

## ***International Society for Science and Religion Statement on the Concept of 'Intelligent Design'***

*The authors of this statement constitute a group set up for the purpose by the Executive Committee of the International Society for Science and Religion. Through a process involving consultation with all members of the Society, the statement has now been accepted by the Executive Committee for publication as a statement made on behalf of the Society.*

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The International Society for Science and Religion is a scholarly society devoted to ongoing dialogue between the sciences and the community of world faiths (see [www.issr.org.uk](http://www.issr.org.uk)). It was established in 2002 for the purpose of promoting education through the support of interdisciplinary learning and research in the fields of science and religion, conducted where possible in an international and multi-faith context.

The society greatly values modern science, while deploring efforts to drive a wedge between science and religion. Science operates with a common set of methodological approaches that gives freedom to scientists from a range of religious backgrounds to unite in a common endeavor. This approach does not deny the existence of a metaphysical realm but rather opens up the natural world to a range of explorations that have been incredibly productive, especially over the last 400 years or so.

The intelligent-design (ID) movement began in the late 1980s as a challenge to the perceived secularization of the scientific community, which leaders of the movement maintained had been coloured with the philosophy of atheistic naturalism. ID theorists have focused their critique primarily on biological evolution and the neo-Darwinian paradigm. They claim that because certain biological features appear to be "irreducibly complex" and thus incapable of evolving incrementally by natural selection, they must have been created by the intervention of an intelligent designer. Despite this focus on evolution, intelligent design should not be confused with biblical or "scientific" creationism, which relies on a particular interpretation of the Genesis account of creation.

We believe that intelligent design is neither sound science nor good theology. Although the boundaries of science are open to change, allowing supernatural explanations to count as science undercuts the very purpose of science, which is to explain the workings of nature without recourse to religious language. Attributing complexity to the interruption of natural law by a divine designer is, as some critics have claimed, a science stopper. Besides, ID has not yet opened up a new research program. In the opinion of the overwhelming majority of research biologists, it has not provided examples of "irreducible complexity" in biological evolution that could not be explained as well by normal scientifically understood processes. Students of nature once considered the vertebrate eye to be too complex to explain naturally, but subsequent research has led to the conclusion that this remarkable structure can be readily understood as a product of natural selection. This shows that what may appear to be "irreducibly complex" today may be explained naturalistically tomorrow.

Scientific explanations are always incomplete. We grant that a comprehensive account of evolutionary natural history remains open to complementary philosophical, metaphysical, and religious dimensions.

Darwinian natural history does preempt certain accounts of creation, leading, for example, to the contemporary creationist and ID controversies. However, in most instances, biology and religion operate at different and non-competing levels. In many religious traditions, such as some found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, the notion of intelligent design is irrelevant. We recognize that natural theology may be a legitimate enterprise in its own right, but we resist the insistence of intelligent-design advocates that their enterprise be taken as genuine science - just as we oppose efforts of others to elevate science into a comprehensive world view (so-called scientism).

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For further reading on the subject, we recommend the following:

**By intelligent-design advocates:**

Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

William A. Dembski, *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased without Intelligence* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

John Angus Campbell and Stephen C. Meyer, eds., *Darwinism, Design, and Public Education* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004).

Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

Schönborn, Christoph Kardinal: *Ziel oder Zufall? Schöpfung und Evolution aus der Sicht eines vernünftigen Glaubens*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2007.

**By evolutionists:**

Denis Alexander and Robert S. White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics: Grid or Gridlock?* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006).

David Bartholomew *Can Intelligent Design be Established Scientifically? In: God, Chance and Purpose: Can God have it both ways?* Cambridge University Press (in press).

Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

Simon Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Richard Dawkins and Niall Schanks *God, the Devil, and Darwin. A Critique of Intelligent Design Theory* (Oxford 2007).

Karl W. Giberson and Donald A. Yerxa, *Species of Origins: America's Search for a Creation Story* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

Robert Hazen *Genesis: The Scientific Quest for Life's Origins* (2005).

Keith B. Miller, ed., *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003).

Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999).

Eugenie C. Scott, *Evolution vs. Creationism: An Introduction* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004).

*Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences*  
Second Edition (1999) National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

**By philosophers:**

Barbara Forrest and Paul R. Gross, *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Robert T. Pennock, *Tower of Babel: The Evidence against the New Creationism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

Del Ratzsch, *Nature, Design, and Science: The Status of Design in Natural Science* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

Michael Ruse, *Darwin and Design: Does Evolution Have a Purpose?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Elliott Sober, "What Is Wrong with Intelligent Design?" *Quarterly Review of Biology* 82 (2007): 3-8.

#### By historians:

Edward J. Larson, *Trial and Error: The American Controversy over Creation and Evolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Ronald L. Numbers, "Science without God: Natural Laws and Christian Beliefs," in *When Science and Christianity Meet*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 265-85.

#### By theologians:

John F. Haught, *God after Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 2000).

Ernan McMullin *Evolution as a Christian Theme Reynolds Lecture 2004*, Baylor University Publication.

Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, *Evolution from Creation to New Creation: Conflict, Conversation, and Convergence* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2003).

Christopher Schrader *Darwins Werk und Gottes Beitrag. Evolutionstheorie und Intelligent Design* (Stuttgart 2007).

#### By astronomers:

Howard J van Till, 'Are bacterial flagella intelligently designed?' *Science and Christian Belief* (2003) 15(2) 117-140.

#### Anthologies:

Nathaniel Comfort, ed., *The Panda's Black Box: Opening up the Intelligent Design Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

William Dembski and Michael Ruse, eds., *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

James B. Miller, ed., *An Evolving Dialogue: Theological and Scientific Perspectives on Evolution* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2001).

Robert T. Pennock, ed., *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

Andrew J. Petto and Laurie R. Godfrey, eds., *Scientists Confront Intelligent Design and Creationism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).

Eugenie C. Scott and Glenn Branch, eds., *Not in Our Classrooms: Why Intelligent Design Is Wrong for Our Schools* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

#### Authors

Dr. Denis Alexander

DR. DENIS ALEXANDER is the Director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, St.

Edmund's College, Cambridge, to which he was elected a Fellow in 1998. Dr Alexander is also a Senior Affiliated Scientist at The Babraham Institute, Cambridge, where he supervises a research group in cancer and immunology, and where for many years he was Chairman of the Molecular Immunology Programme and Head of the Laboratory of Lymphocyte Signalling and Development. Dr Alexander writes, lectures and broadcasts widely in the field of science and religion. Since 1992 he has been Editor of the journal *Science & Christian Belief*, and currently serves on the National Committee of Christians in Science.

**Dr. Munawar Anees**

**DR. MUNAWAR ANEES** is President of KnowSys in the USA and a writer and social critic. A biologist by training, with a doctorate from Indiana University, his contributions to the monthly "Inquiry" (London) have played a pioneering role in the Muslim dialogue of religion and science. One of his books, "Islam and Biological Futures: Ethics, Gender and Technology" has brought Muslim bioethical problems to the forefront of ethical discourse, while his co-authored book, "Christian-Muslim Relations: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" constitutes a seminal document in current interfaith dialogue.

**Professor Martinez Hewlett**

**PROFESSOR MARTINEZ HEWLETT** is an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of Arizona. Having been a distinguished molecular virologist, he took early retirement in order to focus on his philosophical and literary interests. In the science and religion field he is best known as author of "Evolution: From Creation to New Creation".

**Professor Ronald L. Numbers (chair)**

**PROFESSOR RONALD NUMBERS** is Hildale and William Coleman Professor of the History of Science and Medicine and Chair of the Department of the History of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is author or editor of more than two dozen books, including "The Creationists" (1992). "Darwinism Comes to America" (1998) and "Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion and Gender" (1999).

**Professor Holmes Rolston III**

**PROFESSOR HOLMES ROLSTON III** is University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University. A winner of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion (2003), his books include "Genes, Genesis and God" (1999), "Science and Religion: A Critical Survey", "Philosophy Gone Wild". "Environmental Ethics", and "Conserving Natural Value".

**Professor Michael Ruse**

**PROFESSOR MICHAEL RUSE** is the Lucyle T. Werkheimer Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University. Among his many books are "The Evolution-Creation Struggle", "Darwin and Design: Does Evolution have a Purpose?", "The Evolution Wars: A Guide to the Debate", and "Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? - The Relationship Between Science and Religion".

**Professor Jeffrey Schloss**

**PROFESSOR JEFFREY SCHLOSS** is Professor and Chair of Biology at Westmont College, Santa Barbara. Recent projects have included a collaborative volume, "Altruism and Altruistic Love: Philosophy and Religion in Dialogue", a two volume project, from the Journal of Psychology and Theology, focusing on evolutionary and theological perspectives on personhood, and a forthcoming co-edited book entitled "Evolution and Ethics: Scientific and Theological Perspectives on Natural Good".