

The False Duality Argument Debunked

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DOVER DISCLAIMER LAUNDRY LIST

"In summary, the disclaimer singles out the theory of evolution for special treatment, misrepresents its status in the scientific community, causes students to doubt its validity without scientific justification, presents students with a religious alternative masquerading as a scientific theory, directs them to consult a creationist text as though it were a scientific resource, and instructs students to forgo scientific inquiry in the public school classroom and instead seek out religious instruction elsewhere. Furthermore, as Drs Alters and Miller testified, introducing ID necessarily invites religion into the science classroom and it sets up what will be perceived by students a "God-friendly" science, the one that explicitly mentions an intelligent designer, and that the "other science," evolution, takes no position on religion (14:144-45 Alters)). Dr. Miller testified that a false duality is produced: It "tells students...quite explicitly, choose God on the side of intelligent design or choose atheism on the side of science". (2:54-55(Miller)). Introducing such a religious conflict into the classroom is "very dangerous" because it forces students to "choose between God and science," not a choice that schools should be forcing on them Id. at 55." ¹

This statement is what I call the **Dover Disclaimer Laundry List**, and it comes directly from the Kitzmiller Opinion.

The courts that have ruled on CREVO matters accuse IDers and creationists of establishing what they call a 'false duality', in short, the idea that the debate about the origin and development of life is "either-or", e.g., in simple terms, there are only two explanations for biological complexity - either life evolved or it was created. Both the McLean and now the Kitzmiller courts have accused the defendants in this matter (the Dover School Board) of making this up or lying about it (the [McLean](#) court referred to this issue as a "contrived dualism"). In any event, this idea of a duality really isn't original or unique with IDers, and besides, plenty of people agree with this concept of duality anyway – whether they believe in a creator or not (and I document this extensively in the better portion of this essay). SO the bottom line here is: I say this notion isn't contrived at all, as the McLean and Kitzmiller courts maintain.

At this point I want to call attention to and comment on just one remark by Dr. Ken Miller from the 'Laundry List' above.

¹ [Kitzmiller Opinion](#), p. 49-50.

Dr. Miller testified that a false duality is produced: It “tells students...quite explicitly, choose God on the side of intelligent design or choose atheism on the side of science”. (2:54-55(Miller)).

Yet this is precisely what some scientists actually seek to do: denigrate or eradicate the influence of ‘religious’ views wherever they are found, not just in the science classroom. The position clearly promoted by many Darwinists is

“if you are a person of faith, you can’t do science, in fact, you aren’t even capable or qualified to do scientific work. If you don’t believe in Darwinism, we can’t give you a degree in science or publish any paper you have written in one of our scientific journals. You can’t be both a person of faith and a good scientist.”

Such sentiments are almost ubiquitous in academia and in the scientific community. No matter that ID is not a ‘religious’ view and that it does not require religious faith. These may not be the personal views of Dr. Miller, but they are the views that many scientists and students encounter and must combat frequently.

Why then, is there such a hue and cry for the protection of students against the alleged improper or harmful influence of ID, when there seems to be absolutely zero consideration for the hostile influence of Darwinists and their blatant acts of antagonism and discrimination against anyone who fails to believe as they do? False duality? I don’t think so. Only a blind or ignorant person would make such a claim.

James Watson – a very educated man by nearly everyone’s assessment - also makes no bones about his hostility towards matters of faith, and posits his dislike in the context of either revelation or science:

James Watson (co-discoverer of the DNA code) stopped by California Institute of Technology... and had an informal chat onstage with David Baltimore (Nobel laureate in DNA research, current Caltech president). The discussion, held before a packed auditorium, was just reported in Caltech’s latest issue of its magazine [Engineering and Science \(LXVI:2, pp. 19-25\)](#). Jane Dietrich’s report is entitled, “A Conversation with Jim Watson.” In their unrehearsed remarks, they touched on many subjects: the history of Watson and Crick’s discovery, computational biology, the minimum genome for life, the ethics of genetic screening, pseudogenes, cloning, aging, the brain, ethics, politics, science policy, religion, and what it means to be human. For example:

...Watson’s response was that he finds it troubling that our society is indifferent to continued genetic disease. “There is a conflict between truth by revelation and truth by observation and experiment. I think the big fight eventually in our country is not going to be between Republicans and Democrats, but between those who think secularly and those who think in a fundamentalist way.”²

² [Nobel Laureates Opine on DNA, Politics, and the Christian Right](#), 08/24/2003

Incidentally, Crick and Watson were reported as using the occasion of the 50th anniversary of their discovery of the structure of DNA (in 2003) as an opportunity “to mount an attack on religion”.³

Many would argue that the religious beliefs of these and other scientists are not germane because science and religion are two different “magisteria”. Oh really? Then why doesn’t that argument hold up when the IDer mentions it? Ah, that’s because the concept of ID, we are told, is inherently religious. But actually, that’s a contrived and false argument also. So where does that leave us?

*No doubt it is possible to separate Darwinism in the classroom from the anti-religious zealotry in which it often arises. In the same way, presumably, intelligent design theory or objections to Darwinism can also be taught without the religious views in which they often arise.*⁴

Dr. Ken Miller’s Flawed Notion of a ‘False’ Duality

In its opinion, the Kitzmiller court rests heavily on the testimony of Dr. Ken Miller in reaching it’s conclusion about the notion of a “false duality”. For that reason, it’s important to take a close look at what Dr. Miller had to say. My contention is, contrary to Dr. Miller’s sworn testimony in Kitzmiller, that such a duality not only exists, but is widely accepted and understood among many people in the general population of the USA, and is also particularly known and accepted by many people in the scientific, philosophic, and academic communities. I further maintain that Dr. Miller twists the facts in his testimony, thus rendering his arguments impotent.

Here is some of his sworn testimony:

Q. (By Witold Walczak) The School District argues, you know, it takes a minute to read this statement. I haven’t timed it. It takes about a minute to read this statement. What’s the big deal? What’s the harm in reading this to Dover School District students?

A. (By Kenneth R. Miller) That’s a very interesting point. And if they raised the issue, what is the harm in reading it, one might well turn around and say, well then why read it in the first place, if it makes so little difference, if it is of so little consequence? Then why have you insisted on doing this and why are you in court today? The only thing I can infer from turning that question around is that the Dover School Board must think this is enormously important to compose this, to instruct administrators to read it, to be willing to fight all the way to the court. They must think that this performs a very important function.

Now turning it around back to my side of the table, do I think this is important? You bet I think this is important for a couple of reasons. One of which, first of all, as I mentioned earlier, it falsely undermines the scientific status of evolutionary theory and gives students a false understanding of what theory actually means. Now that’s damaging enough. The second thing is, it is really the first attempt or the first movement to try to drive a wedge between students and the practice of science, because what this really tells students is, you know what, you can’t trust the scientific process. You can’t trust scientists. They’re pushing this theory. And there are gaps in the theory. It’s on shaky

³ [Do Our Genes Reveal the Hand of God?](#) In the London Daily Telegraph, by Roger Highfield, 3/20/2003

⁴ Denyse O’Leary in *By Design or By Chance?* (Ontario, Canada: Castle Quay Books – 2004) p. 106

evidence. You really can't believe them. You should be enormously skeptical. What that tells students basically is, science is not to be relied upon and certainly not the kind of profession that you might like to go into. And thirdly, that third paragraph that we haven't talked about very much right now points out that intelligent design, which has implicit endorsement in this statement, because we don't hear that it's just a theory, we don't hear that it's being tested, it sounds like it's a pretty good explanation. It's available. It's good stuff. And students will understand immediately, as anybody does who reads Pandas, that the argument is made on virtually every page of Pandas for the existence of a supernatural creator designer. And by holding this up as an alternative to evolution, students will get the message in a flash. And the message is, over here, kids. You got your God consistent theory, your theistic theory, your Bible friendly theory, and over on the other side, you got your atheist theory, which is evolution. It produces a false duality. And it tells students basically, and this statement tells them, I think, quite explicitly, choose God on the side of intelligent design or choose atheism on the side of science.

What it does is to provide religious conflict into every science classroom in Dover High School. And I think that kind of religious conflict is very dangerous. I say that as a person of faith who was blessed with two daughters, who raised both of my daughters in the church, and had they been given an education in which they were explicitly or implicitly forced to choose between God and science, I would have been furious, because I want my children to keep their religious faith. I also want my students to love, understand, respect, and appreciate science. And I'm very proud of the fact that one of my daughters has actually gone on to become a scientist. So by promoting this, I think, this is a tremendously dangerous statement in terms of its educational effect, in terms of its religious effect, and in terms of impeding the educational process in the classrooms in Dover.⁵

Dr. Miller is entitled to his perspective, but unfortunately takes the position that anyone who doesn't see things his way is mistaken. I find his comments fascinating, especially the part about how ID causes skepticism of science – his way of twisting skepticism about scientific theories into skepticism about science itself. Most IDers I know and whose papers I have read have the greatest respect for science. Contrary to Dr. Miller's assertion, there is no major debate or question about the validity of science coming from the ID camp, so this is yet another contrived 'Millerism'. Perhaps there are some fringe elements out there who do question science, but such a view is not representative or typical of core ID architects. Surely Dr. Miller knows this (which makes his assertion all the more odious). Dr. Miller also says things that I find typical of many ID critics who tend to take great liberties in stretching and misrepresenting the intent of most IDers. For example...

What that tells students basically is, science is not to be relied upon and certainly not the kind of profession that you might like to go into.

No, Dr. Miller, that's not what the disclaimer says or implies – nor is it the message that core ID architects I know of advocates. This is just one more remark in a long line of comments that are designed to marginalize ID concepts unfairly and untruthfully.

⁵ Kitzmiller Trial Transcript with [Dr. Ken Miller](#) – Day 1 PM – 09/26/05

Here, as elsewhere, Miller also claims that an attack on evolution is an attack on science.⁶ This is yet another unfortunate mischaracterization, created by many evolutionists as part of their shtick to depict IDers as anti-science – which is patently untrue. Questioning scientific theories is widely recognized by many competent educators and scientists as a time-honored practice – challenging evolution is only characterized as anti-science by those who staunchly support evolution. Take, for example, Dr. William A. Howard at the University of Alaska who notes that

Scientific knowledge advances only when well-established practices are questioned, and questioning radiometric dating is the responsibility of all professional scientists everywhere.

...

When teaching chemistry, I introduce my students to a number of theories, such as Atomic Theory, Quantum Theory, Valence Bond Theory, Molecular Orbital Theory, Crystal Field Theory, and more! These theories are well-established and supported by a great deal of experimental evidence. Nevertheless, I encourage my students to question the experimental support and to think of new experiments that could potentially falsify the theories. This activity is extremely important for producing first rate scientists. The students are well aware that these theories are not “controversial”, and that we question these ideas simply as an intellectual exercise.⁷

If only more of our educators were permitted to engage students this way. I find it ironic that IDers are the ones who usually have to remind Darwinians about this. As a matter of fact, a growing list of over 500 scientists have publicly proclaimed that they believe Darwinism should be questioned.⁸ These people are not anti-science – they are advocates for better science. I wonder why their opinion doesn't seem to get much consideration in our courts. After all, it took far fewer Darwinist Ph.D's to get the attention of judges in other court cases. And so I have to ask: is this is the man (Dr. Miller) the Kitzmiller court relied on to buttress it's claim that the IDers have created a “false duality”? This man who quickly and readily distorts so many aspects of the ID enterprise with his seemingly authoritative (but false) pronouncements about IDers? Are his assessments to be trusted? I don't think so. If he can't even get the basics about ID right, why should anyone believe anything else he has to say on the subject?

Given all this, I would ask readers to give serious second thoughts to Dr. Miller's testimony that IDers seek to set up a “false duality”. Such a claim is just as unreliable as many of the other inaccurate and misleading statements he made during the Kitzmiller trial.

As I said, most IDers seek better science, not the injection of religious views into our public schools. Some groups do make an effort to introduce Biblical teaching

⁶ [The Evolution of Ken Miller](#), by Linda Heuman *Brown Alumni Magazine Online*, Nov/Dec 2005 - “To Miller, the battle against evolution is an attack on science itself.”

⁷ [Howard, William A.](#) *J. Chem. Educ.* **2006** 83 546.

⁸ [A Scientific Dissent from Darwinism](#), Discovery Institute, updated Dec. 2005

into science classrooms, but this is not the goal of all IDers. What the Dover Disclaimer does is encourage kids to question *evolution* – not science – and that’s a GOOD thing. After all, science should never be in the business of promoting scientific orthodoxy – which is essentially what Dr. Miller is advocating. And if there is one thing we know we shouldn’t do in science, it’s hold onto any idea so tightly that we dare not consider that it might not be accurate. Consider the following comment:

Today evolution survives, not so much as a theory of science, but as a philosophical necessity. Good science is always tentative and self-correcting, but this never really happens in the case of evolution. Regardless of the scientific data, the idea of evolution as a valid concept is not open to debate. Students are allowed to ask "HOW did evolution occur?", but never "DID evolution occur?" Which is a more objective question: "What were the ape-like creatures that led to man?" or "Did man evolve from ape-like creatures?"⁹

In summary, what the Dover Disclaimer does is teach kids that the *ideas* of science are not set in stone – it doesn’t at all suggest that science itself is untrustworthy, as Miller falsely alleges.

The Dover Disclaimer

The Pennsylvania Academic Standards require students to learn about Darwin's Theory of Evolution and eventually to take a standardized test of which evolution is a part. Because Darwin's Theory is a theory, it continues to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The Theory is not a fact. Gaps in the Theory exist for which there is no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations. Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin's view. The reference book, *Of Pandas and People*, is available for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves. With respect to any theory, students are encouraged to keep an open mind. The school leaves the discussion of the Origins of Life to individual students and their families. As a Standards-driven district, class instruction focuses upon preparing students to achieve proficiency on Standards-based assessments.¹⁰

Though Dr. Miller might be excused for his errors (I’m being generous here...), the courts cannot be. The Kitzmiller Court has a great responsibility to get this right – and this it failed to do in pretty big fashion. In fact, I have read countless comments from other scientists who freely admit that this ‘duality’ does in fact

⁹ [Should Evolution Be Immune From Critical Analysis?](#), by David Buckna – 12/22/2004

¹⁰ [Kitzmiller Opinion](#), p. 39-43

exist, contrary to what both the Kitzmiller and McLean court would have us think. And if they don't come right out and say so directly, the implication is quite clear in their remarks. If a significant number of qualified experts find this duality to exist, then it surely does exist, and for any court to ignore this is unfathomable. Evidently the Kitzmiller court found Dr. Miller to be credible enough to rest this point entirely on his expert opinion and the faulty opinion in McLean, which in my opinion displays an alarming tendency to rule on the basis of capricious and prejudicial subjectivity rather than the facts. If this court is willing to rule on this issue as capriciously as it appears to have done, then we must call into question its ability to reason out and rule judiciously on other matters in this case.

In brief, it's my opinion that the Kitzmiller ruling makes the following false claims:

*The court in McLean stated that Creation Science rested on a "contrived dualism" that recognized only two possible explanations for life, the scientific theory of evolution and biblical creationism...*¹¹

*In other words, the disclaimer relies on the very "contrived dualism" that the court in McLean recognized to be a creationist tactic that has "no scientific factual basis or legitimate educational purpose" McLean 529 F. Supp. At 1266.*¹²

*ID is at bottom premised on a false dichotomy, namely, that to the extent evolutionary theory is discredited, ID is confirmed (5:41 (Pennock)). This argument is not brought to this court anew, and in fact, the same argument, termed "contrived dualism" in McLean, was employed by creationist's in the 1980's to support "creation science". The court in McLean noted the 'fallacious pedagogy of the two model approach...all evidence which criticized evolutionary theory was proof in support of creation science' McLean 529 F. Supp at 1267, 1269. W do not find this false dichotomy any more availing to justify ID today than it was to justify creation science two decades ago.*¹³

The [McLean](#) court opinion (quoted in part in Kitzmiller) that addressed the issue of "contrived dualism" is reproduced in its entirety here:

*IV(A). The two model approach of the creationists is simply a **contrived dualism** (22) which has no scientific factual basis or legitimate educational purpose. It assumes only two explanations for the origins of life and existence of man, plants and animals: it was either the work of a creator or it was not. Application of these two models, according to creationists, and the defendants, dictates that all scientific evidence which fails to support the theory of evolution is necessarily scientific evidence in support of creationism and is, therefore, creation science "evidence" in support of Section 4(a).*¹⁴

It seems clear that this argument (mentioned several times in Kitzmiller) is one of the predominant reasons the court found justifiable cause for dismissing the Dover Disclaimer as having a religious purpose.

I take issue with their finding on this matter.

¹¹ [Kitzmiller Opinion](#), p. 21

¹² [Kitzmiller Opinion](#), p. 42

¹³ [Kitzmiller Opinion](#), p. 71

¹⁴ [McLean v Arkansas](#)

We Americans rely on our courts to uphold the rights of all Americans, not just some. When our courts consistently render decisions that give the appearance of being 'rigged' (ie, when they clearly favor one group over another), I have to admit that I get a little bent out of shape over it. And by golly, it looks like I'm in good company.

We are now presented with the specter of atheistic evolutionists and liberal theologians whose understanding of evolutionary process is demonstrable nonsense, joining together with the ACLU and the highest courts in the land to lambast creationists, who are caught in an increasing bind. Evolutionary biology, as taught in public schools, shows no evidence of a purposive force of any kind. This is deeply disturbing to creationists. Yet in court, scientists proclaim that nothing in evolutionary biology is incompatible with reasonable religion. A view also supported by liberal theologians and religious leaders of many persuasions, Not only are creationists unable to have their "creation science" taught in schools, they cannot even convince the court system that evolution is in any significant way antithetical to religion; thus the courts are effectively branding their religious views as terribly misguided. No wonder creationists (somewhere near half of the population!) are frustrated with the system and want equal time for their own views, or at least to be spared bludgeoning with evolution.

--William Provine, Academe January, 1987 p. 52

Provine's comments read like they were just plucked from yesterday's news. While he is definitely not a creationist or ID advocate (in fact, I believe he's an atheist...), he certainly knows how to talk straight about this issue.

Yet, in the midst of this debate, the architects of intelligent design are attempting to make the point that they are seeking to establish better science. IDers ask: is there any scientific evidence for an intelligent agent in the universe? They respond affirmatively, but they don't qualify that observation any further. They don't need to address who the intelligent agent is. They prefer to let their case rest on the obvious scientific evidence that intelligent design is ubiquitous in the natural world. But it is the implications of that evidence that clearly brings the duality sharply into focus.

The court in both McLean and Kitzmiller deliberately chose to ignore a rather significant body of evidence challenging the claim of "false duality" and "contrived dualism", including sworn testimony by expert witnesses and competent authorities on both sides in the fields of science, philosophy, and theology. Instead, they chose to side with the testimony of individuals, like Francisco Ayala, who stated that this duality is false.

*The idea that belief in a creator and acceptance of the scientific theory of evolution are mutually exclusive is a false premise and offensive to the religious views of many. (Hicks) Dr. Francisco Ayala, a geneticist of considerable reknown and a former Catholic priest who has the equivalent of a Ph.D. in theology, pointed out that many working scientists who subscribe to the theory of evolution are devoutly religious.*¹⁵

Such testimony notwithstanding, there are statements from other equally competent individuals who say otherwise. The courts have chosen to completely ignore those other statements, for inexplicable reasons (I could speculate, but I'll refrain from doing so here).

My question for the courts is: you've stated who you chose to side with on this issue, but you failed to justify your decision in view of the fact that other equally competent individuals make a contrary and equally valid claim. So, we know what side you chose, but you didn't give us a reasonable explanation why. So I have to ask: what compels you to choose the claim of experts who deny the reality of this alleged "false duality" over the claims of other experts who readily admit to it? How is the claim of one group of experts (who are not even ID advocates) any more legitimate than that of another equally competent group of experts? The courts need to explain why they seem to have made an arbitrary choice of which experts to rely on.

The fact in this matter is that many competent and qualified scientists, philosophers, theologians, and educators claim that this duality does exist. In fact, many individuals experience a great deal of difficulty in sorting out what they believe about evolution and ID because of the opposing views proclaimed on both sides. People don't generally struggle over a "false" or "contrived" duality.

I would suggest that the characterization of these clearly opposing views as a "contrived" or "false" duality is merely a convenience factor for the courts so that they can more easily dispense with this matter. If I were more cynical, I would even call it deliberately revisionist and prejudicially deliberate, because that's sure what it looks like.

Court Cases

(referenced in this segment)

Kitzmiller v. Dover School District, et al.

(Opinion+)

(Trial Transcripts)

Edwards v. Aquillard

McLean v. Arkansas

¹⁵ [McLean v Arkansas](#), footnote 23

It's time somebody called the courts on this blatant baloney - their refusal to acknowledge what is **clearly** an unjustified ruling on this matter of a "false duality" in both the McLean and Kitzmiller decisions.

Others Recognize the Legitimacy of the Duality

And do please also note that many of the people quoted below are just a small sampling of what can be obtained with just a little research. These comments are representative of what many influential science professionals say about such matters (so much for non-overlapping "[Magisteria](#)").

This duality was recognized as long ago as 1873 when Charles Lyell, the father of Modern Geology, stated as much in the last edition of his *Principles of Geology*:

*...in truth there are only as yet two rival hypotheses, between which we have our choice in regard to the origin of species – namely, first, that of special creation and secondly, that of creation by variation and natural selection.*¹⁶

Soren Lovtrup:

*There are two ways, fundamentally antithetic, to account for the occurrence of life on our planet. It may be the creation of God or some other supernatural power, or it may have arisen spontaneously in some relatively simple form of matter, being subsequently perfected in a process of organic evolution."*¹⁷

Thomas Huxley's brother Julian (1887-1975) was even more blunt:

*The sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a superhuman being is enormous.*¹⁸

Carl Sagan, whose legendary TV series 'COSMOS' has been recently resurrected, and has influenced millions of schoolchildren, has this to say:

*[the Sun] permits us to see. It fecundated the Earth. It is powerful beyond human experience. Birds greet the sunrise with an audible ecstasy. Even some one-celled organisms know to swim to the light. Our ancestors worshiped the Sun, and they were far from foolish ... If we must worship a power greater than ourselves, does it not make sense to revere the Sun and stars?*¹⁹

William Provine (Charles Alexander Professor of Biology at Cornell University), a science philosopher and historian, is perhaps one of the most outspoken on the matter of this alleged 'false duality'. He sees what the courts refuse to acknowledge on this issue, so I'll quote him rather extensively here:

¹⁶ Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, 11th ed., 2 vols (New York: D. Appleton, 1873) vol 2, p. 330

¹⁷ Soren Lovtrup, *Darwinism: The Refutation of a Myth*. New York: Croom Helm, 1987 – p. 5

¹⁸ Huxley, Julian. *Essays of a Humanist*, 1966, p. 223.

¹⁹ Sagan, Carl. *Cosmos*. 1980. New York: Random House, p. 243

*...you have to check your brains at the church-house door if you take modern evolutionary biology seriously. The implications of modern evolutionary biology are inescapable, just as the conclusion of an immense universe was inescapable when we shifted from a cozy geocentric view to the heliocentric conception of our solar system. Stated simply, evolutionary biology undermines the fundamental assumptions underlying ethical systems in almost all cultures, Western civilization in particular. The frequently made assertion that evolutionary biology and the Judeo-Christian traditions are fully compatible is false. The destructive implications of evolutionary biology extend far beyond the assumptions of organized religion to a much deeper and more pervasive belief, held by the vast majority of people: that non-mechanistic organizing design or forces are somehow responsible for the visible order of the physical universe, biological organisms and human moral order.*²⁰

*According to the unlikely coalition of scientists, jurists, educators, theologians, and religious leaders, the conflict between science and religion exists only in the naive, literalist minds of the creationists. Scientists testify that creation science is stupid and so is the literalist religion of the creationists. The federal courts and now even the Supreme Court (in Edwards v. Aguillard, 1987), say the same things. So do the religious leaders. Nearly half of the American public is being called stupid or at best misguided. I agree that evolution has occurred and that creationists are wrong about that. But they are right that there is a conflict between science and religion, and not only their religions. There is a real conflict. The problem is fundamental ... Most contemporary scientists, the majority of them by far, are atheists or something very close to that. And among evolutionary biologists, I would challenge the reader to name the prominent scientists who are "devoutly religious." I am skeptical that one could get beyond the fingers of one hand. Indeed, I would be interested to learn of a single one*²¹

*Of course, it is still possible to believe in both modern evolutionary biology and a purposive force, even the Judeo-Christian God. One can suppose that God started the whole universe or works through the laws of nature (or both). There is no contradiction between this or similar views of God and natural selection. But this view of God is also worthless. Called Deism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and considered equivalent to atheism then, it is no different now. A God or purposive force that merely starts the universe or works through the laws of nature has nothing to do with human morals, answers no prayers, gives no life everlasting, in fact does nothing whatsoever that is detectable. In other words, religion is compatible with modern evolutionary biology (and indeed all of modern science) if the religion is effectively indistinguishable from atheism.*²²

After studying evolution at the University of Chicago, Provine's

...belief in purposive design in nature disappeared for good. Evolution exhibited no sign whatever of purpose. Evolution just happens. I can remember that the pain of loss lasted less than a week. As the creationists claim, belief in modern evolution makes atheists of people.

²⁰ Provine, William. 1989. "Evolution and the Foundation of Ethics." *Science, Technology, and Social Progress*, pages 253-254. Edited by Steven Goldman

²¹ Provine, William. 1989. "Evolution and the Foundation of Ethics." *Science, Technology, and Social Progress*, pages 263-265. Edited by Steven Goldman

²² Provine, William. *Academe*. January 1987, pp.51-52

*One can have a religious view that is compatible with evolution only if the religious view is indistinguishable from atheism.*²³

Another atheist, Frank Zindler, remarked that:

*"The most devastating thing though, that biology did to Christianity was the discovery of biological evolution. Now that we know Adam and Eve never were real people, the central myth of Christianity is destroyed... If there never was an Adam and Eve, there never was an original sin. If there never was an original sin, there is no need of salvation. If there is no need of salvation, there is no need of a savior."*²⁴

Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey:

*Darwin's Dangerous Idea, the title of a recent book, could easily fool an unsuspecting browser at the local bookstore. One might expect that the author, Tufts University professor Daniel Dennett, wants to warn readers of the dangers of Darwinism. But in reality, Dennett hopes to persuade readers to embrace the "dangerous" implications of Darwin's theory. He argues that Darwinism, rightly understood, is a "universal acid" that dissolves away all traditional moral, metaphysical, and religious beliefs. For if human beings have evolved by material, purposeless causes, then there is no basis for believing in a God who created us and revealed moral truths. Dennett even suggests that traditional churches and rituals be relegated to "cultural zoos" for the amusement of onlookers.*²⁵

Eminent Harvard paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson taught that humanity

*...is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned. He is a state of matter, a form of life, a sort of animal, and a species of the Order Primates, akin nearly or remotely to all of life and indeed to all that is material.*²⁶

George Wald:

*"There are only two possibilities as to how life arose. One is spontaneous generation arising to evolution; the other is a supernatural creative act of God. There is no third possibility. Spontaneous generation, that life arose from non-living matter was scientifically disproved 120 years ago by Louis Pasteur and others. That leaves us with the only possible conclusion that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God. I will not accept that philosophically because I do not want to believe in God. Therefore, I choose to believe in that which I know is scientifically impossible; spontaneous generation arising to evolution."*²⁷

One of the most revered evolutionary biologists of the 20th Century, Ernst Mayr, explained that a key element of Darwinian evolution, natural selection, is in fact a substitute for the apparent design found in nature, noting that the

²³ William Provine. 1999. "No Free Will." *Isis*, 90:S117-S132.

²⁴ Taken from a debate with William Craig, "Atheism vs Christianity," Zondervan 1996. This is also found in *Creation Ex Nihilo* 20(1):32 Dec 97 - Feb 98.

²⁵ Colson, Chuck and Nancy Pearcey. *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale. 1999, p. 419

²⁶ Simpson, George Gaylord. 1970. *The Meaning of Evolution*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, p. 345

²⁷ Wald, G. The Origin of Life. *Scientific American* August, 1954 p. 44-53.

*...core of Darwinism... is the theory of natural selection. This theory is so important for the Darwinian because it permits the explanation of adaptation, the 'design' of the natural theologian, by natural means...*²⁸

This use of natural selection is what enables Darwinism to compete against the idea that there might be a Designer at work.

Michael Ruse

*My concern is that if Darwinism implies atheism (or even just the falsity of Christianity)—which seems to be the position of Crews and Coyne and is certainly the position of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and David Hull (to name 3 others who have written on these matters)—then, given the United States' constitutional separation of church and state, I simply do not see how one can legitimately teach Darwinism in state-supported schools in this country. I am not saying one should not be a Darwinian, I am not saying one should not be an atheist—I myself am a Darwinian and, if not an atheist, very skeptical about religious claims—but I am saying that if one links the two, seeing the latter as a consequence of the former, then our creationist opponents are absolutely right in saying that, inasmuch as we teach Darwinism, we are teaching a religious position. At the least, if one thinks that no breach of the science/religion wall is occurring, then it behooves us to show us why we are allowed to do it, and not creationists when they want to teach "intelligent design"*²⁹ (NCSE Reports? May-Aug, 2003, p. 14).

Douglas Futuyma:

*[the creationist] in contrast, believes that everything in the world, every species and every characteristic of every species, was designed by an intelligent, purposeful artificer, and that it was made for a purpose. Nowhere does this contrast apply with more force than to the human species. Some shrink from the conclusion that the human species was not designed, has no purpose, and is the product of mere material mechanism—but this seems to be the message of evolution.*³⁰

Futuyma adds

*Darwin's immeasurably important contribution to science was to show how mechanistic causes could also explain all the biological phenomena, despite their apparent evidence of design and purpose. By coupling undirected, purposeless variation to the blind, uncaring process of natural selection, Darwin made theological or spiritual explanations of the life processes superfluous.*³¹

Harvard zoologist Richard Lewontin states:

*We take the side of science **in spite of** the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, **in spite of** its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promise of health and life, **in spite of** the tolerance of the scientific community for just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to*

²⁸ Ernst Mayr, Foreword, Michael Ruse. Darwinism Defended xi-xii (1982).

²⁹ Ruse, Michael. 2003. citation is currently being verified

³⁰ Futuyma, Douglas. 1983. *Science on Trial*. (New York: Pantheon Books), p. 12-13

³¹ Futuyma, Douglas. 1998. *Evolutionary Biology*, 3rd ed. (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc.), p. 5

*create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. (emphasis added)*³²

Clearly, Lewontin's philosophical worldview takes precedence over whatever the evidence of science might indicate. There can hardly be a more succinct or clear articulation of that in what he says here. He is saying, in essence, that we will adhere to our "commitment to materialism" ***in spite of*** anything to the contrary. Now, that is one of the best explanations one could ever hope to read about the religious faith many scientists adhere to. So, are we looking

The Encyclopedia Britannica asserts that

*Darwin did two things: he showed that evolution was a fact contradicting scriptural legends of creation, and that its cause, natural selection, was automatic with no room for divine guidance or design.*³³

Sterelny notes

*Dawkins and Gould agree on much that matters. They agree that all life, including human life, has evolved over the last 4 billion years from one or a few ancestors, and that those first living things probably resembled living bacteria in their most crucial respects. They agree that this process has been wholly natural; no divine hand, no spooky interloper, has nudged the process one way or another. They agree that chance has played a crucial role in determining the cast of life's drama. In particular, there is nothing inevitable about the appearance of humans, or of anything like humans: the great machine of evolution has no aim or purpose.*³⁴

Jacob Weisberg, writing for [Slate](#), kicked out a resounding essay on this topic where he notes in part:

*That evolution erodes religious belief seems almost too obvious to require argument. It destroyed the faith of Darwin himself, who moved from Christianity to agnosticism as a result of his discoveries and was immediately recognized as a huge threat by his reverent contemporaries. In reviewing The Origin of Species in 1860, Samuel Wilberforce, the bishop of Oxford, wrote that the religious view of man as a creature with free will was "utterly irreconcilable with the degrading notion of the brute origin of him who was created in the image of God." (The passage is quoted in Daniel C. Dennett's superb book Darwin's Dangerous Idea.)*³⁵

Even Plaintiff's expert witness, Dr. Ken Miller, knows full well that this is not a 'false duality', as he and co-author Levine note about Darwin:

³² Richard Lewontin, [Billions and Billions of Demons](#), The New York Review of Books, January 9, 1997, p. 31.

³³ The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition – 1973-74.

³⁴ Sterelny, Kim. 2001. *Dawkins vs. Gould: Survival of the Fittest*. (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books), p. 4

³⁵ Weisberg, Jacob. [Evolution vs. Religion: Quite pretending they're compatible](#). Slate, August 10, 2005.

...accepting his theory required believing in philosophical materialism, the conviction that matter is the stuff of all existence and that all mental and spiritual phenomena are its by-products. Darwinian evolution was not only purposeless but also heartless—a process in which the rigors of nature ruthlessly eliminate the unfit. Suddenly, humanity was reduced to just one more species in a world that cared nothing for us. The great human mind was no more than a mass of evolving neurons. Worst of all, there was no divine plan to guide us. These realizations troubled Darwin deeply, for in his day, materialism was even more outrageous than evolution. Some scholars speculate that fear of being branded a heretic for his materialism contributed to Darwin's 21-year delay in publishing his theory.³⁶

Dean H. Kenyon, one of the Co-authors of *Pandas and People*, submitted an affidavit for *Edwards v. Aguillard*, where he states in part:

10. Sole Alternative to Scientific Explanations. *It is not only my professional opinion but that of many leading evolutionist scientists, at present and in the past, that creation-science and evolution are the sole scientific alternative scientific explanations, although each includes a variety of approaches. Either plants and animals evolved from one or more initial living forms (biological evolution), or they were created (biological creation). Either the first life evolved from nonliving molecules (biochemical evolution), or it was created (biochemical creation). Either the universe evolved from the big bang or other initial state (cosmic evolution), or it was created (cosmic creation). Although some individuals hold to "theistic evolution" and other viewpoints, either these viewpoints are approaches under evolution or creation-science or they combine elements of evolution with elements of creation-science.*³⁷

Jeffrey Addicott concludes

*If solid empirical evidence for Darwin's claim is so lacking, thoughtful students can hardly fail to pose to themselves the question, what makes the theory of evolution so successful an idea? In answer to this perplexing question, one might assert that the phenomenon of acceptance ... is propelled to some degree by a deep-seated urge to formulate a non-religious model to explain the appearance of all living things through natural laws. With the establishment of a natural law model such as Darwinism, it is invariably true that **only ideas or theories based on natural principles will be accepted.***³⁸ (emphasis added)

And of course, no consideration of this topic would be complete without allowing the unflappable Richard Dawkins to speak:

*I could not imagine being an atheist at any time before 1859, when... *Origin of Species* was published ... Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist*³⁹

*In a universe of blind physical forces ... 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. ...DNA neither cares nor knows. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.*⁴⁰

³⁶ Levine, Joseph S. and Kenneth R. Miller. 1994. *Biology: Discovering Life*. 2nd Edition. (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company), p. 161

³⁷ *Edwards v. Aguillard* – [affidavit of Dean H. Kenyon](#), filed on September 17, 1984.

³⁸ *Storm Clouds on the Horizon of Darwinism: Teaching the Anthropic Principle and Intelligent Design in the Public Schools*, by Jeffrey E. Addicott in *Ohio State Law Journal*, Vol. 63 No. 6 (2002) p. 1531

³⁹ Dawkins, Richard. *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design*. New York: Norton. 1986, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰ Dawkins, Richard. *River out of Eden*. London. Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1995, p. 132-33.

It is absolutely safe to say that, if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)"⁴¹

Dawkins, incidentally, wrote a letter to his young 10-year old daughter. It closes with the following remarks:

"It's not easy for you to do anything because you are only 10. But you could try this. Next time somebody tells you something that sounds important, think to yourself, 'Is this the kind of thing that people probably know because of evidence or is it the kind of thing that people only believe because of tradition, authority or revelation?' And next time somebody tells you that something is true, why not say to them, 'What kind of evidence is there for that?' And if they can't give you a good answer, I hope you'll think very carefully before you believe a word they say. Your loving Daddy."⁴²

Those words could not be more aptly spoken by someone trying to teach his child to beware of the dangers from those who proclaim Darwinism to be true.

Closing Comments

Clearly, comments like these illustrate with a resounding voice the existence of the duality the Kitzmiller court and others claim doesn't exist. In view of the many comments I've cited here, and the relative ease with which they may be found, I would ask this question: How can the finding of the Kitzmiller court on this matter be anything other than contrived or capricious? On what basis can this court credibly maintain that the notion of only 'two possible explanations for life' is a "false duality" when it is so widely recognized as a clearly genuine duality for well over 130 years – even by anti-ID scientists?

Finally, why is all this important?

1. *Because it establishes the legitimacy of the claim that teaching the controversy is reasonable.* First, It might not be so reasonable if other options explaining the origin and evolution of life existed – but there really are none. ID isn't just an idea on the "fringe" of science – it has always been the antithesis of Darwinism.

2. *Because the vast majority of Americans reject the notion that life evolved through naturalistic processes.* To suggest that the majority of Americans are simply ignorant concerning science or that science is not adjudicated on a democratic basis is beside the point. The point is, there are only two clear choices in this matter, and they are widely recognized by the vast majority of people on this planet, including both ID advocates and evolutionists. There is scientific evidence for ID, and that's what most Americans want our public

⁴¹ Dawkins, Richard. *The New York Times review of Blueprints*, April 9, 1989.

⁴² Dawkins, Richard. [*The Devil's Chaplain*](#). London. Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 2003, p. 243.

schools to teach. Therefore, both views require consideration to provide students with an accurate rendering of this vital issue.

3. *Because it underscores what our children will be taught if only one view (Darwinism) is presented to them.* To require our children to be subjected to the influence of a single ideological concept such as Darwinsim, under the now court sanctioned equivalent of the old Catholic *Imprimatur* (only in this instance, we're talking about a situation where the state unjustifiably promotes, defends, and supports Darwinism under the heading of 'scientific' orthodoxy) is unconscionable and contrary to the spirit of protections that opponents of ID expect the courts to uphold on their behalf. Evolutionists don't want ID brought into the schools because it's not good science, they claim. Well, what about the Darwinism, which relies more on speculation than fact? Why do advocates of ID rate the short shrift? Our courts need to investigate this matter a whole lot better than was done in Kitzmiller, which merely produced a rubber-stamped ACLU verdict.

If we require our students to read material developed by an avowed atheist like James Watson, who is also very openly antagonistic towards 'religion', should we not then bar his publications from our science classrooms lest he infect our children with his anti-religious teachings? He even openly admits that the very motivation for doing his work was to put religious people in their place. Do we really think there won't be any influential message for our kids embedded in the 'scientific' theories created by a man who proudly boasts of his hostility for the idea of a creator?

Using the ambiguous 'teaching' approach taken in Kitzmiller, if the Dover Disclaimer can be said to project all of the horrible and inappropriate things the Kitzmiller court claims ⁴³, then I'm pretty sure we can easily go on our own witch hunt and identify issues that are equally offensive and inappropriate for the children in Dover public schools that are hostile to their 'religious' values. And that is impermissible, according to the First Amendment. I would therefore submit that the Kitzmiller opinion erred significantly on this point, and should reverse itself (fat chance, huh?). For in the end, Darwinism teaches our kids that everything happened by chance, purposeless processes. No intelligence was required to produce the complexity and 'apparent' design we see in life. To say, as the court in Kitzmiller did, that no such duality exists won't hold water in the end.

Any teacher of evolution is by default a teacher of a deeply philosophical world-view, one that differs dramatically from that of traditional theistic religion.

-- [William Provine](#)

⁴³ [Kitzmiller Opinion](#), p.39-50

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Additional Reading on this topic:

BLOG: Petty Larseny: [Why Intelligent Design Still Lives](#)
Inside: Response to Slate's Will Saeton article - [Is Creationism Destructible?](#)

CHEN, Samuel. [Kitzmiller v Dover: The Truth Behind the Politics](#)

DEMBSKI, William A. [Rebuttal to Reports by Opposing Expert Witnesses.](#)

MONTON, Bradley. [Is Intelligent Design Science? Dissecting the Dover Decision.](#)

