

# Can Intelligent Design be considered a scientific theory?

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# Simple answer

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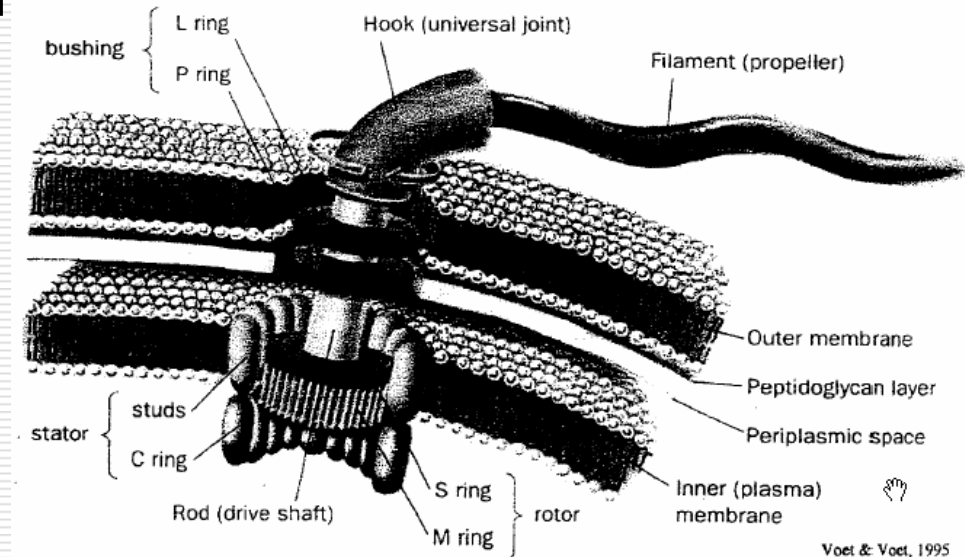
**NO**

- What is ID?
  - What is the problem?
  - Does ID claim to be scientific?
  - What are the arguments?
  - What is a (natural) scientific theory?
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# ID: a very short summary

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- Microbiology shows complex systems consisting of many separate parts delicately working together as a system
  - Bacterial flagellum



# ID: a very short summary

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- Microbiology shows complex systems consisting of many separate parts delicately working together as a system
    - Bacterial flagellum
  - These systems lose all function if any of the parts is removed
  - Therefore they cannot evolve gradually, in small steps
    - Irreducible complexity
  - By analogy, these systems seem to be designed
  - Not necessarily every complex system
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# Some problems I have with ID

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- Darwinism unable to explain origin of complexity... Ok, but what does ID add?
  - Design conclusion based on what?
    - Internal vs external final cause
  - Who is the designer?
    - Aliens?
    - God (of the gaps)?
      - Breaking laws of nature
        - Primary causality
      - Using freedom in QM
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# What is a God of the gaps?

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- There is something we do not understand/cannot explain, so we attribute it to God
    - Thunder and lightning
    - Stable planetary orbits
    - Complexity in biochemical systems?
  - Once science “fills the gap” by explaining the phenomenon, God is no longer needed
    - Often interpreted as “proof” against existence of God
  - Difference between understanding/explaining in QM important
    - “Unfillable” gap
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# Does ID claim to be a scientific theory?

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- ...ID has no theory of the origin of species...because ID has no *scientific theory* (yet)...ID does not pretend to have an answer
    - Juleon Schins
  - ID is a “theory” because... it is a proposed explanation for a set of facts. It is a “*scientific theory*” because... it is based entirely on empirical, observable facts about biology plus logical inferences
    - Michael Behe
  - ...intelligent design is not a religious-based idea, but instead an evidence-based *scientific theory* about life's origins...
    - Stephen C. Meyer, Discovery Institute
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# Proponents vs. opponents

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- Argument from imperfection
    - A designer would have made the design “as good as possible”
      - Example: wiring of the human eye
    - Answer: we don't know the objectives of the designer (and no proof for Darwinistic view)
  - Acceptance by scientific community/peer reviewed articles
    - Questionable
      - ID has published?
      - Scientific world conservative
  - Falsifiability
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# Proponents vs. opponents

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- Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District
    - School board decided to present ID as alternative to evolution
    - Lawsuit arguing many pros and cons
    - Scientists from both sides as expert witnesses
      - Long written reports constituting testimony
    - Important argument: Is ID a scientific theory
      - Behe argues very strongly in favour
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# Proponents vs. opponents

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## □ Kenneth R. Miller

- ID is anti-evolution
    - Only one particular aspect
  - Bacterial flagellum already explained:  
other (slightly simpler) system with  
other function: acting as protein pump
    - Not against ID claims that system would  
lose its function if any of the parts is  
removed
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# Proponents vs. opponents

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## □ Kevin Padian

- Very passionate to discredit “IDC”
  - “Irreducible complexity is a very old idea ... if you discover a structure or function that is too complex for you imagination to conceive that it could have been assembled piece by piece, then it must have been created, presumably by a supernatural force”
  - Etc
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# What is (natural) science?

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## Behe:

- Theory: "analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another"
- Scientific theory: "constructed solely on the foundation of empirical facts about the natural world and logical inferences"
  - Even Astrology is science

## Bakker:

- Describing the natural world and relations between its entities (preferably quantitatively)
    - Supernatural by definition excluded
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# Conclusion

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- Irreducible complexity may or may not hold as an argument against evolution
    - For the moment, neither ID nor ND gives a satisfactory explanation
  - ID can give rise to a scientific program about the origin of (irreducible) complexity
    - Does not need the notion of design for that from a scientific point of view
  - Both sides need to descend from their (self-built) throne and start a discussion about the real issues
  - Neither should make claims (positive or negative) about supernatural entities while at the same time claiming to be scientific
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