

# INTELLIGENT DESIGN IN NATURE: DELUSION OR DIVINE REVELATION?

Denis O. Lamoureux DDS PhD PhD

St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta

## Definition of Intelligent Design

Traditional belief that beauty, complexity & functionality in nature point toward an Intelligent Being/Creator.

*aka* the argument from design for God's existence

NOT to be confused with:

### Intelligent Design Movement/Theory

- Modern (1990s+) US evangelical anti-evolutionism

Phil Johnson, Mike Behe, Wm Dembski

- Claim ID is "scientifically detectable"

Irreducible Complexity:

Biological structures (eg, flagella) are so complex that they could not have evolved through natural processes.

- Divine interventions are needed in the origin of life over time (God-of-the-Gaps).
- Intelligent Design Theory should be termed: INTERVENTIONISTIC Design Theory

## Intelligent Design a Delusion

### Richard Dawkins

"The problem is that of complex design. The complexity of living organisms is matched by the elegant efficiency of the apparent design. If anyone doesn't agree that this amount of complex design cries out for an explanation, I give up."

*The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), xiii.

"Our world is dominated by feats of engineering and works of art. We are entirely accustomed to the idea that complex elegance is an indicator of premeditated, crafted design. This is probably the most powerful reason for the belief, held by the vast majority of people that have ever lived, in some kind of supernatural deity." *Ibid*, xvi.

"It is as if the human brain were specifically designed to misunderstand Darwinism and find it hard to believe." *Ibid*, xv.

"Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." *Ibid*, 6.

### Charles Darwin

"Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wondrous universe, including man with his capacity of looking backwards and far into futurity, as a result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist."

*Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (1876), 92-93.

"This conclusion was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the *Origin of Species*; and it is since that time that it has very gradually with many

fluctuations become weaker. But then arises the horrid doubt—can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animal, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?" *Ibid*, 93.

"The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic." *Ibid*, 94.

"I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind."

Letter to Fordyce (1879) *Life & Letters of Darwin* (1888), I:304.

"In the course of that conversation I said to Dr. Darwin, with reference to some of his own remarkable works on the 'Fertilization of Orchids' & upon 'Earthworms,' and various other observations he made of the wonderful contrivances for certain purposes in nature—I said it was impossible to look at these without seeing that they were the effect and the expression of mind. I shall never forget Mr. Darwin's answer. He looked at me very hard and said, 'Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times,' and he shook his head vaguely, adding, 'it seems to go away.'"

Duke of Argyll conversation in 1882. *Ibid*, I:316.

## Intelligent Design a Divine Revelation

### Definition of Divine Revelation:

- Traditional belief that God communicates with humanity

### Types of Divine Revelation

SPECIAL God's Words (Verbal)

Incarnation → The Word made flesh

Biblical Revelation

Personal Revelation (also non-verbal)

GENERAL God's Works (Non-Verbal)

Moral Revelation or Conscience

- Natural Revelation (*aka* Natural Theology) → ID

### Biblical Texts on Natural Revelation

- Active—nature impacts humanity
- Intelligible—non-verbal; *ie*, does not use words
- Incessant—experienced in every generation
- Universal—everyone aware of it → like music
- Divine—points to & reflects the mind of God
- Rejectable—humanity free to dismiss it
- Relational—to God → 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments
- Accountable—humanity responsible before God