



From Atheist to Theist (Part 4)

The Argument from 'Design'

By

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The Argument from Design

Having been an investigative journalist for many years I highly recommend returning to the beginning of an issue, crime, or whatever is your assignment before reporting about it. If not, you may miss the very thing that will turn your story in the direction of truth, which should be the objective of every journalist.

In that spirit I returned to Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* when a creation scientist challenged evolution on my atheist radio talk show more than 50 years ago. I'm not sure if I had slept through some of the evolution classes in high school and college or just didn't understand what I was hearing, but I learned that Darwin had issues with his own theory.

“Long before the reader has arrived at this part of my work, a crowd of difficulties will have occurred to him. Some of them are so serious that to this day I can hardly reflect on them without being in some degree staggered; but, to the best of my judgment, the

greater number are only apparent, and those that are real are not, I think, fatal to the theory.” (On The Origin of Species, Chapter 6, Charles Darwin, 1859)

As I continued reading I was surprised to see that Darwin had struggled more than a century earlier with some of the same things I was struggling with at the beginning of the 1970s.

“These difficulties and objections may be classed under the following heads: First, why, if species have descended from other species by fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion, instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?” (On The Origin of Species, Chapter 6, Charles Darwin, 1859)

An excellent question, Mr. Darwin. “Why is not all nature in confusion, instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?” Darwin admitted that what he saw in the nature of species was “well defined.” As I learned more about the theory of Creation I heard about an argument that dealt with

the subject of divine design called the Teleological Argument, the “argument from design.”

The concept of intelligent design and an intelligent designer is an ancient idea. The Sumerians had the four creator gods: Enki, Ninhursag, An, and Enlil. The Babylonians had Apsu, Tiamat, Mummu, and Marduk. The Egyptians had Atum, Khepri, Ptah, and Amun. The Chinese had Pan Gu and Nu Wa. The Greeks had Chaos, Uranos, Gaia, and Erebus. The Hebrews had Yahweh.

Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero debated the issue of design more than 2,000 years ago. Early Christian writers like the Apostle Paul, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas also argued for intelligent design. So, what is intelligent design?

Plato wrote this about what leads men to believe “in the Gods.”

“One is the argument about the soul, which has been already mentioned-that it is the eldest, and most divine of all things, to which motion attaining

generation gives perpetual existence; the other was an argument from the order of the motion of the stars, and of all things under the dominion of the mind which ordered the universe.” (Laws, Book 12, Plato, 360 BC, Benjamin Jowett, Translator)

In Plato’s *Timaeus*, Socrates asks Timaeus about “calling upon the Gods.” In his answer, Timaeus says this about the Creator:

“Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created. The work of the creator, whenever he looks to the unchangeable and fashions the form and nature of his work after an unchangeable pattern, must necessarily be made fair and perfect; but when he looks to the created only, and uses a created pattern, it is not fair or perfect. Was the heaven then or the world, whether called by this or by any other more appropriate name-assuming the name, I am asking a question which has to be asked at the beginning of an enquiry about anything -

was the world, I say, always in existence and without beginning? or created, and had it a beginning? Created, I reply, being visible and tangible and having a body, and therefore sensible; and all sensible things are apprehended by opinion and sense and are in a process of creation and created. Now that which is created must, as we affirm, of necessity be created by a cause. But the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible.” (Timaeus, Plato, 360 BC, Benjamin Jowett, Translator)

Johannes Kepler, sometimes referred to as “the first theoretical astrophysicist,” was a leading mathematician and astronomer in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Germany. He was well known for his laws of planetary motion. This is how he viewed the science of astronomy.

“I was merely thinking God’s thoughts after him. Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it benefits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather,

above all else, of the glory of God.” (Johannes Kepler, 1571-1630)

Sir Isaac Newton, Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University and famous for making many scientific discoveries during the 17th and 18th centuries, wrote this about the origin of the universe.

“This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. And if the fixed stars are the centers of other like systems, these, being formed by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One, especially since the light of the fixed stars is of the same nature with the light of the sun and from every system light passes into all the other systems; and lest the systems of the fixed stars should, by their gravity, fall on each other mutually, he hath placed those systems at immense distances from one another.” (General Scholium to the Principia. Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, Sir Isaac Newton, 1713)

Another explanation of intelligent design came from William Paley in the early 19th Century in answer to Scottish philosopher David Hume. Paley wrote this in his *Natural Theology*.

“In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever: nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer I had before given, that for anything I knew, the watch might have always been there. (...) There must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers, who formed [the watch] for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use. (...) Every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature; with the

difference, on the side of nature, of being greater or more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation.” (William Paley, *Natural Theology*, 1802)

An atheist astronomer and mathematician from England was one of the first people to give the ‘Intelligent Design’ theory its name. Fred Hoyle gave the Omni Lecture at London’s Royal Institution in 1982 and titled it *Evolution from Space*. It was later published as a book with the same title. Here’s a portion from the book where Hoyle addressed ‘intelligent design.’

“... The difference between an intelligent ordering, whether of words, fruit boxes, amino acids, or the Rubik cube, and merely random shufflings can be fantastically large, even as large as a number that would fill the whole volume of Shakespeare’s plays with its zeros. So if one proceeds directly and straightforwardly in this matter, without being deflected by a fear of incurring the wrath of scientific opinion, one arrives at the conclusion that biomaterials with their amazing measure or order

must be the outcome of intelligent design. No other possibility I have been able to think of in pondering this issue over quite a long time seems to me to have anything like as high a possibility of being true.” (Evolution from Space (The Omni Lecture), pg. 28, Fred Hoyle, Enslow Publishers, 1982).

Even though I was not familiar with the term ‘intelligent design’ in 1971, the Teleological Argument was well known. Webster’s Dictionary defined teleology as “the study of evidences of design in nature.” That intrigued me — the study of “evidences of design” in nature. What were the evidences of design in nature? One of them is called ‘Cosmic Fine-Tuning.’ I’ll look at that in detail in the next part of From Atheist to Theist.

Even though I'm sharing the evidence available to me as an atheist in 1971, I thought you might find this more recent article helpful to you as well.

[12 Discoveries Point to Intelligent Design](#)