

Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, a Darwinist?

George A. Reisch
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Most scientists and philosophers of science find creationism and intelligent design theory (ID) tedious and frustrating. One reason why is illustrated by the famous scene in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in which King Arthur encounters the Black Knight—the tall, sinister warrior who guards his bridge and refuses to let Arthur and his entourage cross. Arthur tries to reason with him, but the Knight stands firm: “None shall pass!” So, Arthur brandishes his sword, engages the Knight in combat, and slices off his arm. As Arthur prepares to cross the bridge in victory, however, the Knight surprises Arthur by refusing to admit that he’s been beaten. “Tis, but a scratch,” he says. “A scratch?,” Arthur exclaims. “Your arm’s off!” “I’ve had worse,” the Knight says and goads Arthur back into combat. “Come on, you pansy!”

Arthur obliges and lops off the Knight’s remaining arm, and then his legs. Now reduced to a stumpy fountain of blood, the Knight still believes that victory is his—if only Arthur and his entourage would return to fight honorably. “Oh, I see. Running away, eh? You yellow bastards!” Arthur cannot make sense of it. Why would his limbless combatant pretend to be so ferocious? “What are you going to do?,” he asks him. “*Bleed* on me?”

Scientific creationism seems like the Black Knight. After a century of defeats in science and in the courts, the movement is bleeding profusely. Yet it continues to find defenders who, like the Black Knight, don’t acknowledge that they’ve got no legs. Any day now, they tell us, they will emerge triumphant, their defeats of the past will be overcome, and a new kind of supernatural biology will be born. Those philosophers and scientists who avoid or ridicule creationism, they say, are just delaying the inevitable. They’re just Darwinian pansies running away from a good, honest, scientific controversy.

All this taunting is doubly unfortunate. First, unlike John Cleese’s performance as the Black Knight, it’s not funny. Second, it’s a reminder of how poorly most Americans understand science and its methods. The very idea that one could advance the science of biology by consulting the Bible or speculating about how some supernatural, intelligent something or other designed a bacterial flagellum is as silly as the Black Knight’s conviction that, even limbless, victory is his. Like Arthur, scientists and philosophers of science are befuddled. Many have published scholarly books and articles attempting to diagnose on scientific or philosophical terms this or that fallacy or misunderstanding that seems to enable creationism’s hopes and claims.

Something Completely Different

But philosophers and scientists are wrong to construe creationism as some *mélange* of scientific or philosophical mistakes. Mistakes are involved, no doubt. But creationism is not essentially,

nor even largely, a scientific or intellectual movement. Years ago, in a review of a book by Carl Sagan, Richard Lewontin suggested that creationism, unlike the battle between the forces of science and ignorance that Sagan took it to be, is “an example of historical, regional, and class differences in culture that could only be understood in the context of American social history.” It is driven not by ignorance of science but rather by regional and powerful desires to resist, and perhaps dismantle, the power and influence of cultural and intellectual elites, experts, and educators. Lewontin is right, I believe, but his analysis must be carried further if it to illuminate the latest phase of creationist thought and activism, the ID movement.

Lewontin notes that postwar creationism was nurtured by the reform of biology curricula undertaken in the late 1950s by the National Science Foundation’s Biological Sciences Curriculum Study. “Suddenly Darwinian evolution was being taught to children everywhere.” For many, that meant “the elite culture was now extending its domination by attacking the control that families had maintained over the ideological formation of their children.”¹ The result was the creation science movement that set its sights on achieving “equal time” or “balanced treatment” alongside evolutionary theory in high school biology classrooms.

The ID movement, however, is not merely creation science warmed over. It is a very different project that utilizes many of the strategies and tactics of the highly successful anticommunist movement in the early 1950s. Anticommunism, too, rested on America’s long, arguably cyclic, history of anti-intellectualism, anti-elitism, and theism. Only if one did not trust federal administrators in the first place, it would seem, could one have easily believed Senator Joseph McCarthy’s claim that some 205 “card carrying communists” were then working in the State Department. Only if one already doubted the patriotism of the nation’s college professors could one have taken seriously J. Edgar Hoover’s crypto-sexual warning that “You, the college student are the rich earth which the Communist conspirator hopes to till. Your mind is the soil in which he hopes to implant alien seed.”²

It may seem like a stretch to connect ID, which claims to be narrowly and scientifically concerned with evolutionary theory, with widespread fears about Godless communism some 50 years ago. But similar connections abound in American history. The volatile words “under God” in the pledge of allegiance were added in 1954 at the height of the red scare when America, as then President Dwight Eisenhower put it, needed to “strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war.” The BSCS reforms that led to the inclusion of evolutionary theory in biology textbooks were similarly part the National Defense Education Act, a cold-war campaign to vitalize American science education and catch up to the Sputnik-savvy Russians.

The connection does have some twists, however. In the late 1950s, America looked to science education to help save us from the Russians. In the literature of ID, however, science is the enemy and it is your local college biology teacher (not your local union organizer) who schemes to erode the values and core beliefs of American life. And it was those pesky communists who infiltrated public office only by hiding, the charge went, their true allegiance to Moscow. This is a play the creationists have taken from the communists as “stealth” candidates bring up the idea of evolution-is-just-a-theory stickers for textbooks only after they have been elected to local school boards.

Outsiders, Elites, and Lawyers

But these twists and ironies should not obscure the main parallels between the rhetoric and strategies of the ID movement and the anticommunist movement that reconfigured the American political landscape after the second world war. One is broad popular support. Anticommunism thrived in part because it was embraced by the nation's highly patriotic veterans. Investigations of suspicious individuals often began when a letter from an American Legion post arrived at Hoover's desk and raised questions about an individual or an organization. Similarly the ID movement takes itself to represent both the popular Christian values of the majority of Americans and their nagging doubts about evolution and how it is taught to their children. Like those who supported get-tough tactics against communists, they worry that their cherished values and ways of life are being undermined by an effective, clever, and unfairly powerful minority.

In the case of the postwar red scare, these popular fears and worries were channeled into national policy by lawyers. Joseph McCarthy, Richard Nixon, Martin Dies, Pat McCarran, Roy Cohn and Hoover himself, the most powerful anticommunists in Washington during the 1950s, were lawyers who sustained the anticommunist frenzy by skillfully orchestrated the press, their constituencies, and other officials. They knew, in particular, how to identify and attack their targets' assumptions, how to put their opponents on the defensive, how to play defendants off each other by demanding that they "name names," and the withering social and professional ostracism that often came to those publicly asked, "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?"

Enter Philip E. Johnson, the founder (most adherents seem to agree) of the contemporary ID movement. Johnson is a University of California professor of law who in the early 1990s inaugurated ID's lawyerly, inquisitorial approach to Darwinism with his book *Darwin on Trial*.³ The approach revived a movement that languished under (at least) two formidable problems. One was the defeats in the 1980s, in Arkansas (*McLean v. Arkansas*, 1982) and Louisiana (*Edwards v. Aguillard*, 1987), through which the courts ruled that creation science was essentially religious, and not scientific, and that it therefore had no valid claim to be included in biology curricula. The second was disarray within creationism, riddled as it is with factions which sharply disagree about the when's, where's, why's, and how's of God's universe creation. Unlike science's disagreements, moreover, these differences concern salvation, sin, and other theological specifics about which, you might say, disagreement is rampant.

Johnson cleaned house by reducing the claims of creationism to one about which all disputants can agree: something, sometime, somehow created at least some sorts of living things. That something is the "intelligent designer" standing at the center of ID and about whom its advocates have notoriously little to say. This official vagueness about the intelligent designer, in turn, helped Johnson and his followers create a new kind of creationism, one that aims to be rigorously scientific in its claims and, at the same time, well-distanced from the transparently religious and biblical orientation of 1980's-style creation science. Rather than rallying behind substantive claims about floods and arks and days of cosmic toil, that is, ID assiduously keeps the spotlight away from creationism and its factions. Instead it attacks the supposition of evolutionary biology that life's intricate wonders evolved naturally over time without various

metaphysical interventions by supernatural agents. Here the writings and lectures of Michael Behe take center stage. Behe, a trained molecular biochemist who works at a reputable university, argues that mechanistic, natural processes simply could not have given rise to complex organs like eyes or bacterial flagella.

The last of Johnson's innovations was the "wedge" strategy which is designed to hold together ID's intellectual and popular constituencies. These scientific claims that natural, evolutionary forces could never have led to the formation of complicated, living organisms, operate like the thin, sharp edge of a log splitter. Without making any appeals to the Bible or Jesus or the identity of the intelligent designer, that is, it stands ready to pry its way into high school biology classes in the form of a valid, substantial scientific critique ("teach the controversy") of evolutionary theory. Once ID has found its way into curricula, however, then the Darwinian hegemony can be further pried apart to make room for the wide end of the wedge, the cultural and social values of creationists.⁴

The Darwinian Menace

Johnson's arguments against Darwinism are familiar from the red scare of the 1950s. Anticommunists found great success by polarizing debate and demanding that their opponents locate themselves in a framework of stark, exclusive dichotomies. In the 1950s, one was either a freedom-loving American patriot or a communist seeking to undermine American democracy from within. The anticommunist investigator told his target, in effect, "you're either with us or against us—which is it?" The strategy draws firm lines, eliminates gray areas, and forces one's enemy into the open.

Johnson is also eager to polarize debate over the ID movement:

The bitter debate over whether "creation" or "intelligent design" may be considered as a possibility in scientific discourse is no minor matter. Behind it lies one of the most important questions of human existence: Did God create Man, or did Man create God? Theism - whether Christian, Jewish, or Islamic - proclaims the former. Scientific naturalism, the philosophy of contemporary natural science, proclaims the latter.⁵

There is no middle ground. Darwinism looms in Johnson's writings as a belief system that is utterly different—and therefore maximally threatening—to creationists and theists. He regularly refers to opinion polls and reminds his readers that theists and creationists far outnumber naturalists and atheists in the United States. And since everyone must take a side in this cosmic struggle, those naturalists in the minority can easily be seen as actively opposed to the God-fearing, American values of the majority. If you don't easily see that, Johnson will remind you in his many publications by saying, for example, "Some of the most famous biologists went into biology because they want to banish any idea that God is the Creator of life."⁶

Not unlike the red menace that Hoover described and fought against during his tenure at the FBI, the Darwinian menace in Johnson's eyes is totalitarian. It seeks not only to attack and banish specific beliefs about the existence of God or the manner of God's interventions in the history of

life. It seeks total intellectual and cultural control of America. As Johnson puts it, “when a scientific elite claims exclusive authority to decide what is ‘real,’ it is asserting control over science, religion, philosophy and every other area of thought.”⁷

The False and Robot Prophets of Naturalism

Communists also were widely perceived to be seeking control over all aspects of modern life. Their main technique for gaining this power, it was believed, was to work inside American institutions, such as government, journalism, and, entertainment. However, as Hoover’s warning to college students suggests, and Ellen Schrecker’s research has documented, American universities became a lively front in the war on communism.⁸ As faculty around the country were investigated, debates about “academic freedom” took place in political magazines like *Partisan Review* and *New Leader*, and popular magazines like *Look*.

The controversy coalesced around the institution and concept of academic freedom. This was because it was believed that communists sought to *brainwash* or *indoctrinate* American students. Even faculty who were not actively communist, such as those who discussed it or analyzed it sympathetically, were thought to be unfit to teach because they were losing, or perhaps had already lost, their ability to think freely and critically. They had been brainwashed and taken over by a foreign influence—either the ideology of communism itself or perhaps the machinations of friends, family, or colleagues who had already succumbed. As University of Washington President Raymond Allen put it when defending the academic firings that resulted, such faculty had joined the ranks of the “false and robot prophets of communism” whose defense of Marx or criticisms of American capitalism had the mechanical, robotic, soul-less quality that came to be popularized in movies such as *The Manchurian Candidate* or, more allegorically, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.⁹

The real agent of this thought-control, it was believed, was the philosophy of dialectical materialism—that hybrid of Hegel and Marx that construes nature and history as a creative, progressive struggle of opposing, material forces. God, Engels famously claimed, plays the role of an opiate comforting those who can’t handle, or refuse to see, the struggles of class as they play out. Those who did see them, on the other hand, were easily recognizable and thought to be drunk on the loopy, undefeatable logic of dialectical materialism. It could explain everything in the hands of a true believer, especially why your personal views were incorrect, blind or a mere manifestation of bad faith if you happened to disagree with communism.

From Johnson’s perspective, Darwinism has a similar philosophical sidekick. He calls it “naturalism” and argues relentlessly that it controls scientists’ minds. It forces them to analyze, explain, and predict phenomena exclusively by appeal to entities and processes recognized in nature or in our public, everyday experience of the world. They are trapped in something like a dialectical materialist mental straight-jacket, a powerful, self-reinforcing logic that blinds Darwinists to those obvious truths (about the role of design or God in nature, say) that everyone but naturalism-intoxicated scientists find obvious:

When Darwinists affirm that natural selection has the kind of creative power formerly attributed to God, they are describing not what the evidence shows but what their naturalistic philosophy demands.

The neo-Darwinian synthesis is the most plausible naturalistic and materialistic theory for the development of complex life that persons philosophically committed to excluding the Creator from the Cosmos have been able to invent.¹⁰

Variants of this psycho-metaphysical indictment appear throughout Johnson's writings about Darwinism: the otherwise good and honest science of biology has been invaded by a materialistic, Godless, metaphysical intruder that now holds tightly in its grip the minds of all our nation's scientists (except for Behe, and a couple others).

The Innocent and the Willing

During the cold war, the urgent task was to keep the ideological invader at bay. We had to brace ourselves to resist its seductions and dutifully take due note of those who had lapsed. Victims fell into different categories. Some became active and aggressive conspirators who sought to foist their ideology on others. That is why, Hoover emphasized, "*the fight against communism is the responsibility of all*. The communists exploit our apathy, indifference, and unconcern."¹¹ Johnson similarly preaches vigilance by his own example. "It's my job to spot hidden philosophies," Johnson told one interviewer. "That is what a good law professor does."¹²

Other victims remained unaware that they had succumbed. "Since communists realize they are not welcome in American Society," Hoover explained, their influence "is transmitted, time after time, by a belt of concealed members, sympathizers, and dupes."¹³ As a result, "the paradoxical situation arises that noncommunists, who actually have no sympathy with communism, are manipulated to support its objectives."¹⁴ Johnson sees the same dynamic in play, since Darwinism itself is a kind of front, "a scientific prop for scientific naturalism." And he feels very bad for the innocent who have been co-opted: "If I could have one wish it would be for a fair opportunity to persuade the real scientists that the Darwinists are taking advantage of them."¹⁵

The most urgent, primary task, however, is to protect the vulnerable, the *potential* victims, the young. Here the tragedy is that students are twice deceived in their biology classes. First, under the pretense of education, they are actually being indoctrinated and recruited into the cult of Darwinian naturalism: "The problem is that [Darwinism] is being taught dogmatically. It's being used to indoctrinate students rather than to inform them."¹⁶ On top of that, their sacred religious beliefs are stripped away. For "the point of Darwinism," after all, "is not to describe molecular relationships but to get rid of the Designer and substitute the Blind Watchmaker." Where individual communists took their orders from Party officers higher up in the chain of command, biology teachers are interconnected by their professional organizations. These, too, are part of the anti-creationist conspiracy. Johnson writes that "the science education organizations are engaged in a campaign of indoctrination against the concept of creation."¹⁷

Darwin-speak

How do Darwinists get away with all this? Like the communists, they twist and distort language to their own purposes. As the title of one of Hoover's books put it, communists were "masters of deceit." They used "roundabout or elusive words to conceal the Party's real intentions of violence—words which the 'initiated' fully understand in their Marxist-Leninist meanings while the general public is fooled."¹⁸ "When they are speaking for public consumption," Hoover noted, "communists do not mean what they say."¹⁹

Darwinists are also expert, Johnson says, in the "verbal manipulations and circular reasoning by which naturalism retains its power." In the beginning of his essay, "What is Darwinism?," he warns his readers about precisely this:

I should warn at the outset, however, that using words clearly is not the innocent and peaceful activity most of us may have thought it to be. There are powerful vested interests in this area which can thrive only in the midst of ambiguity and confusion. Those who insist on defining terms precisely and using them consistently may find themselves regarded with suspicion and hostility.²⁰

These linguistic tricks can be exported into museum pedagogy, as well. One exhibit Johnson describes involves magnifying glasses mounted over "tiny animals or fossils." In this way,

Unsophisticated museum visitors are likely to get the impression that the invisible common ancestors are known to science, but just a little too small for the naked eye to see. By such means even a spectacular example of absence of evidence for evolution can be transformed into evidence for evolution.²¹

Indeed, according to Johnson, "Darwinists pursue a steady campaign of disinformation"²² using all the tools at their disposal—institutional, linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological—to confuse their enemies and indoctrinate the weak and the young. And, as Johnson knows first hand, they viciously attack those who get too close to the inner workings of their conspiracy.

The Tragedy of Stephen Jay Gould

Much of Johnson's conspiratorial logic is manifest in his dispute with the late Stephen Jay Gould, the prominent evolutionary theorist who popularized evolution to a very broad audience. None of Johnson's other prominent targets, say Richard Dawkins, William Provine, or Lewontin, excite and agitate him as much as Gould. It is tempting to suppose that Johnson simply smarted from Gould's withering review of Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* in which Gould compared the book to a conceptual fart, "scarcely more than an acrid little puff."²³

But Johnson says he was not upset about Gould's review. It was rather Gould's unique role in science that captured Johnson's attention. For Gould was one of the most powerful Darwinists alive in the 1980s and 90s when Johnson began his crusade. If it were possible that Gould actually had doubts about Darwinism and naturalism, Johnson surely recognized, Gould could have become a tremendous ally—a world-famous, Ivy league-Darwinist able to proclaim with authority and prestige that naturalism, evolution's false God, had failed.

Was it possible? Johnson apparently convinced himself that it was. For Gould was as a vocal critic of certain conventional wisdom's in evolutionary science—about adaptationism, about the pace and timing of evolution, and about evolutionary progress. These are relatively esoteric debates, none of which tells against Darwinism or naturalism. In Johnson's eyes, however, all scientific debate must return to the fundamental question he has introduced into his kangaroo court—"Did God create Man, or did Man create God?" And all persons must line up on one side or the other of this urgent, pressing question. Since Gould had disagreements with his co-conspirators inside the Darwinian establishment, there was no mistaking the possibility: Gould was ready to defect for the lord.

So, when Johnson learned that the famous Stephen Jay Gould would be reviewing his book, he surely hoped that Gould would recognize it as a friendly, reassuring hand reaching into Gould's darkness, as a clear signal that conspiracy had finally been exposed. Gould could finally exhale, let the teetering edifice of Darwinism fall, and perhaps eventually find his way back to honest, old-fashioned science. But Gould wouldn't budge. In fact, Gould's terrible review of the book, Johnson tells his readers, is best understood as an illustration of how Darwinists use "all their institutional power to ensure that critics do not get a fair hearing."²⁴

That does not mean Johnson is personally angry or bitter. As he got close enough to see the machinery of the anti-creationist, anti-theistic conspiracy grinding away, he also caught a glimpse of Gould's humanity and the psychological price Gould surely had to pay as he struggled "to keep the outside world from becoming aware of the serious intellectual difficulties"²⁵ inside Darwinism. Indeed, as Johnson see it, Gould's ridicule of *Darwin on Trial* had nothing to do with the quality and credibility of the book and everything to do with Johnson's expose which, in hindsight, seems even more on target. After all, as Johnson reminds us, "people who resort to ridicule are often covering up something."²⁶

In the 1950s, many said similar things about communists who had succumbed not because they set out to destroy America but only because they were emotionally unbalanced or confused. (Gabriel Almond in his 1954 best seller *The Appeals of Communism* called the condition "neurotic susceptibility"). Johnson describes Gould in similar, sympathetic terms:

Having to defend a dead theory tooth and nail can hardly be a satisfying activity, and it is no wonder that Gould lashes out with fury at people such as myself, who calls attention to his predicament. I do not mean to ridicule Gould, however, because I have a genuinely high regard for the man as one of the few Darwinists who has recognized the major problems with the theory and reported them honestly. His tragedy is that he cannot admit the clear implications of his own thought without effectively resigning from science."²⁷

Gould could have taken a different path. But now that he is gone, his tragedy is complete. Other leaders of evolutionary theory will continue to defend Darwinism and scoff at ID. But Johnson knows that the game they play cannot go on too much longer: "I am confident that unbiased investigation will eventually undermine the monolithic materialism of the biological research community" And once that happens, Johnson reassures us, we need never fear again that

scientists will fall under naturalism's dark spell. "Once the light is in the world," he writes, "we know that the darkness can never put it out."²⁸

Darwinism, Naturalism, and Beyond

If we take seriously these parallels and connections between the red menace and the Darwinist menace, we must revise some conventional beliefs and expectations about creationism and the ID movement. The most obvious lesson is that ID, especially when its base of supporters are taken into account, embraces concerns that range far beyond technical issues about evidence, methods, and epistemology in science. Johnson does not hide this fact. When writing for popular Christian audiences, he admits that his fight is not only against Darwinism and naturalism. It is also against "modernism" which holds that "truth is relative to particular interpretive communities, who interpret texts by standards valid only for them." Because of modernism (though others would call it "postmodernism" or relativism) Johnson says that there is "growing doubt that there is any such thing as objective truth."²⁹

Relativism about truth and morality was also one of Hoover's targets. "Communists," Hoover explained,

completely reject not only the traditional Judaeo-Christian concept of morality, with its objective standards of what is right and what is wrong, but also the very idea itself that there can be any objective standard of morality. By the standards of Communist morality, nothing is absolute, final, or sacred—except communism itself.³⁰

Hoover and Johnson also share a tendency to inject sexuality and sexual imagery into their polemics so as to further outrage and agitate their audiences. Alongside the popular saying that "there is a red hiding under every bed," and Hoover's breathless warnings that college students must protect themselves against ideological seed, Johnson now worries about modernism and the scourge of teenage sexuality (where he speaks not of "birth control" but rather "condoms" as the wrong solution to "the problem of teen pregnancy.") He also employs one of Hoover's favorite verbs, to penetrate (as in communism's relentless *penetration* of government, civic groups, and churches).³¹ Johnson writes of the alarming "penetration of the church by a non-Christian philosophy." This "modernist penetration," he notes, "is most dangerous when its philosophical roots are concealed."³²

The point is not only that Johnson portrays and attacks Darwinism as a broad, cultural project similar to the manner in which Hoover portrayed communism, or that Johnson presses the same *kinds* of emotional, moral, and sexual buttons that anticommunists pressed to help propel anticommunism through the cold war. Rather, Hoover's and Johnson's campaigns substantively converge in a shared image of an ideal world that is created and continuously attended by a powerful god. Hoover explained that "*basic in the fight against communism is a faith in things spiritual*, in a creative and loving God Who is interested in the universe He has brought into being"³³ and he blasted "dialectical and historical materialism, which arbitrarily excludes all convictions based on faith in God and the theistic interpretation of life." (90) Make that "the

theistic interpretation of *life's history*” and we have in Hoover’s anticommunism not only the logic and style, but also the substantive goal, of Johnson’s crusade on behalf of ID.

Intellectuals stand to lose much if this crusade becomes as successful as cold war anticommunism. College professors during the cold war were generally unable to resist campus anticommunism partly because their skills, honed in theoretical discussions and seminar rooms, were more or less useless for defending one’s self against suspicions about one’s character and patriotism. As University of Chicago President Robert Hutchins explained it in 1954, since “it is now almost as bad to be ‘controversial’ as it is to be a spy or a traitor,” “if you want to get rid of a teacher,” you need simply “make loud charges against him” and create a controversy.³⁴ Intellectuals largely capitulated to this intimidation, depoliticized their research and teaching, and avoided the day’s “controversial” topics in their syllabi. Fields such as philosophy, sociology, economics, and history were transformed if only because Marxism, which strongly influenced research and thinking in the 1930s and 40s, became suddenly taboo.

The kind of “paradigm shift” or mid-course turn away from naturalism that Johnson and other ID proponents call for seems not so very far-fetched in light of how successfully anticommunism purged and restructured the American academy. I cannot say whether Johnson and others *consciously* model their campaign on mid-century anticommunism. But there is little doubt that, one way or another, they have adopted logical and rhetorical strategies that anticommunism found to be effective. As far as the teaching of evolution in high schools goes, these techniques are leading the ID movement to a similar, if preliminary, kind of success. Eugenie Scott, who watches national trends closely from the National Center for Science Education, agrees that “tensions are so high that many teachers across the nation simply avoid evolution altogether.”³⁵

What the Black Knight Knows

Why did the Black Knight, as his limbs began to pile around him, resort to insults and aspersions about Arthur’s character, masculinity, and honor? It may seem merely an act of desperation, an effort to save face and insist that his morality and character, unlike his body, remain supreme above those of his opponent. But from this larger social and political perspective, the maneuver is a shrewd bid to enlist the help of all those *other* Black Knights around the Kingdom who are sick and tired of being told what to do and what to believe by Arthur in all his smug, self-importance.

What the Black Knight knows, that is, along with Hoover and Johnson, is that social and political movements can make progress by engaging popular fears and insecurities that simmer invisibly and below the stated topics of debate and controversy. To make the connection, the crusader must often get personal and deftly transform political, civic debates about policy, economics, and government (in Hoover’s case) or metaphysical presuppositions about naturalism (in Johnson’s case) into specific questions about loyalty, character, and morality that will grab the attention of the masses. Johnson does this by first attacking a scientific theory of evolution and, second, leading his many readers into the conspiratorial depths of naturalism where the story moves away from the technicalities of epistemology and evidence and toward the drama and intrigue of actual people—professors, lab workers, philosophers, writers, and high school teachers—who actively aid and abet the Darwinian menace.

So while the Black Knight was defeated and left alone with his anger—“Come back here and take what's coming to you. I'll bite your legs off!” he screams at Arthur—Johnson knows (and reminds his readers often) that they are a plural majority. And he knows that the story he tells them about the depravity and danger of evolutionary theory is one they may all relish getting their teeth into.

¹ Lewontin, Richard. Review of Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. *New York Times Book Review*, January 9, 1997.

² McCarthy's accusation launched him into a national spotlight. It was delivered to the Republican Women's Club of Wheeling, West Virginia. The number of communists he cited varied, and shrank, in the media firestorm that followed. Hoover, J. Edgar, "Communism and the College Student," *Boston University Campus*, March 1953. This and other quotations from Hoover are compiled in Hoover, *On Communism*, New York, 1969, here, pp. 133–34.

³ Johnson, Phillip E. *Darwin on Trial*, Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991.

⁴ For more on Johnson's "wedge" and "mere creation" strategies, see Forrest, Barbara, "The Wedge at Work," in *Intelligent Design Creationism and its Critics*, Robert T. Pennock, ed., pp. 5-53; and *Creationism's Trojan Horse*, by Forrest and Paul Gross, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁵ Johnson, "Is God Unconstitutional? The Established Religious Philosophy of America" 1996. This and subsequent quotations are from Johnson's essays published at http://www.arn.org/authors/johnson_articles.html.

⁶ Johnson, "Keeping the Darwinians Honest" 1999.

⁷ Johnson, "Religion of the Blind Watchmaker" 1996.

⁸ Schrecker, Ellen, *No Ivory Tower*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

⁹ Allen, Raymond, "Communists Should Not Teach in American Colleges," *Educational Forum* v. 14 no. 4, §4.

¹⁰ Johnson, "Comparing Hostage Takers" 1997 and "Darwin's Rules of Reasoning" 1996, respectively.

¹¹ Hoover, "Communism Today," in *On Communism*, p. 56, emphasis in original.

¹² Johnson, "Keeping the Darwinians Honest" 1999.

¹³ Hoover, *Masters of Deceit: the story of Communism in America and How to Fight It* New York: Holt, 1958. Quoted in *On Communism*, p. 127.

¹⁴ Hoover, "Violence in American Society—A Problem of Critical Concern," *George Washington Law Review*, December, 1967. Quoted in *On Communism*, p. 129.

¹⁵ Johnson, "The Church of Darwin" 1999; "The Evolution of Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism" 2000.

¹⁶ Johnson, "Keeping the Darwinians Honest" 1999.

¹⁷ Johnson, "The Evolution of Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism" 2000.

¹⁸ Hoover, "Violence in American Society—A Problem of Critical Concern," *George Washington Law Review*, December, 1967. Quoted in *On Communism*, p. 128.

¹⁹ Hoover, Radio Interview, February 15, 1948, in *On Communism*, p. 95.

²⁰ Johnson, "What is Darwinism?" 1996.

²¹ Johnson, "Darwin's Rules of Reasoning" 1996.

²² Johnson, "The Evolution of Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism" 2000.

²³ Gould, Stephen Jay, "Impeaching a Self-Appointed Judge," *Scientific American*, 267(1), July 1992.

²⁴ Johnson, "The Evolution of Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism" 2000.

²⁵ Johnson, "Darwinists Squirm Under Spotlight" 1997.

²⁶ Johnson, "The Evolution of Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism" 2000.

²⁷ Johnson, "What is Darwinism?" 1996.

²⁸ Johnson, "Is God Unconstitutional? The Established Religious Philosophy of America" 1996.

²⁹ Johnson, "Is God Unconstitutional? The Established Religious Philosophy of America" 1996.

³⁰ Hoover, *A Study of Communism*, New York: Holt, 1962, pp. 48–49; quoted in *On Communism*, p. 98.

³¹ For example, Hoover writes of communism's "efforts to penetrate our institutions" throughout his *On Communism*. See, for example, pp. 6, 123, 131, 149. "Communist penetration" is also a common phrase throughout anticommunist literature.

³² Johnson, "Is God Unconstitutional? The Established Religious Philosophy of America" 1996.

³³ Hoover, "Communism Today," in *On Communism*, p. 56, emphasis in original.

³⁴ Hutchins, Robert Maynard, "Are Our Teachers Afraid to Teach?" *Look*, v. 18, March 9, 1954, p. 28.

³⁵ Scott was interviewed on PBS, Newshour, March 28, 2005.