THE DIALECTICAL SITUATION. So far we have seen reasons not to accept Locke's conception of material objects that exist unobserved, that are mind-independent, and that stand in certain relations (causal, representational) to the ideas of mind. We have not seen Berkeley's positive proposal. The positive view builds upon the critique offered in the First Dialogue. Sensible things are real. But their reality cannot be grounded in matter. It must be grounded in the ideas themselves. But these ideas are not produced by my own mind. Hence they must be produced by God.

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE. In DHP 210 Berkeley's remarks suggest an argument from design. Since our ideas display remarkable richness and beauty, their origin cannot be in our own mind. They should be produced by an infinite mind. The same argument is apparently in action in PHK 146. It can be reconstructed as follows:

(1) Sensible things and qualities ('ideas' for short) exist in the mind. [Premiss, from foregoing discussion]
(2) Every idea is produced by a mind. [Premiss, from foregoing discussion]
(3) Some of them are remarkably orderly, beautiful, sophisticated. [Premiss, from observation]
(4) Finite minds are too weak to produce such ideas. [Speculation, from #2 and #3]
(5) Therefore, they should have been produced by an infinite mind. [From #4]
(6) Therefore, there is an infinite mind, i.e. God. [From #5]

Let us postpone the discussion of this argument for a few moments.

THE DIRECT ARGUMENT FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE. In DHP 212, however, Berkeley seems to consider an even stronger argument, eliminating any reference to design:

(1) Ideas exist in the mind.
(2) Every idea is produced by a mind.
(3) Some of my ideas are not produced by *my* mind.
(4) Therefore, they are caused by some other mind.
(5) The only mind able to cause ideas in me is God.

This argument strikes me as completely implausible. It leaves obvious alternatives to God. There can be a finite, but very complex mind, causing my ideas. There can be more than one finite mind causing ideas. And there can be an anti-God causing my ideas. So we have once more to insist on the key role of the premiss #3of the Design argument in proving the existence of God.

DESIGN ARGUMENT: BASIC ELEMENTS. In one version of the Design argument (favoured by Aquinas) we say that observed regularities in nature logically entail the existence of the omnipotent God. This is not a promising move, since there simply is no logical connection. More cautiously, then, we have to say that observed regularities make it very probable that they were put in place by the omnipotent God.

Question 1. Why cannot the Design argument above be interpreted as a deductive inference?

Example 2. Suppose I come across a rock in the desert. Then I am not inclined to conclude that it was planted there by *someone*. I am happy to say that it was there by chance. Suppose, on the other hand, I come across a watch. Then I am inclined to conclude that a certain intelligence planted it there. The difference seems to be that in one case I attribute no purposeful nature to the item, while in the other I do. As I examine and understand the inner workings of the watch, I grasp its purposes. The watch must have a creator with a certain purposes.

The argument from design takes different forms depending on what sort of evidence I am attending to. I find a purposeful watch—I infer the existence of a watchmaker with the need of telling the time. I find a great variety of living organisms—I infer the existence of an exceptionally capable designer with a fondness for life. I find an extraordinarily beautiful world—I infer the existence of a maker with a rare sense of beauty.

As my evidence grows and encompasses more and more areas of the world and its exceptional features, I gradually come round to the idea a perfect maker, an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God.

PROBABILITY AND DESIGN. These arguments should be interpreted probabilistically. But there are two basic ways to do that. According to one of them, we estimate the probability $P(H|O)$: the probability of the hypothesis H given the evidence O. So we want eventually to say that $P(\text{ID}|O) \gg P(\text{Chance}|O)$. But, in order to say that, we have to be able to determine prior probabilities $P(\text{ID})$ and $P(\text{Chance}$. On what basis can we do that? One might argue that the very idea of evaluating hypotheses in absence of any evidence is incoherent.

An alternative way, circumventing the difficulty just mentioned, is to estimate the probability $P(O|H)$. Here we estimate how likely it is for the evidence to occur if a certain hypothesis were true. Eventually we want to say both that $P(O|\text{ID}) \gg P(O|\text{Chance})$ and that $P(O|\text{Chance})$ is very low.

PROBLEMS WITH THE ARGUMENT. One objection is that the evidence we receive allows different interpretations. Where you find extraordinary beauty and order in the animal world, Woody Allen finds one big restaurant. You are fascinated by the starry sky, but the reason of your fascination is your own adaptation: you do not discover the beauty of the sky. You attribute beauty to the sky, because of the way your aesthetic judgement was formed in the course of natural selection. So it may be that the argument does not get off the ground, since its main factual assumption is false.

If this is the case, however, are we to conclude that the world was created by chance?

Example 3. The biologist Stephen Jay Gould argued that imperfections in biological adaptations ought to convince us in the absence of a designer. Consider panda's thumb: it serves pandas to peel off bamboo. But the thumb is an imperfect tool. This fact sits well with the evolutionary theory: adaptations are often imperfect. So, Gould reasoned, $P(\text{Thumb}|\text{ID}) < P(\text{Thumb}|\text{Evolution})$. But this assumes that we know why the designer would design such a thumb. I.e. we say: the designer should have wanted to make panda's life easy, but the thumb does not make it so, so there probably is no designer. But this inference is unjustified, as we may be completely in the dark about the designer's goals. The inadequacy of the panda's thumb is consistent, e.g., with the existence of a designer who is not especially fond of pandas.

The thumb example highlights the implicit assumption behind the arguments from design and some of their refutations: that we know the goals of the designer. If you know the properties of a potential designer, then the evidence you gather can tell you whether $P(O|\text{ID})$ is greater or smaller than $P(O|\text{Chance})$. If you are in the dark about the nature of the designer, then the evidence is inconclusive.

Suppose, however, that the factual assumption is true: there is order in the universe. That would show, probabilistically, that there is *a* designer. Perhaps the world is a put-up job, created by engineers, as in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

But the argument would still fall short of proving the existence of God. To get to the existence of a Divine designer, we have to provide evidence of *supernatural* order and harmony in the world. But this kind of evidence is simply impossible for us to gather.

Finally, you might argue that this universe was created by a finite designer, yet that there must be another designer who created the first designer. This argument fails, I believe, for two reasons. One is that the world of the first designer might not exhibit any order and so is inconclusive with regard to the existence of another designer. Second, we can introduce an infinite chain of designers. Its possibility is no less credible than the existence of an infinitely omnipotent God.

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