Proper Tribute
Your article on “Creative License” was great. Interestingly, it alluded to the importance of “license” — properly used of course. It was correct (as correct as one can be) in its reference to the grandiose issues circling the environs of science and religion, and was commendable for the copious tributes to the past professor at Penn, Loren Eiseley — a wonderful teacher who knew how to illuminate his subject with fairness and sagacity. His thoughtfulness included a keen perceptiveness regarding life and its vagaries. Your reference to him as a “literary stylist” was appropriate. The article caught the essential importance of both science and religion — both being relevant to today’s thinking.

Rosario Quatrochi, CCC’55
Hinsdale, Ill.

Irreducible Complexity
I propose a few words for intelligent design in reply to “Creative License.” Intelligent design does not deny that the appearance of present life forms took place over a long time. Sniegowsksi and Weisberg describe it as creeping creationism. So? If natural phenomena show complexity that is, at this point, “irreducible,” acknowledging there might be a creator seems to be the intelligent approach. The issue in question is the statistical likelihood of the appearance of life forms that at this point appear to be irreducibly complex — life forms where natural selection will not preserve functional intermediates.

Albert McGlynn, C’67

Micro- v. Macroevolution
After digesting “Creative License,” I found it appropriate to point out the two very different views of evolution. Microevolution describes a process of change within a species, but a horse is still a horse. Scientists have observed microevolution. Macroevolution is another story. Macroevolution requires the transfer of genetic information to a higher, more complex classification. More than 100 years of geology have yet to unearth the first fish-with-legs fossil. Macroevolution remains an unproven theory to this very day.

John Shirk, C’83
Ocean City, N.J.

Questionable Hypothesis
Indebtedness to my linguistics teachers at Penn makes me want to disagree with Michael Weisberg’s approach to the Dover school board’s policy on teaching about life’s origins. Professor Henry Hoenigswald was careful to draw distinctions between the structure of languages and their origins. The structure is open to scientific investigation in an unproblematic way to the extent that the language is alive. But the history of a language’s development is hypothetical because of insufficient data for reconstructing earlier stages.

In the argument about evolution, some scientists are saying that studies of the development and origin of life should be clearly marked in publications as hypothetical. It is a mistake to award the same level of confidence to reconstructed forms as it is to the observed structure of current life forms. Yet Weisberg believes that the soundness of evolutionary theory is beyond controversy and that “for the last 75 years there has been full scientific consensus.” Moreover, he has excluded as heretics scientists who question claims evolutionary theorists have recently made, which guarantees his alleged “consensus.”

Many interpretations may be sponsored by the same data, especially if that corpus is severely restricted, as is the case with ancestral life forms and ancestral forms of a language. In the marketplace of ideas, marshalling arguments for one interpretation over another is honorable and fair. “Creative License” did not even attempt that. It was inquisitonal in spirit and substance.

Kent Gordon, G’77
Jefferson, N.H.