



## Essential Philosophy with Dr. David Schenk

### Lesson 15: The Design Argument for the Existence of God

#### Outline:

##### Introduction to the Design Argument:

- **General, commonsense definition:** The operations and natural processes of our world seem too neat and orderly to be an accident. Therefore, some being must have designed our world.
- Dr. Schenk shares two early design arguments: St. Thomas Aquinas' Fifth Way (mid 13th cent.) and William Paley's Watchmaker argument (1802).

#### Aquinas' Fifth Way (3:04)

- (1) All objects in nature consistently act in the same way (each for its kind) and tend toward what is best.
  - (2) Tending toward what is best means functioning for some purpose.
  - (3) Mindless objects can function for some purpose only if they are directed that way by some conscious being.
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- (4) ∴, All objects in nature function for some purpose.
  - (5) ∴, there is some conscious being who directs the behavior of all mindless objects in nature.
  - > (6) That Being is God.

- Notes on Aquinas' Fifth Way:
  - Premise (1) Example: Each orchid acts like other orchids; each dog acts like other dogs. Orchids tend toward what is best (in order to thrive) by growing toward light.
  - In Premise (3), Paley considers plants, like orchids, mindless things. If an orchid functions with a purpose to thrive, though, then some exterior being must have given the mindless orchid its purpose.
  - In Premise (6), God is the best possible being who fits the category of directing all creation.
  - Because Thomistic/Aristotelian causation became unpopular during/after the Enlightenment, Aquinas' version of the argument also became unpopular.

**Paley's Version**

(8:27)

- (1) Unless there is some good naturalistic explanation for it, anything that exhibits as much order, complexity, symmetry, harmonizing of parts, and apparent purpose as a watch must be the artifact of some designer.
  - (2) The human organism exhibits far more of all these properties than any watch.
  - (3) There is no good naturalistic explanation for this.
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- (4) ∴, the human organism must be the artifact of some designer.
  - > (5) That Designer is God.

Notes on Paley's Version:

- In the 18th and 19th centuries, William Paley's book, *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (1802), became popular. It contained his Design Argument and the well-known *Watchmaker design argument*.
  - Paley wrote this book before Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and the evolutionary theorizing that followed. Objections to Paley's argument began in the late 1800s.
- ***Paley/Dr. Schenk's Watch Example:*** (11:00)
  - If Dr. Schenk stumbled upon his Casio G-Shock watch lying on the beach, what would he infer? No one would infer that the tidal forces of the ocean blindly conspired together to produce a complex piece of watch machinery. We recognize a complex, designed watch, which can only come from a factory.
  - ***Factors Paley highlights that alert us to a designer:*** (16:04)
    - Order
    - Complexity
    - Symmetry
    - Harmonizing of parts for an apparent purpose
- **Objections to Paley:** (26:00)
  - Objections to Paley developed with the rise of evolutionary science, *especially Neo-Darwinian evolutionary science*, which includes Gene Theory.
  - Neo-Darwinians (such as Richard Dawkins) deny Premise (3) of Paley's argument. They argue that Neo-Darwinian science offers a better naturalistic explanation of design rather than Paley's theistic one.
  - For example, with Paley's design argument we expect a more beautiful, intelligent world, but what we find are harmful, unintelligent things in nature that do not progress the species. Neo-Darwinians



claim that their science explains both beneficial and harmful evolutionary traits.

- **Example of the human eye:** Pet cats have better eye perception than humans, while our eyesight is on par with that of bats. Similarly, human eyes have blind spots, which graphic artist M. C. Escher exploited in his popular optical illusion drawings.
- **Example of the kiwi bird:** How might Paley explain the kiwi bird, which cannot fly? Neo-Darwinians point out that *genetic drift*, or the separation of a group of creatures from its main population that leads to inbreeding and mutation, produced kiwi birds, which lost their wings but developed longer bills for food foraging.



*Kiwi bird*