work, why couldn't he? Did Dr. Mayer and his supporters across the courtroom have an unreported "higher agenda?" Is it reasonable to conclude that Dr. Mayer was the kind of person who would foster upon us the kind of America that Alan Keyes is concerned about?

For many decades, at all levels of instruction—kindergarten through graduate school, the only officially acceptable model was "gradualness." All "thinking people" knew that evolution was a proven fact, circular reasoning notwithstanding. No hypothesis other than a gradual one was allowed to apply. No heresy was needed here. The party line was inviolate. Any model based on "sudden" or "abrupt appearance" was laughed out of court along with "intelligent design." Let's face it:

¹⁵ See *McLean*, 529 F. Supp. 1255.

¹⁶ Cal Beisner, *Academic Freedom, Openness in Science Hang in Balance in Historic Trial*, PEA RIDGE COUNTRY TIMES, Dec. 30, 1981, at 11.

these silly ideas were nothing more than Genesis wrapped up in contemporary language. The black-robed Supremes could not err. Beware! The "Army of the Night" is out to get us; if all of us educated folks drop our guard, we'll be looking at Torquemada" all over again. Who benefits from this rubbish?

Well, the spawn of the Grand Inquisitor are indeed still with us polluting the academic landscape. Arbitrarily, whenever they can get away with it, they deny or delay advancement in rank (personal experiences of this writer), they deny tenure, they control employment and access to laboratory facilities, they dictate grades (unpublished personal communications to this writer), they censor what is taught, they impugn and slyly harass. Why, for a long time, it has been bandied about in scientific circles that the main obstacle to Fred Hoyle receiving a Nobel Prize was his "unnecessary theory" of panspermogenesis. If you suffer from the illusion that these things do not go on, then you must either be Judge William Overton¹⁸ or you still believe in the tooth fairy. Winning your case before the bar of justice becomes the practical equivalent of a heroic exercise in Sisyphean kinetics. Here in the USA, in defiance of the wisdom of Thomas Jefferson, such patently criminal behavior is typically financed from the public trough. As you contemplate just who benefits from these machinations, I suggest that you recall that the intellectual foundation of what we call science is really rather metaphysical and ultimately resolves itself into a matter of philosophical preference.

For over thirty years, I have found that students of all backgrounds have been quite interested in the fact that . . . in his notebooks, Darwin, before he had read Malthus, remarked that the theory of evolution "would make man a predestinarian of a new kind, because he would tend to be an atheist."¹⁹ Who benefits from not giving students that information?

Perhaps a bit of advice from John Stuart Mill is in order:

[T]he only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized society, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinion of others to do so would be wise or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with

¹⁷ "Spanish Dominican monk who was appointed grand inquisitor in 1487." AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY 1428 (3d. ed. 2000).

¹⁸ Judge William Overton wrote the district court opinion in *McLean v. Arkansas*, 529 F. Supp. 1255 (E.D. Ark. 1982).

¹⁹ Michael T. Ghiselin, *Darwin and Evolutionary Psychology*, 179 SCIENCE 967 (1973).

him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him or visiting him with any evil in the case he do otherwise.²⁰

To my fellow evolutionists I suggest that you abandon your coercive utopian ideas, and return to a powerful fundamental premise: natural selection—or, if you prefer, survival of the fittest. Allow people to exercise mutational—even saltational—options in learning about any controversial topic. Foster multiple working hypotheses. Consider equal time for competing models of explanation. Remember FDR's injunction "You have nothing to fear but fear itself," or Kung Fu's "Fear is the only darkness." "Endeavor to persevere" as the Indian chief was advised in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.²¹ Nature and the real world will win in the end, for they are "hanging judges" that "bat last." The dead hands of superstition will fall prey to reproductive isolation and succumb to a well-deserved extinction. Allow people to learn in the words of Kevin Cullinane, that "Life always gives you what you ask for, whether or not you know it, or whether or not you even know that you are asking for it."²² Stop playing God with the minds of students, especially the young ones. Allow the people who bear the cost of education, to decide just what it is that they want to be taught to their offspring. After all, the "truth is great and will prevail if left to herself . . . she has nothing to fear unless . . . disarmed of her natural weapons—free argument and debate."²³ Let the people vote freely with their money and their feet, for these are the ultimate ethical answers to humane authority. Thus, we can all benefit.

"[I]t is better for a man to go wrong in freedom than right in chains."²⁴

²⁰ JOHN STUART MILL, ON LIBERTY 9 (Elizabeth Rapaport ed., Hachet Publishing Co. 1978) (1859).

²¹ THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES (The Malpaso Co. 1976).

²² Kevin Cullinane, Freedom School Lectures at Wofford College (1985).

²³ THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS COURT TRIAL, *supra* note 3, at 114 (quoting Clarence Darrow).

²⁴ Thomas H. Huxley, *Letters and Diary: 1866*, at <http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/letters/66.html> (last visited Mar. 10, 2001).