



BRUCE LICHT

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Bruce grew up in Lafayette, California and received a BA in Political Science from UCLA as well as a Graduate Gemologist degree from the Gemological Institute of America. After graduating, Bruce operated his family's 100 year-old retail fine jewelry business for twenty-two years. Bruce had a passion for computers and graphic arts, so he changed careers and joined his best friend at a national technical publishing company for seventeen-years as the company's Publisher, where they invented the modern labor law poster industry, including the first "All- On-One Labor Law Poster" and "Labor Law Poster Compliance Plan."

Aside from being the Founder of this website, *My Elevator Pitch for God*, Bruce was the co-editor of the book titled, *Elevator Pitches For God: Volume 1*, and author of the cookbook titled, *Immediate Chef: No Previous Experience Required*.

Bruce's goals for this website are: To introduce more people all around the world to God and strengthen the faith of those who already believe in a non-political and non-religious way, to bring people together, find common ground between different faiths, create meaning in people's lives, and start to move the world in a better direction.

You can help by sending this website to friends and family and posting it on social media!

You can also connect with the website project's LinkedIn page by clicking the link below:

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Purposeful Complexity

BRUCE LICHT

Have you ever opened up the back of a mechanical watch to see what makes it tick? You'll find a complex array of interdependent parts including gears, springs, and levers that work in perfect harmony to keep time.¹

William Paley was an 18th-century English clergyman and philosopher,² best known for his "*Watchmaker Analogy*,"³ which is a *teleological argument*⁴ for the existence of God.⁵ The analogy proposes that if you found a watch as you walked along a beach, you would infer the existence of a watchmaker without even seeing them.⁶ A complex watch implies an intelligent designer (a watchmaker), and by extension the vastly more complex universe implies an Intelligent Designer.⁷

Paley discussed "*prospective contrivances*," which is when "parts" develop before they are actually needed, as strong examples of design. These "*preparations for a future need*" include how eyes develop in the womb long before they are used to see. Paley also cited the development of teeth and the circulatory system long before they are needed.⁸

Paley used the watch's springs, barrel, and gears as an example for the core of his argument—the modern concept of "*irreducible complexity*," where a system's function depends on multiple integrated parts that gradual, step-by-step evolutionary changes could not have produced, as the intermediate stages offer no functional advantage and would actually be detrimental.⁹ Paley discussed the mechanical structures of animal joints for movement and the astounding complexity of the human eye for the function of vision, to demonstrate that these adaptations could only have come from an intelligent creator, versus a slow, undirected process.

Dissenters of his argument often point to intricate, naturally occurring patterns in snowflakes. While indeed complex, they arise from simple, repetitive physical laws and lack "purpose." Therefore, they are a different class of phenomenon and don't require more than purely naturalistic explanations.¹⁰ The eye, by contrast, is an intricate arrangement of lenses, retinas, and nerves perfectly adapted to work together to achieve a specific function. This comparison exemplifies the unique element of "*purposefulness*" in biological organisms.

The "*purposeful complexity*" in nature is fundamentally different from natural selection, which is an objectiveless process that doesn't exhibit any foresight and only selects for immediate fitness and survival.¹¹ Paley cited a bird's pre-programmed instinctive migratory pattern that is hardwired into its DNA, as opposed to a skill learned or developed by each individual bird through trial-and-error. Furthermore, he discussed specific reproductive behaviors, such as birds incubating eggs or salmon returning to spawn.

Seemingly useless parts, vestigial organs, or imperfections don't disprove design.¹² Just as a slow-running watch still had a watchmaker, an organ with suboptimal features does not immediately negate the evidence of design.¹³

The argument for design remains compelling, highlighting purposeful complexity that natural selection just cannot explain.¹⁴ The intricate, interdependent parts of life, like a watch's mechanism, demand a rational conclusion: an Intelligent Designer is the most logical explanation for such breathtaking, precise, coordinated, ordered, and purposeful biological complexity—far beyond the abilities of the most highly skilled terrestrial craftsman.¹⁵

Footnotes:

- 1) Within a basic wristwatch's movement, you'll find a complex array of intricate and interdependent parts including: a mainspring, hairspring, *winding pinion*, *balance wheel*, *ratchet wheel*, *pallet fork*, *click assembly*, barrel bridge, gear train, escapement mechanism, oscillating weight, *jewel* bearings, and more.
- 2) William Paley is considered an 18th-century philosopher and Christian Apologist, although his life extended into the early 19th century. Born in 1743, Paley was a prolific writer and influential figure during the Enlightenment, with his major works published in the late 18th century and very early 19th century, until his death in 1805.
- 3) In his bestselling work, *Natural Theology*, published in 1802.
- 4) A "*Teleological Argument*," also known as the argument from design, is a philosophical argument that suggests the apparent intricate, purposeful order, patterns, and complexity observed in the universe and life imply the existence of a divine designer or creator. It draws an analogy between complex human-made artifacts and the natural world, arguing that if a complex watch implies a watchmaker, then the complexity of life and the universe implies a more powerful designer, often identified with God.

Examples of natural phenomena cited in the teleological argument include:

Cosmological phenomena (Fine-tuning)

- **Fundamental physical constants:** Many physical constants of the universe, such as the gravitational constant, the strong nuclear force, and the electromagnetic force, appear "fine-tuned" to incredibly precise values. If they were slightly different, life as we know it would be impossible. For instance, a minuscule change in gravity's strength would prevent stars and galaxies from forming or would cause stars to burn out too quickly for complex life to evolve.
- **The Big Bang's initial conditions:** The expansion rate of the universe from the Big Bang is cited as evidence of fine-tuning. If the expansion rate had been even slightly different, the universe either would have collapsed back on itself or expanded too quickly for stars and planets to form.
- **The existence of specific elements:** The precise values of forces and constants allow for the nucleosynthesis of heavy elements, like carbon and oxygen, within stars. Without this precise balance, only hydrogen would have formed, making complex life impossible.

Biological phenomena (Irreducible complexity)

- **The human eye:** Often cited as an example of an "irreducibly complex" system, the eye requires numerous intricate parts to function. The teleological argument suggests that such a system could not have evolved through gradual, successive, random mutations because it would be useless or even detrimental until all its parts were perfectly assembled.
- **Bacterial flagellum:** A microscopic rotating motor used by some bacteria for propulsion. Intelligent design advocates, like biochemist Michael Behe, point to its multi-part structure and argue it could not function if any component were missing.
- **The blood-clotting cascade:** The body's system for clotting blood is a complex biochemical pathway involving multiple interacting proteins. Teleological arguments propose that the absence of a single factor would render the entire system non-functional, making it unlikely to have arisen from unguided evolution.
- **The origin of life:** The transition from non-living matter to the first living cell, with its immense and "specified complexity," is presented by some as a phenomenon inexplicable by chance, thus requiring a conscious agent.
- **The fit of organisms to their environments:** Classic arguments note how organisms are well-suited to their surroundings, such as the wings of a bird for flight or the fins of a fish for swimming. This apparent purposefulness is interpreted as evidence of design.

Planetary phenomena

- **The structure of Earth:** Arguments point to Earth's specific characteristics as being ideal for life. This includes its distance from the sun, the presence of a large moon to stabilize its axis, and the composition of its atmosphere.
- **The ozone layer:** This phenomenon is viewed as serving the specific purpose of protecting life from harmful ultraviolet radiation, suggesting a deliberate and intentional arrangement.

Overall universe (Anthropic principle) *

- **Order and regularity:** Ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle saw the predictable, regular motions of the planets and stars as evidence of cosmic order pointing to an intelligent cause.
- **Human capacity for reason:** Some versions of the argument use the anthropic principle, noting that the universe not only allows for life, but also for conscious, intelligent observers who are able to discover its underlying laws and order. This is framed as suggesting a purpose behind existence itself.

* The "**Anthropic Principle**," in essence, states: that the conditions and laws of the universe we observe must be compatible with the existence of conscious observers like ourselves. There are two main versions: the Weak Anthropic Principle (WAP), which suggests our existence is a result of selection bias (we can only exist in a life-supporting universe), and the Strong Anthropic Principle (SAP), a more controversial idea that the universe is somehow compelled to produce life. William Paley's work, particularly his book *Natural Theology*, profoundly influenced natural theology and creationist thought in his time and still today. His arguments were a major inspiration for many writers, such as Charles Bell, William Buckland, William Kirby, Thomas Chalmers, and was a critical point of departure for people like Charles Darwin. Paley's work is still influential in modern thought with recent books by people like Michael Behe, William Dembski, and others.

- 5) William Paley's work, particularly his book *Natural Theology*, profoundly influenced natural theology and creationist thought in his time and still today. His arguments were a major inspiration for many writers, such as Charles Bell, William Buckland, William Kirby, Thomas Chalmers, and were a critical point of departure for people like Charles Darwin. Paley's work is still influential in modern thought with recent books by people like Michael Behe, William Dembski, and others.
- 6) There is no one alive who would disagree with the statement that a complex watch implies an intelligent designer—a watchmaker. But for some reason, many argue that things that are infinitely harder to make (such as an atom, a cell, a strand of DNA, a simple gnat, let alone an infinitely more complex human being or our universe) do not.
- 7) A common retort is: "*Who designed the designer?*" This proposition states that if complex things require a designer, then the designer itself must require an even more complex designer, as so on, leading to an infinite regression and fails to provide an ultimate explanation. The answer to this argument is not that *all* complex things must have a designer, but that things with specific, purposeful, functional complexity do. A designer, and particularly an eternal and uncreated being like God, is not necessarily bound by the same physical constraints and doesn't fall under the same category as a created artifact.
- 8) Another example of "*prospective contrivances*," however not cited by Paley in his book is how milk is produced by mammals long before their offspring are born.
- 9) William Paley did not specifically discuss "*irreducible complexity*" by name, as that is a term coined much later by biochemist Michael Behe in his 1996 book, *Darwin's Black Box*. However, Paley's famous "*watchmaker analogy*" in *Natural Theology* is the historical foundation for the argument, as he argued that complex systems like the eye required a designer for the same reason a watch does. Another biological example is *bacterial flagellum*, where the removal of any single component would render the entire system non-functional.
- 10) This point, about the intricate, naturally occurring patterns in snowflakes is not something that was discussed by Paley in his book, however this point is added within this essay to rebut a common retort to his argument.
- 11) William Paley did not discuss *natural selection* in his book or the idea that it was "an undirected process that doesn't exhibit any foresight." This point, used in post-Darwinian debates, is added within this essay to rebut a common retort to his argument.

- 12) Although Paley did address the problem of imperfections in nature, he was careful not to base his argument on whether all features were functional or optimal. His approach to biological imperfections was more about finding the creator's intent rather than providing a perfect defense against all possible flaws.
- 13) Paley did not believe that the watch running slow would refute the existence of a watchmaker. He argued that even if one did not know the function of a particular part, the rest of the watch still clearly showed evidence of design.

As a side note: Seemingly useless parts or organ with some suboptimal features include in animals, for example, the recurrent laryngeal nerve in giraffes, which is the 10th cranial nerve that has an unusually long and indirect path.

“Vestigial organs,” are described as organs that are left over from previous reiterations, vestiges of a previous existence, or extra organs that have no use anymore. This is something that some non-believers use to try to obviate the need for God. It is important to realize that just because we don't know something's function at this time, does not mean that it doesn't have a function that we will discover one day. Consider for example, “Junk DNA,” our tailbone, wisdom teeth, the auricular muscles in the ear, and the plica semilunaris which is a fold in the inner corner of the eye. Will we one day determine that these do have a purpose? We now know the reasons we have almost everything in our bodies including our appendix, tonsils, thymus, and the pineal gland. These were previously viewed as being vestigial, but now they are not. What will we discover in the future?

Science tells us that they still do not know the reason why we have the soft, fleshy lower part of the external ear—the ear lobe. Interesting that in the Talmud, it tells us the reason we have ear lobes are for times when someone is speaking gossip or what's considered “evil talk” around us. In that case, we are advised to stuff the lobes into our ears, to prevent us from hearing the terrible words being spoken. This is the ONLY organ that the Talmud tells us why we have it. It is the ONLY organ that has a solely spiritual function.

- 14) A painting points to a creator, an artist. A house points to a builder. A book points to an author. A car points to an engineer. A computer program points to a programmer. A lock and key point to a locksmith. Similarly, DNA, the laws of physics, moral law, humans, the universe, etc., point to an intelligent divine Creator.
- 15) Paley's final chapters of the book extend the argument to God's attributes. He contends that God must be benevolent because the designs in nature are beneficial, and for example, that pain is often mitigated or serves a purpose.