

## Review – “Overstatements and Imperfect Machines...”

### Summary

(Paragraph 1) Behe and other supporters of Intelligent Design (ID) point to the flagellum as an example of an irreducibly complex (IC) function. However, their portrayal of the flagellum is inaccurate, and there are reasons for this. (Paragraph 2) Behe mentions mousetraps as systems which are irreducibly complex, but Professor John McDonald pointed out that they are reducibly complex. (Paragraph 3) Despite evidence from ID supporters, flagella are not as symmetrical as ID supporters make them out to be. (Paragraph 4) The semblance to machinery is used by ID supporters as evidence, since the phrase “machine”, when taken out of a scientific context, seems to imply a creator of some sort. (Paragraph 5) The flagellum argument is similar to William Paley’s Technological argument. (Paragraph 6) The images used by ID activists are selected to portray flagella as machine-like as possible. (Paragraph 7) The counter arguments against ID’s arguments may not be effective because people often have unshakable radical beliefs. (Paragraph 8) ID’s official position refuses to name the designer in question, making them approachable by people of all religious beliefs. The theory is very loosely scientific if at all, and actually resembles more creationism. (Paragraph 9) The position of ID, even when based off of the bacterial flagellum for evidence, is flawed and the support for it is purposefully skewed.

### Paragraph 1

- Unnecessary information
  - o The timeline of how ID activists came to use the bacterial flagellum as evidence for their position seems unrelated to your thesis.
- Awkward format
  - o “This paper will seek to discuss...” The blatant declaration of the paper’s contents is consistent with a scientific journal article, but this tone is not kept throughout the paper. The easier solution would be to integrate this sentence into the context of the paragraph.
  - o “Could it be...” and “How plausible is it...” are questions which the author spends the rest of the paper discussing. Rather than asking the reader, who should not know or else the paper would be unnecessary, the author should state his own view to give the paper a direction and a point to transition off of.
- Biased statement

- o “Could it be...” comes off as a rhetorical question. The author’s stance is clearly against ID, and so the answer to the question seems, to the reader, quite obvious according to the author.

### Paragraph 2

- Unnecessary paragraph
  - o As previously discussed (check under header “Paragraph 1”) the chronology of the argument does not seem necessary to the author’s thesis, and the author would benefit from tightening the breadth of the evidence given to make the paper more cohesive.

### Paragraph 3

- Biased statement
  - o “Real flagella” implies that the images used by ID activists are not genuine. From the evidence presented, it seems more that the images used by the ID activists do not accurately characterize the common flagellum.
- Unsupported claims
  - o “...the bacterial flagellum has become the standard...” requires a source or evidence. A more supportable claim would be that some ID supporters choose to use the flagellum.
  - o “Real flagella...” requires a source or evidence.
  - o “Some of these images are...” requires a source or evidence.
- Awkward phrasing
  - o “The flagellum is a...” and “it plays a key part” could be combined into one sentence. The sentence lengths for the two are uniquely short and draw some attention away from the content of the sentences.

### Paragraph 4

- Unsupported claims
  - o “These images are used specifically...” requires a source or evidence.
  - o “ID advocates argue...” requires a source or evidence.
- Awkward phrases

- o “It may be that...” avoids having the claim be unsupported, but now the statement is unprofessional and purely speculative in nature. Thus, it detracts from the power that the paper could have.
- Ambiguous phrases
  - o “It may be...” introduces an unnecessary ambiguous pronoun.
  - o “... really are biological machines...” leaves ambiguous the actual content of this statement, as the author just discussed how the word “machine” could be used to purposefully misconstrue the meaning and gave two different contexts.

#### Paragraph 5

- Biased statement
  - o “It is hard to avoid...” is the reader’s own subjective view of the argument, and should be removed from the paper in order to make it more professional.

#### Paragraph 6

- Awkward transition
  - o The connection between this paragraph and the last is a bit obscure. The author should instead mention that the flagella are not machine-like, but the images used by ID activists are misleading
  - o This paragraph seems to have more in connection to paragraph 3, and the transition between those two paragraphs would probably be more natural.
- Unsupported claims
  - o “However, none of the images” requires a source or evidence. This is an incredibly difficult claim to support, however, since that would require the author, or a source, to have examine every example every put forth. Making the statement less generalized would remedy this.
  - o “There are in fact...” requires a source or evidence.
- Biased statement
  - o “So why are these images not used?” is rhetorical since the author already has stated his position of this question. Therefore, the statement only removes professionalism from the paper.
- Unclear statement

- o “ID advocates benefit...” implies that if the comparison with designed machines would not lose its strength, ID activists would not benefit from comparing flagella to machines. The two parts to this statement do not seem to relate to one another in that respect.

### Paragraph 7

- Biased statement
  - o “only a cursory examination” implies that there are many other flaws to be made if the argument were properly pursued, and that the paper has not properly pursued the issue. Both of these implications are detrimental to the paper.
  - o “there is no reason” generalized the conclusions of the author’s source. The author has evidence to believe that the arguments will not be recognized, but the author cannot say there is no reason to believe that they will be recognized.
  - o “some rather incredible things” injects too much opinion into the statement. Unless that phrase was specifically said by the source, it should not be used. Otherwise, it should be put in quotations.
- Awkward phrase
  - o “what does this say about...” reveals the author as having not pursued this question. If that is truly the question that one should get after reading the source, then the author should make a claim to the question rather than leaving it open ended.

### Paragraph 8

- Unsupported claims
  - o “most ID supporters” requires a source or evidence. The claim that is supported by the author’s evidence is that “some” ID supporters refuse to name the designer.
  - o “ID campaigners appear to be...” requires a source or evidence.
  - o “ID also appears attractive...” requires a source or evidence.
  - o “ID has also been unforthcoming...” requires a source or evidence. The statement generalizes to the point that the author cannot support such a definitive stance.
  - o “they have yet to even allude...” requires a source or evidence. The statement generalizes to the point that the author cannot support such a definitive stance.

- o “Overall, ID attacks...” requires a source or evidence.
- Awkward format
  - o “ID campaigners... .. if one is willing...” are two separate ideas, and should either be connected with a transitional phrase (e.g. because, since, etc.) or separated into two separate sentences.
  - o “ID can be manipulated to be...” uses the passive voice when there is an obvious subject in this phrase.
- Unclear statement
  - o “Behe has offered no concrete alternate solution” implies that Behe has offered a solution himself. This solution, or the context for the solution, has not been elucidated by the author.

### Paragraph 9

- Awkward phrase
  - o “may be just as flawed” indicates that the author has not taken a definitive stance on this question. However, if the author raises this question, then he must answer it. However, it does not seem important to the paper.
  - o “There is evidence to suggest...” is a statement meant for a body paragraph. The author should have already justified the conclusion, and thus does not need to mention that there is evidence; only the conclusion.
- Unclear statement
  - o “Issues with the portrayal...” If the subject of the statement is the “issues with the portrayal” then the author should refer to them more directly. Also, what are the alternative methods?
- Biased statement
  - o “well backed up” is subjective.
- Unsupported claim
  - o “ID advocates appear more interested...” is not what the paper’s evidence has centered on, and so the author should not present this conclusion in the concluding paragraph.

### General comments (things that need improvement)

Many of the author's statements are unjustified and require either a source or evidence. Not many of the paper's conclusions require said unsupported statements, so their removal would not be a large detriment to the paper. However, the scope of the author's paper would reduce substantially. A large problem was that the statements were too generalized, whereas if the author focused only on addressing Behe's particular position, then Behe's book could be used as a readily accessible source and the sentences could be tweaked to be true.

The author's tone in the paper is caustic towards ID, as shown by the biased statements that were pointed out. The paper's professionalism and credibility suffers when the author uses this perspective. The author should keep in mind that a specific point should be addressed, and raising general suspicion against the ID activists is unwarranted.

The point of parallelism between the ID argument and the Technological Argument is very interesting and should be explored more deeply.

### General comments (things to preserve)

There are very few, if any, grammatical or spelling errors.

The perspective of the paper is very interesting.