

have greatly affected his conclusion to this story. Is it really true that the Bush administration's free-market views were solely responsible for the economic crisis of 2007? Many conservatives and others would today still disagree. Were the Bush administration's policies concerning the war on terror disastrous? Farber believes so, and yet, as I write, the Obama administration has yet to abandon many of them. Have the American people abandoned many of the conservative beliefs they held throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and the early years of Bush? Farber argues that they might have; he argues that the election of 2008 showed that the Right was maybe "on the wrong side of history" in many of its tenets (260) and goes on to contend that perhaps conservatism "has outlasted its historic purpose in Americans' continuing political struggle to find social order and individual meaning in the world's most dynamic and diverse nation" (262).

And yet... Conservatives, a mere two years after their defeat in 2008, were able to unify again and win big victories in the midterm elections, creating a conservative Republican majority in the House of Representatives. The Right mounted a very effective counterattack against the Obama administration's initiatives on health care; even a year after the passage of a major new health care bill sought by the administration, that initiative in all polls remains unpopular. It is certainly true, one must concede, that conservative unity might be tenuous. Just what are conservatives for? Will they be able to find a leader, as they did in 1980 with Ronald Reagan, who can lead them back to prominence and forge real unity? Those questions are yet to be answered. But Farber, it would appear, was too quick to suggest that an obituary for conservatism need be written. Ironically, Farber should have seen his possible error from the story he himself wrote. He notes well how in 1964, after Barry Goldwater's landslide defeat, many analysts and pundits forecast the end of the Right. They were wrong then, and Farber says so. One fears he fell into the same trap they did. Time will tell.

—Kevin Smart

EVOLVED OR CREATED? THE TEACHERS DECIDE

Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer: *Evolution, Creationism, and the Battle to Control America's Classrooms*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xv, 273. \$85.00. \$27.99, paper.)

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It is surprising that in the recurrent debate over the teaching of Darwinian evolution in American public schools, we almost never ask the question posed in this book: What are the teachers teaching?

Both the proponents of evolution and their opponents agree on one strategic assumption—that victory in this battle is determined by influencing the standards for teaching evolution set by educational policymakers. Berkman and Plutzer argue, however, that this is a mistaken assumption, because many, if not most, high school biology teachers ignore the educational policies of their states as they teach this subject according to their personal beliefs about evolution. Oddly enough, this might be justified insofar as it serves democratic governance, because this broad discretion of teachers allows them to teach evolution in a way that conforms to the preferences of the citizens in their school districts.

Berkman and Plutzer show that public opinion surveys over the past thirty years indicate that the majority of Americans think that the public school biology teachers should “teach the controversy.” Most citizens think that the public schools should present all sides of the debate over whether the human species and biological life originated through evolution, through divine creation, or through intelligent design. Only about 12–15 percent of Americans favor teaching only evolution, which has become the official policy in all fifty states.

This shows a gap between public opinion and public policy. The primary cause of this gap is that public educational policy concerning the teaching of evolution has been constrained by the Supreme Court decision in *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987), which has been interpreted as holding that offering a “balanced treatment” of the evolution debate in public schools is an unconstitutional “establishment of religion.”

And yet Berkman and Plutzer provide evidence that many teachers routinely violate the state policies for teaching only evolution. In 2007, Berkman and Plutzer conducted a national survey of high school biology teachers. Nine hundred twenty-six teachers responded, including teachers from every state except Wyoming. As reported by these teachers, only 1 percent never taught evolution. On average, teachers devoted about 14 hours of class time to evolution. Seventeen percent taught evolution in general but never talked about human evolution, apparently because it was too controversial. But 60 percent devoted 1–5 hours of class time to human evolution. Seventy-five percent of the teachers report that they never talk about creationism or intelligent design in their classes, while 22 percent of them report spending some time talking about creationism or intelligent design. And 14–21 percent of them actually endorse creationism or intelligent design as valid science.

Berkman and Plutzer conclude that the most important factor in determining how teachers teach evolution is their personal beliefs about the subject. Of the teachers that they surveyed, 47 percent believe in “theistic evolution,” the idea that “human beings developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process,” while 31 percent of them believe in “organic evolution,” the idea that “human beings developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God had no part in this process.”

And 14 percent of them believe in “young earth creationism,” the idea that “God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so.”

Why do these biology teachers have so much freedom to follow their personal beliefs in deciding how to teach evolution? Berkman and Plutzer explain this by saying that high school teachers are “street-level bureaucrats”—governmental employees who act with broad discretionary power in their daily work with the public.

Berkman and Plutzer argue that the behavior of these teachers manifests democracy from the bottom up rather than from the top down. Each school district can be understood as a little democracy unto itself, governed by local community values. The teachers hired in each school district tend to be people who are comfortable with the cultural values of the community. Consequently, the teaching of evolution in the public schools tends to reflect the preferences of the local community. So, for example, in rural and suburban school districts in the South and Midwest with traditional cultural values, there is likely to be some community preference for teaching creationism or intelligent design as an alternative to evolution, and the teachers in those districts are likely to reflect that preference.

So who decides how evolution is to be taught in America’s public schools? The teachers decide. But the local community also decides, because the teachers tend to conform to the cultural values of the community.

Many of the teachers surveyed by Berkman and Plutzer are following the preference of the majority of American citizens for “teaching the controversy.” Of those teachers who introduce creationism or intelligent design into their classes, many say that they do this to present alternative ideas and then leave students free to arrive at their own conclusions. Some tell their students that they need to *understand* evolution, but they don’t need to *believe* it. Of those teachers who say that they do not personally endorse creationism or intelligent design, 17 percent report that they raise the question of “irreducible complexity” as a possible objection to evolution, apparently acting as a devil’s advocate to provoke thought among their students. One teacher from Ohio explained: “I consider myself strongly on the side of evolution, but I do recognize the validity of creationism, and more importantly, I recognize that we have an obligation to expose students to both.”

If these teachers were to have their students read Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, they would see that Darwin himself believed in “teaching the controversy.” He presented the issue as a choice between two theories—the “theory of creation” and his “theory of natural selection.” He admitted that there was “a crowd of difficulties” for his theory. “Some of them,” he lamented, “are so grave that to this day I can never reflect on them without being staggered.” In fact, these “difficulties” turn out to be the very objections to his theory that have been made by the proponents of creationism and intelligent design. Darwin devoted much of *Origin* to answering these objections and pointing to the weaknesses in the alternative “theory of creation.”

Darwin also concluded that there was no necessary contradiction between his theory and religious belief. He quoted a remark by the Reverend Charles Kingsley: "It is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws." Thus, Darwin opens the possibility of theistic evolution for those students who seek a reconciliation of religious belief and evolutionary science.

Using Darwin's *Origin of Species* as their textbook would help teachers defend themselves against the charge of violating the Constitution. It is unlikely that the Supreme Court would declare that reading Darwin in a high school biology class is unconstitutional.

—Larry Arnhart

ANTIFOUNDATIONALIST IN SPITE OF HIMSELF?

Aryeh Botwinick: *Michael Oakeshott's Skepticism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011. Pp. 266. \$35.00.)

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This is a strange book. From the title, one might expect that it would take up Oakeshott's complicated understanding and deployment of skepticism throughout his philosophical career; perhaps also his relationship to such favorite skeptical authors as Montaigne, Hobbes, Pascal, Hume, and F. H. Bradley. But Aryeh Botwinick has something else in mind in his book; something both more ambitious and less satisfying. Instead of providing a detailed analysis of Oakeshott's own views on and uses of skepticism, Botwinick uses Oakeshott to illustrate a larger thesis about how skepticism—which he construes largely in terms of a radical antifoundationalism—issues in a profoundly religious or mystical view of the world. This is not an uninteresting thesis, but whether it captures what is most important and distinctive about Oakeshott's skepticism or his philosophy in general is doubtful.

In reconstructing Botwinick's argument, let me begin with his specific understanding of skepticism. He does not, as Oakeshott primarily did, identify skepticism with a deep distrust about the application of reason to politics or about utopianism in politics. Nor does he identify it with the kind of radical questioning that Oakeshott associated with his philosophical heroes Hobbes,