

# The Scientific Case for Intelligent Design

William A. Dembski

Southwestern Seminary, Ft. Worth

Discovery Institute, Seattle

## Is the Christian God a Designer?

- Short answer: Yes.
- Long answer: The Christian God is the Creator of all that comes into existence. As such, he is the source of all being. But Scripture also clearly teaches that the Christian God brings order to being. The Christian God is therefore a designer. He is more than a designer, but he is at least a designer.

# What Is Intelligent Design?

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

## Is Intelligent Design Creationism?



## Christ as Designer and Redeemer



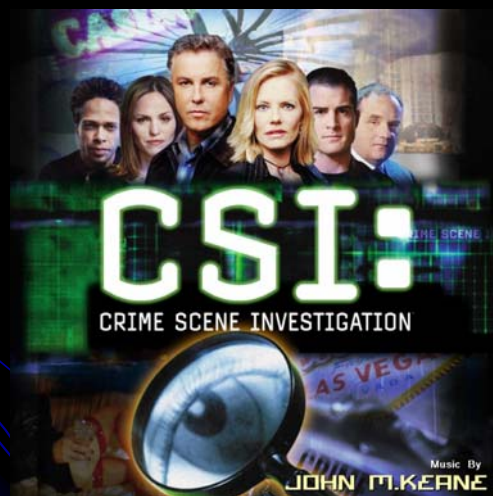
## What Is Intelligent Design?

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

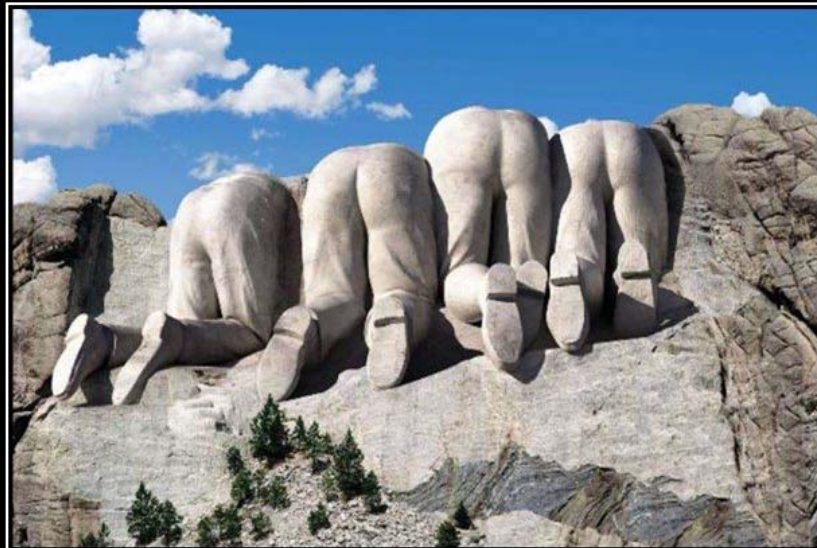


## Example 3: Archeology





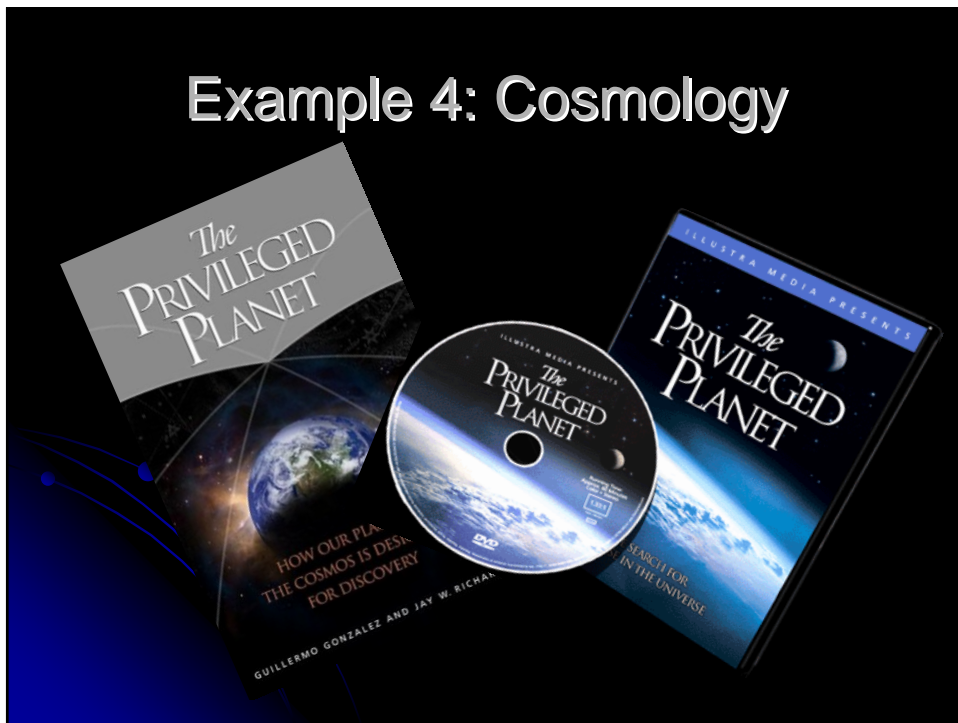
## Example 3: Archeology



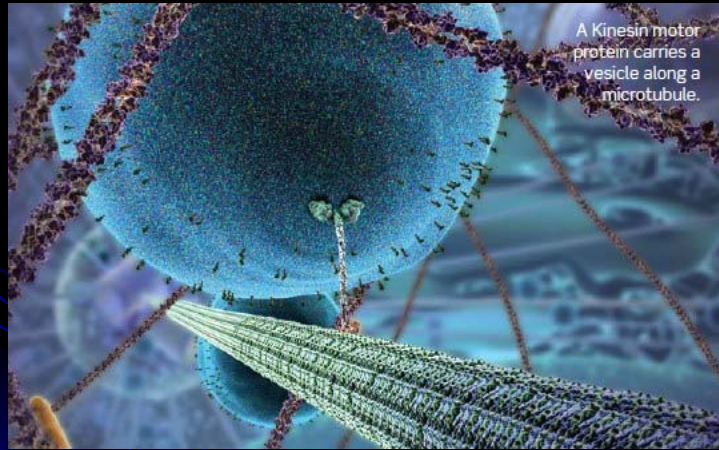
**MT. RUSHMORE**  
The backside



## 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?

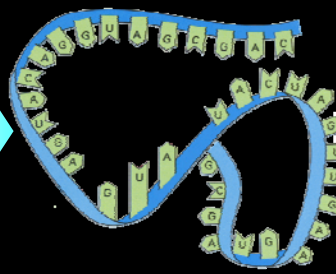
“Apart from differences in jargon, the pages of a molecular-biology journal might be interchanged with those of a computer-engineering journal.”

–Richard Dawkins (ROOE, 1995, p. 17)

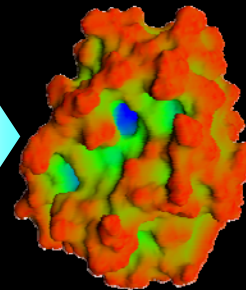
# THE GENETIC CODE



*DNA*  
(Gene)



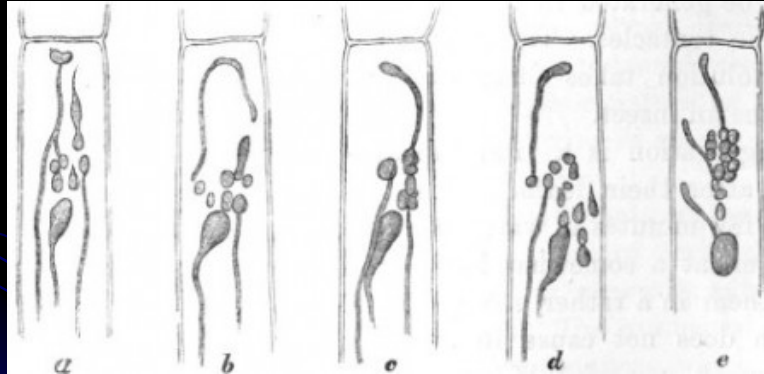
*mRNA*  
(Gene message)



*Protein*  
(Gene product)



## The Cell in Darwin's Day

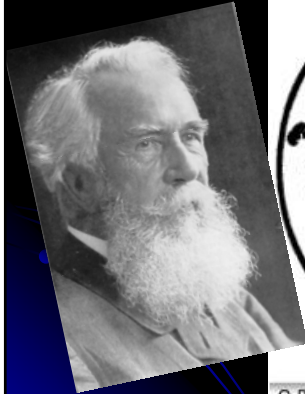


## The Proto-Cell in Darwin's Day

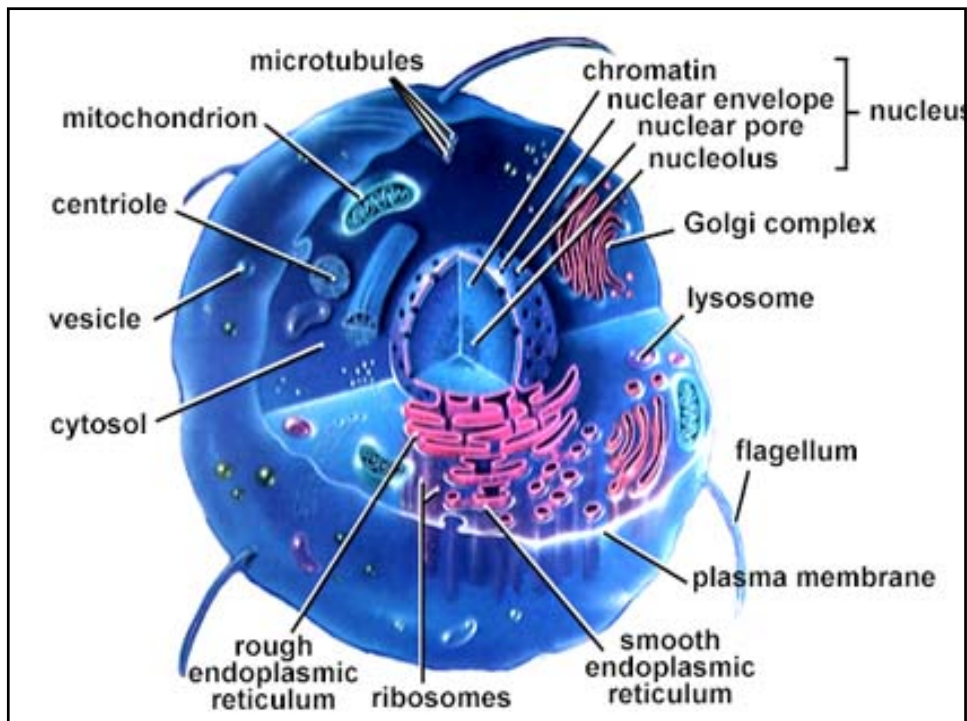
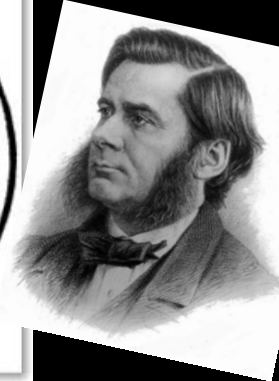


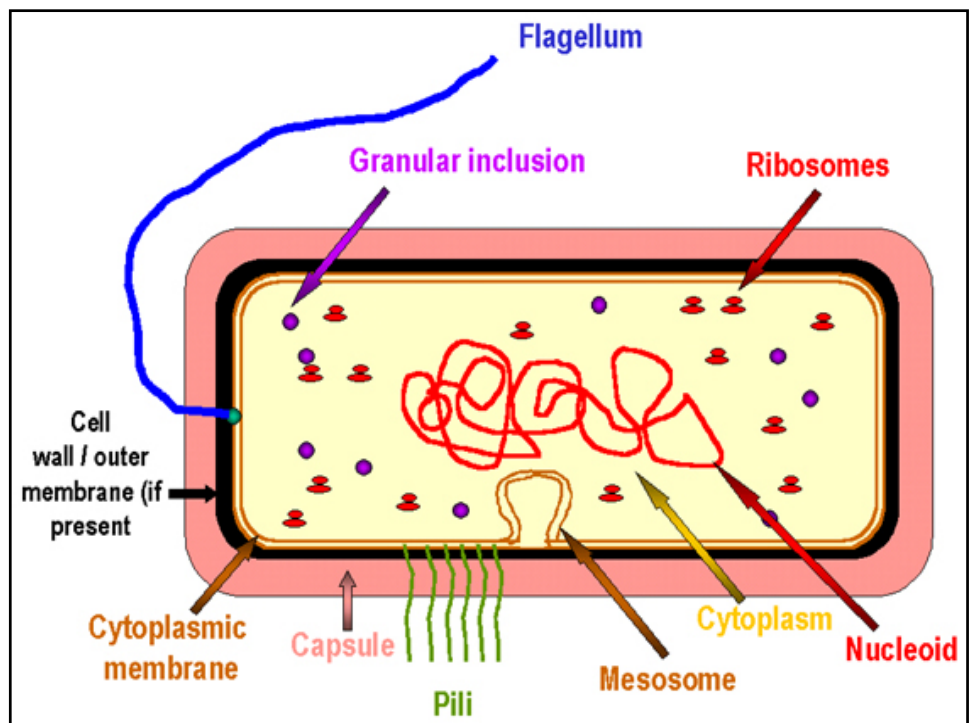
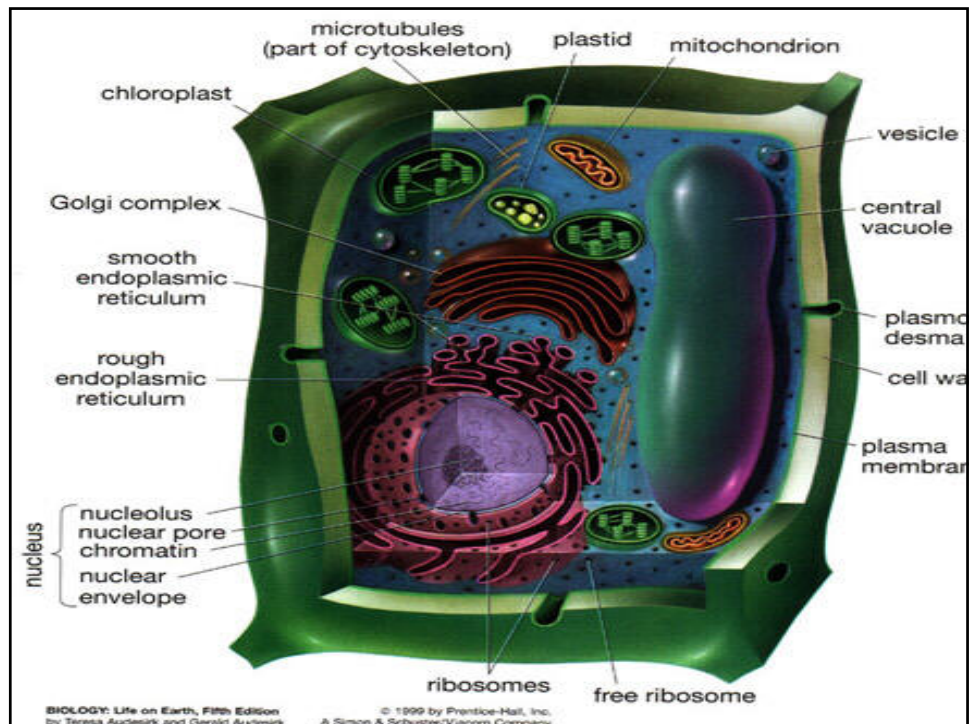


## *Bathybius haeckeli*



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.

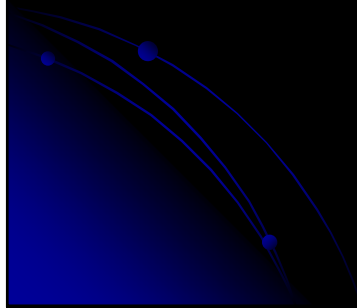
– Stuart Kauffman, 1995



# The Collapse of Darwinian Explanations

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

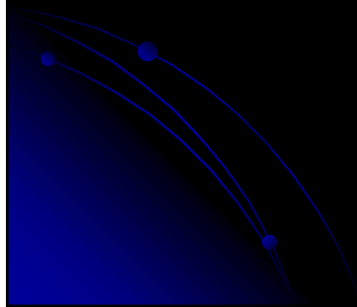
– Leslie Orgel, 2004



# 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, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.

## The Received Wisdom

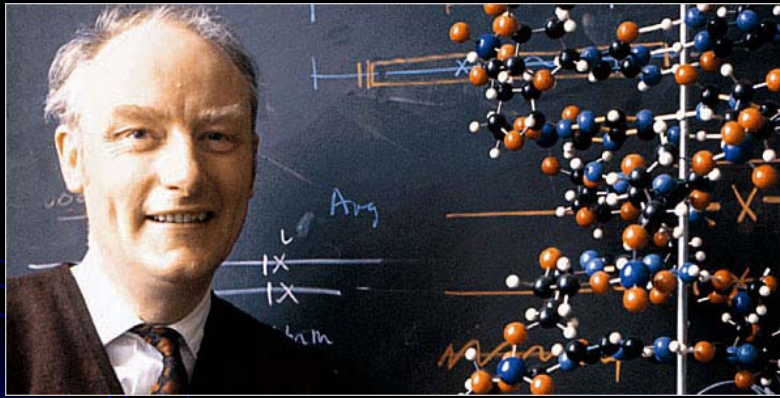
He [Darwin] dismissed it [design] not because it was an incorrect scientific explanation, but because it was **not a proper scientific explanation** at all.

— David Hull

## The Received Wisdom

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

## Design Theorist?

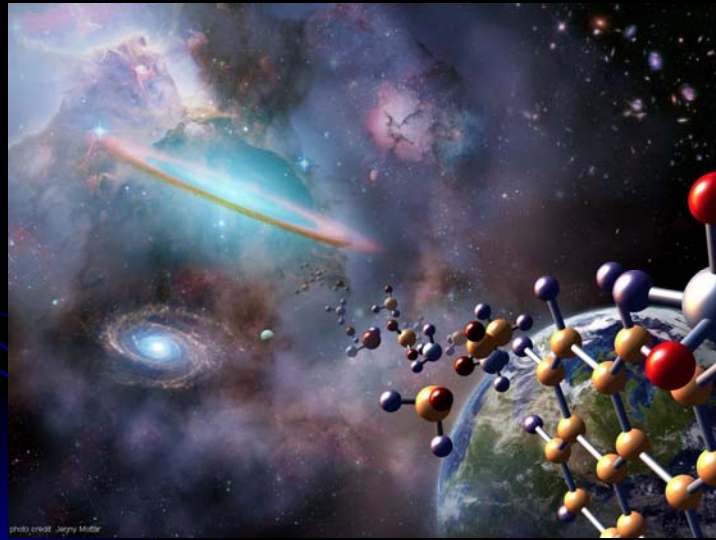


## Directed Panspermia





# Panspermia



# Directed Panspermia

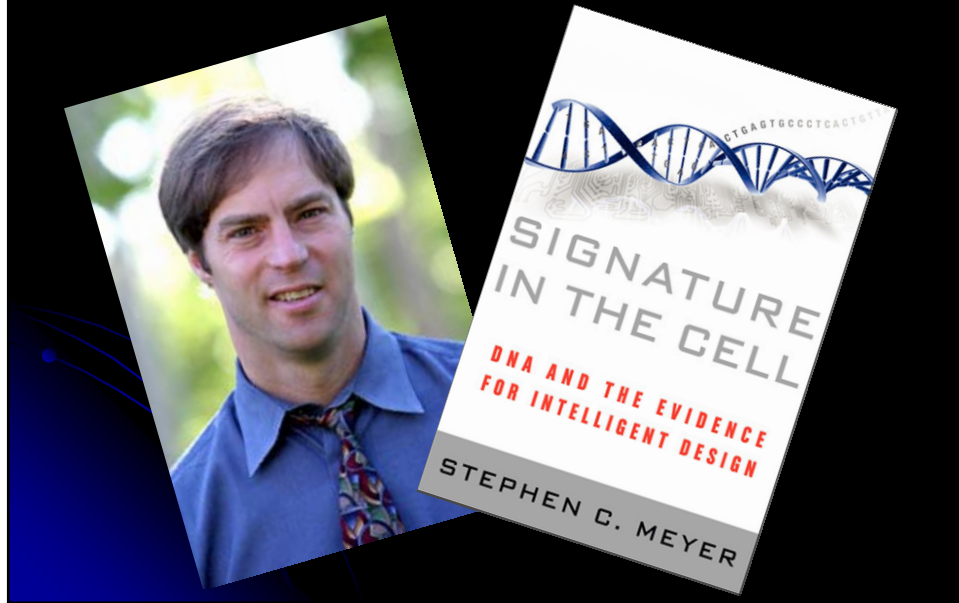


## Directed Panspermia

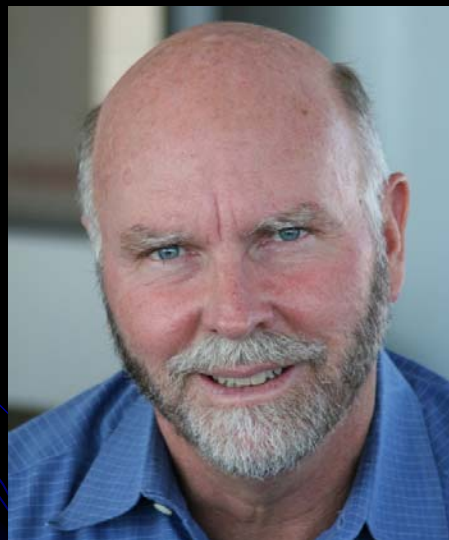


## Directed Panspermia

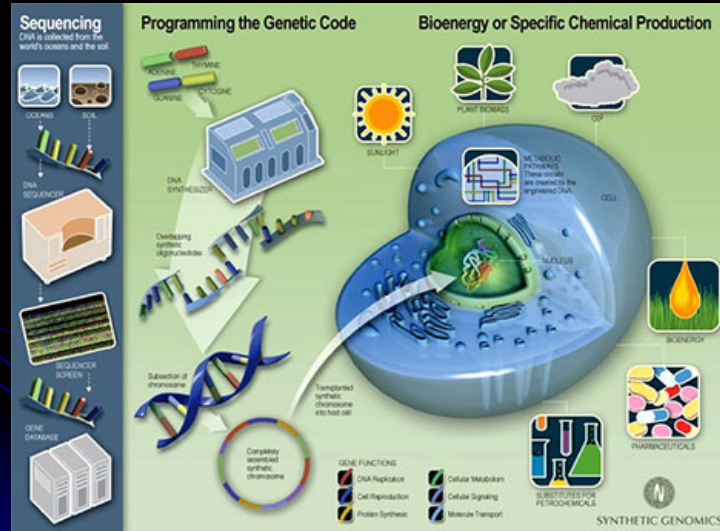
## Signature in the Cell



## 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

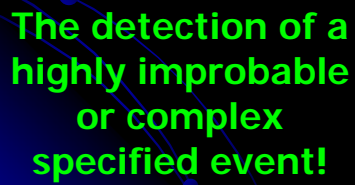
*-Wired, 28jan08*



# How Do We Detect Design?

## SETI: The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence



[illegible]

*What should we be looking for?*

- Complexity (improbability)
- Specification (independent pattern)

## Connection between Complexity and Probability



## Why Probability?

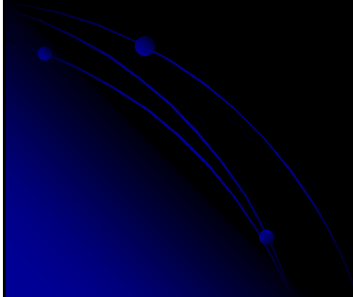
*Unless we discipline how we attribute chance, we can explain anything.*

## This Is Spinal Tap



## Dumb and Dumber





“Getting lucky” is not a  
scientific explanation!

"We can accept a certain amount of  
luck in our [scientific] explanations, but  
not too much."

–Richard Dawkins (TBW, 1987, p. 139)



## Why a Pattern?

*Just about anything that happens is highly improbable/complex. Thus to ensure that something didn't just happen by chance, it must conform to a pattern.*

## What Do You See?



## Why a Specification?

*Although we need a pattern to identify design, we also need to make sure that that we're not just reading the pattern into what we're seeing.*

## Seeing What We Want to See?

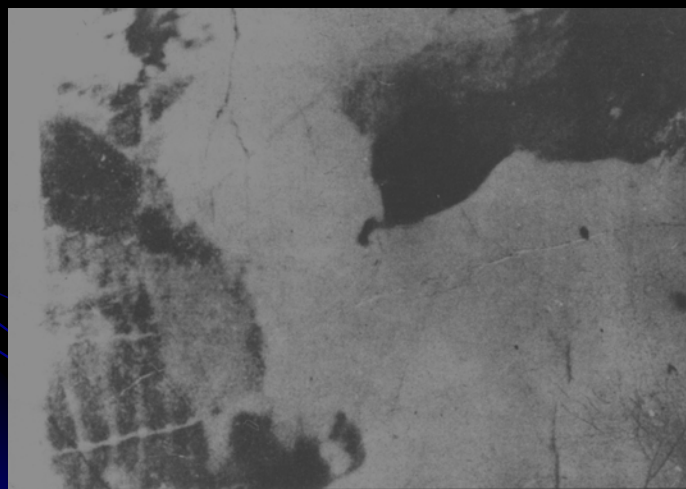
“Perceiving the world as well designed and thus the product of a designer ... may be the product of a brain adapted to finding patterns in nature. We are pattern-seeking as well as pattern-finding animals. ... Finding patterns in nature may have an evolutionary explanation: There is a survival payoff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

— Michael Shermer  
WDM, 2006

Seeing What We Want to See?



Seeing What We Want to See?



## The Case of Archery



## The Case of Cryptography

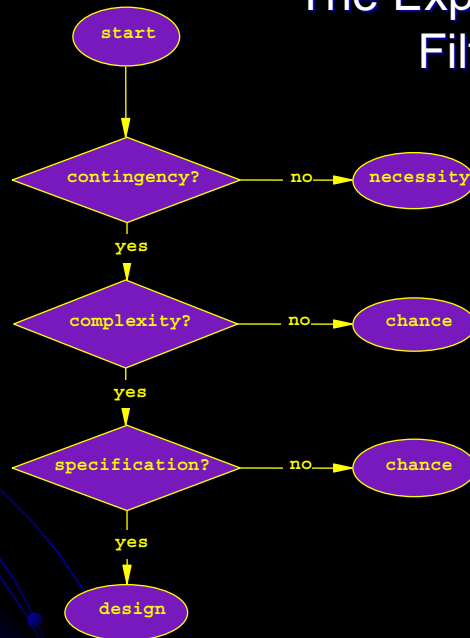
### Encrypted Text

nfuijolt ju jt mjlf b xfbtfm

### Decrypted Text

methinks it is like a weasel

## The Explanatory Filter



Cambridge Studies in Probability,  
Induction, and Decision Theory

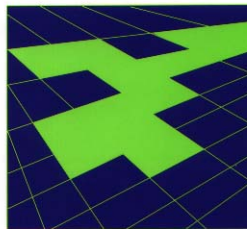
---

---

---

# THE DESIGN INFERENCE

ELIMINATING CHANCE  
THROUGH SMALL PROBABILITIES



WILLIAM A. DEMBSKI



What does the filter  
identify?

## Specified Complexity

*Dawning recognition that specified  
complexity is key to biology*

Living organisms are distinguished by their **specified complexity**. Crystals such as granite fail to qualify as living because they lack complexity; mixtures of random polymers fail to

- qualify because they lack specificity.

—Leslie Orgel, 1973

*Dawning recognition that specified complexity is key to biology*

Before the **specified complexity** of living systems began to be appreciated, it was thought that, given enough time, 'chance' would explain the origin of living systems.

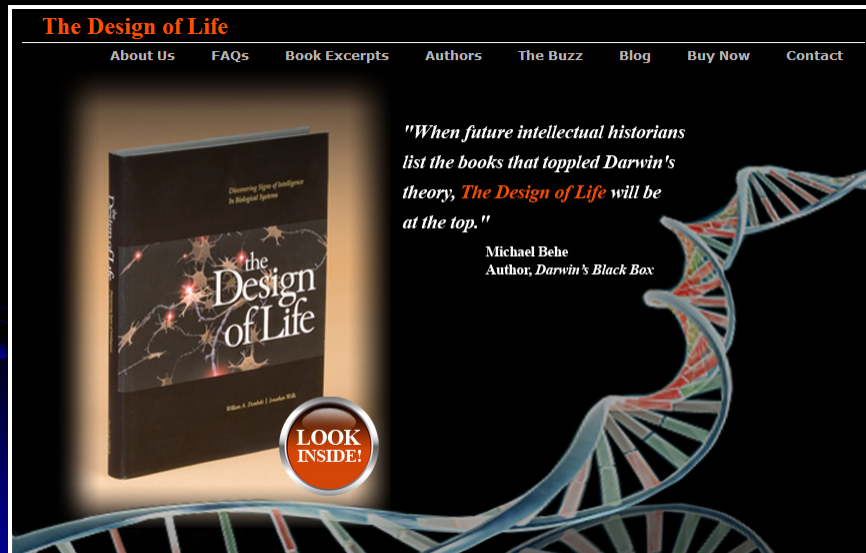
—Thaxton, Bradley, and Olsen 1984

*Dawning recognition that specified complexity is key to biology*

Living organisms are mysterious not for their complexity *per se*, but for their tightly **specified complexity**.

—Paul Davies, 1999

[www.thedesignoflife.com](http://www.thedesignoflife.com)



## Why Is This Important?

- 1) If atheism is true, then science cannot convincingly demonstrate design.
- 2) But science is convincingly demonstrating design.
- 3) Therefore atheism must be false.

## Why Is This Important?

- 1) If atheism, then no design.
- 2) But design.
- 3) Therefore no atheism.

## 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

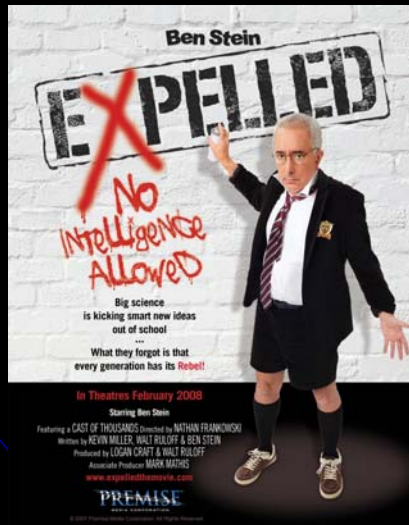
## What Can I Do About It?

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



## PERILOUS DUTY



## Why Should I Do Something About It?

Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been **clearly seen**, being **understood** from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

—Romans 1:20