



# Michael Behe: Kafka at the Dover Trial

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<https://peacefulscience.org/articles/dover-behe/>



**P**at Flynn moderated the exchange on the Dover Trial on his podcast. He generously released the video to Peaceful Science, and released [the audio in his podcast](#).

The Dover Trial was fifteen years ago. Michael Behe is a Catholic biochemist, and he was one of the star witnesses in the trial advocating Intelligent Design. Scientists do not usually find themselves in court rooms. The whole experience would certainly have been disorienting for me.

In this exchange, moderated by guest, Behe gives us his take on the Trial. Here is how he puts it:

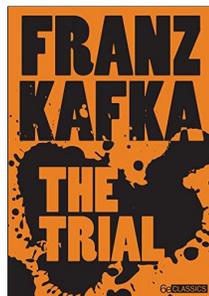
By the time the whole thing was finished I had a lot more sympathy for the protagonist of Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial*, and a much sharper understanding of the term Kafkaesque: "Marked by surreal distortion." On reflection I've concluded that it pretty much didn't matter what I said on the stand, nor what any of the other expert witnesses on either side said. The outcome of the case was decided long before the trial began. It was decided when the hoopla started, when the media cast the whole affair in terms of stereotypical heroes and villains, and when the judge consulted old Hollywood films for better perspective. A courtroom is no place to discuss intellectual issues.

Behe, Michael J. *A Mousetrap for Darwin*. Discovery Institute Press, in press.

Read [the plot of the novel at Wikipedia](#). Kafka's trial certainly was surreal.

I am a computational biologist, and now find myself a friendly critic of Intelligent Design. Fifteen years ago, however, I was not sure where I stood. The Dover Trial was one of the central and defining events of my time in graduate school. So this was a remarkable opportunity for me, a chance to talk directly with one of the key participants in this moment of history.

Mike and I certainly have our disagreements. Nathan H. Lents, Richard



Lenski, and I reviewed his last book, *Darwin Devolves*, a couple years ago. It was not a positive review. But I actually agree with Behe on more than most people expect. Still, in the end, *Intelligent Design* looks like a "garden path" to me.

The tension between our agreement, on the one hand, and our disagreement, on the other, makes conversation with Mike exciting for me. We are both Christians that believe God created humans through a providentially governed process of common descent. We also do not see clear biochemical evidence for God's guidance in human evolution. So where exactly do we disagree? Honestly, on human evolution, I am not exactly sure. Maybe you can help us figure out that puzzle.

The exchange in this conversation was fun. We discussed Irreducible Complexity too. I explain why I'm not convinced by his argument, and Behe agreed to give look at and respond to what I've written about [this in the past](#). We wondered about the meaning of Darwinism, and tussled over the right understanding of "exaptation."

For all our public disagreements, and there are many, Mike was very kind to me. He agreed to read my book sometime soon, and let us know what he thinks. I am looking forward to hearing what he thinks, I really am. The Dover Trial was a flash point of conflict, but this dialogue certainly seemed like peaceful science.

Earlier this year, Mike and I dialogued at Texas A&M University. If you missed that exchange, the video is available now. Though, in all honesty, hearing about the Dover Trial from Mike was a treat. Kafkaesque indeed.

## References

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