

The Legitimacy of Intelligent Design

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Comment [PD1]: good title, name,
date - nice organization

A school board in the state of Georgia was recently ordered by a judge to remove from all of its biology textbooks a sticker that read,

"This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things."

The sticker was the school board's solution to exhortations from proponents of Intelligent Design (ID), an idea intended to replace the theory of evolution. Intelligent Design is purported to be a scientific theory of the origin of life and thus, its supporters reason, should be taught alongside evolution in high school science classes. The apparent existence of a scientific alternative to evolution is what compelled the Georgia state school board to take recourse to its sticker.

Comment [PD2]: omit ?

The remainder of this paper will begin by describing the ideas underlying ID and the claims made by proponents of ID. Chief among these claims is that ID is a scientific theory. This will be followed by popular criticisms of ID and finally, a discussion of the judge's decision to have the school board's stickers removed.

Comment [PD3]: will describe - don't need the begin, as it becomes clear later that you describe a progression. Nice organization, well written

Underlying ID is the notion that everything in the universe, life in particular, developed under the direction of some form of intelligence. Advocates of ID claim that the manifest complexity of living things can be adequately explained only by positing an intelligent designer.

Supporters of ID claim furthermore that the idea of an intelligent designer is incompatible with the theory of evolution, which maintains that living systems have developed under the influence only of observable forces.

Comment [PD4]: don't need a new para here, as the topic/ideas are the same. suggest replacing this phrase by 'They claim that ...'

Most importantly, proponents of ID assert that ID is a scientific theory because it can be empirically verified. This is essential to their bid to have ID taught in science classes, commensurably with evolution.

Comment [PD5]: it could be .. developed only under OR influence of only observable ... Your placement is odd

Each of these claims is of course systematically refuted by critics of ID. The first claim is countered by noting that complexity in no way makes it necessary to invoke an intelligent designer. For, even if existing non-ID theories of the origin of life do not adequately explain the complexity of living things, it does not follow that no non-ID theory ever will.

Comment [PD6]: Again no new para - one sentence paras should be used only in exceptional circumstances, to give emphasis. excellent summary of ID

Comment [PD7]: omit - why 'of course'?+

Comment [PD8]: I prefer 'does not make it ...' But I am a bit old-fashioned. 'in no way' sounds too colloquial for a formal paper

In response to the second claim made above, opponents of ID maintain that a theory involving ID does not preclude a theory of evolution. This claim, they say, places ad hoc bounds of what an intelligent designer is capable of. Certainly, a sufficiently intelligent designer could arrange to have life develop via natural selection.

Comment [PD9]: omit - starting with Even still makes sense

The criticism that is meant to send ID furthest into disrepute holds that ID is not a scientific theory. Here, critics argue that there is no experiment that could discern something that has been designed intelligently from something that has not. This in turn is because ID proposes that everything has been designed intelligently. Any experiment

meant to test this proposition would, by definition, affirm it. Opponents to ID conclude that ID is not scientific because it is not testable, as any scientific theory must be.

Comment [PD10]: good paras, better joined into one

In conclusion, none of the central claims made by advocates of ID go without rebuttal from opponents of ID. To me, the status of ID as a scientific theory is dubious and so, I do not think that ID has any place in a science classroom.

However, I also think that it would be equally as unscientific not to consider scientific alternatives to the theory of evolution. My understanding of theories is that they are tentative propositions rather than facts and that they cannot in principle be proven. For this reason, I agree with the content of the Georgia state school board's sticker, which makes no mention of ID. The school board may do well to place similar stickers on science books of all sorts, if only to emphasize that science is dynamic and changes as does our understanding of nature.

Comment [PD11]: would ?

COMMENT: excellent essay, Jamin. Your writing is now elegant, readable, and succinct. Your quest for concision is going well! – I found only a few redundant words, and, at this level, the judgment is subjective. See my comments re length of paragraphs. Tony