

## INTRODUCTION

This issue focuses on some currently highly popular versions of the argument from design for the existence of God, often known as the *fine-tuning* and *irreducible complexity* arguments. These teleological arguments are extremely controversial, and the debate surrounding them (particularly the intelligent design argument) is often heated.

The fine-tuning argument begins with the claim that if the universe had been set up only slightly differently, then intelligent, conscious beings could never have evolved. Had the laws of nature been only a little different, for example, then the universe would have either ended only moments after it had begun or else it would have dissipated into a thin sterile soup. It's then argued that, given the improbability that the universe should have been set up this way purely by chance, the only half plausible account of this 'fine-tuning' is that someone or something *deliberately* arranged things just so. Some sort of *intelligence* was involved. This intelligence is God.

The argument from irreducible complexity begins with the claim that there are *irreducibly complex* systems in nature. An irreducibly complex system is a complex system in which each part is vital if the system is to work at all. The mousetrap, for example, is clearly irreducibly complex — remove any one part (the spring, say, or the cheese) and the whole thing fails to function. It's claimed that certain features of living organism, such as the bacterial flagellum, a sort of whip-like system utilized by bacteria to propel themselves along, is also irreducibly complex. And this irreducible complexity, it's claimed, cannot be accounted for by Darwinian natural selection. An irreducibly complex system cannot evolve gradually, in the way Darwin envisaged, by nature selecting those random mutations that bestow some survival or other reproductive advantage on the organism, thereby gradually shaping the organism to fit its environment. For there's no advantage to the organism in having only *part* of the system. It's all or nothing. The entire system must appear *all in one go* if it's to have any adaptive value. But that such a complex system should spring into exist-

ence by some single chance mutation is deeply implausible. It's much more plausible that some sort of intelligence was involved in its production. That intelligence is God. It used to be said that only God can make a tree. Now it's suggested that only God can make a bacterial flagellum. I recommend Michael Ruse's article as an introduction to the whole 'intelligent design' debate.

Also in this issue, three articles respond to Michael Levin's provocative piece in *Think* 10, in which he argued both that homosexuality is abnormal and that there might be nothing wrong with discriminating against homosexuals.

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