

Intelligent Design: Is it “junk” Science?

“We should reject, as a matter of principle, the substitution of intelligent design for the dialogue or chance and necessity [i.e., Darwinian evolution]; but we must concede that there are presently no detailed Darwinian accounts of the evolution of any biological system, only a variety of wishful speculations.”

--Franklin Harold, atheist biochemist

- I. What is “Intelligent Design”
 - A. “Intelligent Design” (ID) is a science-based alternative to Darwin’s theory of evolution.
 1. ID theorists do NOT base their ideas upon the Scripture or any other religious dogma. While many ID theorists do believe in God, the theory of ID stems from scientific investigation, not theological presupposition.
 2. In distinction to Darwinian evolution, ID seeks to explain the complexities of the universe as a result of purposeful design by an Intelligent Designer (not necessarily the God of the Bible).
 - B. Foundational Tenants of Intelligent Design
 1. Life, and the complex processes by which cells do their work, cannot have been produced by that combination of chance and necessity known as Darwinian evolution.
 2. The kind of information embodied in things that are designed can only be produced by an intelligent agent, not by undirected material causes.
 3. Design is empirically [based on experiment and observation] detectable, and it is detectable in living things.
 4. Simply stated, ID proponents believe that design is the best *scientific* explanation for the stunning complexity of the cellular processes that underlie life, and for the evidence of how life actually developed.
- II. The Irreconcilable Clash between Darwinism and ID: a Scientific Example
 - A. Darwin’s theory teaches that the various parts of living organisms evolved over time, propelled by a combination of chance occurrence and biological necessity. Organisms expended evolutionary energy only on useful parts, preventing the development of non-useful parts. For example, monkeys needed tails to better climb trees, but humans lost their tails because they were no longer necessary.
 - B. ID theorists have demonstrated the existence of *millions* of organisms that are irreducibly complex—organisms with multiple parts that will not function if a single part is taken away.
 - C. Michael Behe (Lehigh University biochemistry professor and author of *Darwin’s Black Box*) describes such an organism: the bacterial flagellum.
 1. The bacterial flagellum is a microminiaturized rotary motor and propeller system that drives a tiny vessel through liquid.

2. The motor and drive mechanism are composed of 40 parts, including a rotor, driveshaft, bushings, universal joint and flexible propeller.
 - a. The motor is powered by a flow of ions and can rotate at up to 100,000 rpm—10 times faster than a NASCAR engine.
 - b. The motor can reverse direction in $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn.
 - c. The motor is $\frac{1}{100,000}$ th of an inch wide, invisible to the naked eye.
3. All of the essential parts must be there—*all at once*—for the engine to perform its function. If any part is missing, the motor will die.
4. Darwinian evolution can not plan ahead to create parts that might be useful to assemble a biological machine in the future. Consider what Darwin himself wrote:

“If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”

5. ID views the existence of irreducibly complex organisms as evidence of a Designer who designed the individual parts and assembled them spontaneously to result in a functioning organism.

III. ID Theory and Public Education

A. Dover, PA School Board—a test case

1. The Dover School Board voted to require that a statement be read prior to ninth-grade biology lessons dealing with evolution:

The Pennsylvania Academic Standards require students to learn about Darwin’s theory of evolution and eventually to take a standardized test of which evolution is a part. Because Darwin’s theory is a theory, it continued to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The theory is not a fact. Gaps in the theory exist for which there is no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations. Intelligent design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin’s view. The reference book, “Of Pandas and People,” is available in the library along with other resources for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what intelligent design actually involves. With respect to any theory, students are encouraged to keep an open mind. The school leaves the discussion of the origins of life to individual students and their families. As a standards-driven district, class instruction focuses upon preparing students to achieve proficiency on standards-based assessments.

- B. In a December 20, 2005, decision, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III ruled that requiring the reading of the statement above violated the Constitution because the requirement was an attempt to promote religion in the public school classroom.
- C. In January, a federal judge ordered evolution disclaimer stickers removed from textbooks in Cobb County, Georgia.
- D. In November, Kansas educational officials adopted new classroom science standards that question the theory of evolution. The new standards have not yet met with a legal test (Jan., 2006).