

February 12, 2005

'Intelligent Design'

To the Editor:

In "Design for Living" (Op-Ed, Feb. 7), Michael J. Behe quoted me, recalling how I discovered that "the chemistry that makes life possible is much more elaborate and sophisticated than anything we students had ever considered" some 40 years ago. Dr. Behe then paraphrases my 1998 remarks that "the entire cell can be viewed as a factory with an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines."

That I was unaware of the complexity of living things as a student should not be surprising. In fact, the majestic chemistry of life should be astounding to everyone. But these facts should not be misrepresented as support for the idea that life's molecular complexity is a result of "intelligent design." To the contrary, modern scientific views of the molecular organization of life are entirely consistent with spontaneous variation and natural selection driving a powerful evolutionary process.

In evolution, as in all areas of science, our knowledge is incomplete. But the entire success of the scientific enterprise has depended on an insistence that these gaps be filled by natural explanations, logically derived from confirmable evidence. Because "intelligent design" theories are based on supernatural explanations, they can have nothing to do with science.

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Washington, Feb. 9, 2005