

## **Terrorism in the Evolution Wars:**

### **Examining the Significance of Values-Discourse in Creationist and Atheist Propaganda**

#### **1. Introduction**

The global *War on Terror* has arguably remained one of the most influential socio-political phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It has served to inculcate such idioms as *suicide-bomber*, *insurgent*, and *religious extremism* within worldwide news broadcasts, political narratives, and common parlance. Interestingly, the associated hostilities of the War on Terror have also become a rhetorical motif for another notable, though nonviolent, conflict: the *Evolution Wars*. These so-called wars include contemporary disputes regarding the theory of evolution, and religious notions of creationism. While such conflicts appear to primarily involve competing scientific and religious doctrines, at the crux of these enduring debates is an elemental conflict regarding disputes over human values. This is exhibited within the growing corpus of mass media communications affiliated with the enduring debate; constructed to persuade audiences to accept and/or reject particular viewpoints allied with the protagonists on all sides of the exchange. The present study contends that such mass-circulated materials, produced by creationists and new atheist organizations, may be accurately described as *propaganda*, and that values-discourse, including discussions of terrorism, constitute a significant facet of this disseminated media. Incorporated within these communications are disputations relating to the intrinsic value of individual human beings and contestations regarding generally accepted moral values. By employing a descriptive and non-normative definition of propaganda, in conjunction with the machinery of propaganda analysis, this study will examine such values-discourse within

the materials produced under the auspices of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), Bilim Araştırma Vakfı (BAV), and Richard Dawkins (RD). Additionally, arguments employed by these groups concerning terrorism will be examined as a specific case-study of values-discourse within Evolution Wars propaganda.

The term Evolution Wars is used within this paper to represent the contemporary frenetic socio-political debates that continue to rage between religious antievolutionists and supporters of the theory of evolution. Such modern controversies are rooted in the American resurgence of Christian creationism throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and the sustained contemporary proliferation of creationist movements worldwide (Toumey 31-48). Included within these conflicts have been several headline-making legal battles pertaining to public school curricula (Goldberg 73-79; Scott 145-163). Though such altercations are frequently considered to be singularly American in nature, observations concerning the intercontinental growth and influence of various forms of creationism have demonstrated the truly global nature of the Evolution Wars (Coleman and Carlin; Moore 51-51; Numbers 351-372, 399-431). What is particularly significant about this worldwide interchange is the extensive use of every available mass media channel, by both those for and against evolution, to disseminate specific notions about science and religion internationally. Often using similar techniques as those demonstrated in First and Second World War public communication operations, these media campaigns employ magazines, tracts, books, DVD's, conferences, internationally broadcast radio programs, and professionally-rendered websites that host terabytes of digital media. Produced by Christians, Muslims, and atheists, such communications are described here as the propaganda of the Evolution Wars. In order to examine these materials the concept of propaganda must first be explored.

## **2. *Our Age of Propaganda: Defining and Analyzing Propaganda***

Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson have contended that, “Every day we are bombarded with one persuasive communication after another,” and thus, “For better or worse, ours is an age of propaganda” (7, 14). Others have claimed that, “Propaganda is inevitable in today’s media mix,” and “It is not a question of ‘if’ our society and its institutions engage in propaganda; it is rather a question of ‘how’” (Black 130). Nonetheless, despite such claims, actually delineating what propaganda is for the purposes of academic research can prove to be a formidable task. This is due, in part, to the term’s contentiousness and its common derogatory usage. As Mark A. Wollaeger notes, propaganda is regularly employed “to dismiss purportedly documentary accounts for their deceptive inaccuracy or deliberate bias,” such that the word has become “the accepted name for the capacious category of politically motivated falsehood” (1). However, although the term is often utilized in this manner, its actual connotations are complex, and numerous neutral academic definitions of the word have been offered that extend beyond these elementary connotations (Welch 317; Edelstein 13; Fraser 11). Moreover, while propaganda studies witnessed a significant decline in the mid-1950s, over the last 30 years there has been a renewal of propaganda analysis (Jowett and Heath 655; Cunningham 87). Consequently, several researchers of propaganda have continued to refine and utilize this term as an effective, neutral, and descriptive research category (Jowett and O’Donnell ix).

A catalogue of leading 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century propaganda theorists would include, among others, Harold D. Laswell, Edward Bemays, Leonard Doob, Jacques Ellul, as well Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell. These researchers have cumulatively described propaganda as: i. The use of symbols for the “management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion rather than by altering other conditions in the environment of the organism”

(Lasswell 4); ii. A “consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group” (Bernays 52); iii. The “systematic attempt by an interested individual (or individuals) to control the attitudes of groups of individuals through the use of suggestion and, consequently, to control their actions” (Doob 89); iv. A “set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions by a mass of individuals” (Ellul 61); and, v. The “deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett and O’Donnell 7). While a comprehensive examination of these classifications cannot be completed here, the author of this study offers the following definition:

Propaganda is the systematic, deliberate, and ideologically-driven use of all available mass media channels to influence and guide the beliefs and behaviours of numerous individuals towards the enterprises and/or convictions of the propagandist.

In addition to providing a working definition of the terminology, it is also important to note that propaganda analysis has often incorporated the identification and categorization of the explicit persuasion techniques utilized within it. Of particular significance within these inventories of propaganda tactics are various rhetorical tools that often facilitate values-discourse. As they pertain to the use of values within propaganda, the following three rhetorical techniques are especially relevant:

1. *Canalization*. Rather than attempting to totally modify an audience’s perspective, a propagandist employs and fortifies pre-existing opinions and worldviews towards a particular purpose (Lazarsfeld and Merton 113-118; Fraser 11, 192-193, 195-196; Ellul

38-43). As Jowett and O'Donnell explain, "The propagandist uses belief to create belief by linking or reinforcing audience predispositions to reinforce propagandistic ideology or in some cases, to create new attitudes and/or behaviours" (279). Values-discourse is often crucial for this technique, as extant values of a target audience may be associated with the propagandist's broadcasted opinions and goals.

2. *Simplification*. This technique refers to the reduction of elaborate disputes "to formulas which approach in brevity and dogmatism as nearly as possible the form of a slogan" (Lee 134). For instance, complex opinions are abridged to become merely "black or white, good or bad, yes or no," (134) and the propagandist provides an elementary description and solution for certain problems (259-260). Regarding values-discourse the propagandist may distil a serpentine quarrel down to an elementary, mono-dimensional, dispute over values rather than acknowledging the significant complexity and nuances of an argument.
3. *Mythologization*. This component involves the use of a comprehensive myth narrative, or "a story about something significant," which provides meaning beyond mere details and arguments (Segal 4-5). For instance, propaganda of the *National Socialist German Workers' Party*'s included the premise of *Volksgemeinschaft*, and fostered mythology concerning "the historic and racial superiority of the German-Aryans, in their geographic mission to defend Europe against hordes of 'Asiatic' invaders." This also included the "myth of rebirth" for the nation and the "myth of the leader" (Kallis 66-68).  
 Mythologization often involves values-discourse, which is incorporated into the "satanization" of an enemy and the "deification" of the propagandist's causes (Lasswell 77-101; Jowett and O'Donnell 283; Ellul 212-216).

It is important to note that these propaganda techniques do not necessarily exist in isolation. Instead they are often entwined within each other throughout the total mass persuasion enterprise, and together these rhetorical tools are exhibited in ICR, BAV, and RD propaganda.

### **3. ICR, BAV, RD and the Development of Evolution Wars Propaganda**

The Evolution Wars propaganda efforts in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be said to have been spearheaded by Henry M. Morris, the founder of the Christian creationist organization ICR. Morris co-authored the seminal creationist text, *The Genesis Flood*, which was published in 1961, at the beginning of a decade which many thought would mark the demise of creationism's public influence in America (Numbers 51-52). It was during the 1960's that both Tennessee and Arkansas repealed their antievolution laws, and as Toumey notes, one *Scientific American* writer explained that this signalled "The End of the Monkey War" (35). However, *The Genesis Flood* was well received within America's conservative Christian communities, and Morris became intent on reaching the Christian masses with antievolutionist messages. As Numbers explains:

Throughout the 1960s Morris aggressively marketed his brand of creationism in a variety of packages: a series of Sunday-school lessons, a text for youth groups, and a collection of articles he had published in such popular evangelical journals as *His* (Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship), *Collegiate Challenge* (Campus Crusade for Christ), and *Christian Life Magazine*, an interdenominational monthly. (236)

This civil engineering professor went on to help launch the Institute for Creation Research in the early 1970's, which has subsequently been credited with establishing "the basic

infrastructure of the modern creationist movement” (Toumey 35). ICR was unique in pioneering one of the first professional teams of antievolutionists, and it incorporated considerable mass media efforts. Described as “the most important messenger for bringing creationism to the public,” ICR now produces multiple radio programs, a monthly *Acts & Facts* magazine, its *Impact* journal, tracts, books, DVD’s, daily *Days of Praise* Christian devotionals, and a regularly updated website that has been in operation since 1995 (Toumey 113). These materials have continued to help to form a significant volume of propaganda in the Evolution Wars, and they have acted as the archetype of modern worldwide creationist propaganda endeavours.

ICR would eventually hold a number of conferences in Turkey, and in a 1992 article entitled “Do Muslims Believe in Creation?” the author explains how Muslims are often receptive to creationist teachings (Morris). In fact, ICR members have actually participated in several events organized by BAV, one of the most prominent Islamic creationist organizations. BAV was founded in Turkey, a country described as “fertile ground for creationism,” by Adnan Oktar, known through the pen name Harun Yahya (Kaufmann). Since establishing BAV in 1990, Yahya has published more than 250 books under this name, including the now infamous *Atlas of Creation* - though it is suspected that he did not actually write many of these works (Numbers 423). This “patron saint” of Islamic creationism has been arrested numerous times, accused of promoting a theocratic regime, charged with the possession and use of cocaine, denounced as an anti-Semite, slandered as a cult leader, and been under suspicion of fraud (Numbers 422-426). However, despite these setbacks, BAV has developed into a well funded propaganda engine. Yahya’s books are available for free online, translated into at least 23 languages, and it is claimed that these texts have a “wide readership in many countries, from India to America, England to Indonesia, Poland to Bosnia, and Spain to Brazil” (Yahya, *A Call for Unity* 4). In

addition to publishing Yahya's abundant corpus of books, BAV also hosts numerous websites, publishes advertisements in newspapers and magazines, develops audio clips for radio broadcasts, produces television programs as well as online videos, and also organizes creationist conferences. BAV flaunts any mention of its works by evolutionists, who often describe Yahya as a threat, and Yahya declares that the proliferation of BAV materials is leading to the downfall of the theory (Yahya, Global Impact).

In response to the rekindling of creationism embodied in ICR and BAV, various North American counter-creationist initiatives began to emerge in the 1970s onwards. As Roberts explains, while many individuals had classified creationists as "hill-billies, who could be dismissed with ease," the efforts of such groups as ICR began to illicit serious concern (179). Principally, creationist attempts to alter public school curricula in the United States moved evolutionists to action. During the early 1980s such organizations as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Association of Biology Teachers held meetings regarding the threat of creationism, and began producing articles to oppose the perceived crisis (Numbers 351-352). At the same time, atheist groups began to mount their own counter-creationist communications, which affixed significant antireligious messages to the defence of evolution. This is epitomized in the efforts of Richard Dawkins, the public luminary of contemporary atheism.

Throughout the past decade Dawkins' efforts to influence the public have become particularly vigorous, especially following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In response to the violence in New York Dawkins asserted that towards religion "Let's now stop being so damned respectful," and the years following this comment witnessed the development of the official Richard Dawkins website and the Richard Dawkins Foundation (Dawkins, Has The World

Changed?). In the Richard Dawkins Foundation’s mission statement Dawkins highlights the imminent menace of creationism, and explains:

The enlightenment is under threat. So is reason. So is truth. So is science, especially in the schools of America. I am one of those scientists who feels that it is no longer enough just to get on and do science. We have to devote a significant proportion of our time and resources to defending it from deliberate attack from organized ignorance. We even have to go out on the attack ourselves, for the sake of reason and sanity. (Dawkins, Our Mission)

To this end RD operates websites, infused with digital media in all forms, provides lecturers for events, supplies access to a collection of media materials and publications, as well as supporting numerous other publically-oriented campaigns, such as the infamous Atheist Bus Campaign. Dawkins has also presented a number of television series, while founding the *Out Campaign*, which encourages individuals to publicly announce their Atheism. Though many of these initiatives are still inchoate, Dawkins’ mass persuasion efforts represent the institutionalization of an antireligious, counter-creationist propaganda machine in the Evolution Wars. This study will now examine the materials produced by RD, as well as the communications of ICR and BAV.

#### **4. Examining Values-Discourse in Evolution Wars Propaganda**

“What Christians need to understand,” explained an ICR radio broadcaster, “is that people in our society are rejecting the God of creation because they've been trained to believe that they're just animals in the fight for survival—a result of evolutionary processes” (Ham, Back to Genesis). Similar accusations permeate ICR and BAV antievolutionist materials, and include

further contentions, such as Yahya's claim that the influence of evolution "naturally gives rise to social disorder and causes social as well as moral collapse"(Yahya, A Call for Unity 245). These statements reveal an important element of propaganda in the Evolution Wars: a focus on the intrinsic value of human life, and speculations regarding evolution and moral values. In order to examine the role of such values-discourse within ICR, BAV, and RD mass distributed materials this study will investigate how these groups are employing the three specific propaganda techniques of Canalization, Simplification, and Mythologization. Though the content of Evolution Wars propaganda has been investigated elsewhere, and aspects of values-discourse recognized within such materials, this study will uniquely ascertain specifically how the apparatus of values-discourse is employed for propaganda purposes.

#### **4.1 *Allied in Values: Canalization***

A primary component of Evolution Wars propaganda involves demonstrating that the propagandist concurs with the audience's perceptions of values. In this way communicators attempt to convince listeners that, in a sense, they are all on the same side. The common ground of allied values is then coupled with the propagandists' comprehensive rhetorical enterprise. In relation to this ICR and BAV propaganda materials readily appeal to pre-existing religious views of intrinsic human value. For instance, Yahya insists that "Every human being bears a soul breathed into him by God," and attempts to create resonance with the belief that humans are unique from other organisms in their divinely infused spiritual and mental architectures (Yahya, Only Love 44). ICR's current president, John D. Morris, has similarly declared that "No, man is *not* a higher animal...Man is not an animal at all...He is the very image of God, and nothing less" (Morris, Is Man). Referring to both the Qur'an and the Bible for source credibility, these

creationists assert that they are merely advocating commonly agreed-upon monotheistic doctrines of God-ordained human distinctiveness.

This uniqueness, it is claimed, comes in part through the singular ethical and spiritual nature of humanity, which separates individuals from the rest of the natural world. “The greatest gulf lies in the spiritual area,” explains Morris, “No ape has any awareness of right and wrong. They can be taught certain behaviors, but there is no moral comprehension in apes” (Should Apes). While a human “can recognize his own sinfulness, repent of it, and appreciate God's gracious solution to his sin problem,” it is stated that “Animals, regardless of their cranial capacity, know nothing of this” (Morris, Is Man). Along with the appeal to intrinsic moral discernment, ICR and BAV propaganda also align themselves with overarching religious moral values. Christian creationism is correlated with “traditional values” (Morris, Is Creation One), “Christian ethics, based on God’s Word” (Ham, The Chasm), and the “basis for Christian absolutes” (Ham, Monkey Ears). Similarly Yahya identifies himself with “the worldview based on religious morality” and has published numerous texts on such topics as *Perfected Faith* and *Basic Tenets of Islam*, which espouse Islamic moral precepts in conjunction with antievolutionist rhetoric.

As might be expected, RD propaganda offers no apologies for the proposed evolutionary lineage of humanity. In contrast with ICR and BAV, Dawkins asserts that “of course, we are animals” (Dawkins, A Devil’s 5), and gamely reiterates analogous messages within such broadcasts as an online video clip comparing the human and chimpanzee genomes (Dawkins, Nebraska Vignettes). However, RD materials also seem to attempt to canalize generally accepted beliefs regarding human uniqueness and moral consciousness. According to Dawkins the very existence of human beings, and the sheer cognitive power of the *Homo sapiens* species,

separates us from all other creatures (Dawkins, The Greatest 425). Indeed, despite our animal origins within a “wasteful, cruel and low” evolutionary history, Dawkins tells his audience to “exult in your existence” and to “Stand Tall, Bipedal Ape” (A Devil’s 11-12). Human beings have singular mental abilities, including ethical awareness, that certainly foster matchless qualities within the natural world (12). In particular, the quality of “reason” is venerated as a type of high moral virtue, which is also used for canalization purposes.

Not only is reason part of our intrinsic human nature, but it is presented as an axiological tool; the means of comprehending “what is true, what is right” (RDF). It is listed in unison with such ideas as critical thinking, discovery, and human achievement, while being also associated with science, described as a great monolithic force that has “sent orbiters to Neptune, eradicated small pox, and created a super computer that can do sixty trillion calculations per second” (Dawkins, Enemies of Reason). Reason and science then embody a milieu of positive human values, and are subsequently canalized with the rest of RD initiatives. Hence, the RD Foundation is for “*Reason and Science*” (RDF), committed to “pure reason,” and developed to defend the enlightenment, truth, and science (Dawkins, Our Mission). Dawkins further describes contributors to RichardDawkins.net as almost “totally united in one key area: a commitment to reason” (Dawkins, Foundation) and explains that atheists are actually atheists because they “think for themselves” (Dawkins, The Debate). Thus, to be in agreement with reason, science, and the positive values that can be associated with either, is to also be in agreement with the comprehensive RD project.

#### **4.2 *It’s Elementary: Simplification***

In conjunction with the canalization of values, ICR and BAV propaganda also develops thoroughly simplified allegations regarding intrinsic human value and evolution. This

simplification involves reducing complicated notions of human significance and various interpretations of evolution into basic formulaic conjunctions. For instance, one of the primary declarations in ICR and BAV materials is structured as follows: i. Evolution maintains that humans and other fauna share common ancestry; ii. Evolution must therefore entail that humans are simply animals, which have no more intrinsic value than any other creature; iii. Upon accepting the supposed animalistic origins of humanity people will reject their divinely appointed status; iv. Individuals will subsequently act like animals and treat others as mere beasts, resulting in a plethora of societal evils. In short, an elementary rhetorical equation results: *Evolution = (Humans as Mere Animals → Blemished Intrinsic Human Value) + X*, where → denotes that a statement is considered logically equivalent, and *X* represents any quantity of sinful calamities. Using this formal ICR and BAV propaganda substitute such iniquities as religious unbelief, marital infidelity, child and spousal abuse, racism, abortion, prostitution, drug use, and sexual promiscuity as values of *X*.

Within an ICR article entitled “Temples of Evolution – Temples of Doom” Ken Ham explains that if individuals accept evolutionary human origins “why should they not then act like animals?” As millions of people are “graphically told that science has proved they are just animals in the fight for survival,” he asks, “why not take whatever you can get and why not indiscriminate sex, or violence, just like any other ‘animal’ in the jungle?” (Temples of Doom). Similarly, Yahya suggests that, “If a weak-willed person, easily angered, regards himself and others as mere animals he can act in a totally ruthless manner and easily do them harm. It makes no difference if those others are totally innocent children” (Only Love 41-43) This idea is exhibited further in Harun Yahya’s discussion of communism, and the purported impact of evolution upon China’s oppression of various peoples groups. “In communist societies,” writes

Yahya, “human beings are regarded as advanced forms of animal, based on Darwin’s theory of evolution. For that reason, society is seen as a large herd of animals, and little value is ascribed to human beings” (Communist China’s 69).

The tactic of simplification is further employed within ICR and BAV mass rhetoric through the creation of an evolution-religion dichotomy. In brief, ICR materials rationalize that evolution is irreconcilable with literal readings of Genesis, while Yahya explains that the apparent philosophical materialism coupled within evolution is inescapably opposed to religious faith. After fostering this dichotomy both groups then readily compose value-laden arguments, often using the following inferences: i. Religion is the foundation of moral values; ii. Evolution is fundamentally at odds with religion; iii. Consequently, evolution cannot provide any foundation for moral values; iv. Hence, the acceptance of evolution necessarily results in the denial of religion, as well as an escalation in societal evils. Paralleling the equation given above, this conclusion can be represented as: *Evolution = (The Rejection of Religion → A Lacking Foundation for Moral Values) + X*, where *X* again symbolizes any number of evils.

Incorporating this sort of rationale fuels such statements as those found at the beginning of most of Yahya’s texts, asserting that evolution “constitutes the basis of all unspiritual philosophies” (A Call for Unity 2). As the author of an ICR article entitled “The Dirty Little Secret Is Out: Religious Faith and Evolution Are Incompatible” maintains, evolution “is not merely science, but a God-rejecting belief system that directly opposes the events recorded in Scripture” (Sherwin).

Another simplification method employed by ICR and BAV, which also features values-discourse, is described here as *verdict-by-association*. Often using the formulas described above, this involves correlating the actions of a morally corrupt individual, or the tenets of an unethical

philosophy, with evolutionary theory in order to cast judgment upon it. For instance, both organizations regularly produce messages in which Adolf Hitler's hateful deeds are conflated with his seemingly positive receipt of evolution (Bergman; Humber; Yahya Fascism). This is then used to exhibit the conjectured morally deficit nature of the theory itself. In essence the argument attempts the following syllogism: i. An individual and/or philosophy is morally corrupt; ii. That same individual and/or philosophy accepts evolution or incorporates aspects of it into its premises; iii. Therefore, evolution must also essentially be morally corrupt. It is in using verdict-by-association that ICR and BAV juxtapose Nazism, Communism, Fascism, Imperialism, ruthless Capitalism, Stalin, and Kruschev with evolutionary theory (Bergman; Humber; Yahya, Fascism; Yahya, Communism in Ambush; Yahya, Atlas of Creation 632-653; Morris, Creation is the Foundation; Morris, Evil-Ution).

RD propaganda actively defies contentions regarding the religious basis of moral values, and it offers significant treatises on the theoretical evolutionary genesis of ethics and moral behaviour (Thomson, From the Heavens; Dawkins, The God Delusion 211-222). Through this there is an active attempt to wrest the theoretical foundation moral values from the domain of religion. In fact, because moral values are actually deemed simply evolutionarily-based, and part of our intrinsic biological nature, religion is sometimes represented as a being "parasitic on our evolved morality," which abuses our intrinsic worth as ethical creatures (Ellerton). Furthermore, RD materials endeavour to show how 'science' can assist in making ethical judgments, such as in providing evidence in a court of law, while also being theoretically able to provide a reliable basis for moral values (Dawkins, The God Delusion 225-226; Dawkins A Devil's Chaplain 34-36; Dawkins Letting Science). As Sam Harris has noted in an article hosted on RichardDawkins.net:

...science can, in principle, help us understand what we should do and should want—and, perforce, what other people should do and want in order to live the best lives possible. My claim is that there are right and wrong answers to moral questions, just as there are right and wrong answers to questions of physics, and such answers may one day fall within reach of the maturing sciences of mind.

(Moral Confusion)

Moreover, thorough simplification occurs as RD materials labour to emphasize the moral shortcomings of religions texts and religious adherents.

One of the most significant value-claims within RD propaganda is that “we do not – even the religious among us – ground our morality in holy books, no matter what we may fondly imagine” (Dawkins, The God Delusion 262). That is, while religious scriptures are often considered to be the foundation of moral values, and some “good principles can be found in holy books,” these are “buried alongside much else that no decent person would wish to follow; and the holy books do not supply any rules for distinguishing the good principles from the bad” (263). For instance, since Christian and Islamic scriptures contain morally ambiguous and/or evil acts, in addition to precepts no longer adhered to in many societies, these texts cannot possibly provide a framework of moral values (Dawkins, The God Delusion 262-263; Dawkins The Debate). Sophisticated notions of religious text, hermeneutics, and ethical perspectives are seemingly omitted in order to form a comprehensive judgment on the moral efficacy of scripture. Also, In order to further tarnish the purported religious basis of moral values, it is claimed that religious individuals are in fact no more moral than the non-religious (Dawkins, The God Delusion 225-226). More than this, verdict-by-association is used to link such depravity as the

kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara, and child molestation by Catholic priests, with the whole of religion, since these cases are “particularly revealing of the religious mind, and the evils that arise specifically *because* it is religious” (312-313, 317-318).

In the developing these allegations one of the most prominent components of simplification involves advocating a rudimentary dichotomy between religious belief and the highly espoused characteristic of reason. “There are two ways of looking at the world,” explained Dawkins in a television documentary, “through faith and superstition or through the rigours of logic, observation and evidence - through reason” (Dawkins, Enemies of Reason). Since religious belief is myopic in its scope, uncritical of its own premises, inflexible in its dogmatism, and totally unsupported by scientific data, it is malicious and leads to evil consequences. The simplified rhetorical formula may be expressed as: *Religion = (Blind Faith → Irrational Thought) + X*, in which *X* again represents numerous immoral outcomes. Thus, Dawkins explains that the irrationality of religious belief “profoundly undermines civilization,” and that “Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument” (Dawkins, Enemies of Reason; Dawkins The God Delusion 307). This is the logical impetus which lies behind that statement, “To fill a world with religion, or religions of the Abrahamic kind, is like littering the streets with loaded guns. Do not be surprised if they are used” (Dawkins, Religion's Misguided Missiles).

### **4.3 Weaving a Tale: Mythologization**

In addition to correlating evolution with societal evils, ICR and BAV propaganda also integrate evolution within religious mythologies about Satan and supernatural evil. This weaves together canalization, simplification, and values-discourse into a broader narrative regarding epic good-versus-evil spiritual battles. As Ham explains in an ICR article, “Satan is ultimately

responsible for the greatest lie of all time being spread throughout world—the lie, which leads people to reject the truth that God created all things. This is the lie of evolution!” (Battles Behind the Scenes). Evolution is portrayed as “one of Satan's major weapons” (Ham, Battles Behind the Scenes), and it is with this device that Satan is said to be “attacking the Christian faith at a foundational level” (Ham, Why Are Some). Similarly, Yahya explains that “Darwinism is the religion of the Antichrist,” or the *Dajjal*. It is used to indoctrinate people and guide them “in the direction of the dark world of the antichrist” who will “undoubtedly appear before doomsday” (Yahya, Terrorism 15-21).

ICR depicts Satan as using evolution to “gain control of education” (Morris, ICR), as well as to indoctrinate children “with an anti-God, evolutionary framework” in order to destroy society from within (Ham, Children and Creation). Evolution then also becomes part of a premeditated satanic plan to devastate civilization (Ham, Is America). BAV materials also regularly refer to Satan, and discussions about the devil’s actions parallel Yahya’s attacks on evolution (Yahya, Satan). Within this mythological context the work of creationists is presented as being part of the holy resistance within a supernatural conflict saga. As Ham notes, “ICR is involved in this battle against the forces of evil, as we aggressively go to battle against evolution” (Ham, Battles Behind the Scenes). It is because of this that “Satan hates the ministry of ICR because it deals with the foundational teaching that God is Creator,” and the legal battles associated with ICR are described as part of “the greatest battles for Christian freedom in the Western world” (Ham, The Big Bang).

The idea of “real,” “good,” or “true” science also becomes crucial for ICR and BAV mythology (Estrin; Morris, True Science is Creation; BAV, Why Are Darwinists; BAV, Darwinists). Though evolution is a tool of the devil, “true science” is considered to be a divine

gift. It is expressed as science proper, which “always supports the Scriptures” and acts as the defender of religion and its moral foundations (Morris, True Science). This concept becomes integrated within a form of religious eschatological myth, which declares that the future will witness true science prevailing in the name of God, upholding religious moral values, and defeating the satanic powers of evolution. For instance, while discussing the future of humanity and science on a radio program, Yahya utilized distinctly eschatological language to explain that eventually evolution will be discarded, and that the 21st Century will be:

[O]ne of true science, true reason and religion. Believers will give rise to a tremendous civilization in this century, which we call the Golden Age. A perfect world will arise, in which there is happiness, peace, love, friendship and delights of all kinds...This is a reality in the destiny of this world. Nobody can halt this destiny, insha'Allah. (Yahya, An Interview)

Interestingly, RD propaganda also formulates a type of mythology involving science. Though there is no discussion of supernatural wars, RD materials give science a leading role in what may be deemed a future-focused secular myth. This mythology characterizes science as the sacrosanct protector of true morality and reason, as well as the destined slayer of religion; that fiend which captures and weakens humanity through irrational belief. Furthermore, science is expressed as a redeeming force that will help solve a myriad of problems, and formulate the ultimate lexicon by which we will be able understand the universe and ourselves (RDF). It is this redeeming force that is currently locked into battle with religion and its evil repercussions. Interestingly, one such repercussion often mentioned in RD materials is terrorism, which is also a topic that animates the value-discourse of ICR and BAV propaganda.

## 5. Terrorism and Evolution Wars Propaganda

Images of American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 colliding with the twin towers of the World Trade Center are readily exhibited throughout BAV materials (Yahya, Islam Denounces Terrorism 16-18). In an online movie, for instance, detailed video clips of the 9/11 attacks are presented alongside other scenes of violence (BAV, Only Love Can Defeat). ICR articles also refer to terrorism, while RD propaganda often invokes 9/11 and suicide bombers in its communications efforts. This focus on terrorism is a manifestation of values-discourse within Evolution Wars mass rhetoric, and it provides a contemporary example of how propaganda techniques are employed by these three organizations. Firstly, terrorism is a value-laden topic in itself, and it is used as an optimal subject for canalization. Certainly the War on Terror has remained a newsworthy matter, and pictures of 9/11 have become ingrained as powerful socio-political moment in history. When referring to terrorism these groups acknowledge it as immoral, and contrast it with the values that they endorse. In this way the abhorrence for terrorists acts, especially the 9/11 strikes, is initially canalized for propaganda purposes. ICR, BAV, and RD all seem to be declaring to their audiences that, “We are of the same mind -- such violence is evil and contrary to our moral values.” It is from this platform that these groups continue their propaganda endeavours.

The idea of terrorism is chiefly incorporated within propaganda simplification efforts, which also serve to reinforce the overall mythologization attempts of all three groups. This takes various forms, and in ICR materials the teaching of evolution is juxtaposed with terrorism in order to create a simplified comparison and stress its negative impact. For instance, in one ICR article Kenneth B. Cumming compares the 9/11 attacks with a PBS television series on evolution. Describing the latter as “one of the boldest assaults yet upon both our public schools

with the millions of innocent school children and the foundational worldview on which our nation was built,” Cumming explains:

These two “assaults” have similar histories and goals. The public was unaware of the deliberate preparation that was schemed over the past few years leading up to these events. And while the public now understands from President Bush that, “We're at War” with militant Islamics around the world, they don't have a clue that America is being attacked from within through its public schools by a militant religious movement of philosophical naturalists (i.e., atheists) under the guise of secular Darwinism. Both desire to alter the life and thinking of our nation. (Cumming)

The terrorist threat from without is used to emphasize the evolutionist threat from within. In fact, because the insidious nature of evolution causes the rejection of religion, it is said to provoke a cultural battle over values that is “more pervasive in our world than even the global war against terrorism (Ford).” In this way ICR materials explain that evolution is actually *more* dangerous than terrorism, which fortifies the mythology of its satanic origins and the need to fight with God against it. Evolution’s debasement of intrinsic human value, and its denial of the religious foundations of moral values, which are harnessed by Satan himself, is described as being far more ubiquitous and harmful than even suicide bomber and the War on Terror. Thus, the writer explained that “Our soldiers will soon return from Bagdad, but our schools will continue to educate our children in a ‘moral vacuum’” that is linked to the teaching of evolution (Ford).

While ICR's comparisons might be viewed as surprising overstatements, BAV's references to terrorism have made headlines. This is because Yahya has publicly announced that "members of terrorist organizations -- even those that portray themselves as Muslim organizations -- are Darwinists, atheists" (Steinvorth). Additionally, "Modern terrorist groups that claim to act in the name of religion are also under Darwinism's influence...even though they claim to carry out their terroristic acts in the name of religion" (Yahya, Only Love 16). Using an argument that simultaneously defends Islam and indicts evolution, Yahya alleges that evolution, and its corresponding reduction in intrinsic human value, are to be blamed for motivating terrorism rather than virtue-promoting religion. Hence he has maintained that "if you look at all the people responsible for what is known as Islamic terror, all the terrorist attacks in the world, you will see that they have all received a Darwinist education" (BAV, The Mindset). This is further adduced on a BAV website entitled "Islam Denounces Terrorism," which carries the following simplified conclusion: "Religion commands love, mercy and peace. Terror, on the other hand, is the opposite of religion; it is cruel, merciless and demands bloodshed and misery. This being the case, the origins of a terrorist act should be sought in disbelief rather than in religion" (BAV, Islam Denounces). As the purported source of such disbelief, evolution is expressed as the progenitor of terrorism, which is then supplemented as a paramount representation of  $X$  in the formula: *Evolution = (Humans as Mere Animals → Blemished Intrinsic Human Value) + X*. It is with this in mind that Yahya asserts that "Darwinism's theory that man is a warring animal, with which so many are subconsciously indoctrinated, has wreaked dreadful harm on mankind," and subsequently "Terrorist attacks are echoes of that" (Yahya, Only Love 39). Moreover, these references also buttress BAV's comprehensive mythologization efforts,

including attempts at linking evolution with Satan, as terrorism is also described as “the ritual of the devil” and the “rite of the rite of the antichrist” (Yahya, Terrorism).

On the other hand, RD propaganda depicts the terrorism of 9/11 as a thoroughly religious phenomenon, and situates it directly within its own mythology concerning rational belief and the threat of religion. Though Dawkins has admitted that the motivations for such terrorist acts can be complex, and include numerous socio-political motivations, he still rests the culpability for this violence squarely upon religion’s head. In his own words, “‘To blame Islam for what happened in New York is like blaming Christianity for the troubles in Northern Ireland.’ Yes. Precisely” (A Devil’s Chaplain 156). Terrorism is then used, through verdict-by-association, as explicit proof of religion’s unavoidable evil consequences. More specifically, it is taken as unequivocal evidence for the rhetorical equation: *Religion = (Blind Faith → Irrational Thought) + X*. The terrorists who were responsible for the bloodshed in New York and the London bombings committed their crimes because they had “been brought up, from the cradle, to have total and unquestioning *faith*” (Dawkins, The God Delusion 304). Blind faith, and narrow-minded religious obedience, is what leads to terrorism. “However misguided we may think them,” explains Dawkins, these terrorists are motivated by “what they perceive to be righteousness, faithfully pursuing what their religion tells them” (304).

## **6. *The One-Size-Fits-All Theory: Conclusion***

The motif of terrorism in ICR, BAV, and RD materials acts as a potent example of the overall strategies employed within Evolution Wars propaganda, and it further illustrates how values-discourse is applied in these mass persuasion efforts. By surveying the prominent use of such values-discourse throughout these materials, it is possible to identify the specific roles that it plays within Evolution Wars propaganda. Regarding the tactic of canalization, for instance,

references to values are used to prime the audience for the ensuing message of persuasion.

Values are employed to foster a sense of commonality, in which those matters which are held in high regard, such as perceptions of human worth or morality, are utilized to create a familiarity with the rest of the propaganda message. Also, in establishing that the propagandist and audience are of one mind concerning values, this discourse assists in identifying who the actual enemy might be. This occurs in the technique of simplification, which also appropriates values-discourse in order to develop perspective. That is, the correlation of an idea with evil or righteousness may drastically alter the vantage point by which individuals perceive that same notion. Instead of simply providing data and statistics to prove a point, values-discourse is used to elicit a visceral response that other arguments may not rouse. Furthermore, in the technique of mythologization, values can supply a powerful link with a much wider narrative. Values-discourse is the means by which an argument becomes part of a larger story concerning good vs. evil, righteousness and unrighteousness.

In part this propaganda also reveals the how evolution has continued to remain a concept readily affiliated with values-discourse. As Kenneth R. Miller has stated, evolution frequently “spills out of biology” to become a constituent of other disciplines and ideological notions (175). Indeed, “The theory of evolution is not just an inert piece of theoretical science,” contended Mary Midgley. “It is, and cannot help being, also a powerful folk-tale about human origins” (1). With its account of human genesis, and its possible implications for the nature of the universe, evolution has frequently been associated with non-epistemic values that extend beyond the analytical precincts of scientific data. Indeed, unlike most other fields of scientific inquiry, evolution has appeared uniquely poised to become a value-laden concept, often correlated with, and annexed to, a legion of ideologies. As Michael Ruse explains, Charles Darwin’s *The Origin*

has “seemed to be a one-size-fits-all theory used by friend and foe alike” (59). It is this aspect of evolutionary theory that continues to influence its general perception and representation within the propaganda of the Evolution Wars.

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