

Intelligent Design

**‘Readdressing the question
of origin’**

“Intelligent Design is a scientific hypothesis that there is empirically detectable evidence of intelligent causation in nature.”

-Stephen E. Jones

For as long as history has been recorded man has grappled with the question, “where did we come from?” and “how did we get here?” There are many factors that affect how you answer this question that has plagued humanity for so long. Whether it is the media, the school system, our parents, our peers, or just random stabs in the dark, eventually everyone must come to some conclusion of their own concerning the origins of man. In the midst of this battle, after the dust has settled, it appears as though two major thoughts of mind have scratched their way to the surface. Creationism vs. Evolution – the ancient debate continues, but wait . . . there appears to be a new rival approaching from the distance. It bares the name Intelligent Design (ID) and it is approaching quickly. Will it overcome its foe? Or will it, like so many theories, be vanquished and lost in the folds of time? One can merely wait for time to reveal the victor, and in the mean time hypothesize as science demands.

Before I go on, we must be sure that we fully grasp all that the ID movement encapsulates. “The modern concept of intelligent design has been simply formulated as the belief that certain biological lines of evidence (e.g., the ‘irreducible complexity’ of features such as the bacterial flagellum) are evidence for a designer and against blind naturalistic processes.”¹ In other words, as we witness the complexity of certain aspects of reality we must concede that they stand as an indicator of design. Continuing down this avenue of thought, we are led to the conclusion that such things that bare the appearance of design must have a designer. Is this new theory able to be incorporated into the Christians worldview? Not necessarily so. Proponents of ID have come to the realization that there is a god; but Theism and Christianity are leagues apart.

Perhaps one would be too hasty to suppose this to be a “new” theory in regards to origin. It can be traced back as far as ancient Greece and the works of William Paley (1743-1805). In 1802 he released a book entitled *Natural Theology*, which introduced the world to his argument of the divine Watchmaker. In this argument he asks us to

¹ http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2002/0830_IDM.asp

assume for a moment that we are walking down the beach, when suddenly our displacement of the sand reveals a shining piece of metal reflecting in the sunlight. We bend over and pick it up; it is a watch. Now let's go one step further in our assumption and say that we have never seen, nor heard of, a watch before. As we inspect our find, what conclusion would we come to? After thoroughly examining it would we decide that it came into being through the means of chance, good timing, and just the right components being at the right place at just the right time? Or, would we recognize the intricacy of this object, the sophisticated detail that has been attended to in its makeup, the complexity of the surroundings needed to bring such a thing into existence? Would we or would we not recognize that it was a created entity that has been crafted in the careful hands of a knowledgeable creator? The answer is obvious. Any one that claimed to be of a logical mind and rational view would have to admit to the simple truth that certain aspects of design are indicators of such a thing being designed. When one considers the human eyeball for instance, an organism exponentially more complex than a mere watch, why is it that we are willing to abandon logic and attribute its existence to a series of chance, destruction, and mathematical impossibilities? Why do we abandon logic when morals become involved? Perhaps this is a question too immense to address at this time, we must save this "bunny trail" for another day.

As stated above, the ID movement has far reaching roots; the question that now faces us is why has it surfaced once more? What has brought it back into the battleground of human thought? The answer is a chemist by the name of Charles Thaxton. Fifteen years ago he released a book, which he (and two coauthors) titled *The Mystery of Life's Origin*. Within the pages of this book the case for intelligent design in nature was proposed, and in so doing, the major flaws of Darwinism were exposed. Interestingly, this book received great acceptance among their fellow scientists, which came as a shocking surprise for its main author – Thaxton. After all, no self-respecting man of science would dare suggest that there was actually a God behind the creation and order of this world; let alone undermine the tenants of Darwinism that has become the foundation of the scientific world. Yet, apparently there were. Thaxton found out that men and women within a variety of different scientific fields were coming to the same conclusions that he and his coauthors had. As is the case in so many other circumstances,

it just took one brave soul to voice what the rest were unwilling to publicly address. Once the first domino fell, people began to openly doubt the presuppositions of Darwinist thought that they had held for so long. For the first time in many years, scientists threw off the yoke of Darwinism and began to openly look at the data and come to unbiased conclusions. What were these conclusions? They were beginning to see that there are certain highly complex entities in nature (such as the DNA molecule) that have been designed to do what they do and hadn't evolved randomly or by accident, which is the conclusion of Darwin's theory of evolution. Finally people were beginning to open their eyes to God's creation and a new day was dawning in the world of intellectual thought.

One of the many brilliant minds that were captured by the statements produced in Thaxton's book was that of William Dembski. At the time, Dembski was a young man who had acquired a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Chicago, a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Illinois, and a master's degree in theology from Princeton Theological Seminary; obviously a man that has excelled in many diversified areas of life. Dembski knew that the conclusions Thaxton and his associates had arrived at were not only right, but that they were going to 'revolutionize the way man looks at nature and the way biologists approach their field.'² This was a revolution Dembski wanted to be a part of, and he would be.

With this one book came the birth of a movement, but where has it gone since then? Dembski has been joined by an eclectic group of men such as Philip Johnson: a retired (emeritus) Professor of Law at the University of California at Berkeley who is a Presbyterian, Dr. Jonathon Wells: who is not only a scientist but also an ordained cleric in the Unification Church (the 'Moonie' sect), Dr. Michael Denton: a former agnostic anti-evolutionist (with respect to biological transformism), who now professes a vague form of theism – and yet has seemed to embrace evolutionary (though somehow 'guided') transformism, and Dr Michael Behe: author of *Darwin's Black Box* who is a professed Roman Catholic. As we can clearly see, the people behind this movement are varied in beliefs, education, and purpose. Yet, what is the common ground that has brought these men together? What is the defined goal of those who purport ID?

² www.100megsfree4.com/farshores/design.htm

The main motivation of the ID movement is clear. The people behind it want to challenge the blind acceptance of the materialistic, godless, naturalistic philosophy of Darwinian evolution. In so doing, they focus their attack on evolution that is found in naturalistic philosophy. In other words, their main enemy is naturalism, not necessarily evolution.

“What is the difference between ID and creationism?” Many people ask this question, and I think it is proposed for good reason. Yet, the leaders of ID are adamant that there is no correlation between the two schools of thought. Intelligent Design does not support any religious beliefs, its main goal is to observe the evidence of design in nature and expose the rest of the scientific world to these truths. It would appear that in order for one to believe in design one must believe in a designer, a term strikingly similar to creator but without the religious (or Christian) connotation. In regards to Christianity, again there can be no direct correlation. After all, many groups or individuals believe in a designer/creator and do not profess to be Christians. In fact, one of the last things that the leaders of the ID movement would want is for them to be associated with Christianity, Creationism (whether young age or old age), or basically any religious belief. They are constantly being accused of viewing things in a “Biblical” manner. Unfortunately, in the world of intellect, religion has been cast away. People who express belief in God (especially the Judean-Christian one) are seen as naïve, ignorant, and merely pseudo-intellectual at best. This is a stereotype that ID wants to avoid at all costs, and yet one the rest of the scientific world is all too easy to apply. After all, the men of science have already disposed of creationism in all forms so by directly associating ID with this “outdated” and “backward” way of thinking they never really have to address it or the questions it raises. As a creationist who has been on the receiving end of such ridicule I can understand their need for such clearly defined separation. So what should the Christian Orthodox position of the Intelligent Design movement be? Perhaps it is too soon for one to be developed. Yet, upon such a preliminary study one can already see some definite advantages and disadvantages that this movement has to offer the Christian community.

A wise man once said that those who are not against us are for us³. As Intelligent Design attacks the foundation of Darwinian Naturalistic Evolution it aids in the destruction of a mutual enemy. As Darwinist theories have been at the forefront of scientific thought for decades they have clouded the minds of men from any other possible solution for the question of origin. Now, through the hard work of ID supporters who continue to make headway in the evolutionary battle, people with alternative views in regards to origin might be taken into consideration. This could provide the foothold for a complete scientific revolution in which Christian thought and opinion might be reconsidered as a viable option. Some may call me an Idealist but I truly believe that people are searching for truth, and Darwin let them down. They feel empty and abandoned by his cold naturalism, and in the wake of the fall of evolutionary thought Creationism will be waiting. As mentioned earlier, ID is not Creationism; but through its dualistic attack (discrediting evolution while providing a viable alternative) Creationism is provided with an opportunity of reconsideration. Another positive aspect of the ID movement is found within its function as a stepping-stone. The realization that nature contains detectable evidence of intelligent design is not equivalent with a faith based, personal, saving grace, relationship with Jesus – but it may be the first step towards one! Are we not instructed to deal with such strongholds? Paul himself addressed this in his words to the Corinthians, *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*⁴ Far too long has the Christian community lain vanquished by the false wisdom of this world. As we begin to teardown the ancient strongholds of lies and deception that Darwinism erected we will see the nations return to their Lord. Only through this painful process of intellectual restoration will we truly bridge the gap between science and theology.

A wise man once said that those who are not with me are against me.⁵ For all the benefits that the ID movement may provide through its slow ascent into intellectual circles there are of course some detriments for the Christian that accompany it as well.

³ Mark 9:40 NIV

⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:4,5 NIV

⁵ Matthew 12:30 NIV

The first, and foremost must be its intrinsic syncretism. As the average person may decide to shift his worldview from evolution (especially that of naturalism) to intelligent design we may find that they decide to turn this stepping-stone into a foundation. After all, they are now capable of holding onto their intellectual presuppositions (to some degree) and incorporate the existence of God (to some degree) in order to address that which intellect cannot. They get to have their proverbial cake and eat it too! Throughout history we have witnessed account after account depicting the horrors of syncretism. It has been the downfall of many people and nations – including God’s own elect. Another concern is what lies beneath? What seemingly insignificant ideologies will accompany one who converts to the view of the ID movement? The ‘law of uniformity’ does tell us that one’s beliefs or worldview will become uniform over time. In other words, one cannot truly exist on a potpourri of worldviews. Over time you will conform to the dominant one in your mind. So, what is it that is encoded beneath the surface of Intelligent Design that can so easily slip by our conscience thought? Through my brief overview I would have to conclude that it is a plethora of worldly and unbiblical beliefs. For the Christian who approaches ID it would be all too easy to stop grappling with the deeper truths of the Bible, and simply compromise with the things that we struggle most with. Just as ID can bridge the gap for the atheistic evolutionist towards Christianity, so can it also provide a stumbling block for the Christian towards evolution (at least non-naturalistic evolution). This is definitely a point of caution that must be addressed by all Christians who are delving deeper into the views of the Intelligent Design Movement.

Where does this leave us? Must we abandon this movement out of fear of syncretism? Should we embrace it as a forerunner of the Gospel? The answer is truly a subjective one. Intelligent Design has the potential to bring about great and wonderful things for the Christian community. Yet, with this potential for greatness comes the ability for destruction. As with most weapons, it all depends on who wields it!

B b l i b g r a p h y

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