

## FAQ:

# Is ID just a Movement Trying to Push a Political Agenda?

**The Short Answer:** No, definitely not. Many people view intelligent design as forcing a political agenda upon science. There may be some individuals who would like to see public policy changes in light of intelligent design theory (many have also sought to make public policy changes in light of evolutionary theory), but that does not mean that intelligent design theory is not a bona fide scientific theory or that it is just a political movement. Intelligent design theory is trying to do neither of these, as it is a serious scientific research program. For those who want to see how the research of the ID movement is real science with a science-oriented basis and goal, visit the International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design (ISCID.org). At its heart, intelligent design is based upon science.

### The Long Answer:

The charge that intelligent design is forcing a political agenda upon science often comes from charges that intelligent design theory is trying to force some "cultural renewal" or force some political agenda upon science. Charges are often brought by citing the "Wedge Document," an internal document from the Discovery Institute where it talks about a strategy to "defeat scientific materialism" and "reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions." ("Wedge Document" as quoted from <http://www.discovery.org/csc/TopQuestions/wedgeresp.pdf>) Does this represent an improper political agenda that is trying to force political or religiously motivated ideas into science?

"In any case, the "Wedge Document" does not propose replacing "science" or the "scientific method" with "God" or "religion," as one reporter claimed. Still less does it advocate imposing a particular conclusion on scientists as a condition of their practicing science--something that would be absurd. Instead it advocates open debate and argument (see below). Proponents of intelligent design have long insisted that all scientists must be free to follow evidence wherever they think it leads. It happens that many (thought not all) of our fellows think that a considerable body of evidence now points to the intelligent design of life and the universe. Most of these scientists and scholars think that this evidence support, or is at least consonant with, a theistic view of the world. The "Wedge Document" does nothing more sinister than announce our intention to support the research of such scientists--among others.

(From "The "Wedge Document": "So What?" at <http://www.discovery.org/csc/TopQuestions/wedgeresp.pdf>)

The Discovery Institute notes that it is not trying to change science, but rather refocus its emphasis on non-materialistic theories which might bear more fruit for the scientific enterprise:

"The Center for Science and Culture [part of the Discovery Institute] is not attacking the scientific method. It is challenging the philosophy of scientific materialism, and the false scientific theories that support it...we are challenging the truth of particular scientific theories (such as neo-Darwinism and the theory of chemical evolution) using appropriate scientific methods, canons of reasoning and evaluation and, most importantly, scientific evidence. To say that challenging a particular scientific theory constitutes an attack on science itself is to misunderstand science profoundly. Science advances precisely by such challenges. Reasoned argument about how to best

interpret scientific evidence is, and always has been essential to the practice of science--indeed, in a real sense it is science.

Second, as noted, we are challenging the philosophy of scientific materialism, not science itself. Our detractors fail to make this critical, but obvious distinction. We don't know why. But we suspect that some scientists have so equated science with their own materialistic worldview that they regard any challenge to that worldview, or any challenge to the theories that give it plausibility, as tantamount to an attack on science itself.

Others suggest that our discussion of an "overthrow of materialism" shows that the Discovery Institute is pursuing an illegitimate political agenda. But materialism is not a political party or government. It is a system of thought. We are not planning to "overthrow" a political regime by force or otherwise. We are not asking anyone to impose our perspective on anyone else, or to make our perspective a condition of employment. In contrast, many of our scholars and scientists have been pressured to affirm neo-Darwinism and other materialistic ideas as a condition of their employment in certain public universities and research center.

Instead, the "Wedge Document" makes clear that we are advancing an intellectual challenge to a philosophical perspective and to a set of theories that previously have made that perspective seem credible. The kind of "overthrow" we are seeking is an intellectual one, a shift in perspective that can only be achieved by research, writing, and reasoned argument-- as the "Wedge Document" itself makes clear. Our intellectual interlocutors may disagree with our perspective (and we respect their right to do so), but we do not see how they can reasonably object to our methods or to the facts that we have a plan to persuade and influence science and culture *with our ideas*.

And who doesn't try to persuade others with their ideas? Certainly, any group that contends for a point of view in the public square--whether the Darwin-only lobby at the National Center for Science Education, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Association for the Advancement of Science or the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association--wants to see its ideas influence others. And such groups have plan about how they want to achieve such influence. So again: Where is the scandal?"

(From "The "Wedge Document": "So What?" at <http://www.discovery.org/csc/TopQuestions/wedgeresp.pdf>)

### **Are the intentions of intelligent design organizations covert?**

No. Although many critics of intelligent design have called it "Creationism's Trojan Horse" (i.e. a covert attempt to sneak creationism in through 'science'), the Discovery Institute notes that all the intentions of the "Wedge Document" have been made public for some time. Consider the following excerpt from the Discovery Institute in its defense of itself to charges made by Barbara Forrest and others that they have a political agenda:

"Our initial strategy for influencing science and culture (which was first articulated in the "Wedge Document") has been repeatedly discussed at numerous conferences, in book and articles, on our website and in our brochure. Indeed, much of the offending text from the document had already appeared on our website and in our Center brochure (So much for a secret conspiracy) Further, Professor Phillip E. Johnson of the

University of California at Berkeley published an entire book articulating his version of the wedge strategy in the year 2000. Yet Barbara Forrest and others have invented and then hyped a supposed secrecy surrounding the wedge strategy, characterizing the "wedge of intelligent design" as a Trojan horse." At one point Forrest claimed that the "Wedge Document's" "authenticity...has been neither affirmed nor denied by the Discovery Institute." Yet if Professor Forrest had wanted to know whether the document was authentic, all she had to do was ask. But she didn't."

(From "The "Wedge Document": "So What?" at <http://www.discovery.org/csc/TopQuestions/wedgeresp.pdf>)

The intelligent design movement is very forthright about what it is trying to do: it is trying to bring to recognition the scientific evidence supporting intelligent design theory, which challenges a naturalistic and materialistic paradigm which has reigned over science for decades. The methods and means of this movement is research, writing, publication, and dialogue. There are no secrets about the information the intelligent design movement seeks to disseminate. The fact that they have a non-secret strategy for disseminating this information does not make the movement "covert" in any way.

For those who want to see how the research of the ID movement is real science with a science-oriented basis and goal, visit the International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design (ISCID.org).