December 2020

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Benjamin Martin
Liberty University, bmartin6@liberty.edu

Recommended Citation

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Introduction

David Hume, the celebrated Scottish philosopher of the 18th century, wrote a work entitled *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* in which he provides a detailed criticism of several theistic arguments. In the *Dialogues* there are found 3 interlocutors, each of whom approaches natural religion from a different philosophical standpoint. Cleanthes is the character upon whose argumentation we will mainly focus, as he is the defender of the *a posteriori* argument from Intelligent Design. Philo, another interlocutor, is a philosophical skeptic who opposes Cleanthes' arguments. Out of the three, many consider Philo's positions to be representative of those of Hume himself. The purpose of this paper is to analyze Philo's objection to Cleanthes' Intelligent Design argument (ID), and to show that the analogy within the ID argument is strong and that it warrants belief in the existence of a designer of the universe.

Cleanthes' Intelligent Design Argument

First, let us bring into view the specific argument with which we are dealing, and then the grand scheme of the *Dialogues'* treatment of the subject.

Cleanthes and Demea are both pious believers in God as well as philosophers of religion. Demea favors the *a priori* arguments for the existence of the divine being, and he does so seemingly because he is unwilling to accept argumentation unyielding of perfect and certain results.[1] Cleanthes, however, brings experience into play by arguing *a posteriori* for the existence of the divine being. Cleanthes introduces an inductive argument from analogy that goes as follows: The world resembles a machine that is made up of infinite numbers of smaller machines. The complexity and degree at which each machine operates in unison with its counterparts is unfathomable, and beyond any capabilities of "human contrivance," but even still, Cleanthes claims, they resemble exactly the sorts of machines that humans can produce. Therefore, since human machines and the so-called "machines" found in nature are analogous, then so are their human and, arguably, their divine designers.[2]

Philo's Objection

Demea is briefly given the time to express his problems with the ID argument. The main thrust of this portion of the *Dialogues*, however, involves the dispute between Cleanthes and Philo. Philo's immediate charge is that the analogy in the ID argument is weak. He demonstrates that lesser similarity between effects

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[1] David Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," in *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), 609.
[2] Hume, "Dialogues," 608.

would indicate lesser similarity between causes.[3] Since the Earth, he argues, is not similar to a house, we have no reason to analogize the architect of the house to the architect of the universe.[4] He goes on to point out that things can look to have been designed that are not in fact designed, and that we need to have some experience of the designer in order to actually know that he or she designed the object.[5] Finally, Philo points out that, even though some aspects of the universe seem to be designed, this is not the case for everything. We should not then claim that there is a designer behind the entirety of the universe when only certain parts of it bear signs of design.[6] These are the main arguments that Philo raises against Cleanthes' ID position, and we will now analyze their logical patterns more closely.

Does the Machine-Information Analogy Work?

The first of Philo's objections concerns the analogy between house and universe. Again, Cleanthes asserts that, "you will find it [the universe] to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines." However, there are several objections to the notion that we can compare nature to a machine. Boudry and Pigliucci refer to this as the machine-information analogy, and they write a strong criticism against the use of such a

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[3] Hume, "Dialogues," 609.
[4] Ibid., 609.
[5] Ibid., 610.
[6] Ibid., 611-612.

term in the context of science education.[7] They spend some time specifically analyzing Hume's dialogues in the formulation of their argument, during which they reference Philo's example of the ship. Philo explains that the *prima facie* conclusion we might draw about a beautiful ship is that its designer must be an excellent artist and craftsman, but more probably it is just a dull laborer who has repeated the instructions of those who came before him. Who knows then, how many failed attempts at world-designing could lie before the actual world in which we live?[8]

Boudry and Pigliucci claim to agree with Hume's assertion that using this sort of reasoning is "deceptive," and "defective," but they are misunderstanding Hume's objection.[9] Hume is making an epistemological objection to the notion that anyone could know whether the designer is perfect, if he exists at all. We do not even have a critique of design by Hume in this ship example, because the example presumes design in order to attack the further inference to a perfect designer that is frequently made. No matter how many failed ship attempts took place by mediocre ship builders before the final product, it remains evident that they have been designed all along. Boudry and Pigliucci are simply missing the point, and while they do not like the analogy for purposes of education, that does

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[7] M. Boudry and M. Pigliucci, "Why Machine-Information Metaphors are Bad for Science and Science Education," *Science & Education* 20, (Spring 2011): 457.
[8] Hume, "Dialogues," 619.
[9] Boudry and Pigliucci, "Machine-Information Metaphors," 457.

not make it a weak analogy. It is important that we then discuss what are the

particular aspects of a man-made machine that might correspond analogously to

natural phenomena.

William A. Dembski defines an argument from analogy as one that,

"argue[s] that two things share some feature because they share some other

features."[10] He gives the example of a watch and a living organism. Between the

two we can find similarities and dissimilarities. The specific attributes that

Dembski uses for his example are, "functional interdependence of parts,

adaptation of means to ends, [and] self propulsion."[11] This is by no means an

exhaustive list, but it is a good beginning for our purposes here. A watch would

not tell time without the hands, and the hands would not turn without the gears;

we see then that both are necessary for the whole to work just as an organism

might require a simultaneously functioning heart and brain in order to live.

Dembski makes a very good point here, namely that analogy requires disanalogy

in order to be distinct from identity.[12] For every set of objects we wish to

analogize, there must be qualities that cannot be analogized, otherwise A is not

just similar to B; but A *is* B. The points of dissimilarity may even be far more

numerous than those of similarity without invalidating the inference. We need

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[10] William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions About Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 224.
[11] Dembski, *Design Revolution,* 224.
[12] Ibid., 224.

dissimilarity, and yet it is largely upon dissimilarity that Hume builds his criticism.

Philo's Straw Man Argument

Cleanthes seems to do a good job of making this clear when he presents his argument. When he states that the causes must resemble each other as the effects do, he adds that the designer is, "somewhat similar to, the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed."[13] This becomes a prominent point of attack for Philo. He cannot resist berating Cleanthes over his anthropomorphism, taking analogies of the universe compared to houses, furniture, and other machines as being obviously absurd.[14] Philo says to Cleanthes, "I never should expect any success from its [human reason's] feeble conjectures in a subject so sublime and so remote from the sphere of our observation."[15] What we see here on Philo's part is that he is counting obvious dissimilarities as if they were intended to be similarities.

Philo's attempt to discredit ID in this fashion is a straw man. For example, if we say that both a comfortable armchair and the universe are similar effects and that they must therefore have similar causes, then the qualities that bind the

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[13] Hume, "Dialogues," 608.
[14] Ibid., 611.
[15] Ibid., 612.

analogy together would have to be narrow enough to avoid absurd conclusions. We do not wish to intend that both the human designer and the divine designer need a nice place to relax and to spread out their feet. Rather the qualities that bind the two together might be as simple as agency or power. To compare the supreme being to the human mind is not to attempt to house God in a skull with a brain, or to degrade the idea of God in any other such way, yet, Philo talks of being, "scandalized," by the degradation of the supreme being brought on by the comparison of him to the lowly human builders of machines.[16] Are we to view this analogy as supposing that God too has a dirty pair of boots for when he undertakes universe-creating, just like the human builder? We would not be representing Cleanthes argument well if that were our position, and while Philo does not explicitly come to these conclusions, it is clear that he is implying that the analogies carry over more than they are really supposed to. I submit that the original form of the argument avoids these problems when it uses the term, "proportionality." Cleanthes says in effect that, while God has a mind just as humans do, the extent of the greatness of God's mind is (at least) in line with the grandeur and greatness of creation.[17] There does not have to be any overlap in the nature of the human and divine mind save that they are minds and thus capable of thought, purpose, and design.

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[16] Hume, "Dialogues," 610.
[17] Ibid., 608.

Parts to Whole Objection

Lastly, in our analysis of Philo's objections to Cleanthes' ID argument, we will look at Philo's charge of the parts-to-whole fallacy. Philo claims that there are objects that appear to be designed and objects that do not, and that therefore we cannot infer from the designed parts, a designer of the whole. It seems to be true that if there were undesigned material mixed in with designed material in the universe, then that would be problematic if we wished to say there is a universal designer. Philo cites various raw materials such as wood and brick as examples of objects that bear no mark of design on their own.[18] They have to be organized into a mechanism or pattern of some sort in order for us to conclude that they require a designer for their being. Philo is making a couple of assumptions here that are worth mentioning. Roy Clouser states that Hume admitted of an appearance of design in the world, but ultimately believed that that appearance is misleading in the same way the sun 'appears' to rise and set.[19] This same principle, however, can be flipped on Hume. If we can so easily be misled into believing that design exists in an object, then surely we can just as easily be misled into believing that there is no design when in fact there is. Philo's thought seems to pertain to obviously mechanical contraptions, but Cleanthes' argument referred to, "an infinite number

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[18] Hume, "Dialogues," 611.
[19] Robert T. Pennock, *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 530.

of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain."[20] Philo should recognize the entirely legitimate possibility that we live in a world in which everything that appears to be designed is undesigned and everything that appears to be undesigned is designed. With that being said, the position I will advocate for here is that all matter is designed. If all matter is designed then there is no parts-to-whole fallacy, because making an inference from one out of an entire universe of designed objects that the universe *is* in fact designed in all of its parts, would be valid. Since there can be sensory equivalence between any designed or undesigned object (with regard to whether or not they are designed), we can avoid the parts-to-whole fallacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have examined the nature of the Intelligent Design argument as presented by Hume through the character Cleanthes, and we have analyzed the objections of Philo along the way. We conclude that the original argument as given by Cleanthes' in Hume's *Dialogues* is a strong analogy that warrants belief in a divine being. The objections, mainly given by Philo do not ultimately stand up against the ID argument. This is because analogy and disanalogy go hand-in-hand, and a string of accusations over anthropomorphism

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[20] Hume, "Dialogues," 608.

only misses the point of the relevant qualities that are being utilized for comparison. Finally, we have demonstrated that Hume's skepticism works against him as well as for him in that there would be sensory equivalence between totally designed worlds and partially design worlds, and that in the case of the totally designed world, the parts-to-whole fallacy does not apply.

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