

Dover Court Establishes State Materialism

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The Watchman (February 2006)

The twisted decision of the court in Dover, PA on December 21 effectively establishes a state sponsored ideology that is fundamental to non-theistic religions and religious beliefs. By outlawing discussion of the evidence of design and the inference of design that arises from observation and analysis, the court has effectively caused the state to endorse materialism and the various religions it supports. Thus the court actually inserted a religious bias into science, while purporting to remove one.

The incorrect assumption implicit in the decision is that there is only one kind of "religion" - the kind that holds that life and the world were created by a God or gods. In fact religion includes the other kinds, those that embrace material causes for life rather than any God that might intervene in the natural world. These include Atheism, Secular Humanism, Buddhism, Agnosticism, etc. The Court's second error was to ignore the obvious: any explanation of origins will **unavoidably** favor one kind of religion over another.

For Judge Jones "religion" seems to be a term that describes only belief in a God. Although the Judge was quick to note the theistic friendly implications of an intelligent cause for life, his opinion omits any discussion of the religious implications of materialism, the opposite of the idea that life may be the product of an intelligent, rather than a material cause. Materialism is the root of evolution's core claim that life is not designed because it claims to be adequately explained via material causes. Instead he arrives at the absurd conclusion that evolutionary theory "in no way conflicts with, nor does it deny, the existence of a divine creator." This key mistake of the court was caught by an ardent opponent of ID and philosopher of Science, Daniel Dennett: who said after the decision:

"I must say that I find that claim to be disingenuous. The theory of evolution demolishes the best reason anyone has ever suggested for believing in a divine *creator*. This does not demonstrate that there *is no* divine creator, of course, but only shows that if there is one, it (He?) needn't have bothered to create anything, since natural selection would have taken care of all that." [*The Kizmiller Decision by Dawkins, Dennett, Kurtz & Jones* (Butterflies and Dec 26, 2005; Butterfliesandwheels.com)

This mistake is crucial to the outcome of the case. By ignoring the major competing religious implications of evolutionary theory and materialism/naturalism he has effectively caused the state to prefer one kind of religion over another, the very antithesis of Constitutional neutrality.

The court also failed to discuss the fact that the inference of design derives from an observation and logical and rational analysis of the data, not from a religious text. Nor does he discuss or ask, from whence does a counter-intuitive inference of "no-design" arise? From the data or from a philosophy? He makes it clear that it derives from a philosophy: "methodological naturalism." Which hypothesis is truly inferential and scientific? Which idea arises from the data and which from philosophy?

Evolution, and methodological naturalism which effectively shields it from scientific criticism, is key to all of the major non-theistic religions and belief systems. The Dover opinion censors scientific data that is friendly to one set of religious beliefs in favor of data that supports competing and antagonistic belief systems. For the Court, it is OK for the state to put into the minds of impressionable students evidence that promotes a materialistic and non-theistic world view while censoring contradictory evidence that supports a theistic one. How can teaching only one side of this scientific controversy be secular, neutral and non-ideological?

A ruling that effectively insulates evolution from scientific criticism actually converts it into an ideology. It takes the theory out of the realm of science and makes it a religion in and of itself. Unfortunately, the Court fails to recognize that the only way for the state to deal with the unavoidable religious problem

entailed by any discussion of *"Where do we come from?"* is to objectively provide students with relevant scientific information on both sides of that controversy. As soon as the state takes sides in that discussion it steps over the wall.

On December 21, 2005, the court in Dover caused the state to take sides in that religiously charged discussion. Four days before Christmas, the court in Dover instituted state sponsorship of materialism.

The 139 page opinion shows a remarkable lack of understanding of other issues critical to the decision. Rather than seek a true understanding of evolution, intelligent design, the scientific method and methodological naturalism, the court accepted hook, line and sinker the propaganda of true "Fundamentalists," who are as passionate about their "Fundamentalism" as those of the Dover Board. The court ignored key evidence that challenges evolution's claim that life is not designed. It called a strike when the ball hit the dirt six feet in front of the batter.

True institutional scientific objectivity is the only antidote to this religious problem. There is no issue in science that cries out more for competing hypotheses than highly subjective "historical narratives" about our origins. From where we come is inseparable from where we go. So long as only one answer to this question is allowed the story will necessarily be religious. We need the competition to make the explanations truly scientific.

The decision in Dover took evolution out of science and made it a religion. I have confidence that this truth will eventually emerge and be corrected.

The Watchman, a publication of the National Litigation Academy of The Alliance Defense Fund, Vol III, Issue 1 (February 2006)