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# A Taxonomy of Teleology: Phillip Johnson, the Intelligent Design Community, and Young-Earth Creationism

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Instead of being urged to seek both kinds of understanding, suddenly we are urged to seek one or the other. They are no longer presented as either equal or distinct; natural reason is given priority over supernatural revelation and seems to want to absorb it. This does not wash: If the right is nothing but what brings about the good, the good is nothing but the desirable, the desirable is nothing but what we desire, and we desire *both* supernatural revelation and what reason can learn on its own, then Arnhart's own theory is instructing him to lay aside his atheism and pursue supernatural revelation, but he isn't listening. As Pascal once wrote of cases like this, the heart has its reasons, whereof the mind knows nothing.

### Conclusion

From all that has been said, we may conclude that "Darwinian" natural law is entirely at odds with what has traditionally been called natural law. It differs not only in content (no precepts) and structure (consequentialist) but in basic ontology (no lawgiver and therefore no law). In these respects it affirms precisely those tendencies of thought that the natural law tradition has always sought to oppose. If any contemporary scientific movement holds promise for the furtherance of the natural law tradition, it is not the stale dogma of natural selection but the theory of intelligent design.

Phil Johnson was right after all.

## A TAXONOMY OF TELEOLOGY

Phillip Johnson, the Intelligent Design Community  
and Young-Earth Creationism

MARCUS ROSS AND PAUL NELSON

I cannot believe that "Nature" was unknown before Rousseau's time; or method before Descartes; or the experimental system before Bacon; or anything that's self-evident before someone or other. Only, someone had to "make a song" about it!

Paul Valéry, *Analects*

In 1991, with the publication of *Darwin on Trial*, Phillip Johnson "made a song" about the role of naturalism in biology. Immediately, the main thesis of *Darwin on Trial*—its catchiest tune, so to speak—lodged in the thinking of many people, as catchy tunes do. Johnson argued that the authoritative place of neo-Darwinian evolution in modern culture was supported not by the evidence but by the scientific community's prior philosophical commitment to naturalism.<sup>1</sup> This thesis played out as a bothersome, even infuriating jingle for many in the scientific community; as a witty, irreverent *divertimento* to others in that community—but to young-earth creationists, exiles from modern science, Johnson's argument about naturalism was a powerfully evocative melody from their distant homeland. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, *creation* and *creationism* had become bywords in science, as textbook examples (even for many theists) of non- or anti-science. To become known as a "creationist" in the sciences could be career-imperiling.<sup>2</sup> Yet here stood a Berkeley professor, saying that in one very important respect, at least, those exiles and outcasts from science were right. Johnson even claimed to be a "creationist" of some sort himself. But how

could that be, given that he also denied defending creation science and said he was unconcerned to reconcile the Bible with scientific evidence? How could Johnson be a creationist when he plainly wasn't, well, a creationist?

In this chapter, we will answer this seemingly paradoxical question and will argue that Johnson's naturalism thesis deeply shifted the debate—a debate that until *Darwin on Trial* most onlookers saw divided between the polar camps of "evolution" versus "creation science" (meaning young-earth creationism). From the perspective of mainstream science, all sensible people accepted "evolution"—that is, the common descent of life on earth via undirected causes such as natural selection—while a relict population of biblical literalists, self-identified as "scientific creationists," clung stubbornly to their pre-Darwinian views. Creationists occasionally made political trouble by persuading state legislatures to enact so-called "balanced treatment" laws, mandating the teaching of creation science whenever evolution was taught. The courts inevitably overturned those laws, however, and in 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court declared creation science to be a religious belief, effectively banishing it from discussion in science classes.

And there the matter might have remained. Johnson, however, glimpsed something that others had missed. To borrow a metaphor from biological classification, we can say that Johnson discovered the popular taxonomy of theories of origins was wrong. In that classification those who accepted creation held the view of six-day special creation and a young earth, while others accepted "evolution," a 4.5 billion-year-old earth and an even older universe. This classification took as its diagnostic markers the most widely promoted *narratives* of creation and evolution. One story, whose biblical roots were obvious, described the special creation of all life in a few days, on a young planet whose surface was later destroyed by a global flood. The other story—the *scientific* account, for most people—began with the origin of the universe in the big bang, continued through galactic, stellar and planetary evolution to the first stirrings of life on earth. Over billions of years, all other living things descended, via common ancestry and forces including natural selection, until a few million years ago, *Homo* walked across the plains of East Africa. These stories contradict each other. Make your choice.

But Johnson's analysis in *Darwin on Trial* begins by jettisoning this familiar polarity. Setting aside the usual diagnostic markers, Johnson dissects creation and evolution by first inspecting what might be called their *epistemological anatomy*. " 'Evolution' contradicts 'creation,' " he wrote, "only when

it is explicitly or tacitly defined as *fully naturalistic evolution*—meaning evolution that is not directed by any purposeful intelligence."<sup>3</sup> The fundamental differences between the two theories, Johnson argued, did not stem from any particular historical narrative but rather from *what kinds of causes would be allowed in scientific explanation and what would count as evidence*. Epistemology—namely, what can be known empirically, and what counts as a scientific explanation—is what truly cuts the origins issue at its joints.

At first glance this analysis seems to get it all wrong. Theistic evolutionists—those who accept a 4.5 billion-year-old earth and relatedness of all organisms in a tree of life (through divine purpose)—are sorted into the same group as young-earth creationists, with whom they appear to share only the theological premise of "divine purpose." But Johnson presses on:

Persons who believe that the earth is billions of years old, and that simple forms of life evolved gradually to become more complex forms including humans, are "creationists" if they believe that a supernatural Creator not only initiated this process but in some meaningful sense *controls* it in furtherance of a purpose. As we shall see, "evolution" (in contemporary scientific usage) excludes not just creation-science but creationism in the broad sense.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, the narratives of theistic and naturalistic evolution bear many similarities, just as a dolphin can look remarkably like a shark (as ocean swimmers have discovered, to their relief or terror). Both are highly mobile aquatic predators with a streamlined, fusiform shape, similar dorsal and pectoral fins, and so forth. But these are convergences: similarities that mislead about genuine relationships. What we have with theistic and naturalistic evolution, then, is a case of convergence in narratives. Although theistic evolution may resemble its naturalistic counterpart, if the former theory is genuinely theistic, it is profoundly distinct from naturalistic evolution. Any naturalistically grounded theory cannot allow for inferences to divine design, whatever the evidence may indicate. Whether God created suddenly, as in a young-earth narrative, or did so over long spans of time, as theistic evolutionists think, are questions that cannot be entertained by science. Given naturalism, the questions do not arise because they simply cannot arise—again, whatever the evidence.

The consequences of this reframing of the origins controversy, from a choice between two very different *narratives* to the question of which *epistemology* science should adopt, are still unfolding. But already, many years after *Darwin on Trial*, Johnson's approach has revolutionized the debate.

The salient feature of that revolution has been the rapid emergence of the intelligent design (ID) community. As its inhabitants quickly learn, the ID community can be a bewildering place to live. One might imagine introducing a dolphin to a tree shrew and then taking the two of them to meet a koala.<sup>5</sup> "Gentlemen, despite your differences, would you mind standing together for the group photograph? Why? You're all mammals, of course." When faced with taxonomic confusion and a bewildering variety of appearances, the good systematist does not allow himself to be distracted by superficial similarities, no matter how compelling they may be, nor to be put off by apparent dissimilarities. Dolphins and sharks look similar; in fact, they are very different kinds of organisms. ID theorists look very different (young-earth, old-earth, theistic evolution, etc.), yet these apparently dissimilar viewpoints actually belong together at a deep level.

This was one of Phillip Johnson's key insights, and it stemmed from his discovery that *naturalism*—that is, not the detailed narrative of evolution, but its underlying *epistemology*—had become the strongest commitment of modern science since Darwin's time. The evolutionary narrative changed from one year to the next, sometimes wildly so, depending on the latest discoveries or academic fashions; the naturalistic commitment was a constant, so deep that in most cases it was entirely tacit. In the following section, then, we wish to refine Johnson's taxonomy of viewpoints about origins, with two goals in mind: (1) to show how previous classifications of various origins positions fail, and (2) to throw light on what unites young-earth creationism and intelligent design—but also to explain how and why these positions differ. Dolphins and koalas are both mammals, but koalas aren't going to be finding any meals ten meters below the surface of the ocean.

In considering the second goal, we will also answer our opening question about how, or in what sense, Johnson could be a "creationist," when he clearly wasn't one. We also hope to disentangle the confusion that surrounds the perceived relationship between the ID and young-earth creation communities. Uncertainty about what differentiates young-earth creationism from intelligent design has resulted in murkiness (and, frankly, some deliberate mischief on the part of ID critics has played a role).<sup>6</sup> We will argue that young-earth creation and ID proponents define their positions differently, have different goals, and employ different standards of method. Furthermore, both young-earth creationism and ID consider themselves distinguishable from each other, and both agree concerning the basic nature of the

distinction: the level of authority (if any) given to the Bible in model construction. We will also argue that previous attempts to classify design-based positions on origins suffer from three major shortcomings: a strict but un-supportable science-nonscience demarcation, the use of ambiguous classification criteria, and assumptions of theological uniformity among teleological positions. We will then discuss a "nested hierarchy of design," a classification system that categorizes teleological positions according to the strength of claims regarding the reality, detectability, source, method and timing of design. This system results in an accurate and robust classification of numerous positions, while simultaneously avoiding the philosophical and theological pitfalls of previous methods. Ultimately, the nested hierarchy of design classification enables construction of accurate definitions for a suite of teleological positions.

### What Name Should We Use for You?

ID theorists can expect to be called "creationists" at some point or another in their academic career, whether they like it or not. The descriptions and terms used for the various teleological (i.e., design-based) perspectives on origins have caused much confusion in the scientific, philosophical and popular literature. (We dare not even contemplate the op-ed pages). Phrases such as *creationism in disguise*, *neo-creationism* and *stealth creationism* abound. Even the term *creationism* can be ambiguous. Notwithstanding their rhetorical value, such vague or crossover terms can cause those who interact with ID and young-earth creation proponents to expect that both groups agree philosophically and theologically, when in fact they differ significantly. In public forums, such as debates, panel discussions or school board meetings, failure to recognize distinctions between these and other teleological positions becomes a barrier to constructive dialogue.

*How do you see (and what do you call) yourself?* If we listen, just after a controversial lecture on origins, we can hear many voices in the foyer of the biology building: "Don't call me a creationist—that's become a term of abuse." "Well, I'm a creationist, and proud of it." "I'm a design theorist." "I'm a theistic evolutionist." By looking at how ID and young-earth creation proponents view both themselves and each other, one quickly learns that they don't hold, and don't consider themselves to hold, equivalent positions. The Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture, the primary research and publication organ of ID, defines ID as "hold[ing] that certain features of

the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection."<sup>7</sup> Access Research Network, a meeting place for the ID community, defines ID as "the view that nature shows tangible signs of having been designed by a preexisting intelligence."<sup>8</sup> Conspicuously missing from these definitions are any references to religious texts, such as the Bible.

Young-earth-creation paleontologist Kurt Wise defined "Young Age Creationism" (for our purposes the same as young-Earth creationism) as "main[ain]taining] that God created the entire universe during a six-day Creation Week about six thousand years ago."<sup>9</sup> While not giving an age for the earth, Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds provide four other characteristics of young-earth creationism:

1. An open philosophy of science (characterized by an openness to all possible modes of causation).
2. All basic types of organisms were directly created by God during the creation week of Genesis 1—2
3. The curse of Genesis 3:14-19 profoundly affected every aspect of the natural economy.
4. The flood of Noah was a historical event, global in extent and effect.<sup>10</sup>

Both ID and young-earth creation proponents eschew terms like "intelligent design creationism," considering them to be pejoratives designed to blur the distinctions between the groups. The Discovery Institute states that ID can be distinguished from young-earth creationism in five ways, two of which are of particular importance here:

1. ID is based on science, whereas young-earth creationism is based on sacred texts.
2. The religious implications of ID are unconnected to ID itself.

*How do you see (and describe) others?* Bill Dembski (1999) differentiates ID from young-earth creationism primarily because "intelligent design nowhere attempts to identify the intelligent cause responsible for the design in nature, nor does it prescribe in advance the sequence of events by which this intelligent cause had to act."<sup>11</sup> Thus the distinctions between ID and young-earth creationism drawn by ID proponents themselves center on the nonauthority (in science) of sacred texts and an official agnosticism about the nature and methods employed by the designer(s).

The reaction of young-earth creation proponents to ID has been mixed.

Henry Morris, coauthor of *The Genesis Flood* and founder of the Institute for Creation Research, has written in sharp opposition to ID, stating that the design argument "has been tried in the past and has failed, and it will fail today. The reason it won't work is because it is not the Biblical method."<sup>12</sup> Answers in Genesis, another leading creationist organization, has been more measured in its response. Carl Weiland, writing the AiG's official position on ID, outlined perceived strengths and weaknesses of ID from a young-earth creationism perspective, concluding: "Where we can be natural allies, [and] if this can occur without compromising our Biblical stance in any way, we want to be."<sup>13</sup> Wise defines ID as "a theory and movement that seeks to develop a secular method of identifying and defending design in the universe."<sup>14</sup> In each instance, young-earth creation proponents distinguish themselves from ID mainly by the place they believe biblical authority ought to have in scientific model construction.

It should by now be clear that ID and young-earth creationism consider themselves as distinct groups. The groups have different philosophies of science, methodologies and aims. As such, those interacting with them should be mindful of these differences. Utilization of crossover terminology (e.g., "neo-creationism" and "intelligent design creationism") is both inappropriate and misleading.

Despite their differences, there are still a number of "homologies" between ID and young-earth creationism. So much, in fact, that some young-earth creation proponents (such as ourselves) have found a home in the ID movement. To understand this fact, it is helpful to develop a classification scheme that can both (1) accurately define each position, and (2) provide a framework to understand the relationship between them. But before doing this, it would be prudent to look at previous attempts at classification.

### Taxonomies That Don't Work

The most recent attempts to classify various positions of origins are those of Eugenie Scott and Donald Wise. These authors attempt to classify origins positions through one or more gradational characters. Scott's article "The Creation/Evolution Continuum" classifies various origins positions in terms of how literal an interpretation of the Bible is taken. All differences between each position are a matter of degree, and the continuum has "few sharp boundaries."<sup>15</sup> Wise combined the literal interpretation criterion with how much control God has in science in his "belief spectrum."<sup>16</sup> Both of

these classification schemes suffer from three major shortcomings: (1) a strict science-nonscience demarcation, (2) the use of ambiguous classification criteria, and (3) assumptions of theological uniformity among teleological positions.

*Science-nonscience demarcation.* Both the continuum and spectrum assert that there is a clear method of reliably distinguishing science from nonscience, a method of demarcation. Briefly, demarcation is the attempt to draw a distinction, in this case between science and nonscience, two things based on one or more characters, in this case science and nonscience. While the continuum makes a literal interpretation of the Bible the key for distinguishing various positions, a close reading of the article's text gives deeper insight into the nature of the classification. Regarding the interaction of science and the Bible for "Flat Earthers," Scott states, "the earth is flat because the Bible says it is flat. Scientific views are of secondary importance." For young-earth creationists, Scott notes that they "reject modern physics, chemistry, and geology concerning the age of the earth." As for the differences between evolutionary creationists and theistic evolutionists, they "lie not in science, but in theology."<sup>17</sup>

In essence, then, the continuum and spectrum (with its more obvious "Bible" and "science" axes) are identical. Both assert that there is a demarcation between the Bible and science. The admixture of the Bible (no scientific content) on one hand, and science (no biblical content) on the other, results in any one of the positions. Figure 16.1, a composite of the continuum and spectrum views, illustrates this point. But, to justify this scheme it must be shown that the Bible and science are mutually exclusive. It follows that if the Bible is nonscience, then the Bible can neither now nor ever have provided any framework for scientific investigation. Neither can it aid in generating any testable hypothesis. If we are to demarcate science and the Bible, then a scientist simply cannot use the Bible to gain meaningful insight while in the pursuit of scientific knowledge.

Yet the history of science testifies firmly against any such demarcation. The belief that the Bible provides information on the reproductive nature of plant and animal life led Karl Linne to construct the modern discipline of biological systematics. William Paley constructed his views on natural history based on his beliefs about the Bible and the nature of God, and his ideas resulted in an empirical investigation into the natural world that continues to this day. He also believed that certain observations in nature, such

as the magnificent design of the human eye, pointed directly to the nature, character and power of God.

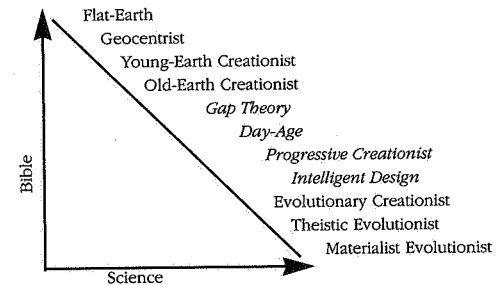


Figure 16.1. Composite continuum/spectrum classification

Conversely, Darwin often utilized a blended biblical-Platonic view, widely accepted at the time by natural theologians, as a foil in *On the Origin of Species* (see especially his discussions on immutability and biogeography), indicating that he believed that such ideas could indeed be empirically evaluated. To assume that there is a demarcation between the Bible and science would mean that Linne and Paley were not scientists (along with Newton and a host of others), and that many of Darwin's arguments in the *Origin of Species* do not count as scientific discourse.

In looking at demarcation attempts in the philosophy of science, assertions of a science-nonscience demarcation have fared poorly. Karl Popper tried to demarcate science from nonscience using the criterion of falsification. He argued that if a statement is testable through empirical investigation, it is thus falsifiable and counts as science. The falsification criterion of Popper fails on one level because theories do not exist in isolation. Rather, theories are usually multifaceted, with a number of auxiliary assumptions and hypotheses surrounding it. These auxiliary assumptions and hypotheses primarily exist to protect the central theory from the very thing that is supposed to make it scientific: falsification.

Furthermore, Popper's falsification relied on the independence of hypotheses and observations. But such a distinction is impossible since all observations entail theories to explain them. For example, observations of minerals in thin sections are dependent on various optical theories of

microscopy that help scientists understand their observations. Without a distinction between theories and observation, Popper's falsification has no philosophical basis.

In the past, attempts by courts to distinguish science from creation science using the falsification criterion (such as Justice Overton's opinion on *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*) have been severely criticized.<sup>18</sup> In particular, falsification failed as a criterion because it can actually be met by creation science. Creation science passes the criterion of testability (and therefore falsification) since, for example, Steve Austin and his colleagues postulate a diluvial origin of Neoproterozoic to late Cretaceous sedimentary rocks.<sup>19</sup> This hypothesis can be empirically evaluated by looking at the inferred environment of deposition for relevant geologic units. So not only has falsification failed philosophically, it has also failed in practice by showing its inability to legally demarcate traditional science from creation science.

*"Literal" interpretation of the Bible.* A second problem for the continuum and spectrum views is, What does it mean to take the Bible "literally" as opposed to "nonliterally"? Here again we face a problem of demarcation. From the standpoint of the continuum, if we take the Bible entirely "literally," then we would be flat Earthers (the spectrum ends at young-earth creationism). Scott claims, "The strictest creationists are Flat Earthers."<sup>20</sup> Granted, flat Earthers would likely say that they take the Bible literally; indeed they might claim to take the Bible more literally than any other position represented on the continuum. But how is *literal* judged, and does the flat-earth position actually represent the most literal position on the continuum?

An interesting dilemma follows from this question. According to the continuum, young-earth and old-earth creationists take the Bible less literally than do flat Earthers. But young-Earth and old-Earth creationists might jointly claim that a flat-earth interpretation is actually taking the Bible *non-literally*. How can this be? One charge might be that a flat-earth interpretation ignores grammatical and linguistic devices employed by the original writer. If a particular passage cited as support for a flat Earth has a poetic literary structure, then perhaps a nonliteral interpretation is actually literal with respect to the author's intent.

The book of Revelation will, perhaps ironically, clarify. John, in Revelation 7:1 writes, "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree" (NASB). The flat-Earth per-

spective may consider this passage to argue strongly for its case. But Revelation is a book written in a particular style known as apocalyptic. One of the main characteristics of this genre is the use of highly symbolic language. To complicate matters further, John indicates that what he is relating to his readers came from a vision (Rev 1:10; 4:1-2), so we can expect that the language used to describe scenes and events will also be symbolic. The "four corners" is typically understood to be the cardinal directions, not *literal* corners. It is literary phrase indicating "from everywhere." In light of these kinds of stylistic devices, saying that John actually meant that he saw a flat Earth would be like assuming that meteorologists are geocentrists because they tell us when the sun will rise and set.

*Assumptions of theological unity.* Third, the continuum and spectrum views fail because both assume theological unity among all positions. This problem is expressed in two ways. First, the continuum categorizes ID as being a form of old-earth creationism, located between progressive creationism and evolutionary creationists. But the diversity of Christian positions among ID proponents undercuts this argument. Though most individuals in the ID community are old-earth creationists of some form or another (e.g., Steven Meyer and William Dembski), the group includes theistic evolutionists (e.g., Michael Behe) and young-Earth creationists (e.g., Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds) that readily identify themselves as part of the ID community. Though individual ID proponents may integrate an old-earth creationist position with ID (e.g., Dembski, *Intelligent Design*), this is not an official position of ID. As it stands, such diversity among Christian beliefs on origins within the ID movement itself disqualifies ID as a subcategory of old-earth creationism.

Second, both the continuum and spectrum views consider that all positions not labeled materialist evolutionism/secular humanism to be derived from a Christian belief system, and that the designer is invariably God. While it is true that the vast majority of creationists and ID proponents are Christians, some are not. Some creationists (young-Earth and other types) are Jewish or Muslim. ID also includes non-Christian adherents such as Michael Denton and David Berlinski. Denton is a particularly illuminating case. His views on the origin and diversity of life are based on a decidedly neo-Platonic view of the universe, asserting that protein structures conform to "ideal forms" necessitated by a designer intrinsic to the universe.<sup>21</sup> To cloud matters further, the Raelian movement (which departs from theism altogether) has officially endorsed ID on its website<sup>22</sup> and identifies the designer

as alien scientists who manufactured life. Supporters of directed panspermia, which submits that life was seeded on this planet by a dying alien race, could likewise be viewed as an ID-type position. Since each of these non-Christian positions can locate themselves within creationism or ID, the continuum and spectrum views fail to accurately describe the relationships among teleological positions.

### The Nested Hierarchy of Design

The philosophical and theological problems encountered by the continuum and spectrum views can be avoided. A classification system that defines positions using a suite of discrete characters based on the presence or absence of particular design claims yet avoids demarcation arguments and naive theological assumptions yields positive results. The "nested hierarchy of design" (see fig. 16.2) is such a system. It is constructed similar to cladograms in biology and paleontology, and the various characters used in this system can be numerically coded.

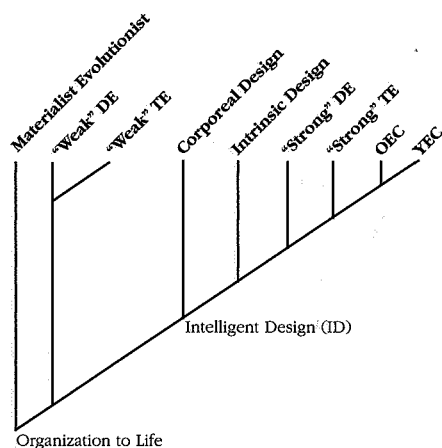


Figure 16.2. Nested hierarchy of design

The nested hierarchy of design is meant to classify teleological positions based on the relative strength of design claims. It is not intended to distin-

guish which of the positions classified can be referred to as "scientific" positions; hence it avoids the pitfalls of demarcation. Through the nested hierarchy of design, we can recognize the variety of theological positions represented among teleological positions. In fact, theological claims are employed to better resolve the relationship between the teleological positions classified here.

To classify the various teleological positions, the characters are defined as follows:

- Teleos (A): Real design does not (0) or does (1) exist in the biotic and/or abiotic universe.
- Detectable (B): Design is not recognizable or empirically detectable (0), or it is (1).
- Agency: The nature of the designing agent is
  - (C) corporeal (0) or noncorporeal (1).
  - (D) intrinsic to the universe (0) or transcendent to it (1).
  - (E) deistic (0) or theistic (1).
- Biological complexity (F): continuous (0) or discontinuous (1) ancestry.
- Age (G): The age of earth is 4.5 billion years (0) or 6,000 to 10,000 years (1).

Table 16.1 is a character matrix (again, like cladistics) of eight teleological positions, with materialist evolutionist as an out-group. Note that in this analysis, there is a distinction between two types of deistic and theistic evolution, "strong" and "weak." These descriptors denote the relative strength of the design inference being made by adherents; they are not theological judgments. Note also the large gap between these views in the nested

Table 16.1. Character Matrix for Teleological Positions. (An X indicates that the position takes no stance on the character.)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
materialist evolutionist	0	0	X	X	X	0	0
"weak" deistic evolution	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
"weak" theistic evolution	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
corporeal design	1	1	0	X	X	0/1	0
intrinsic design	1	1	1	0	X	0	0
"strong" deistic evolution	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
"strong" theistic evolution	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
old-earth creation	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
young-earth creation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1



hierarchy of design, as compared to those in the continuum and spectrum views. The relationships elucidated by the nested hierarchy of design explain why most theistic evolutionists typically ally themselves with materialist evolutionists in common opposition to young-earth creationism and ID, which includes the smaller number of theistic evolutionists. This rejection of ID is based on a rejection of real design itself by materialists and by a rejection of detectability of real design by most theistic evolutionists.

### Formal Definitions

We can now define various teleological positions based on the traits of the nodes that include the philosophy expressed by that position. Based on the above, the following definitions for ID and young-earth creationism can be advanced:

- Intelligent design: a teleological position that asserts recognition and empirical detectability of real design in the abiotic and/or biotic universe.
- Young-earth creationism: a teleological position that asserts recognition and detectability of real design in the abiotic and biotic universe by a transcendent, theistic being who has causally acted both during and after its initial formation, having designed discontinuous biological complexity approximately 6,000 years ago.

By looking at the structure of the nested hierarchy of design, we can now understand more fully the manner in which ID and young-earth creationism relate. ID occupies a node that contains all those teleological views that allow for the empirical detection of real design. That is, ID is philosophically minimalistic. In contrast, young-earth creationism occupies but one branch (like a taxon on a cladogram) and is defined by the successive accumulation of distinct philosophical and theological concepts as one moves up the diagram.

If we follow Johnson's logic that "creationists" are simply defined as those who "believe that a supernatural Creator . . . initiated [and] *controls*" the universe, then "creationists" become a "polyphyletic" assemblage.<sup>23</sup> That is, they are a group that cannot all be connected to a single node. So while "strong" theistic evolutionists, old-earth creationists and young-earth creationists are creationists, so too are "weak" theistic evolutionists. The first group all share a node on the nested hierarchy of design, while the last is on its own, separate branch in the diagram.

Though problematic to biologists and paleontologists, polyphyly need

cause no consternation here. After all, this diagram does not entail common ancestry among the positions. Rather, this situation exists because, at least in the issues of creation and evolution, there are complexities involved in assessing one's position, and certain concepts carry more gravitas than others. If the classification were purely theological, then the situation would be quickly resolved.

### Conclusion

Having explored the relationship between ID and young-earth creationism, we return to our three problems. We have answered the last two, the failure of previous classification methods and the relationship of ID and young-earth creationism, by constructing and interpreting the nested hierarchy of design. In doing so, we have also solved the riddle of our first query: How is it that Phillip Johnson could claim to be a creationist when he clearly wasn't one? The answer lies in the new way that Johnson looked at what it means to be a creationist. In focusing attention on the underlying principle of naturalism, rather than the distraction of the narratives of creation and evolution, a new taxonomy arises. In it we see the philosophical and theological concepts of any position laid out clearly and succinctly. Johnson is a creationist all right—just not a young-earth creationist.

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Darwin's nemesis

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD . . . . .	9
<i>Senator Rick Santorum</i>	
PREFACE . . . . .	11
<i>William A. Dembski</i>	
INTRODUCTION: A MYTHIC LIFE . . . . .	25
<i>John Mark Reynolds</i>	
<b>PART I: PORTRAITS OF THE MAN AND HIS WORK</b>	
1 YOUR WITNESS, MR. JOHNSON: A Retrospective Review of <i>Darwin on Trial</i> . . . . .	33
<i>Stephen C. Meyer</i>	
2 FROM MUTTERING TO MAYHEM: How Phillip Johnson Got Me Moving . . . . .	37
<i>Michael J. Behe</i>	
3 HOW PHIL JOHNSON CHANGED MY MIND . . . . .	48
<i>Jay Wesley Richards</i>	
4 PUTTING DARWIN ON TRIAL: Phillip Johnson Transforms the Evolutionary Narrative. . . . .	62
<i>Thomas Woodward</i>	

**PART II: THE WEDGE AND ITS DESPISERS**

5 DEALING WITH THE BACKLASH AGAINST INTELLIGENT DESIGN . . . . . 81  
*William A. Dembski*

6 IT'S THE EPISTEMOLOGY, STUPID!  
Science, Public Schools and What Counts as Knowledge . . . . . 105  
*Francis J. Beckwith*

7 CUTTING BOTH WAYS:  
The Challenge Posed by Intelligent Design  
to Traditional Christian Education . . . . . 117  
*Timothy G. Standish*

**PART III: TWO FRIENDLY CRITICS**

8 TWO FABLES BY JORGE LUIS BORGES . . . . . 135  
*David Berlinski*

9 DARWINISM AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL . . . . . 139  
*Michael Ruse*

**PART IV: JOHNSON'S REVOLUTION IN BIOLOGY**

10 THE WEDGE OF TRUTH VISITS THE LABORATORY . . . . . 153  
*David Keller*

11 COMMON ANCESTRY ON TRIAL . . . . . 164  
*Jonathan Wells*

12 THE ORIGIN OF BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION  
AND THE HIGHER TAXONOMIC CATEGORIES . . . . . 174  
*Stephen C. Meyer*

13 GENETIC ANALYSIS OF COORDINATE FLAGELLAR AND  
TYPE III REGULATORY CIRCUITS IN PATHOGENIC BACTERIA . . . . . 214  
*Scott A. Minnich and Stephen C. Meyer*

**PART V: EVER-INCREASING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE**

14 INTELLIGENT DESIGN AND THE DEFENSE OF REASON . . . . . 227  
*Nancy Pearcey*

15 PHILLIP JOHNSON WAS RIGHT:  
The Rivalry of Naturalism and Natural Law . . . . . 244  
*J. Budziszewski*

16 A TAXONOMY OF TELEOLOGY:  
Phillip Johnson, the Intelligent Design Community  
and Young-Earth Creationism . . . . . 261  
*Marcus Ross and Paul Nelson*

17 COMPLEXITY, CHAOS AND GOD . . . . . 276  
*Wesley D. Allen and Henry F. Schaefer III*

**PART VI: EPILOGUE**

18 PHILLIP JOHNSON AND THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT:  
Looking Back and Looking Forward . . . . . 305  
*Walter L. Bradley*

19 THE FINAL WORD . . . . . 315  
*Phillip E. Johnson*

Notes . . . . . 318

Contributors . . . . . 348