

# OUT with evolution(ism)!

OCASSION: The current misdirected effort to get "intelligent design" INTO public-school science classes, + the reactive defense of the unscientific status quo (viz., the teaching of a philosophy [scientism, evolutionism] as though it were science).

DIAGNOSIS: Religion, philosophy, & science are sibling rivals. At present in "the West," the third dominates the others, imperially claiming as "knowledge" only the products of its way of knowing. For a variety of reasons, America today is the world-dominant instance of this dominance (both in material prosperity & military might)--& for this achievement we are now facing, at home & abroad, self-defeating & world-threatening untowardnesses.

CURE: Move from the noun "rivals" (with its unreal, dysfunctional fragmentation of science/philosophy/religion) to the adjective "sibling" (with its all-in-the-family, all-at-the-talktable hopeful potential for correcting distortions & healing intellectual diseases). (A decade ago, I showed one way public-school science teaching might make a start: "The public schools hidden persuaders against God," pp207-211 of FLOW OF FLESH, REACH OF SPIRIT [Eerdmans].)

1 Reinhold Niebuhr shocked his fellow public-intellectuals with his insistence on restoring, to the intellectual public square, the word "sin." Vis-a-vis the burden of this Thinksheet, here's part of a paragraph in his AN INTERPRETATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS (Harper & Bros.; my copy is third-edition, 1935), pp65-66:

"....sin has no meaning to the mind of modernity because in modern secularism reality is merely a flux of temporal events. In prophetic religion the flux of the finite world is both a revelation and a veiling of the eternal creative principle and will. Every finite event points to something beyond itself in two directions, to a source from which it springs and an end to which it moves. Prophetic religion believes, in other words, in a God who is both the creator and the fulfillment of life." The next paragraph anticipates the very recent epistemological findings (e.g., through quantum physics) of some of the human mind's limitations. "The human spirit is set in this dimension of depth in such a way that it is able to apprehend, but not to comprehend, the total dimension. The human mind is forced to relate all finite events to causes and consummations beyond themselves. It thus constantly conceives all particular things in their relation to the totality of reality, and can adequately apprehend totality only in terms of a principle of unity "beyond, behind, and above the passing flux of things" (Whitehead). But this same human reason is itself embedded in the passing flux, a tool of a finite organism, the instrument of its physical necessities, and the prisoner of the partial perspectives of a limited time and place. The consequence is that it is always capable of envisaging possibilities of order, unity, and harmony above and beyond the contingent and arbitrary realities of its physical existence; but it is not capable (because of its finiteness) of incarnating, all the higher values which it discerns; nor even of adequately defining, the unconditioned good which it dimly apprehends as the ground and goal of all its contingent values."

2 Religion surmises (with the entirety of human awareness), philosophy speculates (with the human mind's power to explore along seemingly limitless strings or trajectories of ideas), science studies (by trial-&-error manipulation of commensurables). These three perspectives, being constitutive of human consciousness, are always in action--variously, in constructive triangulation or in dynamic convergence/divergence or at war (as when, against the creationists, Harv. atheist David Dennett calls evolution "mindless"). An open intellectual will resist the temptation to ideologize any one of the three perspectives at the expense of the others. And our public-school children can be taught to be, in this sense, open. But for generations we have been taught scientism, which moves the goal-posts of "knowledge" closer together so as to exclude God--so moving the goal posts back to where the game designed (!) them to be seems foul play! The following 8.4.05 letter to the editor is in response to a victim of this distorted education (as Palestinians are victim-legatees of generations who've been taught to hate Jews & pray for the destruction of the State of Israel):

**Elliott**  **Thinksheets**

309 Lake Elizabeth Drive  
Craigville MA 02632  
Phone/Fax 508.775.8008  
eliotetw1@comcast.net

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Partisans teach their children--& others', if they're teachers--that one side fits all; in this case, one way of knowing fits all needs to know (so that any other claimed way of knowing violates the law of parsimony, minimum hypothesis). As for the arts, partisans see them not as openers of the soul but as territories to occupy & weapons to use against rivals.

3 On what to teach America's children about evolution/God, the country seems to be approaching a critical mass. An 8.31.05 AP release said "nearly two-thirds [64%] of Americans say that creationism should be taught alongside evolution in the Public Schools" (Pew Research Center; 38% said "replace" evolution with creationism). No progress: adding one distortion to another, or substituting one distortion for another. In political boilerplate, "we can do better."

4 "Better," I suggest, must include the re-education of public-school science teachers to free them from the prejudice that "science" as they have known it has at least a superior, if not the only, way of knowing. Won't be easy: in "Whatever happened to tolerance?" an LATimes piece, a secularist claims that science is "absolute truth" & conservatives have no right to rip off the liberals' "diversity" pitch. Reminds me of Allan Bloom's (1987) THE CLOSING OF THE AMERICAN MIND. I've read no traditional "science" promoter calling for cutting back on scientism overclaiming for science.

5 What Niebuhr says about "causes and consummations" as unavailable to the human mind without revelation should make for more modesty in teaching "science." To use the metaphor in my Eerdmans chapter (above), we come in on the play late & must leave early, so we'd better not use our sequential power of thought to extrapolate backwards or forward. E.g., from within prophetic religion, Niebuhr speaks of a "will" behind & within the world: no scientist qua scientist can say that consciousness is *only* an evolutionary emergent. (Science + that "only" = scientism.)

## Knowledge needn't be captive to science

In his attack on "intelligent design" (My View, July 18), Ken Morton accuses the proponents of "moving the goal posts" of knowledge to include a designer of the universe. Apparently he is unaware that we pro-design thinkers want to move the goal posts not to a new position of defining "knowledge" but to where they were before narrow-minded, God-excluding scientists moved them closer together. Your note on Mr. Morton says he is "writing a philosophy book." I hope he takes the time to investigate the full spread of ways of knowing, not just the scientific method of objective verifiability. He needs to recover from his scientific, unscientific notion that "knowledge" is captive to only one way of knowing, the one observable in what he calls "natural processes alone." And he needs to face philosophers who discredit his "naturalistic view of the universe."

**WILLIS ELLIOTT**  
Craigville

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS  
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive  
Craigville MA 02632

