



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on February 17, 2015

Gov. Walker's Intelligence Called Into Question Over His "Punt" on Evolution

It has become a ritual of American politics that every three or four years, as the presidential hopefuls proceed at varying speeds and momentum toward the starting gate of the world's longest marathon, one or more of the Republican candidates will be asked if he or she believes in evolution. For Scott Walker (shown), the big question on the science pop quiz came last week on the other side of the Atlantic.



The Wisconsin governor was in London on a trade mission for his state, though a desire to enhance his coming presidential campaign with a nodding acquaintance with foreign heads of state might have had something to do with his meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron and other British officials. And it may be why he spoke at the foreign policy think tank called Chatham House, though he cautiously avoided answering any questions about current U.S. policy in the Middle East or anywhere else.

"Being old fashioned, and having respect for the president, I just don't think you talk about foreign policy when you are on foreign soil," Walker told his London hosts. But the headline-making moment came when Walker was asked about his comfort level with Darwinian theory.

"Are you comfortable with the idea of evolution? Do you believe in it?"

"For me, I am going to punt on that one as well," Walker replied. "That's a question politicians shouldn't be involved in one way or another. I am going to leave that up to you. I'm here to talk about trade, not to pontificate about evolution."

"I love the evolution of trade in Wisconsin," he quickly added.

Later, as his response to the evolution question began to gain traction in the daily news cycle, Walker issued the following statement: "Both science and my faith dictate my belief that we are created by God. I believe faith and science are compatible, and go hand in hand." He also posted a tweet, declaring it "unfortunate the media chose to politicize this issue during our trade mission to foster investment in WI."

Democrats received the news joyfully, hailing it as evidence — further evidence, they would say — that Walker and, by implication, Republicans generally are either ignorant of or hostile to scientific knowledge. A spokesperson for the Democratic National Committee, quoted anonymously at the left-wing *Huffington Post*, said that by refusing to discuss foreign policy and dodging the question about evolution, Walker demonstrated what "we've come to expect from the 2016 GOP field, whose policy positions are just too divisive to share."

But that was mild compared to the record-setting conclusion jumping performed by former Vermont governor and 2004 Democratic presidential hopeful Howard Dean on Thursday's edition of MSNBC's [Morning Joe](#). Dean put what he described as the Wisconsin governor's "dancing around the question of



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evolution for political reasons” together with the fact that Walker left college without graduating — and then concluded, “the real issue is, how well educated is this guy?”

Host Joe Scarborough challenged the relevance of Walker’s lack of a college degree, saying at one point, “Well, nobody is accusing Scott Walker of being dumb because he didn’t graduate from college except you.”

“I didn’t say dumb,” Dean corrected him, “I said unknowledgeable.” Which is, of course, a slightly more polite way of saying “ignorant.”

“Because evolution is a widely accepted scientific construct,” Dean explained, “and people who don’t believe in it either do it for hard-right religious reasons or because they don’t know anything.”

Were Dr. Dean (He is an M.D.) still running or president, he might be a little more careful about whom he calls ignorant. “For me, it’s plausible to believe that slug-like creatures emerged from primordial slime and after millions of fortuitous accidents over hundreds of millions of years emerged as politicians,” wrote David Harsanyi, [senior editor at *The Federalist*](#). “Most people, though, disagree. According to 2012 Gallup poll, along with plenty of Republicans, [41 percent of Democrats](#) believe God created humans in their present form *within the last 10,000 years*.” (Emphasis in the original.) That, of course, goes against the widely accepted “scientific construct” cited by Dr. Dean.

But why is it that Democratic candidates are almost never asked about their beliefs about evolution or other scientific questions? Perhaps it is taken for granted that Democrats all share the worldview the party presents in its platforms and policies. For if the Republicans are drawn to what Dean calls “hard-right religious” convictions, the Democratic Party just as surely reflects the hard-left secular humanism that militates against the moral and religious beliefs of millions of Americans — beliefs that used to go virtually unchallenged in the political arena.

When Pastor Rick Warren asked candidate Barack Obama in 2008 when life begins, Obama dodged that question. Though biology textbooks have long informed junior high school and high school students that new life begins at conception, Obama replied that the question is “above my pay grade.” So while professing ignorance about life in the womb, Obama nonetheless promulgates policies promoting abortion in what has been accurately described as a “culture of death.”

If it’s fair to ask candidates about their beliefs concerning evolution, which has no obvious connection to policies they might promote or oppose in the White House, then it should be permissible to ask if they believe the universe was created according to an intelligent design. Or is all humanity simply an accidental byproduct of blind cosmic forces? Would it be violating the constitutional ban on a religious test for public office to ask candidates if they believe in the laws “of nature and of nature’s God” and that all men are “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” as stated in our Declaration of Independence? Or do they believe our rights are arbitrary, to be determined by a supposedly higher power such as the United Nations or an act of Congress — or perhaps an edict from the Department of Health and Human Services requiring that contraceptives and abortion inducing drugs must be covered in health insurance provide by employers in the public and private sector, including non-profit religious organizations?

Since Darwin’s time, there have been many intelligent and knowledgeable people who have noted the absence of evidence in the fossil record to support the theory that life on Earth evolved from single-celled creatures into the vast variety of species we see on Earth today. The lack of evidence of intermediate or transitional species troubled Darwin himself. “When we descend into details,” he wrote,



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“we can prove that no one species has changed.”

“Missing links in the sequence of fossil evidence were a worry to Darwin,” anthropologist Edmund R. Leach observed at the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1981. “He felt sure they would eventually turn up, but they are still missing and seem likely to remain so.”

Paleontologists, who devote their professional lives to the study of fossils, have confirmed the links are still missing. Harvard’s Stephen Jay Gould has concluded:

Most species exhibit no directional change during their tenure on earth. They appear in the fossil record looking much the same as when they disappear; morphological change is limited and directionless.

Yet according to Dean, anyone unwilling to readily endorse the “widely accepted scientific construct” of evolution is either feigning ignorance for political reasons or belongs in the category of people who “don’t know anything.” In Dean’s mind apparently, such a person, especially if he lacks a college degree, could hardly be “well educated” enough to be president.

There is, of course, no constitutional requirement that the president be college educated, and some might argue that either Lincoln or Truman were better presidents than the scholarly Woodrow Wilson or Rhodes scholar Bill Clinton. Nor is there any requirement, legal or otherwise, that a president must believe in evolution. If there were, it would disqualify those untold millions of Americans who believe their Bible when it says God created the living creatures that inhabit the Earth, plants and animals, fish and fowl, each “after his kind.” It would, in a back door kind of way, be a religious test for holding office.

But then Dr. Dean and others who have made a pseudo-religion of their own out of Darwin’s theories might be unwilling to let a fossilized relic like a constitutional prohibition stand in the way of a “widely accepted scientific construct.”

Photo of Gov. Scott Walker: AP Images



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