

Remarks on the Argument from Design

Joseph S. Fulda

The Argument from Design appeals to the complexity of the universe in all its variety to argue for a Supreme Intelligence as its Creator. Many have found it unconvincing. This article will build up to the argument by first presenting two pared-down versions of it which may well persuade those unconvinced, only to conclude that they are, in fact, inadequate for *real* faith and the full version needed for that. Finally, the argument is taken to its logical conclusion. By the close, the case may be clinched for all, or so it is hoped.

1. The simplest version of the argument from design is to deny *all* randomness and the validity of the branch of mathematics that underlies it—probability theory, which was born in impurity and is often used improperly. People pride themselves in their own creativity, which is but a pale reflection of their Creator’s creativity. If we are, in fact, *that* creative, why is it that even the foremost scientists are totally unable to produce so much as a single stream of random numbers? So-called random-number generators start with a “seed,” which is selected for its properties of subsequently being able to produce the *appearance* of a stream of random numbers. The technical term for such numbers is “pseudo-random.” The seed itself is at *most* arbitrary, not random, and in fact is selected by an algorithm, a step-by-step procedure which is not even arbitrary. If not even integers can be produced randomly, how can it possibly be that the universe in its entirety sprung up through a random sequence of events?

A few words about probability. Its origins largely lie in mathematicians from centuries gone by who either doubled as professional gamblers or whose patrons were professional gamblers. From this dubious parentage sprung up ever-more ingenious ways to steal when one discovered that one could not beat the so-called odds, after all. When used to predict the future, it often fails outright. When it does not, it succeeds merely because it is a model of something far deeper and richer, as will be discussed. In essence, Einstein was right, notwithstanding the near-unanimous view otherwise: God does not play dice with the universe.

Probability so used either fails because nothing is random or succeeds, at least up to a point, because it is capturing something far more profound than the alleged randomness that does not, in fact, exist.

Probability can, of course, be properly used, too, among other ways to study the past (normally the province of statistics), to demonstrate God’s power, or by the use of the so-called “indifference principle,” which presumes *all* possibilities are equally likely and then reason from that untrue presumption for various *constructive* purposes.

2. A more complicated version of the argument now follows. Suppose one were an intelligent visitor from a distant planet and one happened upon a desolate Earth. All that one could see other than natural phenomena is lines in the sand with the words of a sufficiently long text to allow its decipherment and translation by the visitor. What would such a visitor conclude? Two obvious possibilities come to mind. First, the visitor might conclude that a magnificent intelligence had written those words before vanishing without a trace. Alternatively, the visitor might conclude that the waves, the weather, and such other natural phenomena as are in evidence had produced the text over many, many years. What would you, dear reader, expect the visitor to *actually* conclude?

3. These pared-down arguments, while entirely successful in demonstrating an infinitely wise Creator do not, however, demonstrate, even slightly, that He Who created all actively guides His creation. For this, one does, in fact, need the full version; one must notice the incredible adaptations of living beings, in particular, to their natural environment and having done so, it is simply close to impossible to believe that He who created all that would simply abandon it, leaving it all to its own devices. This is, I'm afraid, a bit gullible.

4. Of course, this active, ever-present Guidance must be *inferred* or faith would be empty. Although open miracles are truly rare, hidden miracles occur daily. How? The verse in Psalms referring to the celestial bodies tells us that God has ordained laws for them and times for them which prevent deviations from their purpose. *Not* mentioned, however, is *what* the laws are, *what* the times are, much less their full and true purposes. It is a naïve reading indeed to assume that human beings know all these from daily life.

When one first studies elementary physics, for example, one learns that truly rarely and *unpredictably*, a particle will rise and defy the law of gravity. Any probabilistic treatment, however, is a mirage, or, if you prefer, merely the best human beings can do. How miracles *actually* occur, normally without the beneficiaries even aware of them, is a rather different matter. All natural laws, from the “softest” to the “hardest,” are governed by some branch of mathematics. There is *no* branch of mathematics that does not have “nonstandard” variants. So if decided Above that a miracle is indicated, for just as long as needed and no longer and for just the place needed and no other, the standard branch of mathematics governing the law is quietly and completely unseen replaced by the maximally appropriate nonstandard variant resulting in a miracle, and an “accident,” say, thereby averted. That is how the universe is *actually* run, and never mind appearances; they are, of course, deceiving—and that, too, is by *design* so that faith must, indeed, be inferred.