

BOOK TALK» READING BETWEEN THE LINES OF NEW AND NOTABLE BOOKS

Defending intelligent design after Dover

By Patrick W. Gavin

In their new book, "Traipsing Into Evolution: Intelligent Design and the Kitzmiller vs. Dover Decision," authors David DeWolf, John West, Casey Luskin and Jonathan Witt criticize the manner in which Judge John E. Jones III (a George W. Bush appointee) decided in *Kitzmiller et al. v. Dover Area School Board* (2005), the first case regarding the inclusion of "Intelligent Design" in public schools brought in a U.S. federal court. Jones ruled that the teaching of "Intelligent Design" in public school science classes violated the First Amendment due to the fact that it is not science and "cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents."

The *Examiner* interviewed the authors to get a better understanding of their arguments against Kitzmiller.



John West, left, and Casey Luskin, authors of "Traipsing Into Evolution."

Excerpt from "Traipsing Into Evolution" [p.30]:

"Judge Jones ... repeatedly insists that ID 'requires supernatural creation.' Judge Jones can make this claim only by misrepresenting the actual views of intelligent design scientists, who consistently have maintained that empirical evidence cannot tell one whether the intelligent causes detected through modern science are inside or outside of nature. As a scientific theory, ID only claims that there is empirical evidence that key features of the universe and living things are the products of an intelligent cause. Whether the intelligent cause involved is inside or outside of nature cannot be decided by empirical evidence alone. That question involves philosophy, including metaphysics."

Q Is your main disagreement with *Kitzmiller v. Dover* over its ultimate rejection of intelligent design (ID)? Or for the way the case exemplified, in your eyes, judicial overreach?

A **John West:** The issues are related. Judge Jones' rejection of intelligent design sprang from his willingness to go beyond the facts of the case and attempt to decide an important scientific debate by judicial decree. Unfortunately, in his zeal to decide the validity of intelligent design for everyone else, Judge Jones ended up attacking a straw man. As we document in our book, his opinion is filled with distortions and basic errors of fact. For example, he asserts that intelligent design scientists don't published peer-reviewed scholarship, which is patently false.

Q How did the court exhibit judicial overreach in this case?

A **West:** Judge Jones found that the Dover school board acted for religious rather than secular reasons. Under existing court prece-

edents, that fact alone was enough to invalidate the Dover policy, and that should have been the end of the case. But Judge Jones apparently didn't want to let the facts get in the way of his chance to play philosopher king.

"Experimental tests reveal that the biosphere is full of language-based chemical codes and complex molecular machines. There is no known cause for such structures other than intelligence." - Casey Luskin,

co-author, "Traipsing Into Evolution"

Q How would you most effectively debunk theories that intelligent design is just creationism in sheep's clothing?

A **Casey Luskin:** Creationism starts with a holy writ like the Bible, but intelligent design starts with the empirical discoveries of science — like the genetic information embedded in DNA. Also, creationism postulates a supernatural creator. ID merely postulates an intelligent cause, and does not speculate about the nature or identity of the designer.

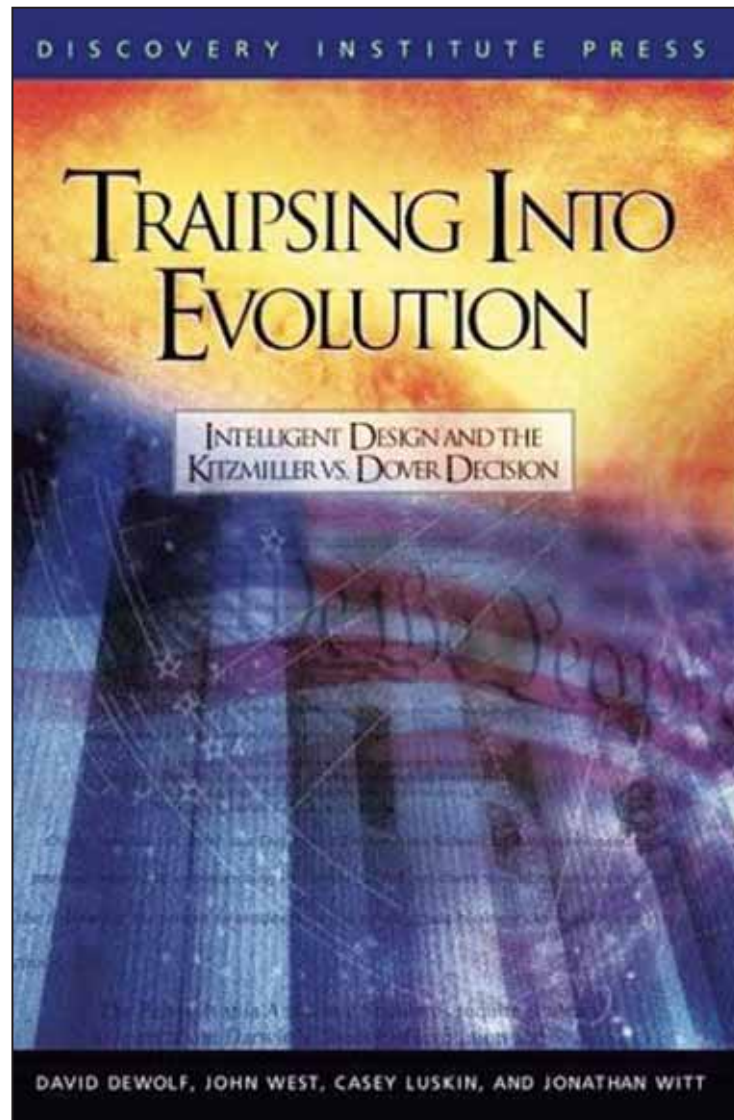
West: Those who conflate ID and creationism display their ignorance of history. The debate over design in nature reaches back to Greece and Rome, and it was a topic of controversy in Darwin's time. Interestingly, the co-discoverer of the theory of evolution by natural selection, Alfred Wallace, disagreed with Darwin about whether unguided natural selection could explain things like the human brain. Based on the evidence, Wallace thought that the evolutionary process must have been guided by intelligence. Ironically, Judge Jones banned the view of the co-discoverer of evolution as unconstitutional!

Q Do you not agree that, even if intelligent design should be included in public schools, science class — where hypotheses are reached based on, and limited by, rigorous scientific analysis — is not the place for it? Isn't a religion or faith class a more appropriate venue?

A **West:** Your question wrongly assumes that proponents of intelligent design favor mandating it in public schools. For the most part, they don't. That's why Discovery Institute strongly opposed the Dover policy and urged its repeal before any lawsuit was filed. We think the focus should be on informing students about the scientific evidence for and against neo-Darwinism, not on telling them about alternatives to Darwin.

Luskin: While ID shouldn't be mandated, it also shouldn't be banned by court order. Science teachers should have the freedom to discuss it precisely because ID is based on science, not religion. Design theory is based upon our knowledge that intelligence is the cause of specified and complex codes and complex machines. Experimental tests reveal that the biosphere is full of language-based chemical codes and complex molecular machines. There is no known cause for such structures other than intelligence. Critics might not like the ID argument, but they can't deny its empirical basis. ID makes its claims using the scientific method.

Q If one were to believe in creationism and the idea that God created this wonderful earth, how then would creationists also explain things like smallpox, AIDS, etc.? Are those also part of God's plan?



A **Luskin:** The problem of evil is a metaphysical question, not a scientific one, and it exists regardless of whether one believes in intelligent design or unguided evolution. So intelligent design as a scientific theory doesn't presume to answer the question. That's another difference between intelligent design and creationism: ID doesn't speculate about the moral purposes of the designer. The Judeo-Christian religious tradition has answers for why natural evil exists, but when we start discussing theology we've stepped outside the scope of science and ID.

Q Why do you believe that Judge Jones overstepped his authority by taking on not just this specific case, but the entire "intelligent design movement"?

A **West:** I think he may have been captive to his own stereotypes. During the trial, he told one reporter that he planned to watch the old movie "Inherit the Wind" for "historical context." The judge showed no awareness that the film is regarded as little more than propaganda by historians. Unfortunately, the movie's stick-figure caricature of all evolution critics as "Fundamentalists" with a capital "F" is painfully evident in the judge's ruling.

Q Although intelligent design may have intellectual roots, do you think it's largely been taken over by political/religious causes?

A **West:** Reporters are preoccupied by politics and religion, so they typically don't report on anything else. Yet there are an increasing number of scientists and philosophers supportive of intelligent design and a teleological understanding of nature, and they are producing a growing body of research and scholarship.

Luskin: Our book provides an annotated list of peer-reviewed and peer-edited publications by scientists who support intelligent design. We also include a brief filed in the Dover case by 85 scientists affirming that intelligent design is a legitimate subject for scientific debate and inquiry. Those scientists include a member of the National Academy of Sciences and biologists from public universities across the United States. These are the scientists who aren't supposed to exist according to Judge Jones and the ACLU. Unfortunately, their plea for academic freedom and free inquiry fell on deaf ears.

Patrick W. Gavin is THE EXAMINER's associate editorial page editor.

