

Meetings

Roundtable

April 1, 2007
Pellissippi State
10:30 AM

Discussion leader:
Professor Martin Carcieri, Assistant, Department of Political Science, Western Kentucky University

Topic:
"Race in Public Schools: Two Current Supreme Court Cases."

Book Club

April 8, 2007
Barnes & Noble Books
5:00 PM

This month's selection is

APRIL - The Chalice and the Blade by Riane Eisler

MAY - What's your life worth
by David Dranove

JUNE - The Ethical Brain
by Michael Gazzaniga

JULY - Our Inner Ape
by DeWaal

Philosophy

April 15, 2007
Pellissippi State
10:30 AM

Presentors:
Michael Lance:
Carl Ledendecker
and all attending

Topic:
Religious Believers:
Confront or Ignore?

We will debate the topic: Religious Believers, Confront or Ignore. Michael Lance will lead the Ignore position, Carl Ledendecker will lead the Confront position and Phil King will be the neutral judge with Lorrie Powdrill as the moderator.

An ID Encounter

Darwin Verses Design Conference

by Carl Ledendecker

On Saturday, March 24th Noelle Cleverly, Kenny Graham, and I stood outside the Knoxville Convention Center from 8:30 AM until after 4:00 PM. That is where the Discovery Institute had an Intelligent Design show. We were handing out flyers about evolution and were joined by two fellows from the Rational Responders, Billy Farris and Josh (Darth_Josh - didn't get the last name). Andy Shor joined us for a while.

We were not able to stand any where on the entire block of the Convention Center. Security (nicely) ran us off. We couldn't even stand on the sidewalk on Henley! That happened after we engaged in a discussion with three men who were attending the meeting. They were very much literally "in your face." I ended up about ten feet back from where we started by the end of the conversation. One guy was arguing that ID wasn't at all about religion and the other was giving me religion 101.

We were not able to see most of the people coming and going. There was a parking garage on the Cumberland side and we weren't allowed to stand any where near it because of the "stay off the entire block restriction" and the lack of adjacent areas that allowed access.

There were only about 100 to 200 hundred people going past our locations. We couldn't cover all access points on the State Street side because of our limited numbers. Inside, according to the News Sentinel, there were about 700. I was also told by a Creationist/ID'er who left early that they were giving out free tickets. (They were \$5 for student and educational faculty but \$55 for everyone else.)

Many convinced people came out of the Convention Center and said that the ID presenters were being very scientific and we should join them inside and learn what new things that they had to offer instead of attacking them without listening. Some people refused to take the evolution literature and some, of course, just threw it away.

The younger attendees were more inclined to take the literature. One adult came out with two teen-aged boys (the boys took literature on the way in). The adult was complaining that he expected that they would present a balanced argument that included evolution but that was not the case. The boys talked with several of us for 10 or 15 minutes. The adult was very aggravated about our not being able to use a public space that his tax dollars paid for.

The most memorable occurrence, for me, was the teen-aged boy who came up to me during the lunch break. He asked if we were the ones giving out evolution literature. When I said yes, he replied that he would like some more because, "My mother is a fundamentalist and she tore mine up." He then went back across the street and read it.

We spend a considerable amount of time just waiting, but the conversations during that time were enjoyable.

A group of adults came out at the end and argued (nicely) that ID wasn't about religion and was good science. They also challenged us to go in and said that some of the speakers were still there answering questions and we could now go in without paying.

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Darwin Verses Design continued

We (Noelle, Kenny and I) went in and there were about 20 or more people still there talking to Michael Behe and Stephen Meyer. We just listened for a bit and then Meyer made an outlandish statement and I couldn't resist challenging him. I wasn't too concerned about "winning the argument" and of course he had a practiced response to any challenge. The only people left were "true believers" and what ever I said would make little difference but it gave me a chance to see what his "new evidence" was. Basically he wouldn't talk about species, saying that that was an arbitrary distinction. He would only talk about the inability of Darwinism to explain the emergence of new "body plans." He skillfully dodged any attempt to talk about actual transitions and the more understandable examples of the fossil record. To keep the conversation on a highly technical sounding level and further add to the confusion, he also kept referring to "higher level order" being a key factor in these "sudden" appearances of new "body plans."

Several UT staff were there. One came out early and when I asked him what it was like in there, he said that he wasn't really sure what to say because he was feeling really depressed at the moment. He then said that the good part was that this was the best that they had to offer and it wasn't much. My response to that is that there wasn't much that they offered if you were a scientist who knew the intricate details of evolution and science, but many layman they sound knowledgeable, sincere and are the new direction of science.

They (the Creationists/ID'er) are out there impressing the general public with techno-babble while the secularists are all too often pretending that they don't really amount to much, should be ignored or shouldn't be challenged. To quote the ID Wedge manifesto, the goal is "nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies" and the renewal of "a broadly theistic understanding of nature." And, as Meyers put it, the goal is to show that "the testimony of nature (or science) actually supports important tenets of theism or the Judeo-Christian religion."

They have an objective and they are spending great amounts of time and money to push it. What are we doing?

For more info: http://www.msu.edu/~pennock5/research/papers/Pennock*DNAbyDesign.pdf



"The real oppressor, enslaver, and corrupter of the people is the Bible. That book is the chain that binds, the dungeon that holds the clergy. That book spreads the pall of superstition over the colleges and schools. That book puts out the eyes of science, and makes honest investigation a crime. That book fills the world with bigotry, hypocrisy and fear." (*Some Mistakes of Moses*, Ingersoll's Works, Vol. 2 p. 43)

"For ages, a deadly conflict has been waged between a few brave men and women of thought and genius upon the one side, and the great ignorant religious mass on the other. This is the war between Science and Faith. The few have appealed to reason, to honor, to law, to freedom, to the known, and to happiness here in this world. The many have appealed to prejudice, to fear, to miracle, to slavery, to the unknown, and to misery hereafter. The few have said, "Think!" The many have said, "Believe!" (Robert G. Ingersoll, "The Gods", 1872)

RET Newsletter submissions

Feel free to submit news of interest. Submissions are welcomed but may be limited by space and topic relevance. The format may vary depending on the amount of information submitted. Short submissions are preferred but longer ones may be accepted if they can be published as a series over two or more issues. Text or Word format are best for submission. Text may also be included in an E-mail.

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The Newsletter can also be found online at our Web site: www.rationalists.org. Scheduling: Philosophy (Michael Lance) lancem@ornl.gov; Round tables (Aleta Ledendecker) aletaledendecker@earthlink.net, 982-8687; Book Club (John McCaffrey) jkmccaffreytn@yahoo.com Newsletter: (Carl Ledendecker) ledendecker@earthlink.net, 982-8687 Material published in The RET Newsletter represents the views of the individual authors. Publication does not constitute an endorsement by the Rationalists of East Tennessee or its members.