

DOES THE PHILOSOPHER'S DESIGN ARGUMENT THAT GOD CLEARLY DESIGNED THE UNIVERSE AND US WORK?

The argument that God is not the universe but its maker and thus responsible for its design is an interesting one and has been adored by many philosophers and laughed at by others. The notion that God had no maker but makes all things is what is meant by calling God a necessary being.

ASSUMES A NECESSARY BEING

Norris Clarke argues that since all parts of the universe are necessary for the rest and everything depends on everything else in the universe there must be a designer who is outside the universe for no part of the universe could be self-sufficient when it is not the cause of the whole system. The designer is not part of the universe for he is self-sufficient and we know he exists because only he could have made things that were not self-sufficient but which were able to exist and be orderly (page 63, Handbook of Christian Apologetics). But the universe is made up of parts that can exist without the other parts. If the whole universe ceased to exist and the sun alone was left there would be no problem. So all can be done here then is to fall back on the necessary being argument. It is dishonest for Clarke to give a new argument that is inseparable from the necessary being one as if there are two arguments and not one which makes the case for God look stronger.

DESIGNED WHAT - THE UNIVERSE OR ITS APPEARANCE?

Something that appears to be designed is either really designed or just seems to be. Or it is a mixture of both.

All designed things might be just things that look designed but are not. But if you assume things need a design you will hold that appearances need to be designed too. It takes more design to make it look like a mess is designed than it is to simply just organise the mess. God makes it look like his fancy handiwork is not anybody's handiwork and the universe is getting more un-designed. It does not want us to know for sure if there is real design not just a lookalike design. Design then means that if there is design it is cosmetic. It is a make-up job. Is that the kind of designer believers want? It would mean that whatever the designer is, it is not a sensible rational God. The make-up could be a mask for incompetence so it not fit to be called a God at all.

IS THERE AN INTELLIGENT DESIGNER LIKE A GOD?

Some say:

We believe that it is obvious that the universe and living beings have been intelligently designed.

Atheists rationalise the design away. That is like seeing hearing the sound of your dog playing with his squeaky toy and deciding that it was the wind. Take the evidence at face value. Rationalisations are dangerous for they blind you to the obvious.

Nobody can make us in the laboratory. Nobody can make life. They can't even restore a plant to life that was alive moments ago even though they have what they think is the raw materials.

The argument is less impressive when one realises that it only says the creation was designed but can only speculate regarding who or what the designer was. Every explanation about the design one is going to sound strange so why favour the strange explanation of God over the other possibilities?

To assume that an intelligence holds all things in existence does not mean that the intelligence that organises all things is the same thing. Christians ridicule the pagan notion of gods that make all things. Whether there is a creator (maker out of nothing) or there is only matter there could be beings like the pagan gods. A creator God would seem to be the only real God. But if all there was was nature in a sense it would be the only God. So the argument for one God and no gods does not work. A creator does not refute the notion of many gods.

To assume that an intelligence creates and then designs raises some questions. Does it tamper behind the scenes unnoticed? Is it honest? Does it care about honesty?

The argument that the designer is God supposes that when anything has a use, it must have a divine designer. In other words, they are saying, "The universe was designed by God to be useful for it is useful." They are assuming what they are

claiming to prove - its an argument of circles. If God is the designer and he wants us to believe then if we have to deploy tricks like that to believe then he is not much of a designer.

And it is nonsense to say that a designer necessarily has to make only useful things. It could make something that is useless in itself but which can still be put to use.

And what if there was more than one designer? Here is an example of an argument that highlights the problem:

The Mormon doctrine that the spirits, many of which are now human people, organised the universe is true. Mistakes were made. We make mistakes even now in the flesh so why should it be any different if we leave the body and start working on the universe? Intelligent design still goes on today. We design the universe by our thoughts.

We believe that we made the universe from materials that already existed. There was a lot of it which was why we made such a big universe. We have some power to create - eg our choices. But perhaps we did not create the universe. If we did, we created the universe to become living beings and to be material beings that overcome matter and take power to benevolently rule. The more we support science and the more knowledge of science we gain and the more we take the power it gives over nature the better.

If a creator made all things it does not follow that the creator needs much intelligence. It could be a very simple intelligence. An intelligent computer can come in theory without a maker from a pile of plastic and metal but that does not imply that intelligence is built into plastic and metal. The universe could be full of intelligence and still come from a dullard creator. This being would be a creator perhaps and a sustainer. But not a designer.

Religion points to the difficulties in the scientific denial of intelligent design to manipulate people in the hope that they will turn against it and stay against it. Yet when somebody notices the difficulties in intelligent design it says, "A thousand difficulties does not make a doubt." What an example of bias and a double standard. There are difficulties in Einstein's science and in natural selection just as there are in just about anything. It does not make them any less true. Unlike religion, there is enough known to be sure that they are right despite the difficulties. And religion likes to arrogantly claim that all things were organised and designed just to make human beings. As religion claims to make man realise and exercise his true dignity it follows really that all that has happened is really about producing religious people.

The thought of an infinite spirit like God making all things is mad for it could only become them. Infinite means there is no power that is not his and since he is his power it follows that all things are God. When a spirit becomes people and animals to suffer how can you call that design when it would have been better off staying the way it was? It would only prove the existence of a mad or defective designer if it had any merit.

The alleged proofs for God fail so we can't be confident that the designer is God or a spirit. Some would reply that it is like how you can be made of matter which is necessary to make you and anything you do is done by matter for you are matter. So, in the same way the necessary being must be the designer for the designer is a part of it. But this designer is a part of the necessary being while religion needs the designer to be all of that being. The Bible says that Yahweh made the world.

Those who deny that God is the creation say that if he made a designer to make all things, he is still the ultimate designer for the designer gets all his abilities from him. Religion says that since the necessary being is intelligent and the maker of the designer everything the latter has comes from the necessary being so the necessary being would have to be the real and ultimate designer after all. But the flaw in this is assuming that the necessary being must be intelligent. It is just something that enables everything to exist and doesn't have to be intelligent for that. The necessary being could become all things and the designer could have been made by pure chance and have made more designers who altogether made a great mess of the design.

Religion says that the idea of the infinite spirit is a simpler explanation for the origin of all things than anything else for spirit has no components but is like an infinite gas filling infinite space that you cannot see, smell, feel or hear and that has no parts. But even if this is right it might not be entitled to be worshipped or know anything but just be like a program. And how do you know that the natural law is not that spirit should make matter but that matter should transmute into spirit? They are only guessing that it is a simple explanation.

Evil shows that the design argument does not prove God. Also, so does sincere error. Thoughts are caused by our past and even when we will them they do not come just because they were willed but because the thought that attracts them was forced on us so error is not needed to conserve free will. Most of our thoughts come automatically without our will. God then could influence us by making better things come to our mind. Our subconscious forces thoughts on us anyway.

It would be simplest to believe that if God designed all things that he was imperfect in power for there is no way of proving that God should allow evil for none of the excuses work. The design argument and the miracles argument are both

supposed to be evidences for God. Argument from design comes before argument from miracles for not all see miracles and so it is stronger evidence. When it does not point to a perfect God, any miracle that fails to point must be dubious and is anti-reason.

If the arguments for creation are wrong, design cannot be a miracle for there is no creator. So design proves that there are no miracles for they are just strange events. Why would you believe miracles indicate God's existence if a tree, an amazing thing, can exist and be so incredible and complex without the input of a God?

ANTHONY KENNY ON DESIGN

Kenny observes that the idea that God designed all things for a purpose cannot be proven because things can be designed and still not be for a purpose. A machine can design but not for a purpose for it has no will (page 83, What is Faith?) and it is possible for a machine to be developed by pure chance. So even if we prove a designer it is not the same as proving a God that has a purpose for our lives and a being that has no purpose for our lives. A being with no purpose for our lives is not a God and no religion can worship it for religion is about the purpose and meaning of life. The proofs for God cannot lead to religion never mind God. The argument from design does not prove that God is good.

It is evil to argue that God has done his best with us and put us on the best world he could though we often get in the way to prevent the best from happening for there could be other worlds in which the inhabitants are better than us and suffer far more. The design idea is refusing to admit what is best for us for there is plenty God can do to give us a better and fairer lot without interfering with free will.

Kenny agreed with Aristotle that it is greatly foolish to say that God has moral qualities for it is only communities that have these and God is not a member of a community. For the same reason, God cannot be a subject of our politics. But the fallacy in this is that morality is thought to be a social construct like politics and is not really about good and evil. If morality is about goodness then God has to be moral though his behaviour will be different from ours for he has the power to bring good out of evil and has a lot more tough decisions to make when he is boss of the world and sees all. God can kill for a greater good and we can't for we don't see how to bring about that good and he can still be moral. There is no double standard in this for it is exactly the same as the intelligent man's morals being different from the dim man's. There is only one morality but it differs in its application as determined by ability and intelligence.

Some say there are so many planets and universes that as unlikely as it seems for life to grow and develop by chance to the proportion it has here it could have happened (page 99, Doing Away with God?). There could have been infinite number of big bangs before the one that led to this universe and at some stage life is bound to appear. This refutes the existence of God because a sensible God would have given the design argument greater probability by just making the sun and the earth.

Good is a default for if there were absolutely nothing at all it would follow that at least it is good that there are no little babies to suffer and die. Good is a default and independent of what exists or does not exist. Design should be about showing that God is goodness but it cannot show that for goodness is goodness regardless of there being a God or not. God may implement goodness but goodness is not his and goodness forces goodness in many ways on the universe or whatever exists.

LAW OF ENTROPY

In nature, the law of entropy makes sure that flaws in design will happen. Worse the flaws are not really flaws but like a blind experiment. Errors in design led to us coming about and considering how we will destroy all life one day that is an error of huge magnitude. So really what we have is the result of countless blind experiments that look like design has occurred when in fact it has not.

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