

Confessions of a Skeptic

By **RICHARD T. HALVORSON**
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Does our culture, like many others, have an unpardonable heresy? Every culture constructs an idol unto itself, punishing heresy by excommunication. We can discover the sacred idol of any culture by finding its taboo question.

In Medieval Europe, the peasant was forbidden to question the truth of the Church. Under Communism, comrades doubting the Party were thrown in gulag labor camps. Now, citizens must recite principles of Darwinism through compulsory schooling.

We are encouraged to learn nuances like punctuated equilibrium and neo-Darwinism, but questioning the universal explanatory power of evolution is met with intellectual excommunication.

I make no apology for those who blindly reject scientific evidence due to contrived religious doctrines; I have equally little tolerance for those who ignore scientific evidence to prop up a naturalistic anti-religious dogma.

Anti-religious prejudice among scientists significantly impeded 20th century scientific advance. Stephen Hawking wrote in *A Brief History of Time* that evidence for the Big Bang was ignored for decades because it “smacks of divine intervention.” For fear of theological implications, there were “a number of attempts to avoid the conclusion that there had been a Big Bang.”

Intellectual honesty requires rationally examining our fundamental premises—yet expressing hesitation about Darwin is considered irretrievable intellectual suicide, the unthinkable doubt, the unpardonable sin of academia.

Although the postmodern era questions everything else—the possibility of knowledge, basic morality and reality itself—critical discussion of Darwin is taboo. While evolutionary biologists test Darwin’s hypothesis in every experiment they conduct, the basic premise of evolution remains an scientific Holy of Holies, despite our absurd skepticism in other areas.

Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins writes: “It is absolutely safe to say that, if you meet somebody who does not believe in evolution, that person is either ignorant, stupid, or insane.”

Biologists continue to recite the worn credo, “the central, unifying principle of biology is the theory of evolution.” But where would physics be if Einstein had been forced to chant, “the central, unifying principle of physics is Newtonian theory,” until he could not see beyond its limitations?

Scientific innovations originate outside the dominant paradigm—demanding orthodoxy invites stagnation. Scientists who question evolution, like Intelligent Design theorists, do

not reject evolution entirely, but argue that evidence supports a limited explanatory role. Faithful Darwinists, however, like Teilhard de Chardin, insist that evolution is “a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforth bow.”

Luckily, no one needs a doctorate to separate honest skepticism from institutionalized dogma. Skip Evans, of the National Center for Science Education, worried that classroom discussions of evidence against evolution might “cast seeds of doubt in students’ minds.”

Professors expressing doubts about evolution are often ostracized, demoted or fired. A Baylor University professor found research funds rescinded because his project would undermine evolutionary presuppositions. Other skeptical professors have resorted to using pseudonyms, fearing for their jobs and careers if they openly publish contrary evidence.

Evolution skeptics are almost universally dismissed with an ad hominem charge of “religiously-motivated propaganda.” Yet science students and professors consistently fail to address the merits of critics’ arguments. They cannot answer the relevant evidential questions of: (1) what is the most compelling critique of evolution; (2) and on which points the evidence or arguments fail.

Most Darwinists have not read or considered biochemist Michael Behe, geneticist Michael Denton, embryologist Jonathan Wells, or information theorist William Dembski. These dissenting voices are systematically marginalized and silenced by academic McCarthyism.

We must refuse to bow to our culture’s false idols. Science will not benefit from canonizing Darwin or making evolution an article of secular faith. We must reject intellectual excommunication as a valid form of dealing with criticism: the most important question for any society to ask is the one that is forbidden.

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Go back to [original article](#).

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