

Intelligent Design

Intro: You may have noticed in the news earlier this month that the President fueled controversy by answering a reporter's question about teaching "intelligent design" in the classroom. The President expressed the view that students should have the opportunity to "hear both sides of the debate". His comment has produced a plethora of responses and discussions in the media. Advocates for "evolution only" in the classroom are up in arms arguing that "intelligent design" is just a way for fundamentalists to sneak religion into the classroom under the guise of science.

You may have an occasion to discuss this issue with your peers at work and school and it would be helpful to know something about this issue and how it can be an ally of faith.

The Argument from Intelligent Design

For centuries Christians have been making a philosophical argument for God's existence from the observable universe. The argument is based on the design or order that we see in the universe. If the earth shows evidence of design, there must be a designer.

The Hebrew writer essentially makes this argument in Heb. 3:4.

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. (Hebrews 3:4)

The Hebrew writer assumes that we would all acknowledge two things about a house:

A house has an origin; houses haven't just always existed.

A house shows evidence of a builder—"a someone" who made it (i.e. it comes into existence through intelligent planning).

Thus, it has complex systems that show design (Even an adobe hut from the first century conveyed an arrangement of blocks and room divisions that would not have been considered accidental. How much more our houses that have complex support structures, electrical systems, plumbing, and other amenities for comfortable living.

In the same way, the universe has the features of a house too. Its existence as a "house" for man implies an "intelligence designer".

Many scientists and theologians in the past argued the point that the evidence of design in the universe points to a designer.

William Paley many years ago popularized the concept by using the analogy of a pocket watch one might find in a field. He simply appealed to common sense; if you find a watch you don't conclude that it originated from chance occurrences but from design.

Unbelievers have responded that the design we see in the universe is only apparent, that it is simply looks like someone designed it. They argued that all features of the universe and life in particular based on

what they knew could be explained by the principles of genetic mutation and natural selection.

What scientists then didn't know is what was going on at the cellular level. There was a "black box" that scientists had not opened; it is the inter-workings of life at the molecular level in the cell. In Darwin's day, scientists had very simplistic views of how cells consisted that made it easy for them to imagine that evolution could take place by natural selection.

However Darwin made an important admission: '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.' (Natural History, April 2002)

Now many modern scientists by opening Darwin's "Black Box" have shown that a case can be made for "intelligent design" at the cellular level.

Michael Behe, a biochemist at Lehigh University has written a powerful book called "Darwin's Black Box". In his book, Behe gives a number of examples of ultra-sophisticated molecular machines that are found in a cell. He argues that these molecular machines are too complex to have come into being accidentally part by part. They are in his words "irreducibly complex".

To illustrate the idea of irreducible complexity Behe uses a mousetrap, showing that all parts must be present for the machine to function. Behe then shows examples of such irreducibly complex machines at the cellular level, machines that could not have been formed gradually with one part being added and then another, but had to exist all at once in order for the cell to function.

Some examples:

(1) Chemical motors

Cilium

Bacterial flagellum

(2) Other examples of irreducible complexity abound, including aspects of protein transport, blood clotting, closed circular DNA, electron transport, telomeres, photosynthesis, transcription regulation, and much more. Examples of irreducible complexity can be found on virtually every page of a biochemistry textbook.

The argument advanced is that because these features of the cell are irreducibly complex they cannot be explained by natural selection; they could not have evolved slowly. Thus, Darwin's mechanism cannot explain life at the cellular level. The scientific evidence points then to "intelligent design" as the alternative explanation.

"Intelligent design" scientists do not advocate their views by quoting the Bible but by exploring facts about how the world works and considering the logical difficulties and the mathematical probabilities implied by the belief that such sophisticated processes could occur by accident. Such

evidence cannot by nature “prove” that that intelligent designer is the God of the Bible; but it can certainly point to the need for an alternative explanation that involves “an intelligent designer”.

The Argument from Scripture

If God has been seen, then God exists.

The apostles of Jesus who report that Jesus claimed to be God’s Son and that He had been sent by God into the world to reveal God to us. They revealed that Jesus worked miracles as proof of His claims to be the Son of God, including the ultimate miracle of proof, His resurrection from the dead.

Therefore, God exists because He has been seen by men.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

If God exists, then He knows how the universe originated.

We have God’s testimony concerning how the world came into being. He was the only one there! Moses in Genesis presents God’s revelation about the world’s origins.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1) Jesus, as God, validated Moses’ account by appealing to its accuracy as to the origin of man and woman.

And He answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, (Matthew 19:4) John, properly understanding Jesus’ testimony to be God, presents Him as the Word who was present with God in the beginning and through whom everything was made.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)

Thus by faith we can know how the universe originated

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

Conclusion: Intelligent design reveals the difficulties of seeking an origin for life in naturalism and points to the possibility of a Creator. God’s own self-revelation completes the argument as God comes to man in the person of Christ and reveals what He did in the creation of the world.

I used to think that the scientific community, as it grew in its knowledge, would come to realize the inadequacy of Darwinian concepts of origins and acknowledge the scientific evidence for God. Now, I'm not so sure. Satan knows that He cannot afford to let such evidence be presented to children; for it fundamental to his success to keep such evidence out of the minds of youth. Satan may control the government, but he cannot control and stop the church from speaking.