Intelligent Design

What Is It Really All About?

and

Why Should You Care?

The theological nature of Intelligent Design

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May 4, 2005
1. Introduction and summary of the current situation

2. The national Intelligent Design Movement
   Goals
   Strategy

3. The theological argument about the nature of science

4. What’s wrong with ID’s theological argument?

5. Why should you care?

2. Kansas in 2004-2005: The Intelligent Design Movement
   a. Draft 2, written by the science writing committee
   b. The Intelligent Design Minority proposals
   c. The “science hearings”
The national Intelligent Design Movement

Their goal is to “overthrow materialism” (aka “philosophical naturalism”)

* Life is the product of “blind, material mechanisms”
* There is no God (nor other kind of spiritual reality)
* Human life is purposeless and without value

They believe that society has suffered “devastating cultural consequences” from adopting materialism.

The Wedge Strategy

1. They believe science is the cause of this decay into materialism.

2. Why? Because science seeks “natural explanations for what we observe in the world around us.” (Kansas Science Standards, Draft 2, 2005)

3. Therefore science is equivalent to materialism and hence atheism.

They are using an attack on science and science education as a Wedge to achieve their philosophical and theological goals.
Intelligent design and theology

From the Wedge Document:

“We are convinced that in order to defeat materialism, we must cut it off at its source. That source is scientific materialism. … Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.”

But is Intelligent Design really “consonant” with all Christians’ convictions?


See also “Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design”, by Barbara Forrest and Paul Gross. A history and analysis of the Wedge strategy and the Discovery Institute.
Many orthodox Christians accept science and evolution. *

They believe that God acts continuously through natural causes in ways that are beyond the comprehension of human beings.

They therefore accept science as a powerful, but limited, way of knowing about God’s creation.

They understand that science does not address questions of spiritual reality.

They don’t need to find specific scientific proof of God. All of nature is a testament to God’s continuous creative action.

But the Intelligent Design movement dismiss such people, accusing them of selling out to materialism.

Philip Johnson once said, "liberal Christians [theistic Christians] are worse than atheists because they hide their naturalism behind a veneer of religion." (University of Kansas, April 8, 2000)

William Dembski wrote,

“Design theorists are no friends of theistic evolution. As far as design theorists are concerned, theistic evolution is American evangelicalism's ill-conceived accommodation to Darwinism. What theistic evolution does is take the Darwinian picture of the biological world and baptize it, identifying this picture with the way God created life. When boiled down to its scientific content, theistic evolution is no different from atheistic evolution, accepting as it does only purposeless, naturalistic, material processes for the origin and development of life.” What every theologian should know about creation, evolution and design, William A. Dembski, Ph.D., 1995
The Intelligent Minority reports says, “Opponents seek to significantly limit the amount of scientific information” students have about “the origin of life and its diversity.” This is the “the core of the controversy between Proponents and Opponents”:

How? What is this “significant limitation”?

They write, “It [science which seeks natural explanations] requires that evidence and criticisms that challenge Darwinian evolution (the primary theory that supports the philosophy of Naturalism) not be permitted.” (p3)

What are the consequences of this, according to the Intelligent Design advocates?

They write, “It is reasonable to expect that this b” will cause students to conclude that “they, and all other human beings, are merely natural occurrences, accidents of nature that lack intrinsic purpose.” (p3).

Also, “This can be reasonably expected to lead one to believe in the naturalistic philosophy that life and its diversity is the result of an unguided, purposeless natural process,” and as we all know,

“Naturalism is the fundamental tenet of non-theistic religions and belief systems like Secular Humanism, atheism, agnosticism and scientism.” (p6)
So what are they really saying?

They are saying that when students are taught science, they are being implicitly indoctrinated in non-theistic religious belief systems such as atheism, agnosticism, and secular humanism. They are being taught that there is no God, and that they are purposeless accidents.

John Calvert regularly calls this “state-sponsored naturalism.”

Therefore, in order to be “constitutionally neutral,” design (i.e., supernatural causation) needs to be included in science in order to balance atheistic evolution.

This is the core argument of the Intelligent Design proposal.

But this leaves out the theistic evolutionist - the person who believes that in matters of the physical world God acts through natural causes, and who accepts the conclusions of science as valid within its scope and limits.

The theistic evolutionists are lumped in with the secular humanists, atheists and agnostics. They have sold out to naturalism, despite their claims of being Christians.
Kansas Citizens for Science February 12, 2001

A Response to the Intelligent Design Network’s Proposals to Include “Intelligent Design” in the Kansas Science Standards

Draft 6 presents a religiously neutral science. It is ID that inserts theistic considerations into science. The IDnet places too great a value on scientific explanations as an ultimate arbiter of truth. They make the very mistake they claim others are making: trying to find empirical explanations for truths which must be reached in other than scientific ways. It is they who act like “philosophical Naturalists” as they seek to establish an empirical basis for all aspects of the world, including our beliefs about God and morality.
The Intelligent Design proposal seeks to elevate one theological position (God intervenes in evolution in empirically detectable ways,) over another theological position (God acts continuously through natural processes in ways that are beyond our scientific scrutiny,) as well as over many other religious perspectives.

This raises serious legal questions

- about the separation of church and state, and

- about the actions of the state Board in allowing the Intelligent Design Minority special privileges to present their views through the “science hearings”

The Intelligent Design movement has had no success in establishing any actual science concerning this “empirical evidence for design.” Doing an end-run around established procedures, they are now getting a government hand-out: special privileges, at tax-payer expense, to advance their theological views.
Why Should You Care?

Science - they want to include supernatural explanations

Theology - they want to advance a particular view of God over all other views

Education - they are using the educational system to advance their cause without following established processes

Political - they are using political means and political power to legislate scientific knowledge

Legal - in advancing one theology over another, they are violating the separation of church and state