What’s Wrong With Evolution?

The proponents of intelligent design do not claim to have a coherent scientific theory about how life actually changed over time on earth. They offer arguments about what evolution could not do, and then conclude that a designer is the best hypothesis.

Irreducible Complexity

THE CRITICISM  The parts of a mousetrap do not catch mice unless they are put together. Much of the biological machinery in cells, like the motor-driven tails, or flagella, at the back of the bacterium Helicobacter pylori (below) and other bacteria, is similarly complex. Taking away one piece breaks the machine. Because evolution makes slow, incremental improvements, it would not have produced all these separate pieces that would have had no use until they were assembled into the final, working mechanism.

THE RESPONSE  Evolutionary biologists agree that evolution would never have produced the biological structures all at once. Rather, what likely happened is that evolution borrowed existing structures for new purposes, like taking the spring of a clothes pin for use in a mousetrap. For example, there exists a microsyringe inside some bacteria that consists of about 10 of the proteins found in the flagellum.
The Pace of Change

THE CRITICISM  Since natural selection deals with small changes in DNA, which in turn alter proteins the cell produces, it cannot create fundamentally new body shapes and new forms of life, as occurred during the Cambrian explosion a half a billion years ago, or during the rise of mammals after dinosaurs went extinct about 65 million years ago. The trilobite fossil, below, lived half a billion years ago in what is now Wales. The crablike trilobite, which lived on the ocean floor, is one of the major groups of advanced animals that appeared suddenly in the Cambrian.

![Trilobite fossil](image)

David L. Meyer

THE RESPONSE  Some very powerful genes control what other genes do. These control genes switch on and off early in the life of embryos and mutations in these genes can make major changes, giving rise to new animal species. More and more fossils from the era leading up to the Cambrian are being discovered and studied, and other evidence shows that Earth's environment might have been undergoing major changes, like a rise in oxygen levels, that for the first time made more complex life possible. Further, the changes leading up to the Cambrian may have taken up to 100 million years.

Information Theory

THE CRITICISM  Look at Mount Rushmore and you think that it must have been carved. Look at a cell and you should think it must have been designed. Scientists who won't consider this are doing the same thing as looking for erosion...
carved. Look at a cell and you should think it must have been designed. Scientists who won’t consider this are doing the same thing as looking for erosion and tectonic explanations for Mount Rushmore.

THE RESPONSE Mount Rushmore is an exception. It is the only place among all of earth’s mountains where the faces of four presidents appear. A cell that had the faces of four presidents on it, while other cells did not, would no doubt prompt scientists to look for a designer. But the point of science is to discover how natural processes work. Moreover, intelligent design theorists have failed to show calculations that can convincingly differentiate a designed object from a naturally occurring one.