

## Does the Design Argument Show There Is a God? William A. Dembski

Suppose you take a tour of the Louvre, that great museum in Paris housing one of the finest art collections in the world. As you walk through the museum, you come across a painting by someone named Leonardo da Vinci -- the *Mona Lisa*. Suppose this is your first exposure to da Vinci -- you hadn't heard of him or seen the *Mona Lisa* before. What could you conclude? Certainly you could conclude that da Vinci was a consummate painter. Nevertheless, just from the *Mona Lisa* you couldn't conclude that da Vinci was also a consummate engineer, musician, scientist, and inventor, whose ideas were centuries ahead of their time.

The design argument is like this. It looks at certain features of the natural world and concludes that they exhibit evidence of a designing intelligence. But just as the *Mona Lisa* can only tell us so much about its author (da Vinci), so the natural world can only tell us so much about its author (God). The design argument allows us reliably to conclude that a designing intelligence is behind the order and complexity of the natural world. But it cannot speak to the underlying nature of this designing intelligence (for instance, whether this intelligence is the transcendent interpersonal triune God of Christianity). Nor can it speak to the actions of that designing intelligence in human history. In particular, the design argument is silent about the revelation of Christ in Scripture. It follows that the design argument cannot "prove the Gospel" or "compel someone into the Kingdom."

Christian theologians have long recognized that the design argument is a modest argument. Even so, it is a powerful argument. Perhaps the best-known design argument is William Paley's. According to Paley, if we find a watch in a field (and thus lack all knowledge of how it arose), the adaptation of the watch's parts to telling time ensures that it is the product of an intelligence. So too, according to Paley, the marvelous adaptations of means to ends in organisms (like the human eye with its ability to confer sight) ensure that organisms are the product of an intelligence. The theory of intelligent design, or ID as it is commonly abbreviated, updates Paley's argument in light of contemporary information theory and molecular biology, bringing the design argument squarely within science.

The implications of ID for the Christian faith are profound and revolutionary. The rise of modern science led to a vigorous attack on orthodox Christian theology. The high point of this attack came with Darwin's theory of evolution. Orthodox Christian theology has always been committed to the proposition that God by wisdom created the world. A clear implication of this proposition is that the design of the world is real. The central claim of Darwin's theory is that an unguided material process (random variation and natural selection) could account for the emergence of all biological complexity and order. In other words, Darwin appeared to show that the design of the world was unreal -- that science had dispensed with any need for design. By showing that design is indispensable to our scientific understanding of the natural world, ID is breathing new life into the design argument and at the same time overturning the widespread misconception that science has disproved the Christian faith.