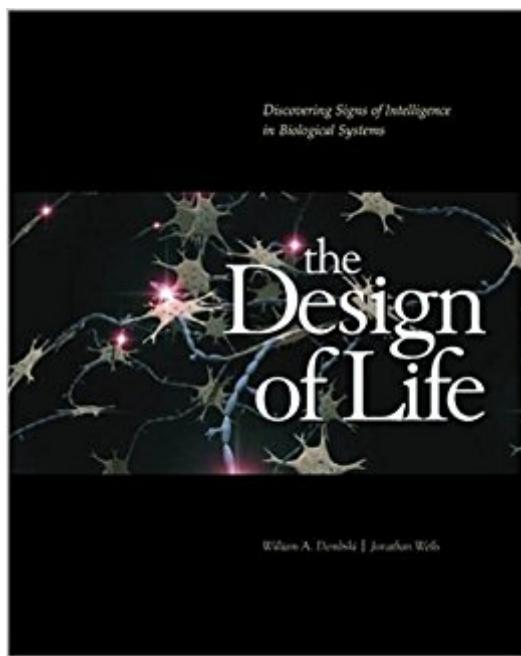


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# The Design Of Life: Discovering Signs Of Intelligence In Biological Systems



## Synopsis

The Design of Life, written by two leading intelligent design theorists, offers the clearest, most comprehensive treatment of intelligent design on the market, with answers to Darwinists' objections drawn unrelentingly from the recent science literature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Design of Life, which is both a sequel to Of Pandas and People (Second Edition, 1993), and a stand alone book in its own right, brilliantly lays out all the main lines of evidence and argument in the current dispute between the Darwinists and the growing body of Intelligent Design theorists. It not only updates the arguments presented in Pandas but explains the exciting developments in the new science of intelligent design that have occurred since the early 1990s. Dembski and Wells, who themselves are among the leading practitioners of the new science, write in a refreshingly carefully reasoned, lucid and direct style, pulling no punches when it comes to answering the criticisms of their leading Darwinist opponents including Richard Dawkins and Kenneth Miller, among many others. They make a formidable case that the indications of design seen everywhere in nature at all levels of organization (and acknowledged by the Darwinists) bespeak real and not just apparent design. Nowhere is this more evident than in the powerful new chapters on irreducible complexity (Chapter 6) building on the ground breaking work of Michael Behe in Darwin's Black Box, 1996, and specified complexity (Chapter 7) based on Dembski's many contributions to information theory as it relates to design (e.g., The Design Inference, 1998, and No Free Lunch, 2002). Each of the book's

eight chapters is thoroughly documented with many explanatory footnotes and references to the pertinent technical literature. These detailed notes as well as the supplemental General Notes contained on the accompanying CD provide interested laypersons, university students, and working scientists with a reliable guide to the highest levels of scientific discussion in the often contentious dispute between Darwinists and intelligent design proponents. Appended to each chapter is a list of 10 discussion questions keyed to the order of presentation of the topics in the chapter and to the General Notes. If I were still involved in university teaching I would enthusiastically adopt *The Design of Life* as a required text in courses in evolution and the origin of life and in graduate seminars on information theory and molecular biology, and use it as a supplement in introductory biology classes. Dembski and Wells argue calmly and convincingly that intelligent design theory is empirically testable (in spite of Darwinists' shrill protests to the contrary) by indicating precisely what it would take to refute the theory, namely a clear demonstration that systems exhibiting irreducible complexity with specified complexity can in fact arise spontaneously by purely material processes. Their discussion takes intelligent design theory far beyond what we were able to accomplish when we wrote *Pandas*. I salute Dembski and Wells for a most worthy addition to the already powerful case that intelligent design deserves a seat at the academic table in university biology courses and with all scientists working to unlock the mystery of life's origin. --Dean Kenyon, Emeritus Professor of Biology, San Francisco State University

When future intellectual historians list the books that toppled Darwin's theory, *THE DESIGN OF LIFE* will be at the top. --Michael Behe, biochemist, Lehigh University

*The Design of Life* gives all interested parties in the debate over biological origins the hard scientific evidence they need to assess the true state of Darwin's theory and of the theory of intelligent design. But it does much more: it carefully fosters the attitude of open inquiry that science needs not only to thrive but also to avoid becoming the plaything of special interests. The authors, William Dembski and Jonathan Wells, are to be commended for writing a sparklingly clear book that empowers readers to navigate the captivating and controversial waters of biological origins. --William Harris, biologist, University of South Dakota

"The illusion of purpose is so powerful," writes Richard Dawkins, "that biologists themselves use the assumption of good design as a working tool." As an ardent proponent of Darwinian evolution, Dawkins imagines that all design in biology is merely an illusion. By contrast, this book shows that biologists use the assumption of design with success precisely because design in biology is not an illusion but real. In this book, William Dembski and Jonathan Wells present a compelling scientific case for the intelligent design of biological systems. Their laser-like analysis, clear explanations, and

brilliant analogies will captivate every reader, whether trained scientist or curious layperson. Intelligent design (ID), as the study of patterns in nature best explained by intelligence, is already accepted in many special sciences. Archeology, forensics, and the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) all belong to ID in this broad sense. These sciences, however, are uncontroversial because any intelligence there could be an "evolved" intelligence. In biology, by contrast, intelligent design is highly controversial because any intelligence there would be an "unevolved" intelligence - it would not be the product of purely material evolutionary processes. Thus, to convinced materialists like Richard Dawkins, who dogmatically accept Darwinian orthodoxy, this book comes as a shot across the bow. Scientists who support the intelligent design of biological systems are routinely held up to ridicule, stripped of their status, denied tenure, and driven from their posts. Why? They do not agree that the universe, life, and the human mind are the accidental outworking of purely material forces. And why don't they agree? Because the evidence of science shows otherwise. This book presents that evidence clearly and cogently. Written for the general reader, it will quickly enter the national conversation. In *The Design of Life*, Dembski and Wells make the most powerful and comprehensive case to date for the intelligent design of life. This is the book that the promoters of unintelligent evolution do NOT want you to read.

Most books on the subject of evolution and intelligent design irritate people because they dive right into philosophical constructs, religion, theology, and immeasurable metaphysical arguments. This book does NOT. It is easy to read. It defines the arguments. Defines the terms. Provides the actual data and explains it. This book had received high praise from evolutionists and creationists alike and anyone that is remotely interested should read it.

Having read Pandas, I was looking for a follow up on ID for a better explanation. *The Design of Life*, though having different authors than Pandas, provides the information I was looking for. I don't know who has had the larger imput into this book, either Dembski or Wells, though I assume they are both in collaboration, I believe they are in agreement as to the books content. Dembski is a well known proponent of ID and has written other books along similar lines. The authors main contention is that Evolution is not the only mechanism for the existance of life forms here on earth. They believe that Darwinism has many flaws and is not reliable as an explanation of how life is propagated. They believe an Intelligent Agent (God) has created and directed life's origins and its diversification. They also believe that species cannot change or evolve into other species (Macro Evolution) and argue that man's earliest fossil ancestors were little more than apes and could not evolve into the humans

we are today. They argue on P.6 that "....there is no clear genealogical evidence demonstrating the evolution from Homo habilis into Homo erectus into Homo neanderthalensis into ourselves." Which indicates we were created like "poof" from and by Intelligent Design. They provide no proofs or evidence of this just pseudo-convincing rhetoric, which indicates their beliefs are of a strong religious nature. The authors claim there are "Gaps" in the fossil record which indicate that there are no transitional forms which connect the various species, however, they ignore the Tiktaalik discovered by Neil Shubin which is a transitional form linking fish to amphibians and down plays the archaeopteryx, claiming that is mostly a reptile with feathers and not really a transitional life form. The authors revisit the 1925 Scopes trial and claim the reason Creationists lost (P. 268) the court proceedings was that Clarence Darrow pulled a slick move which prevented pro-Darwinian science experts from being cross examined. decisionLosing other court battles, like the (P.274) 2005 Kitzmiller v. Dover decision, wherein the Judge, John E Jones concluded that the teaching of Intelligent Design in public school science curricula violates the Establishment Clause separating church and state and is therefore unconstitutional. Undeterred, proponents of Intelligent Design plan to continue their fight to introduce ID theology into the curricula of public schools as an alternative to the theory of Evolution. The biggest problem with this book, besides being incorrect, is that Evolution is a proven science with its tenets being backed up by many experiments by the many fields of science. The book down plays Darwin's theories and wrongfully portrays them as being "hotly contested" in intellectual circles by many scientists which is certainly untrue. Nearly every university trained scientist of its many fields strongly support Evolution as fact. To assume that God created everything by supernatural means is the fundamental error of this book and it fails to prove its point.

The book is well written. The authors demonstrate a breadth of knowledge in their respective fields. Any thinking person who truly wishes to know more about how a design approach to the study of life is the superior approach must read this book. Anyone opting for the traditional evolutionary approach to study would also benefit greatly from this book in that it should open up better, alternative ways of approaching the study of life.

Halfway through this book, I was thinking, "maybe three stars." I dropped by , and what did I find? Three stars was average -- apparently a lot of people agreed with me! But I looked closer, and laughed. Every single review was either five stars, or one! (Except for another "three star" reviewer -- and he hadn't read the book!) What a remarkable statistical fluke! (Heh, heh) Now, having read to the bitter end, I still think three stars is about right -- for reasons I'll give in due course. But first, stop

and survey this bizarre landscape: thirty five star reviews, thirty-three one star reviews. Zero four or two stars reviews. And now, a second three star -- by someone who has actually read the book! (Though I salute my contrarian predecessor!) I hope I'm not the only other person here with a sense of proportion, or who dislikes the smell of rat. But frankly, I find the inanity of many reviews on both sides (but especially the side with the most votes), and the open-armed welcome those who vote correctly receive, amusing but also repugnant. Someone says he hasn't read the book, but KNOWS ID is nonsense. He gets 216 out of 267 "helpful" votes -- about 80%! Someone else mocks the book with a five-star satire, and "only" gets 65% "helpful" votes. Does that mean 80% of "readers" here will vote for anything one star, but about a fifth are too stupid or too lazy to recognize a joke? Or did he get some "plus" votes from the smaller, pro-ID faction, and even more "minus" votes from the anti-ID faction? And here's another bizarre phenomena. Almost none of the critical reviews point to anything specific that Dembski and Wells get wrong. By my count, only two out of thirty four (including the satire) even try to point to any errors in this book. The rest mostly just mock Dembski and Wells, forecast the end of American civilization (the inimitable John Kwok, of course), and rake in "helpful" votes. If I'd lived in Stalin's Soviet Union, they might have had my head for laughing at phony voting. So I'll cheerfully take this opportunity to give the whole ernest crowd a belly laugh. What a herd of ninnies. Now for the book. It's actually a pretty good overview of the ID position, by and large. I was surprised to find it came in the form of a sort of textbook, with study questions at the end of each chapter -- I was hoping for something more on the order of original research and arguments. Strangely, though, at times the authors explain very elementary terms, then later will use several technical terms in short order, without explaining them. The book is well-illustrated. The chapter on the origin of life sets the issues out particularly well. I'm wary, though, of the post hoc view of chemical evolution (230) -- what's the chance of lucky combinations of amino acids forming a certain protein, for example. The real question is, what structures would they form, and would those structures prove useful? But the authors make some good points about chemical barriers to biogenesis. As reflected by the reviews, it seems to me the authors often take positions that are too argumentative. "Analyzing existing species to support one or another theory of speciation, however, is not the same as observing speciation in action." (98) Of course not, but come on -- you can't just ignore the similarities. "The fossil record doesn't support the Darwinian claim that the major taxonomic groups are connected to one another by biological descent." Doesn't support at all? Such a sweeping generalization strikes me as folly. Or have they found a rabbit in the Cambrian? I'm also tired of the ID argument that similarity in living things could be explained just as well by a common designer as by a common ancestry (140); this seems terribly ad hoc to me. God could just as well

be entirely original with each new species. The authors say evolutionists engage in circular reasoning when they use homologies for both "defining and explaining common ancestry." (126) They don't consider what might be the best resolution: to recognize that there are two sources of homology -- environmental or adaptive, and ancestral -- to discount the first and THEN use remaining homologies as evidence for common ancestry. The arguments against mutations as a mechanism for NDE seem more convincing to me. I've studied some of the evidence, then begged NDE proponents for instances of mutations that produce helpful biological innovations -- without much result. Finally, the "monkeys typing" analogy is getting tedious: could both sides come up with something new, please? We all know monkeys have no interest in Shakespeare. Couldn't someone ask them to type, say, the screen play for King Kong vs. Godzilla? No, it's not such a terrible book. A pox on both houses, though. Be honest, reviewers. Read the book you claim to be reviewing. Really read it, with an open mind, before you tell us what you think -- that's something you do with that grey stuff inside your skull. And enough of this black-and-white, doomsday, Hatfield vs. McCoy, "I ain't read it yet but I KNOW it's from the devil" nonsense. The world won't end if you think for yourselves, folks: this isn't supposed to be Joseph Stalin's Russia. And your "vote" means nothing at all: what you're really voting for (or against) is your own integrity. Does that mean so little to some of you folk?

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