

Mere Creation Conference

THANE H. URY

ABSTRACT

At this invitation-only landmark conference, intelligent design theorists threw down the gauntlet at the feet of methodological naturalists. A dazzling array of heavyweight speakers representing all shades of 'creationism' masterfully dealt with the four programmed topics: Design Theory, Biological Design, Philosophy and Design, and Design in the Universe. The objective to put intelligent design back on the scientific agenda as the explanation for the origin and existence of the Universe and all life was unquestionably achieved. But for many the price of unity may be too high, since it has been bought at the cost of theological compromise on issues like the age of the Earth, prelapsarian suffering, death and extinction, and the hermeneutical perspicuity of Genesis.

This past November 14-17 (1996) at Biola University, in the Los Angeles area, 200 scholars convened for a major research conference which will probably serve as an historical landmark. The theme, **Mere Creation: Reclaiming the Book of Nature**, drew a veritable who's who from 'intelligent design theorists' worldwide. One even quipped that the attendees were in some measure more impressive than the presenters. Most notable in the pews were names like Michael Denton, Al Plantinga, Phillip Johnson, John Leslie, Pattle Pun, Tom Bethell, Michael Corey, and one of the planet's most renowned information theorists, Hubert Yockey. Nearly 100 institutions of higher learning and para-church organisations were represented, including representatives from Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Nigeria, Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

With the Pope's recent rubber-stamping of evolution, buttressed by all the furore over alleged microfossils from Mars, a gathering like this was all the more timely. Conference organisers were attempting to forge a new multi-disciplinary coalition of like-minded theistic scientists, philosophers and other scholars.

OBJECTIVES

Conference goals were obvious: First, to foster interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation among many scholars fluent in their respective disciplines, with an eye to update old arguments and infuse fresh ones, which naturalists

cannot as easily resist.

Second, to unite on common ground. Therefore, partisan debate regarding the age of the cosmos was shelved. This allowed colleagues to find common ground in rejecting methodological naturalism as a sound paradigm for science, while advocating a consensual objective of intelligent design as a major unifying theme for 21st century creationists. But with 'young Earth' creationists given only inconsequential representation at best, overconfidence in solidarity may be only pyrrhic.

And third, the conference sought to produce tangible results which would stimulate the progress of design theory, and encourage further scholarship along the lines of breaking free from the suppression of naturalism. Apropos to this vision will be the publishing of the conference proceedings, planning of future conferences, exploring the establishment of fellowship programmes, encouraging joint research, contributing to scholarly journals, and establishing a Web site.

The Mere Creation Conference (MCC) sought to address several issues. Perhaps most prevalent was the desire to correct both the historical and the scientific record regarding the popular secular myth that David Hume and Charles Darwin sounded the death knell for design; and when design was jettisoned, the notion of a Designer, or at least a competent one, likewise evaporated. Once design was evicted as a viable option in life's history, the door was opened for disavowing theism and adopting naturalism. But there has been a growing frustration among theistic

scientists that the notion of design in nature has never been seriously addressed by critics, much less demolished, as is so cavalierly claimed by secularists. Collective sneering and materialist philosophy have egregiously passed as scientific method for far too long. The irony is that William Paley is still in the race, and Hume and Darwin hardly have any muscles left to pull.

Modern day naturalists like Richard Dawkins, Michael Ruse and Stuart Kauffman promote a dogma where any alleged complexity, biochemical or otherwise, can be interpreted naturalistically. Any perceived design is only 'apparent'. The irreducible complexity of the coagulation cascade of human blood, for example, is exemplified away as self-organising laws in nature, or algorithms capable of spawning mind-boggling complexity *ex nihilo*. Here, *deep time* saves the day, since it is axiomatic among the neo-Darwinian faithful that given enough time anything can happen. Mere hydrogen can eventually give rise to the mammalian central nervous system, with time itself and these principles of spontaneous biogenesis being tag team miracle workers.

THE PROGRAMME

The conference committee arranged to have the lectures divided into the following four categories: Design Theory, Biological Design, Philosophy and Design, and Design in the Universe. What follows are synopses of a few of the key papers to afford the reader with the general flavour of the conference.

On the first evening of the MCC, **Walter Bradley**, co-author of the highly acclaimed book, **The Mystery of Life's Origins**, set the stage for the entire conference with the topic: 'Nature: Designed or Designoid?' The main thrust was to address Dawkins', *et al.*, notion that all complexity and design can be accounted for by some 'incrementalism' (the *Mount Improbable* hypothesis), 'inevitable consequence of self-organising schemes' (Kauffman), or 'irreversible thermodynamics of non-linear systems' (Prigogine).

Whatever facets of nature bear the alleged earmarks of design, are really just 'designoids', according to Dawkins. These designoids can be anything from functional biopolymers, to universal constants, to the mathematical forms of the physical universe itself. Yet Bradley pointed out what all well-read creationists have always contended; this being that, aside from the prestige jargon of the author of **The Blind Watchmaker** (Norton, 1986), Dawkins 'offers no fundamental principles of. . . how biological information of the scale needed to explain macroevolution is generated and absolutely no empirical support for his [Mount Improbable] thesis.'

The work of Prigogine likewise is impotent to explain aperiodic specified complexity, though to his credit, he does not emit the arrogance of Dawkins. But Prigogine's thesis is nonetheless equally barren, since only in proposing special pleading axioms can he get his theory going. These axioms

are:

- (1) an 'open' system which is subject to constant input and output of matter and energy (implying systems constrained to be far from equilibrium);
- (2) the presence of various catalytic, cross-catalytic, or feedback processes (insuring that the description of the system kinetics will include non-linear differential equations); and
- (3) the imposition of specifically defined values and constraints (to mitigate against entropy, and foster growth).

One should first be struck at how much 'design' is in these axioms, and second, that no path to actual biological information ever goes beyond the imagination of the methodological naturalist.

Stuart Kauffman and the Santa Fe Institute's approach to complexity and self-organisation suffers the same fate as all other free lunch scenarios (that is, something for nothing, as in real world biological complexity from computer enhanced algorithms). Similar to Dawkins, Kauffman employs creative computer simulations. But just like the Oxford zoologist's computer modelling, there is not a shred of any experimental substantiation, and the programme ignores important aspects of physical reality (thermodynamic and kinetic issues), which if included would not allow things (in the words of Kauffman) to 'catch fire'.

The fact that the strongest link of these types of arguments has to be made from an analogy, is a pretty sure indicator of the theories' weakness. Worse yet, such nebulous analogies as Dawkins' 'biomorphs' have no analogue in the real world of biology. Rather, they ironically serve as an apologetic for special design, with Dawkins playing the role of creator. Kauffman's model likewise 'assumes away' any system-level configurational entropy problems, and the three solutions he proposes so complicate his model as to make it untenable. In addition, any alleged 'organisation schemes' commit a category mistake, since they really never account for the message in DNA. Kauffman and Dawkins are only able to have their 'free lunch' because they ignore brutal thermodynamic and kinetic realities hostile to their models, and employ the method of what John Maynard Smith calls 'fact-free science', where the mention of falsifiability and observational facts is considered to be in bad taste.

Jonathan Wells next spoke on 'Unseating Naturalism: Recent Insights from Developmental Biology'. Wells noted that the neo-Darwinian paradigm portrays evolution as proceeding by modifying a DNA programme which controls embryonic development. But while embryology was 'second to none in importance' for Darwin, embryology has been virtually ignored by the modern synthesis. However, the situation has begun to turn since the early 1980s. The same comparative method which disclosed the almost universal occurrence of similar DNA chains also divulged some staggering details about embryogenesis. While Darwin noted that vertebrate embryos paralleled each

other at certain developmental stages (allegedly evidence of common ancestry), modern embryologists are finding numerous cases in which organisms with very similar morphologies follow drastically dissimilar trajectories in early development.

As is typically the case, Darwinians are able to turn such liabilities into assets. Wells informs us that evolutionary biologists are interpreting this new evidence in such a way that early development can be easily adapted to generate macroevolutionary change. Thus they believe developmental genetics attests that organisms develop due to a palaeo-blueprint encoded in their DNA; and comparative embryology seems to have provided evidence that major changes in early development are relatively easy to achieve.

But atheistic cork-popping is surely premature, in that these recent discoveries in developmental genetics and comparative embryology actually pose insurmountable problems for neo-Darwinians. Wells illustrated this with recent data about homeotic genes. The very universality of these genes nullifies the role Darwinian biologists impute to them. Since they affect radically different structures in so many different organisms, they actually contain very little developmental information. And if similar homeotic genes were inherited from a common progenitor, then they were present in a primal organism lacking the modifications which would make them selectively advantageous, thereby making their origin more difficult for neo-Darwinists to explain.

Nancy Pearcey's paper was entitled, "You Guys Lost" — Is Design a Closed Issue?. Here the central message was to correct the historical revisionism often promoted by anti-teleologists. It is commonly assumed that the battle over the truth or falsity of Darwinism was waged in the nineteenth century, and that Darwin won the day because his theory was supported by the scientific evidence, and therefore solved the 'problem of teleology'. Pearcey led her audience back to the site(s) of the battle and asked whether it was, in fact, won fair and square. She contends that Darwin did win the battle (but not in the sense normally meant). The rhetorical question begging to be asked is, 'Were the motives for accepting Darwinism scientific or philosophical?' Darwin's theory was a hinge moment in biology, not due to the actual evidence, but simply because of its utility in advancing a metaphysical position. If indeed the motives for promoting Darwinism were surreptitiously metaphysical, then we are justified in resurrecting the debate. Pearcey further argued that Darwinism is clearly inadequate to the task, and that design theory holds great promise for science. Creationists over the last decades have been raising these same issues, yet it was refreshing to hear them once again, and to be accompanied by such able documentation.

The lecture of **William Dembski** was titled 'Redesigning Science'. Here Dembski contends, to little surprise, that the theory of intelligent design will actually help to reinvigorate science. Intelligent design is not some

vague fideistic intuition masquerading in empirical raiment, but is a thoroughly Scientific theory and needs to be formulated as such.

In general, Dembski avers, whenever an event needs explanation, we must choose from among three distinct modes of explanation: law, chance, and design. This tripartite delineation may be conceived as stages in what Dembski calls 'The Explanatory Filter', which one might also call a design detector. Whether the naturalist acknowledges it or not, we use such a filter every day of our lives.

Given some event or thing needing explanation, in general the filter *asks* three questions: First, does a law explain it? In other words, if given consistent antecedents an event always happens, then it merits the appellation 'law'. Second, does chance explain it? This second tier of the filter catches events explainable by chance. If neither law-like regularities nor chance are apropos, then we ask, thirdly, does design explain it? But negligible probability is insufficient here, since improbable events happen quite often. Therefore Dembski asserts that,

'Specified events of small probability, however, cannot be explained by natural law or chance, [but rather] they can only be explained by design — that is, intelligent causation.'

If something we deem 'designed' passes all three stages of the filter, and meets the criterion of specification and probability, we are justified in affirming design as a necessary cause.

One can hardly do justice to a 20 page paper (which itself is a condensation of a soon to be published book, **The Design Inference**) in just a few paragraphs. Dembski has a University of Chicago Ph.D. in mathematics to complement his Ph.D. in philosophy and Princeton M. Div. Suffice it to say that he has thought deeply and clearly on these issues, and the Explanatory Filter could become the centerpiece of design theory in the next decade.

BIOLOGICAL DESIGN

Stephen Meyer spoke on 'The Explanatory Power of Design: DNA and the Origin of Information'. Since Meyer is mired in the undergraduate world of Whitworth College, he made seasoned and effective use of toy plastic rings and Lego™ building blocks to augment his presentation.

Mechanistic materialism has successfully indoctrinated many to believe they are nothing more than 'cosmic orphans'. This gate to nihilism has been essentially paved by merely asserting that incremental and atelic evolution, given the miracle working powers of deep time, can account for any example of alleged design. First, the Laplacian nebular hypothesis made its entree, claiming that on the basis of natural gravitational forces alone we could posit the origin of the solar system. Next came Lyellian uniformitarianistic geology, replacing catastrophism with sluggish, incremental, and unabashedly naturalistic

mechanisms.

Such set the stage for Darwin, both metaphysically and chronologically. Here many theologians were valuable allies by offering 'biblical reasons' for jettisoning the literalness of the Mosaic time-frame. But if blind processes really could account for the advent of new species, many began to wonder if invoking a supernatural Designer was not redundant.

Darwin's thinking was a harbinger of the prevailing orthodoxy that designedness is only in the eye of the beholder. Richard Dawkins, for example, preaches that 'Biology is the study of complicated things that give the *appearance* of having been designed for a purpose' (**The Blind Watchmaker**, page 1, emphasis added). Therefore, it becomes obsolete to invoke a pre-existent Mind that shaped matter. In reality, modern science contends, matter shaped the mind, not vice versa.

Meyer provided an up-to-date reality check on ideological materialism, which is more morgue-worthy than ever. All the popular origin of life scenarios (see above), while saturated with impressive rhetoric, are no more credible than Haeckel's underestimation of the cell as merely a 'homogenous globule of plasm', or Darwin's pre-biotic 'warm pond'. With the staggering complexity of the simplest cell, and the specificity of protein molecules, methodological naturalism is having every last raiment of credibility stripped away so that the emperor's status is obvious to all but the chronically fideistic. But while there is a crisis in chemical evolutionary theory, the Oparin/Miller hypothesis still persists as textbook orthodoxy, for the sole reason that there is no better naturalistic theory to replace it. The 'best-in-field' fallacy, first pointed out by Macbeth, still carries much weight with modern disciples of Darwin.

Meyer highlighted the fact that laboratory experimentation has inadvertently and ironically confirmed that intelligent causation is needed even to get something which could be primitively labelled as 'the building blocks of life'. Origin of life researchers illicitly reconstruct chemically non-hostile atmospheric conditions (that is, reductive), which independent geochemical data over the last 30 years suggests is clearly unwarranted. An intelligent agent is still needed to protect the amino acids, etc. from degradation, and to pamper them along a promising, albeit imaginary, biological trajectory. Yet for all this, we only have a concoction of glorified sludge.

In light of the astonishing lilliputian complexity of the cell, and biological systems which employ features such as 'information storage and transfer capability; functioning codes; sorting and delivery systems; regulatory and feedback loops; signal transduction circuitry, and complex, mutually-interdependent networks of parts', design theory seems to be more alive than ever before. Of course for creationists, who have been waiting at the finish line for decades, this is not surprising in the least.

Paul Nelson, grandson of the renowned creationist, Byron C. Nelson (**After its Kind**, and **The Deluge Story** in

Stone), and editor of **Origins and Design**, had the task of 'Applying Design Within Biology'. Building on the lectures of Dembski and Meyer, Nelson emphasised that the Explanatory Filter provides an analytical meeting ground between design theorists and their nemeses, methodological naturalists. The hegemony of naturalists is 'desperately confused' and woefully premature, as was Darwin, in decrying the epistemological handicaps of design theory as empirically vacuous. Even more conspicuous is a glaring incongruity with most Darwinists when they demand that design theorists demonstrate a level of apodictic certainty, while exempting methodological naturalism from the same stringent criteria of verification.

Nelson applied the Explanatory Filter to explicate how it might function in biological explanation. An event or object which passes through the filter's first node (natural laws, law-like regularities, and causal mechanisms) will necessarily yield a corresponding insufficiency claim. Such claims, expressed as proscriptive generalisations (*'it is impossible that x. . .!*) are empirically verifiable, and indeed constitute a large body of falsifiable propositions.

Thus, in Nelson's words, a design theorist might argue that it is impossible to perturb certain elements in the development of any animal; for example, the morphogen *bicoid* in *Drosophila*, which establishes the anterior-posterior axis of the entomological *bauplan*. Furthermore, the design theorist, unlike his naturalistic counterpart, need not qualify this claim: the necessity of *bicoid* can be extended into the past as a strong prediction about the functional design specifications of *Drosophila*. Design permits, and in fact predicts, discontinuities in organic form and function.

Because design can explain primary discontinuities, the theory gives an account of phenomena inexplicable on naturalistic scenarios. These phenomena include the necessary minimal complexity of cells, incongruence between developmental pathways and morphological homologies in different taxa, the functional complexity of organismal systems (for example, the mammalian ear), the hierarchical structure of development, genetic pleiotropy, and architectural aspects of three-dimensional form and function.

Michael Behe addressed 'Intelligent Design Theory as a Tool for Analysing Biochemical Systems'. Basically Behe augmented his best-selling book, **Darwin's Black Box** (already in its seventh printing), with an unbridled interrogation of Darwinism under the electron microscope. His innovative book has been praised and excoriated in over 50 reviews. Since he writes with such devastating clarity, those guarding the lily-pads on the pond of methodological naturalism are going to bar no holds in attacking Behe; actually *answering* him, however, rather than feigning scientific engagement, is quite another matter.

The central creed of modernity is that inorganic material gave rise to living matter, and subsequently progressed up the great chain of being by undirected processes. Behe

contends that all non-theistic brands of Darwinism have been ill prepared to explain the paradigm paralysing phenomena culled from recent breakthroughs in biochemistry.

Incremental natural selection at the cellular level is the primary target in the cross-hairs of Behe's microscope. Selection is the *Deus ex machina* animating the Darwinian puppet. Once the strings of selection are severed, it is curtain time. With his words playing surgeon's scalpel, Behe points out that incipient evolutionism weathered initial scientific criticism due to a rather crude view of the cell as a glob of jelly. While excusable prior to electron microscopy, X-ray crystallography and nuclear magnetic resonance, such understatements are no longer justifiable. Therefore we must ask, if the worldviews stemming from this crude view are justifiable.

Thousands of recent technical biochemistry articles reveal an eerie lacuna, if not deafening silence, of data offering plausible scenarios of the origin of biomolecular complexity. Rather, we find a glut of 'just so' articles, amounting to nothing more than fraternal order question begging, with the very things begging substantiation merely assumed *a priori*.

In Darwin's day, the cell was a 'black box'. This metaphor refers to a device which performs a marvellous function, while the inner mechanism(s) remain mysterious. Darwin not only could not access the box's content (that is, the cell's complexity), but no one in his day even remotely anticipated its astonishing contents.

Recent technology, however, has revealed the box's 'content', yielding a mind-boggling complexity. Darwin might be pardoned on this particular, but modernity is without excuse for any studied disregard of the box's accoutrements. In Pandoran manner, the lid is off inviting us to peek inside, we encounter a flabbergasting array of 'irreducible complexity' in Lilliputian biology. By irreducible complexity, Behe means,

'a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning!'

In translating *irreducible complexity* for the novice, Behe employs the common mousetrap. Functionality of the mousetrap requires a minimum number of components. Just look at a standard trap, and imagine taking away any one piece, without impairing its function? All the pieces are necessary, yet no piece is sufficient in isolation, and would not serve in any capacity to expunge rodents (except in Dawkinsian imagination). The parallel is obvious: irreducibly complex *molecular* mechanisms also have a minimum number of components; take one part away and the entire 'machine' is non-functional. Behe fleshes out irreducible complexity and minimal functionality in his book, with bombardier pyrotechnics, bacterial locomotion and the coagulation cascade. The design inference is clear, though too painful for some to dwell on for very long.

Behe has articulated what honest scientists have

suspected for quite some time, but have perhaps been reticent to speak too loudly due to various pressures. But when such ideological influences as research grants, careerism, peer pressure, and the agony of an autonomy-threatening paradigm shift, then it is legitimate to ask if *real* science is taking place.

Readers of **Darwin's Black Box** will appreciate Behe's update. They will also wonder how to fight boredom from now until the publication of Behe's next book. To the evolutionist, such a text has a reserve shelf on the *index librorum prohibitorum*, along with Phil Johnson's work. But in dogmatically and automatically turning a blind eye to Behe's scientific evidence, methodological naturalists further entrench themselves in the foxholes of irrationalism.

Such should suffice to give a genuine feel for the climate at MCC. Remaining speakers and topics were as follows: **Siegfried Scherer** presented 'Basic Types of Life: Evidence for Design from Taxonomy' (which essentially elaborated on his 1994 ICC presentation); **Sigrid Hartwig-Scherer**, 'Apes or Ancestors? Interpretations of the Hominid Fossil Record within Evolutionary and Basic Type Biology'; **Jeffrey Schloss**, 'Of Natural Theology and Natural Theodicy: Evolutionary Accounts of Altruistic Morality and the Quandary of Goodness by Design'; **J. P. Moreland**, 'The Explanatory Relevance of Libertarian Agency as a Model of Theistic Design'; **Del Ratzsch**, 'Design, Chance, and Theistic Evolution'; **John Mark Reynolds**, 'God of the Gaps: Intelligent Design and Bad Apologetic Advice'; **William Lane Craig**, 'The Cosmological Argument and the Hypothesis of Intelligent Design'; **Hugh Ross**, 'Big Bang Model Refined by Fire'; **Robert Kaita**, 'Design in Physics and Biology: "Cosmological Principle" and "Cosmological Imperative"'; **David Berlinski**, 'Radical Darwinism'; and **Robert Newman**, 'Artificial Life and Cellular Automata'.

IMPRESSIONS

Following each presentation, the floor was opened up for some lively question and answer periods. This usually carried over into *intense fellowship* during the coffee breaks. With most of the conferees staying at the same hotel, and all the meals together, some of the most valuable dialogue took place aside from the lectern.

This reviewer came away from the conference with mixed feelings. Challenging material was presented, and scholarly interaction was evident, though with a tight schedule much good dialogue was curtailed. The forthcoming proceedings, when published, will serve as a catalyst for healthy reflection in creationists' circles. Yet, one could not help but be struck by the dual authority latent with most of the actual conference content. The conference is in no danger of being accused of going top-heavy on theology. The book of Nature truly has achieved equal epistemological status with God's written Word in the eyes of many; and to listen closely to some papers it even appears

to have been elevated to a higher plateau.

Let us keep in mind that the exclusion of exegetical material was by design, with an eye to produce a 'purely scientific' rebuttal of methodological naturalism; a work that could be put in the hand of an open-minded sceptic without fear of losing him with a plethora of 'thus saith the Lord's. But surely at an 'in house' forum like this, more time could have been afforded to plumb the depths of the theological repercussions of some of the positions presented.

Theodicy type questions [compare **CEN. Tech. J.**, 10(3):391- 404] came up at least eight times in question and answer periods, but were never seriously addressed. One questioner noted that this is **not** a problem for young Earthers. So beguiled by the assured results of geology, etc., some are not even fazed by the notion of death prior to the Fall. And as if it is not enough for death to be merely benign, some progressive creationists boldly proclaim it to be a blessing.

Dembski, Meyer and Nelson will prove to be valuable allies for readers of this journal. These three keepers of the flame will adeptly carry the torch of mentor Phillip Johnson, for they insist on setting the agenda rather than capitulating to the ideational trajectories of modernity. Their conference papers should be seen as three sides of a very formidable tripartite apologetic, which will only get stronger in the decades to come.

Plaudits should go to Christian Leadership Ministries for excellent planning and execution of the conference. Speaking for others in attendance, I find it hard to imagine it having been run more efficiently. The extension of invitations to many who swim in ponds very different from that of evangelicalism was a stroke of genius, and created an unpredictable, and therefore all the more anticipatory, mood.

Dembski is editing the conference papers, which will result in a book; one that will definitely benefit creationists. Of course the content will have to be scrutinised, and the presuppositions of this multi-authored work disambiguated for relevant material for the special creationist's apologetic arsenal.

As one example, while portions of the work of Hugh Ross could conceivably be useful, lovers of God's Word will shy away from what his position smuggles in with it:

playing fast and loose with the perspicuity of the Mosaic 'yom', death before the Fall, condescending treatment of the Flood model, dual revelation, genuflection at the altar of Big Bang cosmology, etc. While modern cosmological arguments serve some purpose, an over-enamouredness with the Anthropic Principle opens the door to 'multiple universes', and the latest fluctuations from quantum physics. Ross never clarifies where, why nor whether he refuses to follow the naturalistic trajectory to this end. His latest foray into extra-dimensionality leads to a position that is, as one MCC attendee and big bang enthusiast described it, virtually indistinguishable from Trinitarian modalism.

The Explanatory Filter, on the other hand, was one of many positive rubrics at the conference, and will bear much fruit for those who master its finer nuances. However, like its precursor, **The Creation Hypothesis** (InterVarsity Press, 1994), this upcoming book may be too 'big bang friendly' for the taste of some, and others will be disappointed that the issue of the age of the Earth continues to be relegated to the status of a 'non-issue'. But both books will prove useful, and can be read with delight by creationists of any stripe. The words in an atheist publication, toward the previous book, seem equally apropos for the forthcoming **Mere Creation**:

'If [the authors] are successful, the day will come when the editorial board of Science will convene an emergency session to decide what to do about a paper which is of the highest quality . . . of great and broad interest, and which proceeds from the prior assumption of intelligent design. For a preview of that crisis, you should read this book.' (Arthur Shapiro, **Creation/Evolution**, 14:2, Winter 1994.)

Thane Hutcherson Ury has a M. Div, and has been teaching philosophy for eight years at Bethel College, Mishawaka, Indiana. He is in his final year of doctoral studies in Systematic Theology at Andrews University, with the thesis: 'The Fossil Record and Divine Omnibenevolence: a Critical Comparison and Analysis of Post-Darwinian Concordist Responses to Paleo-Natural Evil'.