

Analytical and critical questions

[Philosophy](#)



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William Paley's Natural Theology What is the thesis (the central idea or main point William Paley's concept of Natural Theology argues for a synthesis between laws of nature and God. Natural Theology claims that the laws of the natural world are designed and made operant by the Divinity. It is this divine hand at work which accounts for the stability and order in the cosmos.

2. What are the main arguments made in supporting the thesis?

Paley was not only a theologian but also a brilliant lawyer. His training as a lawyer is put to rigorous use in constructing his arguments. The grand thesis of Natural Theology is supported by numerous examples from geology, cosmology and the natural world. For example, in the case of a wrist watch, there is a clear purpose as well as precision behind its design. This is circumstantial evidence for a Creator, in this case of the watchmaker. There are numerous similar examples offered by Paley to support his claims.

3. What are the important implications of the author's position?

The most important implication is that science is subservient to religion. But the greatest rebuttal to this assertion would come in the form of Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution through Natural Selection a century after the publication of Natural Theology.

4. Is what is said clear? How is it unclear?

Paley's arguments are well rounded, detailed and rigorous. The prose style is lucid and his metaphors apt. The drawbacks come in the form of selective omissions of facts undermining his position.

5. Are the arguments adequate to support the claims? Are the premises true? The assumptions dubious?

The arguments offered by Paley are very eloquent and persuasive, yet not

decisive. His assumptions and premises are dubious in many instances. To be fair to Paley, writing as he did a century before the arrival of Charles Darwin in the scientific scene, his arguments were handicapped by the lack of evidences to the contrary that are offered in abundance by Darwin.

6. Do the implications of the text lead to absurd or false consequences?

Given that Paley was a renowned scholar with a considerable readership, the false or inadequate conclusions in the text is prone to be abused or co-opted by religious fundamentalists.

7. Are important aspects of the issue overlooked?

Yes, many natural phenomena can be explained scientifically without resort to argument from divine intervention. Perhaps, Paley's passion for religion has biased his views. By virtue of stating a strong thesis, the author is compelled to look and select evidence in support of it. Perhaps a free exposition of the subject would have lead to a balanced rhetoric and findings.

8. How well did the author accomplish his or her goal?

Paley's Natural Theology is relevant today as a specimen of logical rigour and refined styles of argument. Its thesis has steadily lost relevance since the age of the Enlightenment and that trend continues today.

Richard Dawkins' Blind Watchmaker

1. What is the thesis (the central idea or main point?)

Richard Dawkins' main argument is that the forces of evolution give an illusion of deliberate design, whereas in truth, they were shaped by gradual and random mutations sifted by the filters of natural selection.

2. What are the main arguments made in supporting the thesis?

Drawing on the analogy of the watchmaker by William Paley, Dawkins

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produces his polemic by systematically dismantling the theory by design as applicable to life forms on earth. Dawkins shows that random mutations at the level of the DNA, when filtered and selected under the process of natural selection, gives rise to sophisticated and specialized species. His main argument is that there is no need whatsoever for invoking divine intervention in explaining variety and magnificence of life on earth.

3. What are the important implications of the author's position?

The most important implication of Dawkins' position is that it undermines the theological view that humans as superior to other species. Under the powers of natural selection humans are just one twig at the end of a grand tree of life (both extinct and still existent). Hence, *The Blind Watchmaker* weakens the homo-centric view of the world.

4. Is what is said clear? How is it unclear?

Dawkins's arguments are very clear and logical. The analogies and turns of phrase evident in the text are of high literary quality as well.

5. Are the arguments adequate to support the claims? Are the premises true? The assumptions dubious?

Since Dawkins is exclusively dealing with supporting a scientific theory with empirical and verifiable fact, there is very little inadequacy in the scholarship. As for assumptions and premises, there are hardly any that he makes.

6. Are the arguments adequate to support the claims? Are the premises true? The assumptions dubious?

Dawkins uses computer generated models of mutations and gene selection across generations. This way, he gives a virtual demonstration of how evolution occurs in the natural world. It is as if we are witnessing evolution at <https://assignbuster.com/analytical-and-critical-questions/>

work. Dawkins also uses principles from game theory and economics to support his claims. Open minded people will find hardly anything disputable in the Blind Watchmaker.

7. Do the implications of the text lead to absurd or false consequences?

Reading the text leads to an enlightenment view of life on earth. It does not lead to absurd or false conclusions.

8. Are important aspects of the issue overlooked?

Being a thorough-going polemic that he is, Dawkins leaves no false premise unexposed. So, it is fair to say that all aspects of the issue are given attention.

9. How well did the author accomplish his or her goal?

Richard Dawkins scholarship succeeds in what it set out to do. It beautifully illustrates an important scientific theory in jargon-free language. The text inspires the reader to explore the subject further. It also serves as a wake-up call to religious people and prompts them to revisit their ingrained assumptions about life on earth and the position of humans in it.