

Evolution or Design ...

Does Science Provide
Evidence for a Designer?

William A. Dembski

Discovery Institute, Seattle
Evolutionary Informatics Lab, Waco

American Museum of Natural History



AMNH Debate Invitation

Date: Wed, 31 Oct 2001 16:30:21 -0500
To: "William A. Dembski" <dembski@discovery.org>
From: Nathaniel Johnson <natj@amnh.org>
Subject: "Blind Evolution or Intelligent Design?"

Dear Dr. Dembski:

I would like to invite you to participate in an upcoming panel discussion at the Museum, "Blind Evolution or Intelligent Design? A Debate on Evolution," from 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Tuesday, March 12, 2002. This program is co-presented with Natural History Magazine, which as you know will publish a series of articles on the topic, in the March issue.

We would like you to discuss the concept of "the design inference" as part of this panel. Dr. Michael Behe, Lehigh University and Dr. Robert T. Pennock, Michigan State University have been invited to be a part of the panel. The panel will occur in our Kaufmann Theater at the Museum. Richard Milner, of Natural History has recommended you as a person who could best communicate this idea to our lay adult audience. They are generally well informed and include many people from the professional and non-academic community.

Niles Eldredge, curator in the Division of Paleontology will be moderating the discussion.

We would be able to provide you with round trip travel and overnight hotel accommodations and a modest per diem.

If you agree to participate, I can be reached by telephone (212) 769-5176,
Fax (212) 769-5329 or email natj@amnh.org.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Johnson, Jr.
American Museum of Natural History
Education Department
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024
Tel: (212) 769-5176; Fax: (212) 769-5329
E-mail: natj@amnh.org

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AMNH Debate PROGRAM

“Evolution or Intelligent Design?”

The Consensus in Biology?

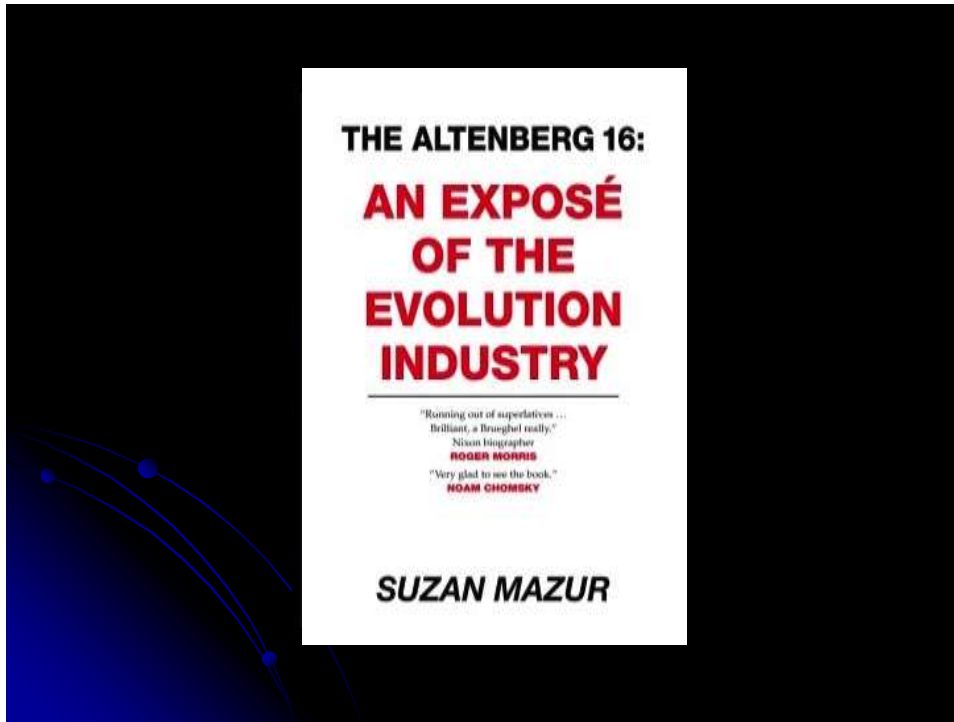
“No one, and I mean *no one*, working in the field is debating whether **natural selection is the driving force behind evolution**, much less whether evolution happened or not.”

— Michael Shermer
WPBWT, 1997

The Majority Position in Biology

Biologists now tend to believe profoundly that **natural selection is the invisible hand that crafts well-wrought forms**. It may be an overstatement to claim that biologists view selection as the sole source of order in biology, but not by much. If current biology has a central canon, you have now heard it.

— Stuart Kauffman, *AHITU*, 1995



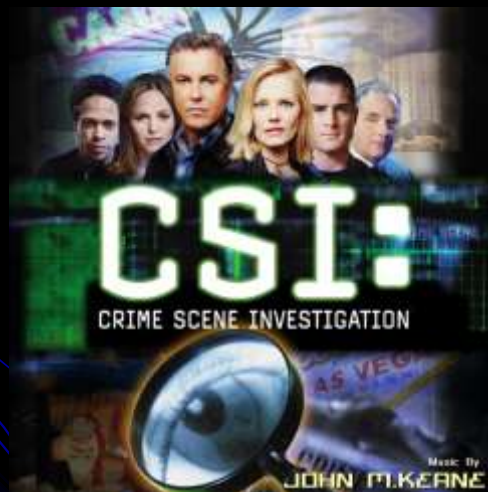
What Is Intelligent Design?

Intelligent design is the study of patterns in nature that are best explained as the product of intelligence.

Example 1: Forensic Science



Example 1: Forensic Science



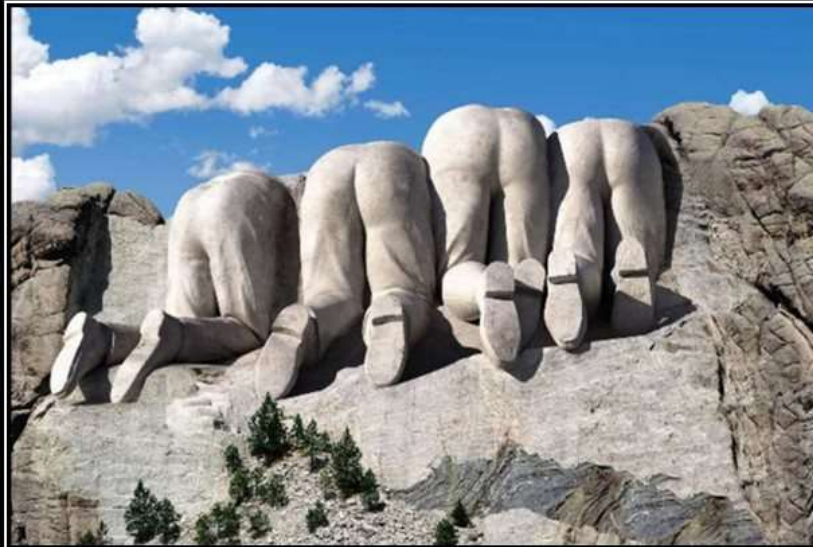
Example 2: SETI



Example 3: Archeology



Example 3: Archeology

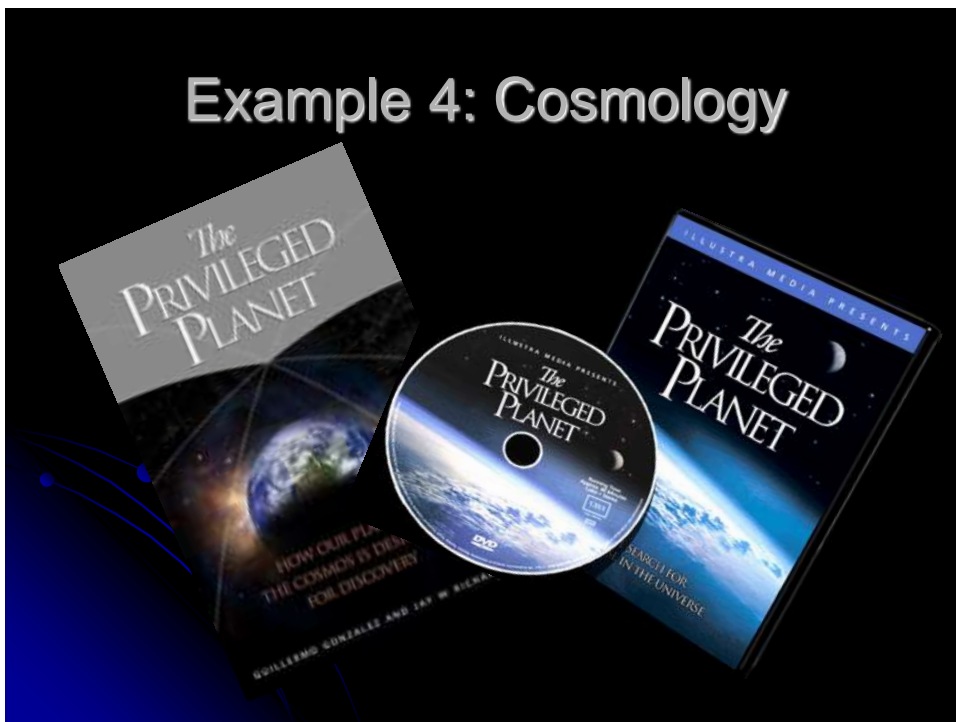


MT. RUSHMORE

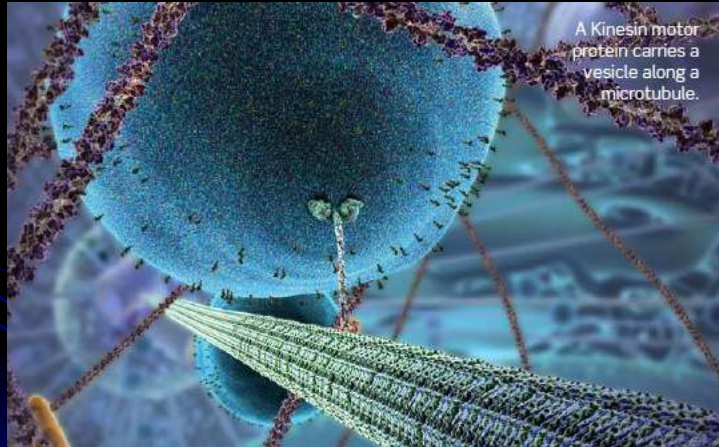
The backside



Example 4: Cosmology



Example 5: Biology



Example 5: Biology

But Is Design in Biology Real?

- “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.”
—Richard Dawkins
- “Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.”
—Francis Crick

But Is Design in Biology Real?

“The illusion of purpose is so powerful that biologists themselves use the assumption of good design as a working tool.”

—Richard Dawkins (ROOE, 1995, p. 98)

But Is Design in Biology Real?

Molecular biologists have themselves needed to introduce the language of high-tech engineering to describe the systems they are seeing:

- information storage, retrieval, and processing (genetic code)
- signal transduction circuitry
- high-efficiency nano-engineered motors
- automated parcel addressing (UPS labels / zip codes)
- transportation, distribution, and communication systems
- complex monitoring, error correction, and feedback mechanisms
- self-replicating robotic manufacture

But Is Design in Biology Real?

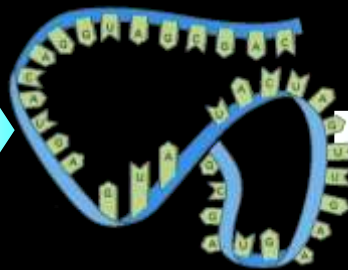
“Apart from differences in jargon, the pages of a molecular-biology journal might be interchanged with those of a computer-engineering journal.”

–Richard Dawkins (ROOE, 1995, p. 17)

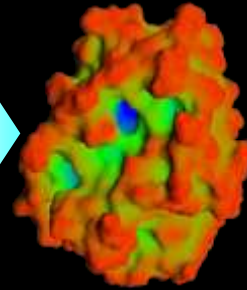
THE GENETIC CODE



DNA
(Gene)



mRNA
(Gene message)

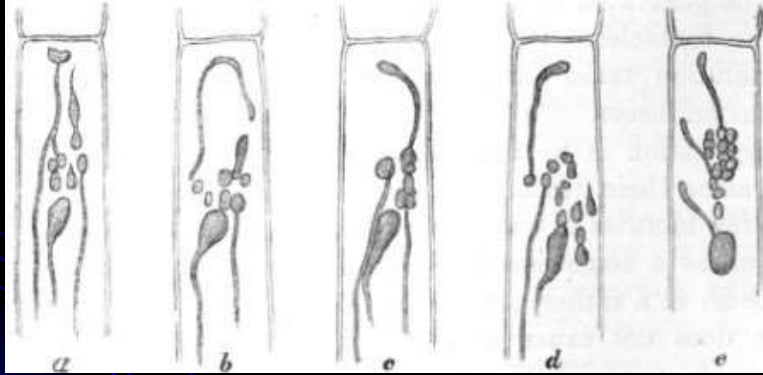


Protein
(Gene product)

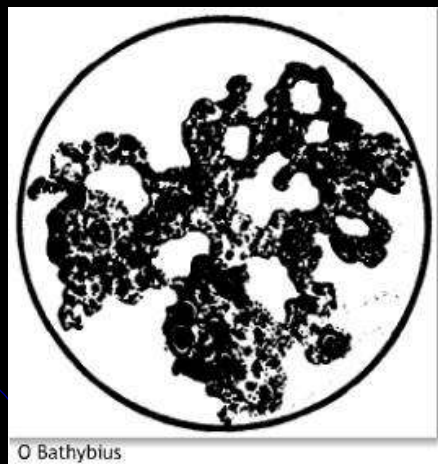
The origin of life itself...
eh, it's not really my bag.
The origin of species is where it's at!



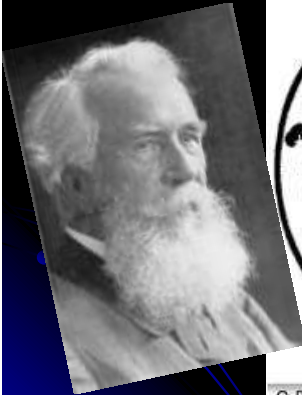
The Cell in Darwin's Day



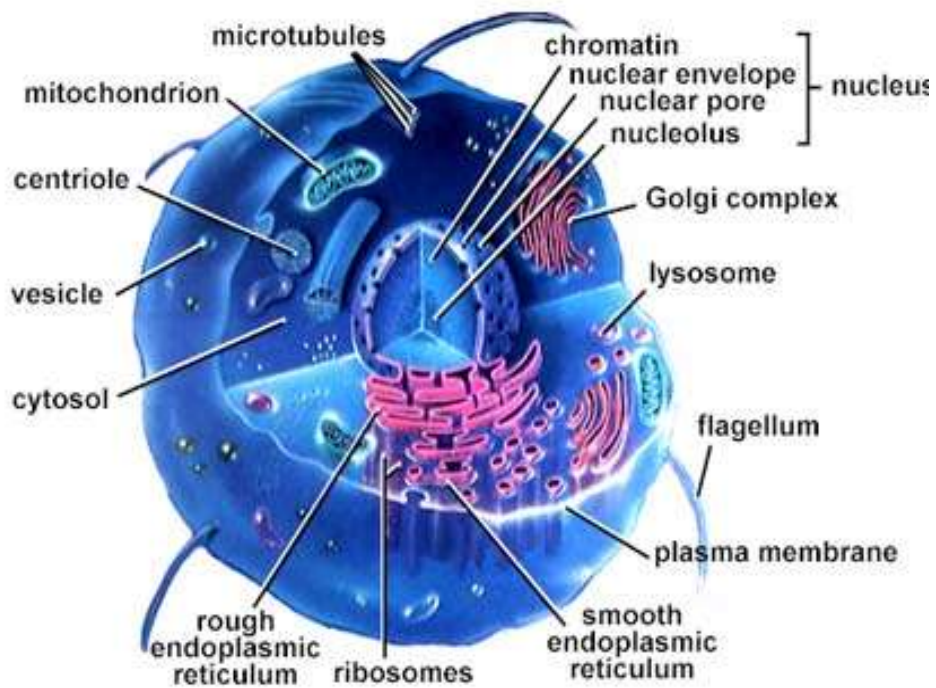
The Proto-Cell in Darwin's Day

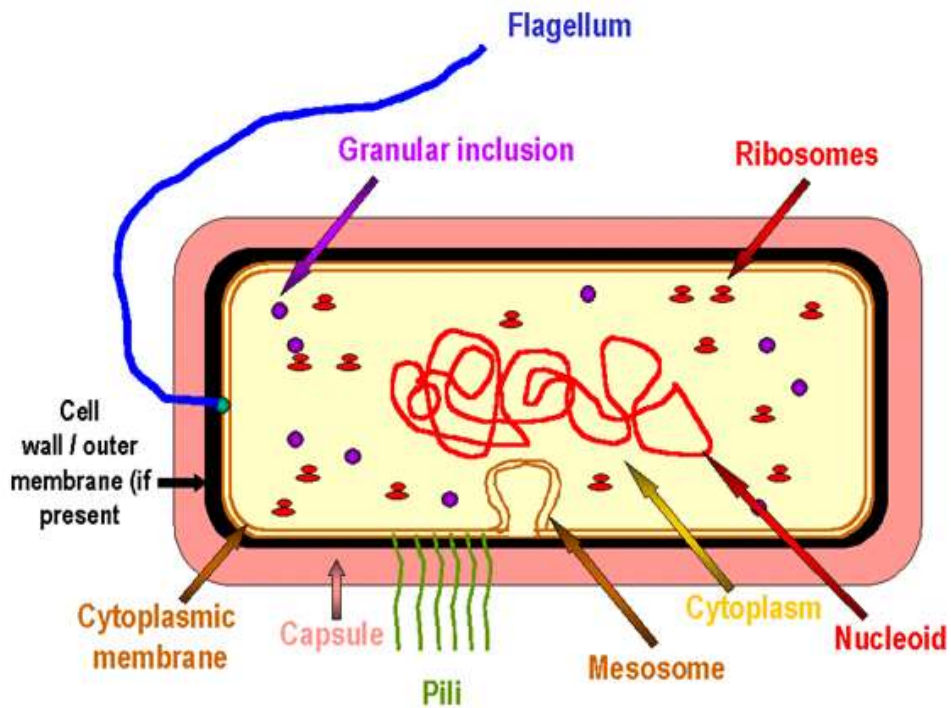
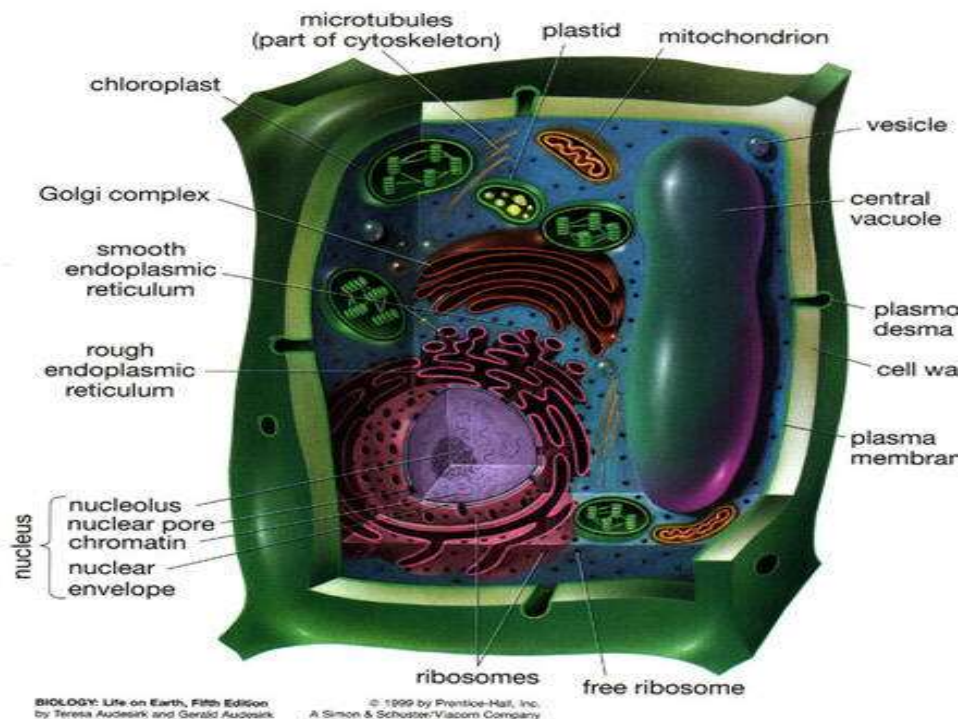


Bathybius haeckeli



O Bathybius





Cell Phone vs. Laptop Computer



The Collapse of Darwinian Explanations

There are presently no detailed Darwinian accounts of the evolution of any biochemical or cellular system, only a variety of wishful speculations.

– Franklin Harold
The Way of the Cell
[OxfordUP 2001]

The Collapse of Darwinian Explanations

There are no detailed Darwinian accounts for the evolution of any fundamental biochemical or cellular system, only a variety of wishful speculations. It is remarkable that Darwinism is accepted as a satisfactory explanation for such a vast subject — evolution — with so little rigorous examination of how well its basic theses work in illuminating specific instances of biological adaptation or diversity.

– James Shapiro, 1996
Review of *DBB*

The Collapse of Darwinian Explanations

Anyone who tells you that he or she knows how life started on the earth some 3.45 billion years ago is a fool or a knave. Nobody knows.

– Stuart Kauffman, 1995

The Collapse of Darwinian Explanations

Anybody who thinks they know the solution to this problem of the origin of life is deluded.

– Leslie Orgel, 2004

The Collapse of Darwinian Explanations

No serious scientist would currently claim that a naturalistic explanation for the origin of life is at hand.

– Francis Collins, 2006

The Failed Challenge of Biological Evolution to Intelligent Design

Premise 1: If unguided evolutionary mechanisms adequately explain biological complexity and diversity, then intelligent design is superfluous.

~~Premise 2: Unguided evolutionary mechanisms adequately explain biology complexity and diversity.~~

~~Conclusion: Therefore, intelligent design is superfluous.~~

The Received Wisdom

By attributing the diversity of life to **natural causes** rather than to **supernatural creation**, Darwin gave biology a **sound scientific basis**.

— Campbell's BIOLOGY, 5th ed.

The Received Wisdom

He [Darwin] dismissed it [design] not because it was an incorrect scientific explanation, but because it was **not a proper scientific explanation** at all.

— David Hull

The Received Wisdom

Intelligent design is not science because it **cannot be science**.

Design Theorist?

A photograph of a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, sitting in a chair. He is looking slightly to his left with a thoughtful expression. Behind him is a bookshelf filled with books and a framed picture of a person's face.

BEN STEIN'S EXPELLED

Ben Stein

EXPELLED

No Intelligence Allowed

Big science
is kicking smart new ideas
out of school

What they forget is that
every generation has its **rebels**

In Theaters February 2008

Starring Ben Stein

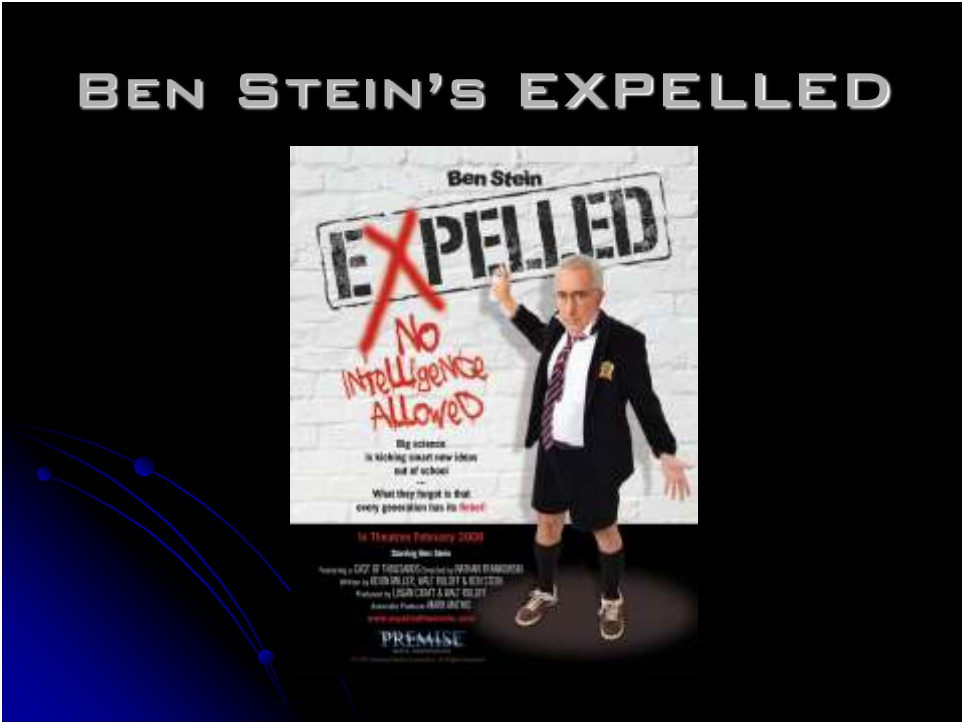
Featuring a CAST OF THOUGHTLEADERS OPPOSED TO THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION
presented by KEVIN B. LITZ, BRIAN PILLEY & JEFFREY H. HARRIS

Produced by LEON CANT & MAT JULY

Associate Producer: RABBI JACOB WEISS

www.expelledthemovie.com

PREMIERE
A FILM BY LEON CANT & MAT JULY



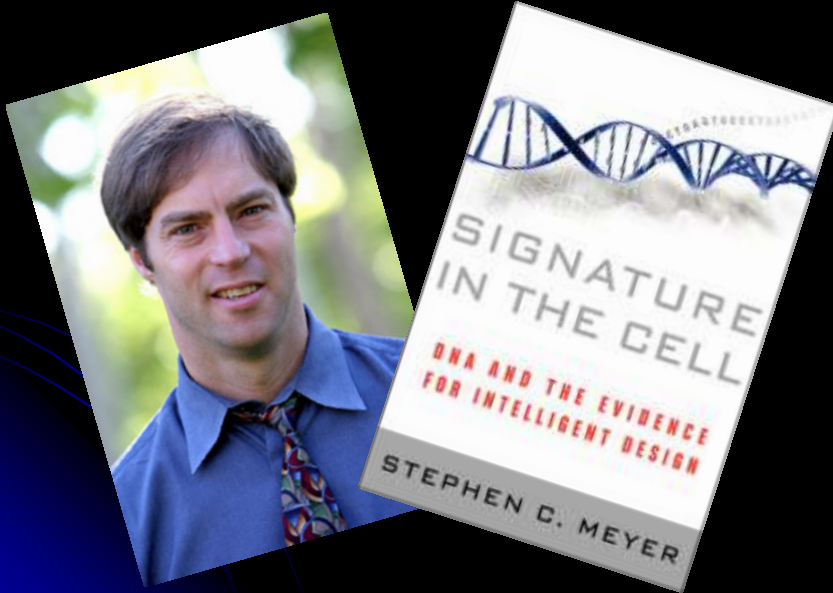
Intelligent design okay as long as ...



... the designer isn't God.



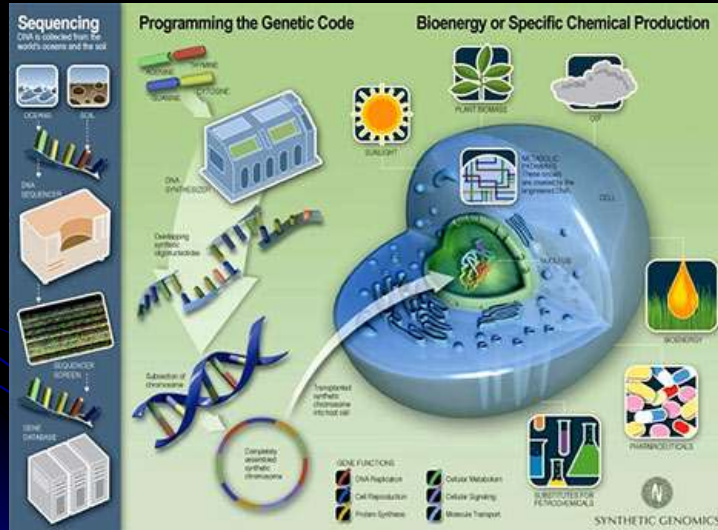
Signature in the Cell



Craig Venter



Venter's Synthetic Genomics



Venter's DNA "Watermarks"

The five coded messages embedded in the first synthetic genome :

VENTERINSTITVTE
CRAIGVENTER
HAMSMITH
CINDIANDCLYDE
GLASSANDCLYDE

-Wired, 28jan08

How Do We Detect Design?

SETI: The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence

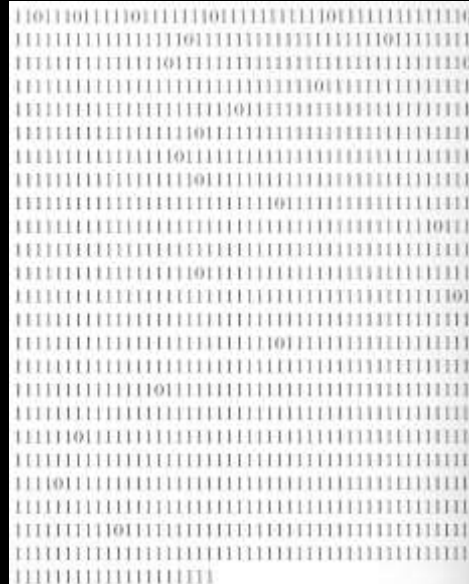




What persuaded the scientists that they had found an extra-terrestrial intelligence?

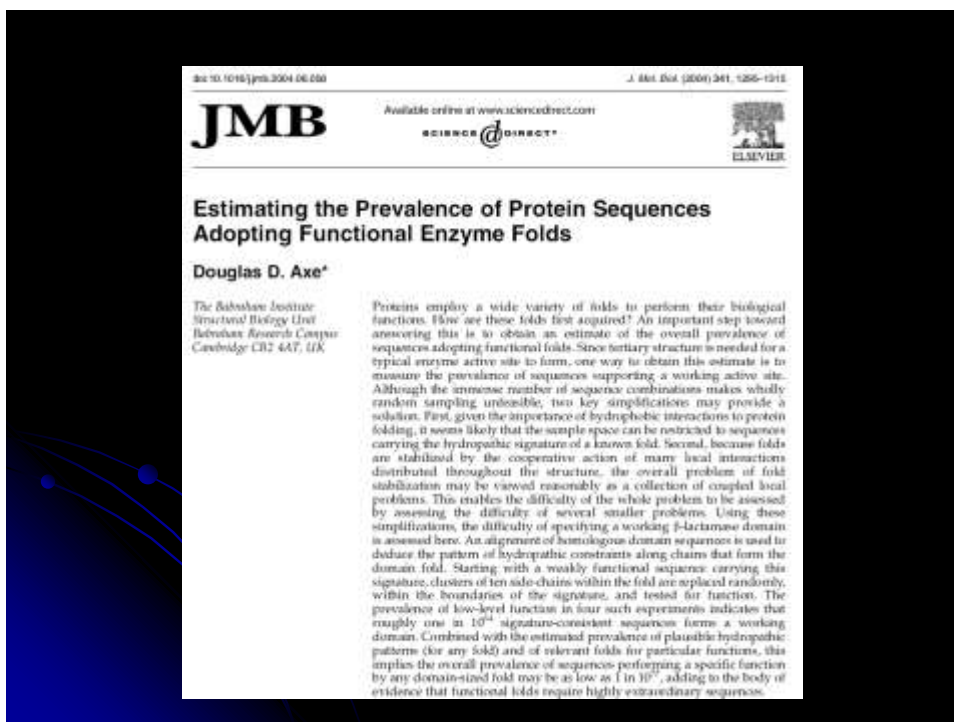
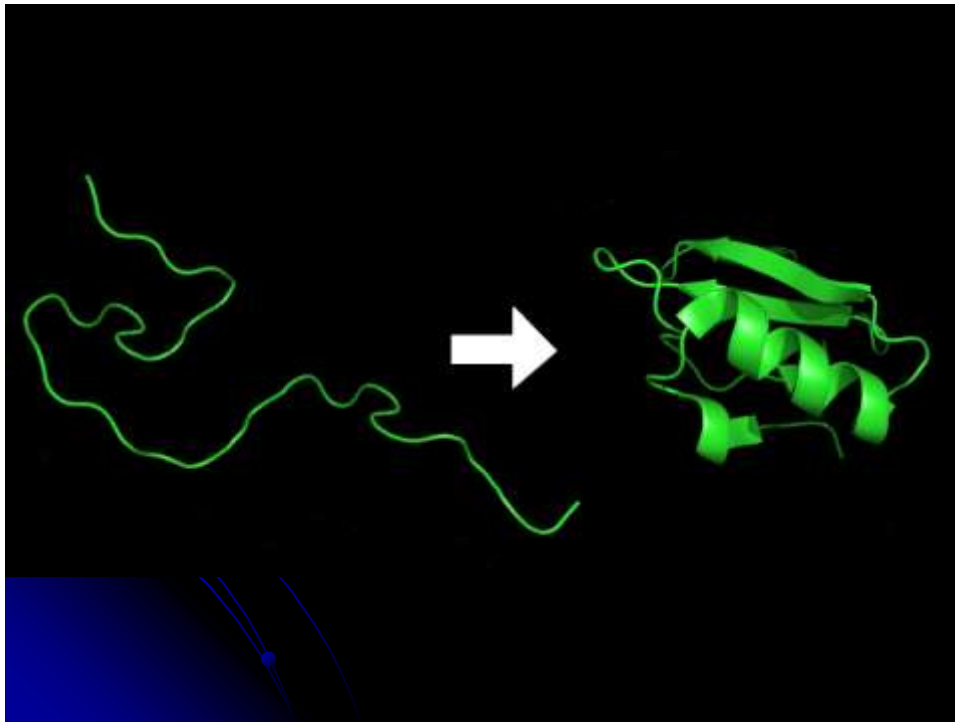
The detection of a highly improbable or complex specified event!

2 3 5 7 11 13



How do we detect design?

Specified Complexity



Seeing What We Want to See?

“Perceiving the world as well designed and thus the product of a designer ... may be the product of a brain adapted to finding patterns in nature. We are pattern-seeking as well as pattern-finding animals. ... Finding patterns in nature may have an evolutionary explanation: There is a survival payoff for finding order instead of chaos in the world....”

— Michael Shermer
WDM, 2006

Seeing What We Want to See?

“We are the descendants of the most successful pattern-seeking members of our species. In other words, we were designed by evolution to perceive design.”

— Michael Shermer
WDM, 2006

Problem

You can't use evolution to refute our ability to detect design since that ability in turn throws evolution into question. When two things call each other into question, deciding between the two requires looking to independent evidence.

Seeing What We Want to See?



Seeing What We Want to See?



Seeing What We Want to See?



Seeing What We Want to See?

Encrypted Text

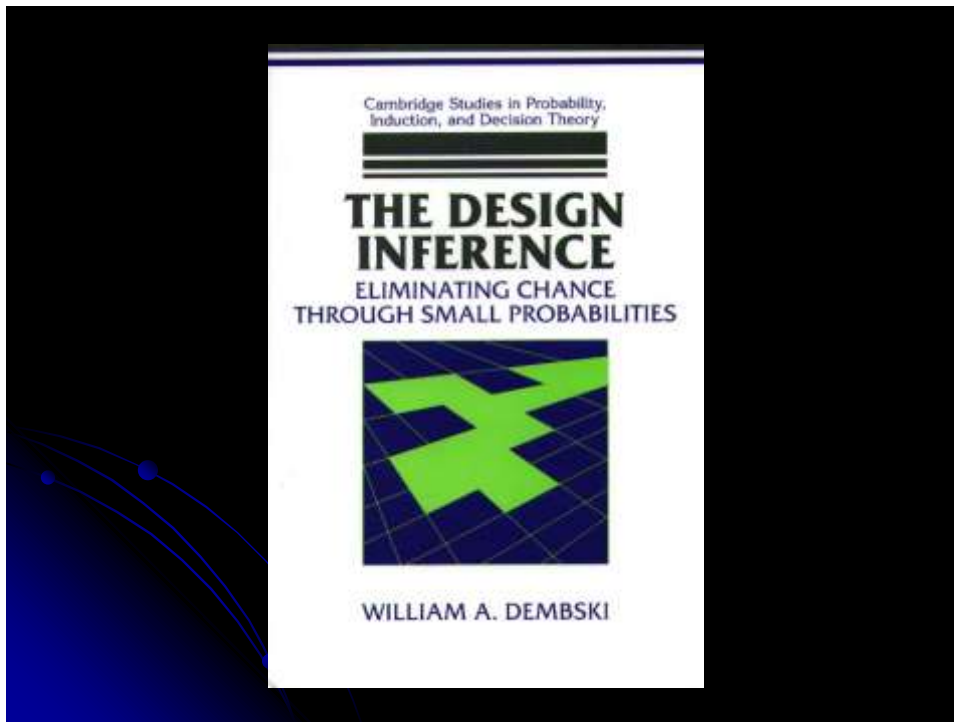
nfuijolt ju jt mjlf b xfbtfm

Decrypted Text

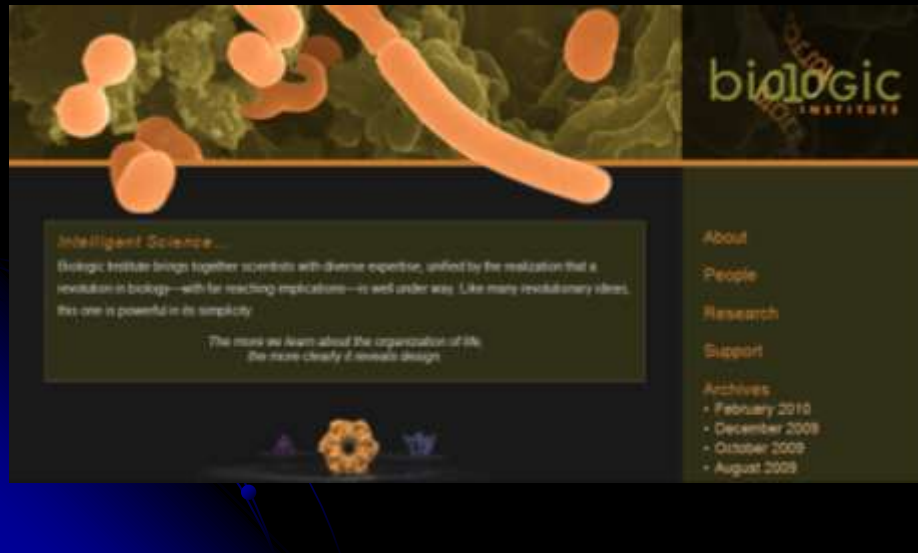
methinks it is like a weasel

How do we detect design?

Specified Complexity



BIOLOGICINSTITUTE.ORG



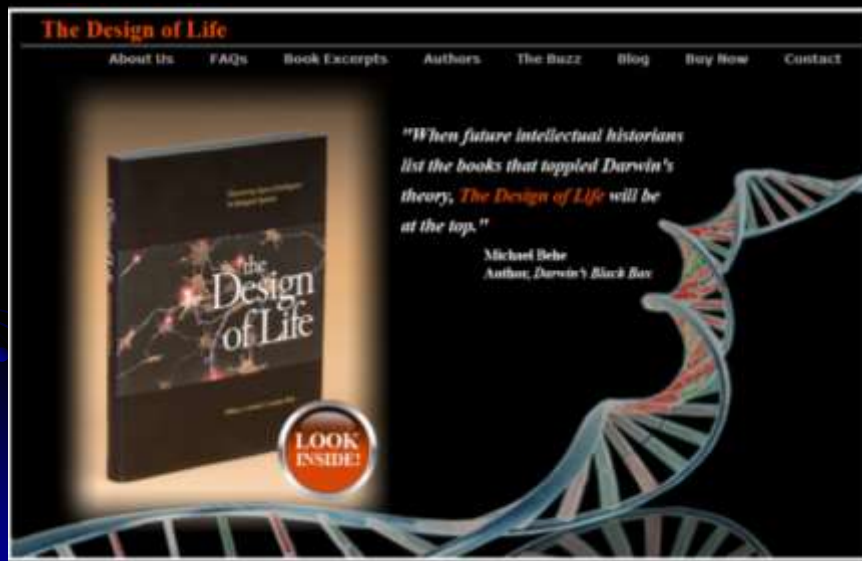
DISCOVERY.ORG/CSC



Conclusions:

- 1) The evidence for evolution is underwhelming.
- 2) The evidence for intelligent design is intriguing.
- 3) Without intelligent design biological education becomes indoctrination.

www.thedesignoflife.com

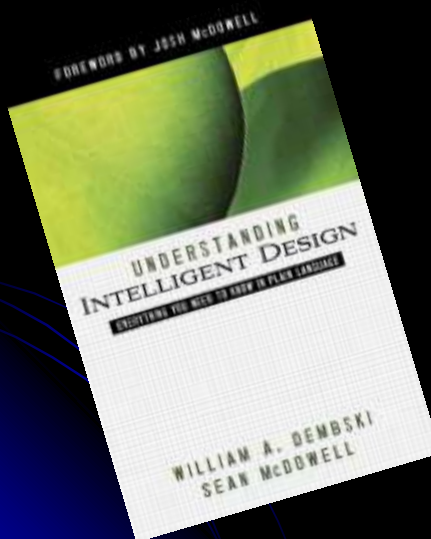


What Can I Do About It?

Plenty of people **wish well** to any good cause, but very few care to **exert** themselves to help it, and still fewer will **risk** anything in its support. "Some one ought to do it, but why should I?" is the ever re-echoed phrase of weak-kneed amiability. "Some one ought to do it, so why not I?" is the cry of some earnest servant of man, eagerly forward springing to face some perilous duty.

—Annie Besant

What Can I Do About It?



- ** Inform yourself
- ** Ask the right questions
- ** Get active online
- ** Write op-eds
- ** Organize pro-ID events
- ** Give money and time
- ** Get a PhD



Bill Wimsatt in 1998

"Dembski has written a sparkingly original book. Not since David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* has someone taken such a close look at the design argument, but it is done now in a much broader post-Darwinian context. Now we proceed with modern characterizations of probability and complexity, and the results bear fundamentally on notions of randomness and on strategies for dealing with the explanation of radically improbable events...

Bill Wimsatt in 1998

...We almost forget that design arguments are implicit in criminal arguments 'beyond a reasonable doubt,' plagiarism, phylogenetic inference, cryptography, and a host of other modern contexts. Dembski's analysis of randomness is the most sophisticated to be found in the literature, and his discussions are an important contribution to the theory of explanation, and a timely discussion of a neglected and unanticipatedly important topic."

Bill Wimsatt in 2007

"Sarkar's scientific expositions and dissections of Dembski's specious arguments and Behe's lack of imagination are clear, surgical, and authoritative. For those who would fear a return to the Middle Ages, this is the best critique of ID now available."

[Blurb to Sahotra Sarkar's *Doubting Darwin? Creationist Designs on Evolution.*]

Email from David Raup to Bill Wimsatt (and to me, dated 12.19.07)

“I think Bill Wimsatt is completely out of line to use such invective and has thereby fallen into the disgusting mode of ID-bashing as it is practiced by conforming evolutionary biologists (and even philosophers) everywhere. [Sorry, Bill, I guess I am resorting to invective also but your language makes me mad!]”