

Peer Review:

Is intelligent design even a worthwhile consideration in the debate on the origin of species?

SUMMARY

After reading your essay, I arrived at the summary below. I put it down so that you can see if your writing achieves what you have intended.

Thesis: Intelligent design is not a worthwhile consideration in the debate on the origin of species.

Introduction: Reactions to the intelligent design argument is opinion sought: irreducible complexity is untreatable. The primary reasons to reject it as a valid scientific theory are: a) its theological components; b) its evidence, methodology and rhetoric.

Argument:

- “Mouse trap” analogy
 - a) Evolution is not only “adding” or “complicating” features; it is also capable of simplifying traits;
 - b) Keith Robison’s example of stables undermines the irreducible complexity of a mouse trap;
 - c) No law requires “a system to be functional at every stage of development;”
- Kitzmiller vs. Dover case
 - a) Behe: “systems that cannot be proven to have developed through evolution and appear to be too complicated to have developed slowly must have been from the product of an intelligent designer;”
 - b) Behe’s statement in Dover’s case that scientific statements have to rely on physical evidence and that they have to be backed up by studies are contradictory to the reasoning that justifies ID;
- Relation between evolution and ID
 - a) Some of Behe’s statements show that he does not attempt to “loosen the control Darwinian thinking has over the argument for the origin of life;”
 - b) Investigating the conditions under which ID could occur → it could only be a supernatural being → God of the gaps best labels this type of thinking;
 - c) Some scientific evidence that Behe fails to acknowledge is in favor of gradualism, while Behe’s argument rests on untestable examples of irreducible complexity;

Conclusion: Intelligent design is unscientific and might be potentially harmful to the society.

STYLE & STRUCTURE

Your language is very clear and straightforward. Sentence structures are diverse, which

makes the essay very accessible. You have a very nice balance between concrete examples and supporting reasoning. Whenever a point is made, associated examples are presented in a concise way that would help reader understand your argument. Each paragraph begins with a good introduction that gives reader general information without losing reader's interests and ends with a conclusion that naturally blends into the next paragraph. Over all, great job!

However, there are a few grammatical mistakes that can be avoided (detailed in the next section). In rare cases, you wrote very long sentences with multiple clauses. For example, the last sentence in the fourth paragraph, its structure makes it difficult to grasp your central idea.

Your first paragraph is too long and complicated. It tries to give the whole picture; as a result you included a little bit too much reasoning in the introduction that it intimidates the readers. The introduction should be a brief summarization of your essay and is not necessarily inclusive. After reading it, the readers should have a general idea on what to expect, and at the same time leaving room for questions that would keep them curious and interested while reading the following parts. I understand that it is very difficult to summarize your multi-layers argument, but explanatory parts like "irreducible complexity cannot be proved or disproved... to observe the hypothesis" can be chopped out from the intro and form a new paragraph that serves to define concepts and illustrate the logical deduction.

Individual parts of your argument are very well organized and easy to follow, and the structural transition from one part to the next is clear and direct. It would also be helpful if (for example in the first paragraph) you can explicitly clarify the overall flow of your essay.

THESIS & ARGUMENT

You made your thesis clear at the beginning of your essay. Whether intelligent design is a worthwhile consideration in the origin of species debate is a very interesting topic to investigate. Your argument focuses tightly around this thesis and expands in multiple dimensions: you explored different responses from scientific community and properly utilized them to support your argument; you researched on corresponding fields in science and gave evidence from other sources; you not only listed your research results, but also presented consistent reasoning. Overall the essay is well constructed.

However, there are some minor drawbacks in your essay that could be improved. First, the structure within the first paragraph is not very lucid. Towards the end of it, you wrote "because he relied on analogies that can be made ambiguous, ignored examples of possible intelligent design that have been tested and fallen under evolution, gave too much ground to Darwinian thinking and used argument techniques that previously he had called out when used for evolution," and this sentence baffled me for very long. The structure of the parallel reasons is too complicated and the language is ambiguous; please try to simplify each component.

The second paragraph tries to convey a lot of ideas. Although they are inherently related, it is very easy to get lost when they are all piled into one big chunk. Try splitting them into two paragraphs or put in additional transition signals to help your readers navigate.

There are many modifiers, some very ambiguous like “seem” or “seemingly,” through your essay. The argument would be strengthened if you delete them or change them into more definite words. Since you are making an argument you do not want to sound unconfident. Also, avoid using “you” in an academic paper.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

This part mainly focuses on parts that need improvement. There are lots of merits that I cannot present due to limited space.

Introduction

- “Michael Behe’s *Darwin’s Black Box* has been labeled as the most successful literary demonstration of this alternative hypothesis” – You did not give the source of this comment so I suppose it comes from the back of the book. Although it reflects certain merits, because of its commercial nature, the praise on a book usually has little value in establishing academic credentials. Cite more authoritative sources.
- “The scientific community simply... when used for evolution” – As mentioned above, the structure of this sentence is not the most ideal. Certain parts, such as “gave too much ground to Darwinian thinking,” and “used argument techniques that previously he had called out when used for evolution,” are a bit awkward in wording and leaves ambiguities that baffle reader. (What are the techniques?) Try to use simpler words in the intro and then expand them later so it won’t seem so wordy.
- “There is no hope for a successful movement to overthrow Darwinian evolution” – First, Behe never intends to overthrow Darwinism. Rather, he claims ID as an addition or an alternative to it. Second, it would make more sense to say, “then there is no hope for this movement to successfully overthrow Darwinian evolution.”

Body

- Para 2 “Function ability” – How about “functionality”?
- Para 2 “Keith Robison’s reference” – Behe did not rule out the impact of evolution, and he agreed that designed features can later be influenced by evolution? Is there a counterargument towards this point?
- Para 2 “Function able” – “Functional”?
- Para 2 “The evidence used to support the claims you make should not...” – avoid using “you” in an argument.
- Para 3 “Behe’s major focus in his arguments is systems that...” – Do not omit “that” in the clause in a piece of formal writing. You might also want to change second “that” into “which” just to make it sounds better.
- Para 3 “They have to be backed up by studies.” – “Backed up with.”
- Para 3 “It seems more...” – Be more confident in your statement!
- Para 4 “He needs to find a suitable and believable method...” – “Believable” here

seems a little bit strange. May be “credible” or “reliable”?

- Para 4 “Behe is completely behind the hypothesis of a common ancestor” – “Behind” is not the best word choice here.
- Para 4 “Evolution cannot explain... disprove Behe’s claim of intelligent design” – This is a run-on sentence and it is too long. Could you restructure it?
- Para 5 “Science has had a habit of disproving religious theories.” – ID is not necessarily a religious theory. Is there a better word to categorize?
- Para 5 “If any one of its parts are taken away” – The verb should be “is.”

Conclusion

- “Despite this theory, ...” – it makes more sense to start with “despite the fundamental flaws in...”
- “Until there is testable and repeatable observations to couple the theory than it should be kept out of emotionally charged books.” – “Than” → “,” would be more accurate.