

The Design Argument

In this essay I intend to look at the Design Argument in depth. I will outline the key features of the Design Argument, looking at the historical aspects, the modern version (including the anthropic principle) and the important people in the Argument for Design, such as William Paley and David Hume. I will then examine the strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate.

The Design Argument is also known as the Teleological Argument coming from the Greek word 'telos' meaning 'end' or 'purpose'. It is a form of natural theology based on reason rather than special revelation. Its basis is on the evidence of design that people can see in the world around them.

The biblical writers assume that the world exhibits order and design and is the 'handiwork' of the Creator (God). Quote: 'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse'.

The Argument from Design originated with Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas said that nature points to the notion of order in that things seem to have an innate sense of purpose/design. We know that nothing that has purpose does so without the aid of a 'guiding hand' (He used the example of an archer shooting an arrow at a target), thus everything in nature is directed to its goal by God. Aquinas's formation of the Design Argument here is slightly different from the traditional view as presented by William Paley. Aquinas agrees that there is order and purpose in the world but adds to this that inanimate objects (E.g. Planets), could not have ordered themselves, lacking the intelligence to do so, and so have been ordered by a Being with intelligence who could, which would be God.

William Paley is undoubtedly one of the most important people in the history of the Design Argument. He published the most famous form of the argument in 1802, twenty-three years after David Hume's critiques.

Paley's argument evolved around analogy. He asks us to consider what we would think if we came across a watch while walking across a desert. We could fairly assume that such a complex design adapted to the purpose of showing the time did not come about by chance, but was the result of an intelligent design from a designer. Paley said that the universe is like a watch, and that it is clearly designed, even if we do not know its exact purpose. The universe must have been brought into existence by an intelligent designer. This designer (creator) is God.

Paley did not believe if one had never seen a watch before, if the watch was broken or if we did not understand all the workings of the watch, would undermine his analogy. Paley did not believe the universe could appear by chance as a result of, 'one of many possible material forms'.

In the modern day, the Anthropic Principle has become a modern version of the Design Argument. Tennant developed the anthropic principle in 1930. The argument accepts the existence of God and Darwin's evolution theory. It states that how even a slight change in the way the world is made up then intelligent life would have been unlikely to develop. This theory is often labeled 'the new design theory'.

Tennant argued that there were 3 types of natural evidence in the world to favor a natural designer:

- The world can be analysed in a rational manner.
- The fact and way in which the inorganic world sustains life.
- The fact that evolution has moved towards intelligent life.

The Design Arguments main strength is of being based on empirical observation rather than the abstract reasoning found in arguments like the ontological argument, and, to a lesser extent, the cosmological argument. The evidence that supports the Design argument can be seen in the world around us.

This argument is simple to understand. It is very logical and has value since humans are designers by nature and it is natural to think in terms of things having purpose.

It is also strong because it is consistent with Scripture:

Quote: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

The Bible states that we are *made* in God's image. Therefore, there are certain things that we will respond to.

Also, evolutionists have *difficulty* accounting for apparent design in objects like the eye, the heart, and the brain where *many different* parts come together to *form* the whole thing. These *individual* parts have no purpose except in the *function* of the whole thing. *How* can evolution account for these *detailed similar* occurrences? So far no one has.

There are *many criticisms* and weaknesses of the design argument. The *most strong* of which come from David Hume and Charles Darwin (Theory of Evolution)

Hume takes some of the Design Arguments key points to a logical conclusion to make them unacceptable to the Christian believer.

His best argument was of the inappropriate analogy. He said the strength of an argument depends on the similarity between things held to be analogous. The greater the similarity, the stronger the argument, and vice versa. Hume said the analogy of the watch and the world by Paley was of two analogies far apart, and completely unlike each other. He also said that analogy makes God more human than divine and also leads to a non-moral God due to unpleasant features of nature, e.g. earthquakes.

Hume often did not directly disagree with the idea, but questioned its likelihood, by suggesting other possibilities. For example he said there is also no reason to assume that God is One. It could be that there were many gods involved in the creation of the world just as many people are involved in the production of certain man-made things. The belief that the world was created by the Christian God let alone any other god is an assumption and cannot be ultimately proved to be either true or false. He also said how, 'This world... is faulty and imperfect, it is possible that this was the result of a first attempt of some lesser God.'

Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution/Natural Selection is important as it gives an explanation to what has happened that does not include God.

The theory is that animals with the fittest genes (those which best suit its environment) survive and others are wiped out, hence giving the effect/image of

evolution over generations as they adapt to the precise conditions in which they live.

There is no place for any designer, for God, in this theory.

Darwin said that things such as the complex structure of the eye evolved as a progression of slight improvements in answer to anti-evolutionists argument that things such as the eye are too complicated too have evolved.

In conclusion, I side with the critics of the design argument. I think that its key arguments are too easily picked apart and turned against it such as in the way which Hume did so. In my opinion as well, the universe and a watch are too dissimilar to be used to argue such a point.

I also think that it has very little in defense against the theory of evolution/ natural selection. The defense that complex structures such as the eye could not have evolved lacks foundations and I think that there is enough evidence of time in which a gradual progression of slight improvements (as Darwin said) could have lead to the evolution of the eye.