

The irony of the proof for Intelligent Design Theory

Adherents of “Intelligent Design Theory” claim that it is legitimate science. They are correct in this claim, to the extent that if *properly* and *correctly* applied, “Intelligent Design Theory” can be very useful in explaining and understanding certain aspects of our surroundings.

The key is to apply “Intelligent Design Theory” only in cases where there exists observation and credible data which support the “Theory.”

To understand the proper application of “Intelligent Design Theory” we will begin by examining three types of replicators.

The first type of replicator to be examined is a biological replicator. Viruses are little packets of instructions for taking over the chemical factories which we call cells. Once the chemical factory is hijacked then all the chemical machinery is put to work making copies of the virus which will be released to hijack additional chemical factories. Viruses evolve according to simple rules of evolution. The viruses which are best at getting copied will be better represented in each subsequent generation.

The next type of replicator to be examined is a computer-based replicator. Computer viruses are little packets of instructions for taking over the data processors which we call computers. Once the computer is hijacked then all the data processing machinery is put to work making copies of the virus which will be released to hijack additional computers. Computer viruses evolve according to simple rules of evolution. The computer viruses which are best at getting copied will be better represented in each subsequent generation.

The last type of replicator to be examined is a cultural replicator. Religions are bundles of instructions for taking over the biological computers which we call minds. Once the biological computer is hijacked then all the mind's machinery is put to work attempting to copy the religion into as many additional minds as possible. Religions evolve according to simple rules of evolution - just like biological viruses and computer viruses. The religions which are best at getting copied will be better represented in each subsequent generation of the religion.

So the evolution of viruses, malicious computer software, and religions are at least somewhat analogous. There is one difference which is key to understanding the proper application of “Intelligent Design Theory”. That difference is the source of variation upon which “natural selection” acts. For our purposes the variation in biological replicators may be considered as random noise in the copying process. However, in the case of computer viruses and religion there are designers - sometimes very intelligent designers.

A designer of computer viruses has a motive. Sometimes the motive is mischief or the notoriety that comes with a successful exploit. Other times the motivation is financial

gain. These motivations drive the designers of computer viruses to create variations upon which “natural selection” can act. Early computer viruses were rather simple. But they have evolved as designers created new variations to thwart defenses deployed by computer owners. For example early viruses were easily detected because the virus programs were in memory and a virus detection scheme could simply search for known patterns. Virus designers then invented camouflage - so the next generation of computer viruses rearranged the parts of their program so that each instance of infection had a different pattern. More recent computer viruses have been designed to block access to antivirus resources and even directly attack antivirus software. The result has been an escalating arms race between the virus designers and providers of computer security products.

Like the designer of computer viruses, a designer of religion also has a motive. Often times the motivation is financial gain. Modern day televangelism and “mega-churches” are good examples of how persuading a large number of people to “tithe” can be very lucrative for the purveyor of religion. Other times it is laziness or lust for power over other people. The Catholic practice of “confession” surely gives priests power over people who have divulged their most intimate secrets. This is all likely to be traceable back to distant ancestors who figured out that managing superstition was a good specialty. The first purveyors of religion were likely motivated by a desire to receive a share of food and to benefit from the common protection - without having to labor or risk losing life or limb. Designers of religions have many other characteristics in common with the designers of computer viruses. For example, they are able to observe other people’s work and then incorporate the best ideas into their own exploits. Sometimes these exploits are highly successful - such as when Joseph Smith Jr. designed Mormonism for financial gain.

If one reduces “Intelligent Design Theory” to its essential elements then adherents are asking us to believe that a preexisting creative force has conjured stuff out of nothing. Now using that definition, look around and find some credible evidence of that having happened. There are no signs of intelligent design in the heavens. The Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence project hasn’t come up with anything to date. In fact, there is no observed evidence of any intelligent creative force other than the human mind. Thus, based on the evidence, “Intelligent Design Theory” can only be applied to stuff created by the human mind.

If one examines all the things created by the human mind - all the things in the petri dish of human culture - then religion should stand out for its virus-like behavior. Religion is different from other things in the Petri dish because its behavior is analogous to “The Selfish Gene”. Religion (a complex Thought Contagion) is “The Selfish Meme” evolving in the primordial soup of human culture.

One might consider fashion or other aspects of human culture to be “contagious” like religion - but there are critical differences. To understand the differences one need only consider the relative proportion of people “infected” with fashion who are determined to spread their fashion to others in comparison to the proportion of

people infected with religion who are determined to spread their religion to others. Fashion and religion are similar in that there are entire industries dedicated to spreading each. But if religion and fashion were really the same then we would see widespread pressure for women to pick one of a small number of designs and then wear that design every day. Or if fashion and religion were really the same then we should anticipate pressure on those women to constantly update their religion with the very latest trendy religion. We do not observe those patterns because religion is not really like fashion. Religion demands the equivalent of each woman wearing the same dress day after day - and conditioning her daughters to wear the same exact dress - and for this pattern to be enforced through the generations.

“Creationism” was designed as a defensive mechanism to protect religion from the teaching of legitimate science in the classroom. This is similar to the origin of the concept of “blasphemy.” The concept of “blasphemy” was obviously designed to protect religion from competing religions or other memes which threatened the dominant religion. This is essentially no different from inventing “proselyte” to identify and defend against invading “missionaries” and “evangelists” of a competing religion. The designers of “Creation Science” sought to neutralize the threat of legitimate science and hijack the process of teaching in order to bolster the dominant religion.

There was a predictable response when scientists and their supporters pushed back against “Creation Science”. This is analogous to the designers of computer viruses responding to some new defense deployed by computer owners. The designers of religion tried to camouflage “Creation Science” as “Sudden Appearance Theory” and “Intelligent Design Theory.”

Now that we know what “Intelligent Design Theory” really is then it logically follows that we know what it is not. It is a defense designed to protect religion. It may be incorporated into any number of religions as those religions are “improved” by their designers. If the “improved” religions are more successful at getting copied into additional minds then we will have observed evolution of religion. A defense mechanism is not science - so “Intelligent Design Theory” is not science. If “Intelligent Design Theory” were science then there would first have been some observed data or phenomena which needed an explanation. Then there would have been an “Intelligent Design Hypothesis.” The “Intelligent Design Hypothesis” would have been elevated to the status of “Intelligent Design Theory” only if it proved to be the best explanation for observed data. It has not. In fact there is no observed phenomena or data to support “Intelligent Design” - only a “Theory” with adherents desperately fabricating evidence in an attempt to protect their profitable enterprises.

Adherents of “Intelligent Design Theory” would like us to believe that it is a good substitute for the science of evolution. This is simply illogical considering how the science of evolution readily explains the origin of religion and the diversity of religion just as it readily as it (the science of evolution) explains the origin of life and the diversity of life. In comparison “Intelligent Design Theory” can't even explain all the

inconsistencies within religious texts. “Intelligent Design Theory” also fails to explain the inconsistencies between religious texts and the archeological record, the fossil record, and the geological record. “Intelligent Design Theory” is best understood as an example of syncretic evolution as well as being part of the diversity of religion. So it is ironic that the most appropriate applications of “Intelligent Design Theory” are to computer viruses, religion, and to “Intelligent Design Theory” itself as a special case of religion.