

method. Further, he makes frequent use of the Leibnizian (Aristotelean) law of contradiction, in which one must assume the meaning of something in order to deny it; otherwise the denial would be meaningless (i.e., Hunter challenges the evolutionary claim that God does not involve himself directly in the creative process, if indeed he exists at all. If one assumes that God does not exist, then one must have assumed that God did exist, because otherwise the notion of God would not be an issue at all). Once again, Hunter forces evolutionists to reexamine their arguments and to acknowledge the Leibnizian (and other) presuppositions that bolster their beliefs, and to move on to surer and (if truly scientific, less religious) foundations than those upon which evolutionary theory is currently based. To argue against divine creation, Hunter contends, is ultimately a religious, metaphysical idea. To support it, then, with scientific evidence is a contradiction of scientific methodology, which clearly distinguishes between the metaphysical and the physical. Thus, evolution is not atheism, nor is it science.

I recommend this book as a valuable source tool for better understanding the hermeneutical issues behind evolutionary theory.

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Johnson, Phillip E. *The Right Questions: Truth, Meaning and Public Debate*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002. 191 pp. Paper, \$16.00.

Phillip Johnson, dean of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, has been portrayed as leader of a nefarious conspiracy to undermine science teaching in American public schools. Barry Palevitz huffs that IDers like Johnson “have a strategy that would make any conspiracy maven drool” (“Intelligent Design Creationism: None of Your Business? Think Again,” *Evolution* 56/8 (2002): 1718-1720). Barbara Carroll Forrest and Paul Gross have written a whole book “exposing” Johnson’s “Wedge strategy” complete with secret memos from the Discovery Institute (*Evolution and the Wedge of Intelligent Design: The Trojan Horse Strategy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]). Ironically, all this hyperbole is directed at a movement that is transparently open in its goal to liberalize science and science education from constraints imposed by materialist dogma.

There is no clandestine ID agenda and certainly no reason to search for secret memos by the conspirators involved; from the start Johnson has been open about the “Wedge strategy.” For all the details, any interested party can consult his highly readable book *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000). If there is a plot and Johnson is leading it, it is one of the most poorly concealed conspiracies in history. In *The Right Questions*, Johnson continues the open discussion characteristic of his previous writings. This is a good thing for those interested in clear thinking about the origin of life, as concealing Johnson’s sharp-edged wisdom on this and related topics in conspiratorial secret memos would be a tragedy.

The thesis of *The Right Questions* is simple. When controversial topics are discussed, the right questions must be asked before constructive dialogue can occur. In no area of intellectual life is this principle truer than in the current debate over the origin of life. However, Johnson does not restrict his questions to quibbling details about what may or may not be at certain strata in the fossil record, or whether nature is capable of producing molecular machines. Instead, he deals with questions that his career as a professor of law at UC Berkeley has uniquely prepared him to address. In this book, among other subjects, he tackles the right questions about logic and the right questions about truth and liberty. When addressing these broad questions, Johnson uses his expertise as a logician and trial lawyer to bring into sharp focus the issues involved and expose fuzzy thinking. For most readers this will be both

enlightening and uncomfortable. Johnson is not so much providing answers as he is teaching how to think.

Those familiar with Johnson's recent stroke may have cause to wonder whether he is physically capable of teaching others how to think. Readers of *The Right Questions* will quickly discover that, if anything, the brilliance of Johnson's mind shines through more clearly in this book than in his more detailed analysis of Darwinian arguments in books such as *Darwin on Trial* (2d ed. [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993]).

Each chapter of *The Right Questions* is a case study in clear thinking that quickly penetrates to core issues while avoiding superficially simple approaches to problem solving. For example, in a chapter entitled "The Word of God in Education," Johnson investigates the right questions about the religious foundations of education. Johnson asks:

Should a college education prepare students to understand the ultimate purpose or meaning for which life should be lived and to choose rightly from among the available possibilities? Alternatively, should this subject be left out of the curriculum on the ground that the choice among ultimate purposes involves only subjective preferences and not knowledge? (68).

These profound questions should be carefully answered before addressing questions of curriculum or teaching pedagogy. Once addressed, the general aspects of what should be taught and how it should be taught naturally follow. Johnson, with good reason, claims that subsequent decisions are likely to be more logically coherent, but does not pretend that the consequences will be uncontroversial. He explicitly points out that explaining to constituents why bad ideas should be taught at Christian schools may be difficult. When teaching evolution in Christian schools, this was certainly my own experience. And yet, if we believe that education is about "prepar[ing] students to understand the ultimate purpose or meaning for which life should be lived and to choose rightly from among the available possibilities," then students must be exposed to the strengths and weaknesses of all possibilities. As Johnson puts it: "The way to deal with timidity and self-deception in Christian education is not to try to prevent bad ideas from being taught but rather to ensure that the bad ideas are effectively countered by better ideas in an atmosphere of open deliberation" (59). I believe that every Christian parent, teacher, principal, and school board member should read this chapter. After completing the book, I would add only that it would be a loss for anyone who only stopped at the education chapter; there is so much more.

Trying to represent and critique the questions and arguments raised by Johnson is an almost impossible task in a review. *The Right Question* is a short book and easy reading, yet it seems to effortlessly concentrate vast quantities of wisdom into its fewer than 200 pages. Perhaps even more amazing, only 161 pages were written by Johnson. There is a bonus that should not be missed at the beginning of the book: Nancy Pearcey, possibly the best contemporary evangelical Christian writer, wrote the Foreword. Readers seeking to gain the full benefit of *The Right Questions* will not skip over her profound insights.

Issues discussed in *The Right Questions* are thought-provoking and wide-ranging, but readers seeking a detailed critique of evolutionary theory will be disappointed. On the other hand, those seeking fresh and logical approaches to the issues raised by Darwinian thinking and its materialist underpinnings will be greatly rewarded. Because of this, *The Right Questions* represents profitable reading for both experts in the sciences and those pastors, teachers, citizens, and parents who are interested in the impact of materialist thinking and ways it may be addressed in our culture.