

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Readers are invited to submit reviews of current literature relating to origins. Please submit contributions to: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA. The Institute does not distribute the publications reviewed; please contact the publisher directly.

TEACH THE CONTROVERSY

Darwinism, Design, and Public Education. Edited by John Angus Campbell and Stephen C. Meyer. 2003. E. Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. 634 p. Paper, \$28.95.

Reviewed by Henry Zuill, Norman, Arkansas

The editors of *Darwinism, Design, and Public Education (DD & PE)* advocate presenting design along side evolution in public education curricula. Their plea is to “teach the controversy” so that science education will be more rigorous when taught with the give and take that is part and parcel of real science. They suggest evolution classes should not only teach perceived evidentiary strengths, but also evidentiary weaknesses. Evidence should take one to where it leads, and in the view of most of the contributors to *DD & PE*, that is to Intelligent Design (ID).

Thirty authors, representing an array of disciplines and perspectives, contributed to the 27 chapters, five appendices and glossary that make up *DD & PE*. Unashamedly biased toward ID, the editors have included a number of chapters that argue the opposite position, an unlikely concession if the tables were turned. To me, however, this adds to the value of the work. Juxtaposed as the two arguments are, the contrast between design and evolution is stark.

Given its size, *DD & PE* is not a quick read. I often found myself reflecting on what I had read, slowing my pace even more. Several contributors, including editor John Angus Campbell, are rhetoricians. It seems to be their nature to drive one to the dictionary. Many times I wished to return to something I had previously read, but found myself frustrated in being able to quickly do so. An index would be helpful.

DD & PE will be of value even to those not directly involved in determining educational policy. For example, while reading *DD & PE*,

I wished I had had such a work available when I used to teach an Origins course. I would have done things differently and students would have been better informed. Science and science-education majors should both read and discuss this book.

American science educators make up the primary audience of *DD & PE*. In the US there are two hurdles that proponents of teaching ID in public schools must cross. One is constitutional, the other philosophical. The first is the argument that ID is a subtle intrusion of religion, violating the separation of church and state. The second is that ID is not scientific, or that it is not good science.

However one may define science, DeWolf, Meyer and DeForrest argue (p 78) that it is not possible to include evolution while excluding creation. When applied narrowly, the definition of science excludes both; when applied more liberally, both are embraced.

Is ID a subtle form of religion? ID proponents are careful to note that their work is entirely based on observations in nature without reference to biblical descriptions of creation. They are at pains to distance themselves from creationists whose work references scriptural accounts of the creation and the flood. This is an important point, especially for constitutional purposes. That ID has theological implications is not a substantial argument that teaching ID violates the First Amendment Establishment Clause. *DD & PE* notes that evolution also has religious implications. If students ask theological questions after a classroom consideration of ID, does that then make ID inherently religious? What about when students ask theological questions after studying evolution? *DD & PE* argues that the religious connection has to be more direct.

Most examples given for ID are molecular and cellular. Indeed, a significant portion of *DD & PE* is devoted to questions about the origin of life, with less attention to natural selection, as such. Pro-ID arguments appear stronger when set against fanciful ideas about a naturalistic origin of life. Given what we see and experience, ID appears to be the best explanation. I found myself wishing the design argument had been carried to higher organizational levels, even to ecology. However, the cellular–molecular foundation is strongest for ID.

Hypotheses for biochemical evolution have themselves evolved. Adapting to challenges brought against them, one scheme after another has been proposed to replace predecessors, but to little avail. Notwithstanding this, the jump from hypothesis to hyperbole is often rapid indeed. Sidestepping all previous challenges, a currently popular

argument postulates “self organization.” This suggests that complex living things are an inevitable outcome of the physical nature of atoms. Examples given, such as crystal formation, naturally forming vortices such as tornadoes, and convection currents, fall far short in supporting the argument. In fact, the evidence seems weaker than ever. But what alternatives are available within a naturalistic world view? ID, on the other hand, continually accrues compelling data.

A paragraph written by Steve Fuller (p 539) particularly caught my attention. It carries the argument to new heights:

If, however, we take seriously that nature is a unified object in the mind of the Creator, then it is entirely possible — and I believe more plausible — to suppose that the purpose of specific entities, be they cells or species, cannot be discerned until at least the main contours of the entire world-picture are in place. On this more holistic view of creation, any given cell or species taken in isolation may seem the product of contingency, exactly as Darwinists suppose. But while Darwinists conclude their inquiry at that point, holistic creationists argue that the appearance of contingency merely reflects the incompleteness of our knowledge of the divine plan.

I like Fuller’s designation, “holistic creationist.” It conveys a suggestion of wholeness and completeness that fits well with ID. Moreover, it impacts how we think of ourselves.

For years, creationists have attempted to “prove” creation by disproving evolution, responding defensively to claims by evolutionists, and even reinterpreting their findings. Another approach involves short-changing the time necessary for evolution. Neither approach demands creation as an alternative.

ID, on the other hand, presents a positive alternative in which evolution is put on the defensive. Readers of *DD & PE* will get a tone of evolutionary bravado from authors opposing ID, which comes through as overdone. Are they whistling in the dark?

Evolution isn’t wrapped up yet by any means, but there is a new confidence in the design camp that cannot but auger of exciting days to come. And “teaching the controversy” well compliments the new spirit.