

How Convincing is the Design Argument?

The teleological argument is a prosteriori argument, evidence can be found all around us, it is natural and common for humans to marvel and wonder at the incredible design in the world, this therefore makes the arguments premises easily understandable. Even Hume, one of the main critics of the design argument, acknowledged that 'a purpose, an intention, a design strikes everywhere (even) the most stupid thinker...'

Tennant's aesthetic argument argued that the universe is more than orderly; it possesses natural beauty, 'Nature is not just beautiful in places; it is saturated with beauty-on the telescopic and microscopic scale.' This supports Newton's theory that 'the most elegant system of the sun, planets and comets could not have arisen without the design and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.' Newton's idea rejects the argument that scientific discoveries dismiss the existence of God but only further proves that there is an intelligent designer, God. Hume argues that if the observer sees order and regularity in the world, all this proves is that there is order and regularity in the world.

The anthropic principle proposes that the reason and purpose of the universe's existence is the support of human life, the universe was specifically developed for us. The features of order and purpose in the universe could be explained as the result of one huge coincidence, chance. Darwin deals a blow to the argument with his theory of evolution as this showed the world could change and evolve freely without the need of an external force, we merely exist today because the right conditions for our existence came about in the past. James Lovelock and his GAIA hypothesis support this, arguing the world is more like a 'self-regulating organism' which changes and adapts with the environment. However the archbishop temple 1884 stated 'the doctrine of evolution can leave the argument for an intelligent creator and governor of the earth stronger than it was before.'

One of the main arguments against the Design argument is the evidence of poor design in the world, natural disasters, famine, disease. Hume argues that either there is no designer of the designer is a poor one and certainly not benevolent or omnipotent. That we question whether this world is beautiful and harmonious is evidence against a designer and rejects the notion that God has the benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient attributes. Paley's response to this argument was that even if the watch we found was faulty, we would still assume it was designed due to its complexity. This parallels with the universe (not perfect but still very ordered). However this does still not explain why there are flaws within in the world if God possesses these attributes. If the world was designed why stop at a designer? Who designed the designer? Why not infinite regress?

Hume argued that the analogy drawn between human design and those of nature was flawed; they do not resemble each other sufficiently enough for us to conclude that they have similar causes. We could use for example a vegetable and analogy that the world could be caused by something similar to generation or vegetation, some inner self regulation and growth. The analogy relies on things created within human history, the world around us which has its origins outside human history. The analogy also makes God human like, the more you press the analogy, the more human God becomes. Hume argues the even if the argument were to reveal a creator, it does not tell us about the creator, which refers back to the argument why stop at just one creator?

A.J Ayer argues that the world is bound to have the appearance of the design by the very fact that we are here, we cannot compare to a designed world to one that isn't designed because we do not have one. To speak of a designed universe is meaningless unless we can say what the world would be like without design, we cannot reach the conclusion that the world is designed.

As with all a prosteriori arguments, the evidence can be interpreted differently by differently by different people, the argument can be seen as valid by many people, evidence can easily be found all around us and there of course man wonders in the world. However the argument becomes flawed if we too see, the 'evil' in the world such as disease. The argument does also not explain how we can come to the conclusion of a solo designer and the Darwinian Theory delivers a real blow to the whole argument.