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## Intelligent Design—A “Plot” to Kill Evolution?

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Put simply, Intelligent Design is a scientific theory that affirms a level of specificity and complexity in the universe that cannot be explained by any blind natural process, but can be explained only by intelligence behind the design.

The Intelligent Design movement is a relatively new development in the scientific world, though the roots of ID thought go deeply into the history of Western civilization. The leading proponents of Intelligent Design are well-credentialed scientists who are both articulate and persuasive in arguing that evolution is a theory in crisis. Scientists and other leaders of the ID movement have punctured the arrogance and ideological inflexibility of the modern evolutionary establishment, and the evolutionists don't like it one bit.

The cover story in Wired magazine is the latest evidence of ID success. Written by Evan Ratliff, the article proves that the panic attack experienced by evolutionists is only deepening in intensity.

As the article begins, Ratliff takes the reader into an auditorium in downtown Columbus, Ohio, where the state's Board of Education is considering "the question of how to teach the theory of evolution in public schools." As the school board met two years ago, four experts engaged in a debate before the assembled school board members, considering "whether an antievolution theory known as Intelligent Design should be allowed into the classroom."

Ratliff is apparently shocked and outraged that the debate even took place. "This is an issue, of course, that was supposed to have been settled long ago," he explains, "but 140 years after Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, 75 years after John Scopes taught natural selection to a biology class in Tennessee, and 15 years after the US Supreme Court ruled against a Louisiana law mandating equal time for creationism, the question of how to teach the theory of evolution was being reopened here in Ohio."

Eventually, the Ohio State Board of Education decided to allow "optional" lessons on Intelligent Design as a supplement to the schools' biology curriculum. The ID proponents were successful in persuading the school board that teaching students the theory of evolution in a way that raised none of the significant questions posed by other scientists was neither good education nor good public policy.

This, evolutionary theorists insist, is nothing less than mindlessness and a return to religious fundamentalism. In the Wired article, Ratliff portrays a conspiracy led by scholars and scientists associated with Seattle's Discovery Institute. According to Ratliff, ID advocates operate with a strategy to "create the impression that this very complicated issue could be seen from two entirely rational yet opposing views." As he quotes Discovery Institute scholar Stephen Meyer, "When two groups of experts disagree about a controversial subject that intersects with the public-school science curriculum, the students should be permitted to learn about both perspectives." Meyer and his colleagues call this teaching method the "teach the controversy" approach.

But the evolutionists do not want the controversy taught. To the contrary, they have strapped themselves into an ideological straitjacket and have constructed the theory of evolution so that it is a comprehensive worldview impenetrable by outside criticism.

Ratliff goes on to explain that the Intelligent Design movement can be traced back to two seminal books: Darwin's Black Box by Lehigh University biochemist Michael Behe and The Design Inference by William Dembski, a philosopher and mathematician currently at Baylor University, and recently appointed the Director of the Center for Theology and Science at Boyce College and Southern Seminary. According to Ratliff, Dembski's work "proposed that any biological system exhibiting 'information' that is both 'complex' (highly improbable) and 'specified' (serving a particular function) cannot be a product of chance or natural law." In other words, Dembski argued that the facts of specific and highly organized complexity in a biological system could not be explained by mere chance or the operation of purely natural forces. Dembski points to the specific and highly complex information that is demonstrated, for example, in the genetic structure of the human cell.

But if purely natural forces and chance cannot explain the presence of such complex information, what can? Ratliff describes the ID response in this way: "The only remaining option is an Intelligent Designer—whether God or an alien life force." Dembski's contribution, along with Behe's theory of "irreducible complexity," throws the evolutionary mainstream and its ideologues into apoplexy.

But even armed with effective scientific arguments, the Intelligent Design movement needed something else in order to project itself into the public square—and that something else was an articulate public advocate. That advocate emerged in Phillip Johnson, a now-retired law professor at the University of California at Berkeley. Johnson, a former clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren, brought impeccable academic credentials, boundless energy, and winsome courtroom effectiveness to his mission of exposing the pretensions and weaknesses of evolutionary theory.

In a series of best-selling books, Johnson directed his intellectual guns at "scientific materialism," the affirmation that the material world must be entirely self-explanatory. Using the argument of Intelligent Design as a "wedge," Johnson, along with scientific colleagues in the movement, took their case to the public.

The evolutionists have responded with dismissal, condescension, outright opposition, and worse. Michael Ruse, a philosopher of science at Florida State University, simply dismisses Intelligent Design by labeling it theology in disguise. "Ultimately, they have an evangelical Christian message that they want to push," he says. "Intelligent Design is the hook." Of course, this ignores the fact that, in dismissing Intelligent Design with this unscientific argument, Ruse and his fellow evolutionists discount anyone positing any level of design in the universe, for whatever reason.

Lawrence Krauss of Case Western Reserve University, a defender of evolution, warns his fellow evolutionists that they had better not underestimate the threat represented by Intelligent Design. "Where the scientific community has been at fault," he says, "is in assuming that these people are harmless, like flat-earthers. They don't realize that they are well-organized, and that they have a political agenda."

For years, the evolutionists have been virtually alone in playing their own political game, intimidating school boards and political officials into giving them a virtual free rein over the academic process and hegemony in the teaching of subjects like biology.

Evan Ratliff portrays Intelligent Design as a serious threat to the evolutionary establishment. By referring to the ID movement as "Creation Science 2.0," he signals the tech-savvy readers of Wired magazine that the Intelligent Design movement is something they should oppose and observe with growing concern.

Nevertheless, Wired also ran a side article by George Gilder, identified by the magazine as "the technogeek guru of bandwidth utopia." Gilder is also a Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute, and one of the major figures behind the movement. As Gilder argues, "The Darwinist materialist paradigm . . . is about to face the same revolution that Newtonian physics faced 100 years ago. Just as physicists discovered that the atom was not a massy particle, as Newton believed, but a baffling quantum arena accessible only through mathematics, so too are biologists coming to understand that the cell is not a simple lump of protoplasm, as Charles Darwin believed."

According to Gilder, "Intelligent Design at least asks the right questions. In a world of science that still falls short of a

rigorous theory of human consciousness or of the big bang, Intelligent Design theory begins by recognizing that everywhere in nature, information is hierarchical and precedes its embodiment.” Students who are merely fed the dominant evolutionary model are, Gilder asserts, “imbibing the consolations of a faith-driven 19th-century materialist myth.”

While Wired magazine sounds its alarm, a similarly panicked approach is evident in The Washington Monthly’s October 2004 issue. Chris Mooney, a senior correspondent for The American Prospect, argues that the Intelligent Design movement is an effort by “the religious right” to “combat mainstream science.”

Mooney minces no words, using vitriolic language in an attempt to dismiss the movement out of hand. He suggests that “Christian conservatives have . . . adopted the veneer of scientific and technical expertise instead of merely asserting their heartfelt beliefs.” As he portrays the conflict, uninformed, uneducated, and Bible-thumping fundamentalists stand opposed to the enlightened, educated, and entirely sophisticated scientific establishment. Mooney lumps together the proponents of abstinence-based sex education, scientists who believe that abortion is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer, and advocates for Intelligent Design. The naturalistic scientists are always identified positively. Mooney refers to “the respected International Society for Stem Cell Research” and “our nation’s distinguished scientific community.”

This is evidence of weak argument and irresponsible journalism. This degree of editorializing has no place in what is presented as serious journalism, and Mooney’s real secular agenda is clear when he drops his guard.

Christian conservatives, he argues, “have gone a long way towards creating their own scientific counter-establishment.” He further claims that “the religious right’s ‘science’ represents just the most recent manifestation of the gradual conservative Christian political awakening that has so dramatically shaped our politics over the past several decades.”

Mooney’s attempt to dismiss the Intelligent Design movement as nothing more than an appendage of the “religious right” demonstrates once again the irritation of the evolutionary mainstream. In desperation, they want to have it both ways. Mooney dismisses Intelligent Design as science because he claims that ID proponents believe in a divine Designer, “a claim naturalistic science can neither confirm nor refute.” Yet, just a few paragraphs later, he quotes Brown University biologist Kenneth Miller as saying, “The scientific community has not embraced the explanation of design because it is quite clear, on the basis of the evidence, that it is wrong.” Miller flatly dismisses the idea of design in the cosmos—the very claim Mooney had just asserted science could “neither confirm nor refute.”

The house of evolution is falling. Its various theorists are increasingly at war with each other over the basic question of how evolution is supposed to work, and its materialistic and naturalistic foundation is becoming increasingly clear. The evolutionists tenaciously hold to their theory on the basis of faith and as an axiom of their worldview. The publication of these two articles in influential magazines indicates that proponents of evolution see the Intelligent Design movement as a real threat. They are right.

