

Creationist' Tactics

Sooner or later, if you have any interest in science, or in education, you will encounter a Creationist Argument. Creationists are always trying to sneak Biblical Creationism into the curriculum by any means possible. To this effect, they will try to convince parents, teachers and school boards that they are presenting real science.

When presenting their arguments to any except the converted, these people are too canny to advocate anything that too strongly resembles the Biblical account of Genesis as their "theory." Instead, their beliefs masquerade under such aliases "Scientific Creationism", "Creation Science" or "Intelligent Design Theory". Any time someone claims to have a theory that will overturn what the "establishment" is teaching in the schools, you have reasonable cause to be skeptical. The use of any of the terms quoted above should be considered a red flag.

Since "Creation Science" is not science, Creationists cannot use scientific arguments to support their cases. By "scientific argument", I mean an argument in favor of creationism based on the **evidence**.

Scientific theories win acceptance because the bulk of the evidence provides support for them, and because no evidence proves the theories to be false. Creationist ideas are backed up by isolated bits of data which were usually refuted not too long after they were published. By citing an article published in some scientific journal, the Creationist hopes to convince the public that there may be something of substance to his claims.

The majority of Creationist arguments are intended to discredit evolution in various ways. Since they can't make a case for creationism, they attempt to dismantle the case for evolution. This fallacious argument assumes that there are only two possible explanations of creation and evolution.

Here is a sampling of the techniques used in Creationist arguments. You will often see a large number of these techniques used in one presentation. A really gifted Creationist can often combine two or three of these techniques in a single paragraph.

1) INTERPRET ANY UNCERTAINTY ANYWHERE IN SCIENCE AS IMPLYING TOTAL UNCERTAINTY EVERYWHERE IN SCIENCE.

Science is by nature tentative. Anything on the cutting edge is going to have considerable uncertainty attached to it. Anything science is certain about now will be found to have had considerable uncertainty attached to it at some point in history. As soon as any evidence of any uncertainty is found, present it and claim that scientists therefore don't know what they are talking about.

2) TRUMPET ANY MISTAKES MADE BY ANY SCIENTIST, AND IGNORE THE FACT THAT THESE MISTAKES ARE CORRECTED.

Most people in your audience will not be well versed in the history of science. You can flood an audience with accounts of mistakes in science, and accounts of things scientists thought that are now known not to be true. With enough such accounts, you can build a superficially compelling picture of "Science Always Getting It Wrong". Even experts in the history of science will not be able to directly address all the examples you bring up. Anything left unaddressed can be waved in front of the audience as "not refuted". You can then use the fact that something has been left unrefuted to claim that everything has been left unrefuted.

3) SHIFT THE BURDEN OF PROOF TO YOUR CRITICS ANY WAY YOU CAN.

Remember, your position is indefensible. The only way you can present anything like a compelling argument is to make your opponents look ignorant. Force them to prove everything they say. If they refuse to accept the burden of proof, force them to prove they don't have to prove what they say.

4) ANY FACTS OR EXPLANATIONS NOT IMMEDIATELY AT HAND MAY BE REGARDED AS NONEXISTENT.

If a critic makes a statement about science and doesn't present all the evidence to prove it from

the fundamental level on up, you can seize upon any missing step and declare the entire statement as "unproven" or "a wild guess". If a critic manages to refute any of your statements, ignore the refutation. As soon as the refutation is no longer being actively presented, re-assert your claim. After all, the refutation's not right out there any more.

5) BURY YOUR OPPONENT IN QUOTES.

Nobody is an expert in everything. The more quotes you pull up, the greater the chance that your opponents will not have the knowledge or data to refute at least one of them. You can then emphasize the quotes not dealt with and announce that "science has no response to them". (Note that this will not work unless you have managed to shed the burden of proof, as advised in step 2.)

6) USE "CAFETERIA SCIENCE"

If you look around diligently enough, some scientist somewhere will say something that will bolster your case. Even at the rate of one oddball case in a million, you can accumulate literally thousands of quotes if you mine a long enough time period. In true cafeteria style, you can seize upon these quotes and ignore the science that refutes these quotes.

7) FIND AN INSTANCE OF A SCIENTIST BEHAVING BADLY, AND USE IT TO MAKE THE CLAIM THAT ALL SCIENTISTS WILL DO THE SAME.

Ideally, all scientists would base arguments against bad science on the science. Fortunately, scientists are human. Sometimes they will engage in personal attacks, censorship and other unsavory techniques. Use this fact to tar all scientists with the same brush, and also to make the claim that no crank scientists have been "refuted", but rather censored.

8) SCIENTIFIC FACTS AND THEORIES NEED HAVE NO EFFECTS EXCEPT WHERE CONVENIENT.

Whenever some bit of cafeteria science has implications you don't want to deal with, you are free to ignore them. For example, if you like the possibility that neutron radiation might have changed the ratios of radioactive elements and their decay products, ignore the fact that neutrons have observable effects elsewhere in nature.

9) WHEN CORNERED, CHANGE THE SUBJECT.

Always have material from several different subjects ready to present. When you find yourself out of your depth in one, be ready to duck into another. Chances are, your opponent will not be an expert in that other subject. This is particularly true if you choose subjects that are distantly related, such as cellular biology and astrophysics. Ideally, you will have set this dodge up while you have been burying your opponent in quotes.

10) WHEN REALLY CORNERED, CALL NAMES.

With sufficient imagination, any of society's ills may be attributed to the beliefs of "evolutionists". Ignore the fact that most, if not all, of these ills existed long before Darwin ever drew breath. Asserting links between evolution and such movements as Marxism, Communism and Nazism is a popular form of mud slinging. If you have been making use of technique #7, accuse your opponent of being as bad as the people you've been citing.

This is even more effective if you can manage to goad your opponent into a display of impatience, disdain or temper using any of these techniques.

11) WHEN AN EXPLANATION SHOWS YOU TO BE ABSOLUTELY WRONG, IGNORE THE EXPLANATION AND REASSERT THE ORIGINAL CLAIM.

This works on the principle that "Any Lie Repeated Often Enough Will Be Believed". It's also a very good way of goading your opponents into bouts of ill temper.

Being aware of the techniques Creationists use may be of some help, should you ever find yourself engaged in a "discussion" with one of them. The entire purpose of these techniques is to keep the audience from noticing that the Creationist never actually defends his own position, but merely attacks everyone else's.