

Darwinian Objections to Intelligent Design are Irrational: Thirteen Reasons

The Objections Itemized

1. ID is ambiguous, and so disqualifies itself as science for the reason of its intrinsic incapacity to identify the alleged designer by means of *scientific* tools and methods.
 2. ID proponents are evasive in that they *refuse* to identify the designer in question as God.
 3. ID is little more than repackaged young-earth creationism (YEC).
 4. ID argumentation is grounded on the *god-of-the-gaps* fallacy.
 5. ID's postulation that the designer is a personal agent logically demands determining further what it was that caused the alleged designer?
 6. Since the dominant assumption of the scientific community is that only material entities exist, the notion of an intelligent agent is inconceivable. Consequently, ID proponents bear an insurmountable burden of proof for the legitimacy of their hypothesis.
 7. The dominant definition of science, based as it is on naturalism, deems only *scientific* knowledge to have the capacity to convey truth (pt. 6, above). Hence, since ID is fundamentally a philosophical consideration, it is by definition incoherent.
 8. Consequently, ID's assertion that design in nature is actual as opposed to merely an illusion based on naïve perceptions, it is grounded not on science; but religion.
 9. ID disqualifies itself as science due to its failure to either prove its own assertions, or disprove Darwinian assertions.
 10. The teleological ramifications which logically *follow* out of ID assumptions undermine the capacity of its proponents to pursue their investigational agenda dispassionately.
 11. ID's hypothesis that the efficient cause behind nature is a personal agent *categorically* disqualifies its investigational program from being *scientific*.
 12. ID's postulation of *personal* agent (efficient) causation contaminates the spirit of the task of *scientific* inquiry into causations.
 13. ID's postulation of personal (agent) causation contaminates the spirit of *scientific* investigation into origins.
-

Rebuttals to the above Challenges

1. ID is ambiguous, and so disqualifies itself as science for the reason of its intrinsic incapacity to identify the alleged designer by means of *scientific* tools and methods.

Reply: *This charge commits the reductio absurdum fallacy in that if this criterion were applied to other circumstances, the results would be either absurd or untenable. Among other things, it arbitrarily rules out of court a fundamental aspect of other schools of scientific inquiry, including archaeology, SETI research, and the forensic sciences. For example, a private investigator seeking to determine the cause of death of a body lying in a*

pool of blood in the dark and isolated end of an alley, would surely not be expected to first positively identify the perpetrator prior to hypothesizing that the relevant evidence points to an intelligent, though diabolical designer.

2. ID proponents are evasive in that they *refuse to name the designer in question as God.*

Reply: *This charge amounts to the red herring fallacy. As trainers of hunting dogs would, as an aspect of their instruction, lay pungent smoked herring (which is red) across the canines' path in order to fool them, this ploy seeks to distract intellectual audiences from the central issue of ID, namely, does the scientific evidence demand an intelligent designer to account for it, or not?*

Secondly, it is ID proponents who are demonstrating more care than are Darwinists in identifying what scientific evidence has (or has not) the capacity to discover. The former insist that determining whether the evidence points specifically to God is not a matter that can be proven on the basis of scientific knowledge. Belief in Christian dogma entails the additional non-scientific step of faith, as indeed does belief in the Darwinian tenet that the biological order can be accounted for by unguided natural processes alone.

3. ID is little more than repackaged young-earth creationism (YEC).

Reply: *This charge entails three intellectual errors which include both intellectual laziness plus the commission of two logical fallacies. Firstly, since a primary aspect of the scientific method entails gathering and evaluating the relevant data, (in this case documents published by ID proponents which plainly specify a critical difference between the epistemological foundations of ID and YEC respectively), it is therefore not too much to expect critics of ID critics familiarize themselves with these distinctions. Secondly, this statement commits the genetic fallacy (dismissing evidence primarily because of its source—"genetic"). It is logically fallacious for Darwinian evolutionists (DE) to exploit the fact of a shared belief (common to both ID and YEC) in the existence of an intelligent designer, as an excuse for dismissing ID evidence altogether. Thirdly, this statement commits the begging the question logical fallacy by its fundamental assumption that God cannot, even in principle, play a role in the natural order. In other words, its very argument merely assumes as true what it seeks, in the end, to "prove."*

4. ID argumentation is grounded on the *god-of-the-gaps* fallacy.

Reply: *To the contrary, ID begins by identifying and elucidating phenomena which call for a causal explanation, and then, by the investigational process of inference to the best explanation within a pool of multiple competing hypothesis, seeks to identify which one is superior to its rivals in its explanatory powers. With respect to Stephen Meyer's Signature in the Cell, The postulation of an intelligent agent as the cause of information in DNA is not an*

argument from ignorance (“therefore God must have done it”), but is based on knowledge as to which hypothesis best accounts for the existence of information. The answer is, the entirety of human experience indicates only intelligent creative agents have ever been demonstrated to have that capacity.¹

At the same time, critics of ID obligate themselves to concede the existence of gaps in their own Darwinian hypothesis with respect to actual (existent), supporting data. Insofar as Darwinists appeal to hypothetical (yet to be identified pathways) they fail to account for the present state of the phenomenon that is under consideration. Insofar as DEs seek to trump ID claims on the basis of such unsubstantiated assertions, they are employing a god-of-the-gaps line of argument of their own.

5. ID’s postulation that the designer is a personal agent logically demands determining further what it was that caused the alleged designer?

Reply: *This charge commits the double-standard fallacy² by expecting ID investigators to operate under different criteria than do practitioners of similar branches of science. Meyer for example notes, contra Richard Dawkins’ assertion, all “events that explain other events presumably also had causes, each of which also invites a causal explanation...[this does] not render the explanation void, nor does it negate the information it provided about past conditions or circumstances, [it instead] merely raises another separate question...[For example] one needn’t explain who designed the builders of Stonehenge... to infer that this complex and specified structure was clearly the work of intelligent agents.”³*

6. Since the dominant assumption of the scientific community is that only material entities exist, the notion of an intelligent agent is categorically inconceivable. Consequently, ID proponents bear an insurmountable burden of proof for the legitimacy of their hypothesis.

Reply: *This charge begs the question identified in point 3 above, in that it merely assumes what it seeks to establish, thereby employing an unsubstantiated assertion as the standard against which they dismiss ID. The correct methodology for discriminating between hypotheses is to begin with an analysis of the phenomenon under consideration in order to infer which hypothesis (materialism or theism) provides the superior explanation.*

7. The dominant definition of science, based as it is on naturalism, deems only *scientific* knowledge to have the capacity to convey truth (pt. 6, above). Hence, since ID is fundamentally a philosophical consideration, it cannot qualify as a truth-claim.

¹ Stephen Meyer. *Signature in the Cell*. (Harper One, 2009), p. 377.

² <https://agingcapriciously.com/2016/05/22/the-fallacy-of-the-double-standard/>

³ Op.cit. (1), pp. 389-90.

Reply: *This charge, too, begs the question. In addition it is self-refuting for the reason that if it were true that scientific concepts alone are capable of conveying truth, then it would logically follow that the charge itself cannot be true. Indeed, it would be incoherent.*⁴

8. Consequently, ID's assertion that design in nature is actual as opposed to merely an illusion based on naïve perceptions, it is grounded not on science; but on religion

Reply: *This charge seeks to apply a double standard in its designation of which investigational programs entail religious motivations. The question at hand is whether the present phenomena of the biological world is the result of unguided processes or is the result of an intelligent designer. Since it is true that the goal of Darwinism is to demonstrate the absence of an intelligent designer behind nature, then its agenda is religious in equal measure to the ID agenda. In either case, appealing to motivation alone for the purpose of undermining the integrity of any investigator, is a red herring (see note 2, above).*

9. ID disqualifies itself as science due to its failure to either prove its own assertions or disprove Darwinian assertions.

Reply: *In actuality, the encounter between ID proponents and Darwinists is not a contest between two equally empirically-bound competing hypotheses. To the contrary, Darwinists employ a double-standard from which the former are expected to make an air-tight case based on currently known "eliminative" scientific facts, while the latter are entitled to hold out for yet-to-be discovered "pathways." William Dembski exposed the fallacious aspect of this discrepancy by stating, "Evolutionary theory is thereby rendered immune to disconfirmation in principle, because the universe of **unknown** material mechanisms can **never be exhausted**" (boldface mine).*⁵

10. The teleological ramifications which logically follow out of ID assumptions undermine the capacity of its proponents to pursue their investigational agenda dispassionately.

Reply: *Since it is true that sociological, philosophical, and theological ramifications logically follow from both ID and Darwinism, then that charge seeks to employ a double-standard by its denial of the legitimacy of the former while affirming the legitimacy of the latter when measured by the very same criterion.*

⁴ David Hume stated at the conclusion of his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Harvard Classics, v. 37. (Collier 1910)), *If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity, or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames. For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.* ** Karl Popper countered that Hume's statement is self-defeating since it leads to his discrediting his very own assertion (The Logic of Scientific Discovery. (Harper, 1968), p. 135).

⁵ Dembski and Ruse, editors. William Dembski. "The Logical Underpinning of Intelligent Design." Debating Design. (Cambridge, 2004), p. 328f.

11. ID's hypothesis that the efficient cause behind nature is a personal agent *categorically* disqualifies its investigational program from being scientific.

Reply: *This charge repeats the same begging-the-fallacy referenced in points 3, 6, and 7, above. It also raises the question whether the purpose of origins science is to identify the cause of a phenomenon, whoever or whatever it may be, or to consider natural causes only, irrespective of whether such hypotheses adequately account for its existence and qualities.*

12. ID's postulation of *personal agent* (efficient) causation contaminates the spirit of the task of scientific inquiry into causations.

Reply: *Lawrence Krauss objects to the very notion of a personal designer for the reason that revealed truth conflicts with the scientific method of examining the natural order by means of autonomous direct analysis (as opposed to verbal communication by a party who is "in-the-know").⁶ Yet there is no reason why these two means of attaining knowledge cannot coexist. In "Aunt Matilda's Cake" analogy Dr. John Lennox points out that with respect to the question, "How is it we are enjoying this cake laid before us?," the following two answers are distinctly different, equally true, and compatible with each other.⁷*

13. ID's postulation of personal (agent) causation contaminates the spirit of *scientific* investigation into origins.

Reply: *John Haught states, "The real problem...is that both ID and evolutionary materialists [representing two extremes] take flight into ultimate metaphysical explanations too early in their explanations of life [when instead] we must all postpone metaphysical gratification. To introduce ideas about God or intelligence as the 'direct cause' would be theologically as well as scientifically ruinous. A mature theology allows natural science to carry out its own methods and explanations as far as they can possible go."⁸*

While I find Haught's essay to be intellectually stimulating to read, I nevertheless judge it to entail two fallacies. Firstly it commits the black-or-white fallacy by its incorrect suggestion that primary and secondary, causation cannot both coexist in the providential economy of God. Secondly it commits the affirming the consequent fallacy by its insistence that God doesn't create by primary causation. Consequently it is dismissive of the need to examine the evidence as the first order of business.

Rev. Gary W. Jensen M.Div. (Luther Seminary) and M.A. in Science and Religion (Biola University)

February 21, 2017

gjensen549@gmail.com ** <http://www.christianityontheoffense.com>

<http://www.offensivechristianity.blogspot.com>

⁶ Ray Comfort. Interview with Lawrence Krauss. DVD, *The Atheist Delusion*. (Living Waters, 2016), 14:00 approx.

⁷ John C. Lennox. *God's Undertaker*. (Lion, 2009), p. 208.

⁸ Dembski and Ruse, editors. *Debating Design*. John Haught. *Darwin, Design, and Divine Providence*. (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 236-7.