

Final Exam

PHILO 5483/2483 Intelligent Design William Dembski, Fall 2007

This is a take-home final. It is open book. You may not consult with anyone while taking it. You have exactly till noon on Thursday, December 13, 2007 to complete it and email it to me at wdembkiATdesigninferenceDOTcom. There are five questions each worth 20 points. No answer should exceed 1,000 words (this limit is strict—please include number of words for each answer in brackets). Each question has multiple parts. Be sure to address everything raised in each question (failure to do so will lead to deductions). Good luck.

1. You are a panelist at the premier showing of Richard Dawkins's BBC production debunking religion titled "The Root of All Evil?" Richard Dawkins is there on the podium with you. After the showing of this program, you are asked to present a brief response. Throughout the program, Dawkins emphasizes that evolutionary theory is confirmed by overwhelming evidence whereas religious belief is as a matter of blind, unthinking faith. Challenge him in your response on both points: spend roughly half of your response showing that evolution is not nearly as overwhelmingly confirmed as Dawkins makes out. Having done that, indicate how, at least when it comes to the Christian faith, religious belief can be well-supported evidentially (e.g., you might consider lines of evidence that support the Resurrection and the reliability of the Scriptures).
2. What is metaphysical materialism (or naturalism)? What is methodological materialism (or naturalism)? How do they relate? Is methodological materialism a legitimate constraint on scientific theorizing? Explain. Is it possible to be a methodological materialist and also to be a supporter of intelligent design? Explain. Is Darwinian evolution the best *materialistic* explanation of biological origins? Explain. If science is not limited to materialistic explanations, how good is Darwinian evolution as an explanation of biological origins? In that case, how does it compare to intelligent design as an explanation of biological origins?
3. You are an expert witness in the Dover case. You've been asked to summarize why you think intelligent design is a fully scientific theory. Do so here. Sketch ID's method(s)

of design detection and then show how it/they apply (or might apply) to biological systems. Further, indicate how ID is testable: what evidence would confirm ID and what evidence would disconfirm ID? Also, indicate how ID differs from creationism and from natural theology. Finally, what would you say to the charge that ID is “pseudoscience”? What would you say to the charge that ID is “religion”?

4. Barbara Forrest and Paul Gross have characterized intelligent design as part of a vast right-wing conspiracy to undermine our democratic institutions by substituting religious dogma for scientific theory. Accordingly, they see intelligent design as part of a “Wedge Strategy.” Briefly recount the history of the “Wedge” and indicate why Forrest and Gross may be wrong to paint it in conspiratorial terms. Is the “Wedge” a legitimate cultural movement? Explain. How might it be important in reclaiming a Christian influence in public life? How is ID important for Christian apologetics?

5. You’ve been assigned to teach six Sunday school lessons on intelligent design over six consecutive Sundays. Each lesson is an hour and fifteen minutes. Outline how you would conduct these lessons. What would you have people read? In what order? What would you present? What would you want participants to take away at the end of the six weeks?