

Is Critical Analysis of Evolution the Same as Teaching Intelligent Design?

A common criticism contends that education policies requiring critical analysis of evolution are simply guises for teaching intelligent design (ID). While ID is a scientific viewpoint, some Darwinist arguments become so fantastical that they contend that critical analysis of evolution is the equivalent of teaching religion. For example, Professor Patricia Princehouse was quoted saying “critical analysis is intelligent design relabeled, just as intelligent design was creationism relabeled”¹ and “[c]ritical analysis is just another name for creationism.”² Here are six simple reasons why teaching critical analysis of evolution is very different from teaching about ID (a science) or any religious viewpoint:

(1) Mere Critical Analysis of Evolution Does Not Necessarily Imply Intelligent Design:

Evidence against one scientific theory does not in-and-of-itself constitute evidence for another theory, and it is common practice within science to critique a scientific explanation without necessarily offering an alternative one. The argument for ID is not based upon the mere refutation of neo-Darwinian evolution, for it is built upon a strong, positive argument, justifying the inference to design.³ Mere scientific critique of evolution therefore does not logically entail an argument for design.

(2) The Pedagogical Approaches Are Distinct: Since the argument for design is not built upon the mere refutation of evolution, there is no logical reason why simply critiquing evolution in the classroom must entail teaching ID. Even the National Research Council states that when learning science through inquiry, students should “constantly evaluate and reevaluate the nature and strength of evidence and share and then critique their explanations and those of others”⁴; critiquing one scientific theory does not necessarily imply learning about an alternative viewpoint.

(3) Explicit Statements of Intent to Not Require Teaching ID: Various school districts and state boards of education have sanctioned critical analysis of evolution, but also included in their policies explicit disclaimers to ensure that teachers, students, and the

¹ “Ohio Expected to Rein In Class Linked to Intelligent Design,” by Jodi Rudoren, *New York Times*, February 14, 2006.

² “Ohio Drops Demand That Evolution Be Challenged,” by Stephanie Simon, *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 2006.

³ See Stephen C. Meyer, “The origin of biological information and the higher taxonomic categories,” *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, Vol. 117(2):213-239 (2004), Scott A. Minnich & Stephen C. Meyer, *Genetic Analysis of Coordinate Flagellar and Type III Regulatory Circuits in Pathogenic Bacteria*, in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Design & Nature*, Rhodes Greece, pg. 8, at <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/filesDB-download.php?id=389> and Casey Luskin, “The Positive Case for Design,” at http://www.evolutionnews.org/2005/09/a_positive_case_for_design.html and Casey Luskin, “Intelligent design (ID) has scientific merit because it uses the scientific method to make its claims and infers design by testing its positive predictions” at <http://www.discovery.org/a/7051>

⁴ National Research Council, *Inquiry and the National Science Education Standards: A Guide for Teaching and Learning*, pg. 124 (National Academy Press, 2000).

public understand that the critical analysis policy does not call for teaching ID. For example, Ohio previously had state science standards requiring students to “Describe how scientists continue to investigate and critically analyze aspects of evolutionary theory” but the standards also stated that “The intent of this benchmark does not mandate the teaching or testing of intelligent design.” From 2005-2007, Kansas likewise had standards that required critical analysis of evolution but made it clear that “these standards neither mandate nor prohibit teaching about [intelligent design].” One school district in Wisconsin currently has a policy that requires students to “explain the scientific strengths and weaknesses of evolutionary theory” but the policy also states that it “does not call for the teaching of Creationism or Intelligent Design.”⁵

(4) Scientific Critique is a Separate Legal Category from Teaching about Alternative Theories: In *Selman v. Cobb County*, Judge Clarence Cooper explained in a lawsuit over a textbook disclaimer requiring that evolution be “critically considered,” that “the issue before the Court is not whether it is constitutionally permissible for public school teachers to teach intelligent design.”⁶ Likewise the U.S. Supreme Court seems to have separated “scientific critiques” of evolution from teaching alternative views.⁷ Even Darwinist legal groups like the ACLU who argue that teaching ID is unconstitutional concede that “any genuinely scientific evidence for or against any explanation of life may be taught.”⁸ Critical analysis thus exists as a separate and already-protected legal category.

(5) Some Critics of Darwin Don't Support ID: There are prominent scientific critics of neo-Darwinian evolution, such as Lynn Margulis, David Berlinski, Stanley Salthe, and Stuart Kauffman, who are not pro-ID. If critical analysis of evolution equals ID, then these people could not exist.

(6) Final Proof: The Pudding (the Darwinists' own behavior): It took Darwinist legal defenders less than two months to file a lawsuit after the school district in Dover, PA passed an explicitly pro-ID policy. But policies requiring critical analysis of evolution have existed in many states for years with no lawsuit ever being filed.⁹ If Darwin's public defenders really believed that policies calling for critical analysis of evolution require the teaching of ID or the teaching of an actual religious viewpoint, lawsuits would have arisen over the past few years over the many critical analysis of evolution policies around the United States. But they haven't filed such lawsuits, and they won't, because they know that critical analysis of evolution is different from teaching about ID, and additionally is very different from advocating religion.

⁵ See “Wisconsin School Board Adopts Improved Policy Endorsing Fully Teaching Evolution, Not Creationism,” at <http://www.discovery.org/a/2323>

⁶ *Selman v. Cobb County Bd. of Educ.*, 390 F. Supp. 2d 1286, 1288 (N.D. Ga. 2005), *vacated and remanded*, 449 F.3d 1320 (11th Cir. 2006).

⁷ *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578, 593-594 (1987).

⁸ American Civil Liberties Union, *Religion In The Public Schools: A Joint Statement Of Current Law*, April 12, 1995, <http://www.aclu.org/religion/schools/16146leg19950412.html>

⁹ See Casey Luskin, “Does Challenging Darwin Create Constitutional Jeopardy? A Comprehensive Survey of Case Law Regarding the Teaching of Biological Origins,” *Hamline Law Review* (Forthcoming Fall, 2008).