

Preparation for A-Level : Philosophy Evaluation of the Design Argument

Remember this is A-Level work, it is difficult and it is ok if you do not fully understand it. It often takes several lessons with a teacher to understand it so working on your own may be difficult but give it a go.

RECAP

The design argument can be summarised as follows....

1. certain phenomena within the universe appear to have been designed in so far as they are perfectly adapted to fulfil their function e.g. human eye is so complex and perfectly designed for seeing.
2. Such design could not have come about by chance and can only be explained by an **intelligent, personal designer**.
3. The **only possible explanation** for such as designer is God.

Conclude: God must exist

Strengths of the Design Argument

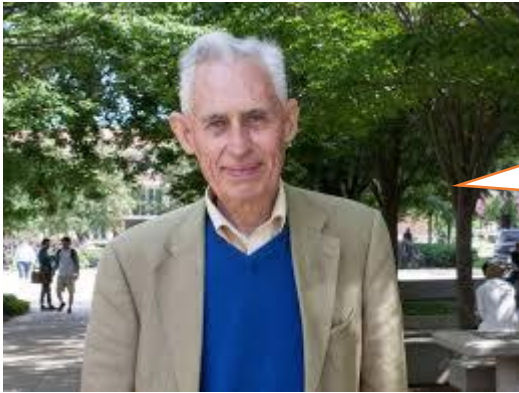
It is a posteriori. This means that it is based on experience and so everyone has access to the examples that are used to support the argument.

It uses a variety of evidence. The argument appeals to not only features of the natural world that appeal to have a purpose but also to the probability of intelligent life occurring and the existence of beauty. Thus, evolution might offer a convincing alternative for one such feature but not all. Further, all this evidence might be combined into a stronger cumulative design argument.

It fits with Christian scripture. "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." (Romans 1:20).

It offers a much richer account of the universe. The appeal to an intelligent designer that had the desire and ability to create a universe offers a fuller explanation of the universe than 'chance' or natural selection. We can always ask 'who designed evolution?' or 'why is it all down to chance?' and there is no apparent answer whereas we would want to create a stable, organised world for his creatures to live in successfully.

It fits with science. The more science expands the more we learn about the intricate structure of the universe and thus the more evidence that can be used in the design argument.



Richard Swinburn, in his book *Is there a God?* 1966, "The very success of science in showing us how deeply orderly the natural world is, provides strong grounds for believing that there is an even deeper cause of that order"

Weaknesses of the Design Argument

David Hume

Hume is a very famous Scottish atheist. He lived in the 18th century.

Below are some of the criticisms Hume put forward to suggest the design argument cannot be correct and isn't convincing proof of God's existence...

Problem of Induction:

This argument suggests that "like effects do not always have like causes". This means that just because both the world and a watch are complex and work with some regularity does not mean both must be designed. Even though a watch needs a watch maker doesn't mean the world needs a "world maker".

Problem of Anthropomorphism:

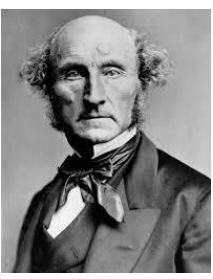
This argument suggest that philosophers like Aquinas and Paley are comparing God to a human which is wrong as God isn't like a human if He does exist.

God's infinite and perfect nature are gone if we compare God (the designer of the world) to a finite and imperfect human watch designer.

Problem of Analogies:

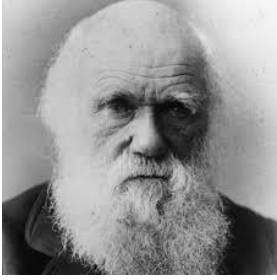
Comparing things in nature, to a man-made machine is an un-sound (weak) analogy. It is not reasonable to make such a comparison.





Mill
19th Century
Philosopher &
Political thinker

John Stewart Mill suggested that a benevolent (all-loving), omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful) God would not allow evil and suffering. It is clear that this world has a lot of natural and moral evil in it, we experience this and it is undeniable. Surely if God had these powerful and loving characteristics that Christians think he does the world wouldn't be this way. Therefore either the world is not designed ,or it is not designed by the God of classical Theism (Christian God).



Darwin
19th Century
Biologist

Charles Darwin believed that things appear to be ordered with a specific purpose are not designed but instead have come about through evolution and natural selection.

For example the human eye works with purpose (to see) and is complex but actually evolution explains how the human body changed over time. Whilst humans were evolving if they couldn't see they wouldn't have been able to survive so natural selection and evolution explains these examples of complex design.

The world is not designed for human life but is actually human life is adapted to fit the world.



Dawkins
Evolutionary
Biologist.
Still alive today

Richard Dawkins: labelled Paley's watchmaker the 'blind watchmaker' when he suggested that the forces of physics can explain what appear like design. Really we are just "grotesquely lucky" and what appears to be designed is just the forces of physics at work. E.g. the eye is not designed it has evolved with physical processes to work for sight.



Ayer
20th Century
Philosopher

A J Ayer states that we have no experience of another world which has or has not been designed therefore we cannot know for certain this world has been designed. If we observed the world being designed that would be different but because we didn't we can never know.

Youtube "Mr McMillanREvis Design Argument 2"

Watch from 4.45 until the end. Make sure you are watching is Part 2 video



The Design Argument (2 of 2) | by MrMcMillanREvis

MrMcMillanREvis • 76K views • 6 years ago

An introduction to the Design Argument designed for people studying Philosophy of Religion at AS/A2 Level. Part 1 vid

Tasks

Remember this is A-Level work, it is difficult and it is ok if you do not fully understand it at this point.

1. Read this sheet carefully
2. Watch the video and make notes on key criticisms of the idea that God designed the world.
3. Have a go at trying to answer these questions in a sentence or two.
4. Read each of the strengths of the design argument – do you find one makes the argument sound convincing?
5. On the sheet are four different philosopher's and their arguments. Carefully read each. Each criticism is trying to suggest that the God Christians believe in could not have designed the world.
 - A. Order the philosophers by name from most convincing to least
 - B. Which criticism do you think is most convincing and why?
 - C. Can you come up with any counter arguments to the criticisms (i.e. can you think of how a Christian might defend their faith when debating this topic with the philosophers above)?
6. Do you think the design argument is a good argument or not? Create an informative poster, leaflet or speech that summarises both side of the argument and convinces readers/listeners that your view is the right one.