

## **The Design Argument for the Existence of God**

### **Continued**

#### 3) *Weaknesses of the Design Argument*

The Teleological argument for the existence of God is an inductive argument. Already we can see by the fact that it is an inductive argument that it has its flaws and that it has its weaknesses. The conclusion is not contained within its premises. This infers that the premises do not fully support the conclusion; therefore the argument is not a solid argument, leaving room for many weaknesses. This is illustrated best by Richard Swinburne in his writing 'The Quest for Eternity'. He states that at best the Design Argument is possible or probable, but by no means is it a certainty; what the Design Argument does is to serve to increase the probability of God's existence. The logic is sound but the argument is weak because there are other possible conclusions.

One of these other possible conclusions is put forward by David Hume in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion in 1779. Through the character of Philo, Hume puts forward his first argument. This is that like effects imply like causes, so we end up with a caricature of God. However he also has a second argument; that it is possible that the universe arose by chance. The argument accepts that the world is orderly – it behaves in an incredibly orderly manner. Natural laws operate consistently and we can discover them and work with them. He agrees that few would deny the order in the cosmos, but order does not necessarily imply a designer. The crucial issue is whether the step can be made from order to design. If it cannot as suggested by Philo, then the order in the cosmos does not mean that a designer (God) created it. Therefore this takes apart one of the premises of the design argument, and consequently making the argument unstable.

Hume also argues that if the Design Argument is valid, then what it does is to prove a designer; but not his nature, which is a key point. Here the Design Argument has a definite weakness; because the whole point of the argument it is to prove the God of Classical Theism. There are many possibilities for this designer of the cosmos. The designer could be female or male; there could be many designers/ deities and so forth. Hume puts his argument, and the one his personal viewpoint follows through the character of Philo. Philo states that we should postulate many gods rather than one. He uses the analogy that many men co-operate in building a boat, just like many deities could co-operate to build the cosmos.

Another downfall of the Teleological Argument is the danger it falls into of anthropomorphism. The argument depends on there being close analogies between the creator of something within the world and the creation of the world as a whole. The more dissimilarities are argued between human construction and the world the weaker the argument by analogy becomes. This however needs to be done because the stronger the analogies, the stronger the anthropomorphic view of God that emerges is. The argument

assumes that God would design as a human designer would; for example William Paley's famous analogy of the watch and the watchmaker. The analogy is assuming that the designer of the cosmos - God would design like the watch designer. This gives God a human image. This cannot be the Classical Theistic concept of God, which is the concept of God on which all monotheistic religions agree. This God has 5 distinct qualities they are:

1. Incorporeal
2. Omnipotence
3. Omniscience
4. Omnipresence
5. Omnibenevolence

So clearly here the teleological argument shows a great weakness by giving God human characteristics and comparing God to a human.

Another weakness of the argument is the Epicurean Hypothesis written by the Greek philosopher Epicurius in 341-270BC. It argues that at the time of creation the universe consisted of particles in random motion. This initial state was chaotic, but gradually the natural forces evolved into an ordered system. The universe is eternal and, in this unlimited time, it was inevitable that a constantly ordered state would develop. The stability and order is not the result of a divine designer but of random particles coming together through time to form the current stable cosmos. In short the hypothesis states that order will always follow chaos. It is quite possible that the cosmos was chaotic originally, and has settled down to the orderly world we live in now without the need for an intelligent designer.

Then there is the weakness that science puts forth. This is the principle by Charles Darwin in his book 'Origin of the Species by Natural Selection.' His book challenged the Design Argument, as it revolutionized thinking about the way in which species, including human beings, developed – hence evolution. Darwin has provided an alternative explanation for the design of the world, without reference to relation by God. He offered a mechanical explanation for the development of life, in which natural selection took place. His argument is that random variations take place which gave the best advantage to a plant or animal in the struggle for survival. Resulting in the survival of the plant or animal, with the best adaptations through mutation of genes. This is where the phrase by Herbert Spencer comes from 'the survival of the fittest.' The philosopher Richard Dawkins in his book *The Blind Watchmaker* supports Darwinian evolution and rejects God. Dawkins argues that natural selection gave the appearance of design, and that this led to the mistaken belief that there was a designer. Dawkins' view is that the hypothesis of God is entirely superfluous and that order is due to natural selection alone.

#### 4) Do the Strengths outweigh the Weaknesses?

The Design Argument is undeniably a lovely argument, even the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his writings 'Critique of pure reason' who was completely against the Design Argument could not deny that the argument was most appealing saying that it "*deserves to be mentioned with respect.*" The argument is simple following the principle of Ockams Razor, which makes it clear and 'user-friendly' making it popular argument. But after the strengths and weaknesses have been considered the ultimate question is do the strengths outweigh the weaknesses? But my answer would be that it depends on the person. This argument would not still be here after countless philosophers have argued it for centuries; if the argument was so easy to answer. It would be either proven or contradicted.

The philosopher David Hunt in 1996 argues that "*faith without evidence is irrational. Evidence points in the direction of which faith must go.*" The design argument offers exactly this, some evidence on which people can apply their faith in a rational way. Hume argued that all conclusions come from experiences; therefore they are "effects of custom, not of reasoning." So effectively Hume argues that faith and therefore the design argument for the existence of God will only be believed by the people who have experienced him or brought up to believe in him.

However the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in around 1840 argued that faith develops not as a consequence of evidence, but can only result from a decision to believe regardless the possible lack of evidence. The Teleological Argument therefore, as suggested by Kierkegaard, is only going to be believed and accepted by the people who decide to believe and have faith, even though the argument provides evidence. So clearly there is a problem here for the argument if Kierkegaard is correct. This is because the argument is based on finding evidence from the cosmos to prove the existence of God. But if faith develops only from the decision to believe not whether there is evidence or not, then this limits how successful the Design Argument is.

William James adopted a similar approach which he termed 'the will to believe.' Whilst the scientific line requires objectivity and neutrality, we do not apply this to every aspect of our lives and there are times when we allow what we hope and fear to influence what we choose to believe, rather than insisting upon vigorous testing of our beliefs. This argument is backed by Kierkegaard's concept of the 'leap of faith.' Arguing that the only way that God and the Design Argument could be proven was if God physically showed himself for all to see. But because this can't happen; the design argument shows there is a probability of God existing and that it comes down to people taking that final 'leap of faith,' to accept his existence.

So in Conclusion I have come to the viewpoint that the Design Argument is a great one. It follows simplicity making the argument comprehensible for all. However I don't believe that I or anybody else can actually come to the definite conclusion that the Design Argument is correct or incorrect. After all this argument dates back to the time of the Ancient Greeks and Socrates, but yet nobody has found a conclusive answer with no flaws. This argument is about proving the existence of God through the design shown through out the cosmos. However like most arguments trying to prove the existence of God, the final issue comes down to the person's personal beliefs. As Hunt said "*believing is not the same as seeing.*" For the person who believes in God, it may well be just as good as seeing God. But the problem lies that belief cannot be proven for others were seeing can. After all faith can only result from a decision to believe, as indicated by Kierkegaard. So if that person does not have the 'will to believe' and will not make that 'leap of faith.' Then the Design Argument will never prove the existence of God. But for the person that does. The Design Argument will be all the evidence they may need.