

**Hume on the Argument from Design**  
(Page references to Pojman & Rea *Philosophy of Religion :  
An Anthology*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Wadsworth)  
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**David Hume from *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*:**

- I. Cleanthes gives his argument from design on page 57
- II. Demea objects that this is not a certain, *a priori* proof but only an *a posteriori*, inductive one. Not good enough, he says.
- III. Philo: it's not only inductive but not a very good inductive argument at that. We have only inductive evidence that a stone will fall but because our evidence for this is past experience of a great many instances of exactly the same kind of thing, and stones have fallen *every* time, our evidence is excellent. But in the present case, the difference between the universe (and natural objects in the universe) and human-designed objects is great. The greater the disanalogy, the less legitimate it is to imply the "from like effects infer like causes."
- IV. Demea finds the whole enterprise of trying to show that God exists by 'pseudo-scientific' reasoning religiously troubling. Believes in the mysterious nature of god and very concerned about anthropomorphizing.
- V. Philo: thinks there is nothing wrong in principle with arguing a posteriori for the existence of God. Even shows how such thinking should go: page 58.
- VI. Hume's Objections:
  1. Only one universe objection: All inferences concerning fact (i.e., a posteriori matters) are founded on the supposition that from similar causes come similar effects and similar effects are produced by similar causes. But such inferences are only legitimate when we have experiences of just those sorts of effects being brought about by just those sort of causes. But there is only a single universe, and so it isn't as though we have experience knowing that when there are universes that are apparently designed, mostly of the time they have designers. Here there seems to be a large gap between what we are trying to explain (the apparent design in the universe) and the design in things like clocks.
  2. The argument infers design from too small: We are inferring that the cause of the universe is a mind from the fact that a few of the entities we experience (or have experienced in our brief experience) in our small corner of the universe appear to be designed. But we shouldn't draw major conclusions about a whole the size of the universe from such a small sample. See page 60

3. Bad consequences of *a posteriori* theology objection.
  - a. If you use this argument you must think of God as finite since our own experience is experience of finite minds and there is nothing, even in this vast universe, to suggest that it took infinite intelligence to make the world.
  - b. No reason to ascribe perfection.
  - c. No reason to think that God is one.
  - d. No reason to think that God is spirit.

## VII: The Need for Explanation and the Impact of Evolutionary Theory