

THE WEDGE STRATEGY

Center for the Renewal of Science & Culture / Discovery Institute (circa 1998)

INTRODUCTION

The proposition that human beings are created in the image of God is one of the bedrock principles on which Western civilization was built. Its influence can be detected in most, if not all, of the West's greatest achievements, including representative democracy, human rights, free enterprise, and progress in the arts and sciences.

Yet a little over a century ago, this cardinal idea came under wholesale attack by intellectuals drawing on the discoveries of modern science. Debunking the traditional conceptions of both God and man, thinkers such as Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud portrayed humans not as moral and spiritual beings, but as animals or machines who inhabited a universe ruled by purely impersonal forces and whose behavior and very thoughts were dictated by the unbending forces of biology, chemistry, and environment. This materialistic conception of reality eventually infected virtually every area of our culture, from politics and economics to literature and art.

The cultural consequences of this triumph of materialism were devastating. Materialists denied the existence of objective moral standards, claiming that environment dictates our behavior and beliefs. Such moral relativism was uncritically adopted by much of the social sciences, and it still undergirds much of modern economics, political science, psychology and sociology.

Materialists also undermined personal responsibility by asserting that human thoughts and behaviors are dictated by our biology and environment. The results can be seen in modern approaches to criminal justice, product liability, and welfare. In the materialist scheme of things, everyone is a victim and no one can be held accountable for his or her actions.

Finally, materialism spawned a virulent strain of utopianism. Thinking they could engineer the perfect society through the application of scientific knowledge, materialist reformers advocated coercive government programs that falsely promised to create heaven on earth.

Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies. Bringing together leading scholars from the natural sciences and those from the humanities and social sciences, the Center explores how new developments in biology, physics and cognitive science raise serious doubts about scientific materialism and have re-opened the case for a broadly theistic understanding of nature. The Center awards fellowships for original research, holds conferences, and briefs policymakers about the opportunities for life after materialism.

The Center is directed by Discovery Senior Fellow Dr. Stephen Meyer. An Associate Professor of Philosophy at Whitworth College, Dr. Meyer holds a Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Science from Cambridge University. He formerly worked as a geophysicist for the Atlantic Richfield Company.

THE WEDGE STRATEGY

Phase I.

- * Scientific Research, Writing & Publicity

Phase II.

- * Publicity & Opinion-making

Phase III.

- * Cultural Confrontation & Renewal

THE WEDGE PROJECTS

Phase I. Scientific Research, Writing & Publication

- * Individual Research Fellowship Program
- * Paleontology Research program (Dr. Paul Chien et al.)
- * Molecular Biology Research Program (Dr. Douglas Axe et al.)

Phase II. Publicity & Opinion-making

- * Book Publicity
- * Opinion-Maker Conferences
- * Apologetics Seminars
- * Teacher Training Program
- * Op-ed Fellow
- * PBS (or other TV) Co-production
- * Publicity Materials / Publications

Phase III. Cultural Confrontation & Renewal

- * Academic and Scientific Challenge Conferences
- * Potential Legal Action for Teacher Training
- * Research Fellowship Program: shift to social sciences and humanities

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

The social consequences of materialism have been devastating. As symptoms, those consequences are certainly worth treating. However, we are convinced that in order to defeat materialism, we must cut it off at its source. That source is scientific materialism. This is precisely our strategy. If we view the predominant materialistic science as a giant tree, our strategy is intended to function as a "wedge" that, while relatively small, can split the trunk when applied at its weakest points. The very beginning of this strategy, the "thin edge of the wedge," was Phillip Johnson's critique of Darwinism begun in 1991 in *Darwinism on Trial*, and continued in *Reason in the Balance* and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. Michael Behe's highly successful *Darwin's Black Box* followed Johnson's work. We are building on this momentum, broadening the wedge with a positive scientific alternative to materialistic scientific theories, which has come to be called the theory of intelligent design (ID). Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.

The Wedge strategy can be divided into three distinct but interdependent phases, which are roughly but not strictly chronological. We believe that, with adequate support, we can accomplish many of the objectives of Phases I and II in the next five years (1999-2003), and begin Phase III (See "Goals/ Five Year Objectives/Activities").

Phase I: Research, Writing and Publication

Phase II: Publicity and Opinion-making

Phase III: Cultural Confrontation and Renewal

Phase I is the essential component of everything that comes afterward. Without solid scholarship, research and argument, the project would be just another attempt to indoctrinate instead of persuade. A lesson we have learned from the history of science is that it is unnecessary to outnumber the opposing establishment. Scientific revolutions are usually staged by an initially small and relatively young group of scientists who are not blinded by the prevailing prejudices and who are able to do creative work at the pressure points, that is, on those critical issues upon which whole systems of thought hinge. So, in Phase I we are supporting vital writing and research at the sites most likely to crack the materialist edifice.

Phase II. The primary purpose of Phase II is to prepare the popular reception of our ideas. The best and truest research can languish unread and unused unless it is properly publicized. For this reason we seek to cultivate and convince influential individuals in print and broadcast media, as well as think tank leaders, scientists and academics, congressional staff, talk show hosts, college and seminary presidents and faculty, future talent and potential academic allies. Because of his long tenure in politics, journalism and public policy, Discovery President Bruce Chapman brings to the project rare knowledge and acquaintance of key op-ed writers, journalists, and political leaders. This combination of scientific and scholarly expertise and media and political connections makes the Wedge unique, and also prevents it from being "merely academic." Other activities include production of a PBS documentary on intelligent design and its implications, and popular op-ed publishing. Alongside a focus on influential opinion-makers, we also seek to build up a popular base of support among our natural constituency, namely, Christians. We will do this primarily through apologetics seminars. We intend these to encourage and equip believers with new scientific evidence's that support the faith, as well as to "popularize" our ideas in the broader culture.

Phase III. Once our research and writing have had time to mature, and the public prepared for the reception of design theory, we will move toward direct confrontation with the advocates of materialist science through challenge conferences in significant academic settings. We will also pursue possible legal assistance in response to resistance to the integration of design theory into public school science curricula. The attention, publicity, and influence of design theory should draw scientific materialists into open debate with design theorists, and we will be ready. With an added emphasis to the social sciences and humanities, we will begin to address the specific social consequences of materialism and the Darwinist theory that supports it in the sciences.

GOALS

Governing Goals

* To defeat scientific materialism and its destructive moral, cultural and political legacies.

* To replace materialistic explanations with the theistic understanding that nature and human beings are created by God.

Five Year Goals

* To see intelligent design theory as an accepted alternative in the sciences and scientific research being done from the perspective of design theory.

* To see the beginning of the influence of design theory in spheres other than natural science.

* To see major new debates in education, life issues, legal and personal responsibility pushed to the front of the national agenda.

Twenty Year Goals

* To see intelligent design theory as the dominant perspective in science.

* To see design theory application in specific fields, including molecular biology, biochemistry, paleontology, physics and cosmology in the natural sciences, psychology, ethics, politics, theology and philosophy in the humanities; to see its influence in the fine arts.

* To see design theory permeate our religious, cultural, moral and political life.

FIVE YEAR OBJECTIVES

1. A major public debate between design theorists and Darwinists (by 2003)

2. Thirty published books on design and its cultural implications (sex, gender issues, medicine, law, and religion)

3. One hundred scientific, academic and technical articles by our fellows

4. Significant coverage in national media:

* Cover story on major news magazine such as Time or Newsweek

* PBS show such as Nova treating design theory fairly

* Regular press coverage on developments in design theory

* Favorable op-ed pieces and columns on the design movement by 3rd party media

5. Spiritual & cultural renewal:

* Mainline renewal movements begin to appropriate insights from design theory, and to repudiate theologies influenced by materialism

* Major Christian denomination(s) defend(s) traditional doctrine of creation & repudiate(s)

* Darwinism Seminars increasingly recognize & repudiate naturalistic presuppositions

* Positive uptake in public opinion polls on issues such as sexuality, abortion and belief in God

6. Ten states begin to rectify ideological imbalance in their science curricula & include design theory

7. Scientific achievements:

- * An active design movement in Israel, the UK and other influential countries outside the US
- * Ten CRSC Fellows teaching at major universities
- * Two universities where design theory has become the dominant view
- * Design becomes a key concept in the social sciences Legal reform movements base legislative proposals on design theory

ACTIVITIES

- (1) Research Fellowship Program (for writing and publishing)
- (2) Front line research funding at the "pressure points" (e.g., Daul Chien's Chengjiang Cambrian Fossil Find in paleontology, and Doug Axe's research laboratory in molecular biology)
- (3) Teacher training
- (4) Academic Conferences
- (5) Opinion-maker Events & Conferences
- (6) Alliance-building, recruitment of future scientists and leaders, and strategic partnerships with think tanks, social advocacy groups, educational organizations and institutions, churches, religious groups, foundations and media outlets
- (7) Apologetics seminars and public speaking
- (8) Op-ed and popular writing
- (9) Documentaries and other media productions
- (10) Academic debates
- (11) Fund Raising and Development
- (12) General Administrative support

THE WEDGE STRATEGY PROGRESS SUMMARY

Books

William Dembski and Paul Nelson, two CRSC Fellows, will very soon have books published by major secular university publishers, Cambridge University Press and The University of Chicago Press, respectively. (One critiques Darwinian materialism; the other offers a powerful alternative.) Nelson's book, *On Common Descent*, is the seventeenth book in the prestigious University of Chicago "Evolutionary Monographs" series and the first to critique neo-Darwinism. Dembski's book, *The Design Inference*, was back-ordered in June, two months prior to its release date.

These books follow hard on the heels of Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* (The Free Press) which is now in paperback after nine print runs in hard cover. So far it has been translated into six foreign languages. The success of his book has led to other secular publishers such as McGraw Hill requesting future titles from us. This is a breakthrough.

InterVarsity will publish our large anthology, *Mere Creation* (based upon the *Mere Creation* conference) this fall, and Zondervan is publishing *Maker of Heaven and Earth: Three Views of the Creation-Evolution Controversy*, edited by fellows John Mark Reynolds and J.P. Moreland.

McGraw Hill solicited an expedited proposal from Meyer, Dembski and Nelson on their book *Uncommon Descent*. Finally, Discovery Fellow Ed Larson has won the Pulitzer Prize for Summer for the Gods, his retelling of the Scopes Trial, and InterVarsity has just published his co-authored attack on assisted suicide, *A Different Death*.

Academic Articles

Our fellows recently have been featured or published articles in major scientific and academic journals in *The Proceedings to the National Academy of Sciences*, *Nature*, *The Scientist*, *The American Biology Teacher*, *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications*, *Biochemistry*, *Philosophy and Biology*, *Faith & Philosophy*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, *Analysis*, *Book & Culture*, *Ethics & Medicine*, *Zygon*, *Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith*, *Religious Studies*, *Christian Scholars' Review*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, and the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. Many more such articles are now in press or awaiting review at major secular journals as a result of our first round of research fellowships. Our own journal, *Origins & Design*, continues to feature scholarly contributions from CRSC Fellows and other scientists.

Television and Radio Appearances

During 1997 our fellows appeared on numerous radio programs (both Christian and secular) and five nationally televised programs, *TechnoPolitics*, *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, *Inside the Law*, *Freedom Speaks*, and *Firing Line*. The special edition of *TechnoPolitics* that we produced with PBS in November elicited such an unprecedented audience response that the producer Neil Freeman decided to air a second episode from the "out takes." His enthusiasm for our intellectual agenda helped stimulate a special edition of William F. Buckley's *Firing Line*, featuring Phillip Johnson and two of our fellows, Michael Behe and David Berlinski. At Ed Atsinger's invitation, Phil Johnson and Steve Meyer addressed Salem Communications' Talk Show Host conference in Dallas last November. As a result, Phil and Steve have been interviewed several times on Salem talk shows across the country. For example, in July Steve Meyer and Mike Behe were interviewed for two hours on the nationally broadcast radio show Janet Parshall's *America*. Canadian Public Radio (CBC) recently featured Steve Meyer on their *Tapestry* program. The episode, "God & the Scientists," has aired all across Canada. And in April, William Craig debated Oxford atheist Peter Atkins in Atlanta before a large audience (moderated by William F. Buckley), which was broadcast live via satellite link, local radio, and internet "webcast."

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

The *Firing Line* debate generated positive press coverage for our movement in, of all places, *The New York Times*, as well as a column by Bill Buckley. In addition, our fellows have published recent articles & op-eds in both the secular and Christian press, including, for example, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Times*, *National Review*, *Commentary*, *Touchstone*, *The Detroit News*, *The Boston Review*, *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, *Christianity Today*, *Cosmic Pursuits* and *World*. An op-ed piece by Jonathan Wells and Steve Meyer is awaiting publication in the *Washington Post*. Their article criticizes the National Academy of Science book *Teaching about Evolution* for its selective and ideological presentation of scientific evidence. Similar articles are in the works.