

Philosophy of Religion

3. *Design Arguments*

How strong is the traditional Design Argument for the existence of God? Is the contemporary “Fine Tuning Argument” any more promising?

1. Essential Sources

David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, available in many editions.

David Hume, *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Section XI, available in many editions (this is less essential than the *Dialogues*, and focused on a particular limited conclusion – the impossibility of arguing “from the world to God and back again”).

Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (OUP, second edition 1991), chapters 1-6 and 8
or (much shorter!)

Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?* (OUP, 1996), chapters 1-4.

Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (OUP, second edition 1991), Appendix B on the Fine Tuning Argument.

or

Leslie, John, “Anthropic Principle, World Ensemble, Design” in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1982), pp 141-152.

2. Critical Discussions

Hume’s treatment of the argument in the *Dialogues* is sympathetically examined by John Gaskin, *Hume’s Philosophy of Religion* (Macmillan, second edition, 1988), pp. 116-31. Section XI of the *Enquiry* is examined in Gaskin’s paper “Religion: The Useless Hypothesis”, in my *Reading Hume on Human Understanding* (OUP, 2002), chapter 13.

An extensive overview of the literature on Hume’s discussion is available in §9.2 of the Critical Survey mentioned below (pp. 455-9 in the printed version).

Perhaps the best-known critique of Swinburne’s approach is by J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (OUP, 1982), chapters 8 and 9.

A recent collection is N. Manson (ed.), *God and Design* (Routledge, 2003).

An interesting discussion with a metaphysical slant is in Robin Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism* (Routledge, 1996), chapters 4 and 5 (chapters 1 to 3 are also worth reading, on the Cosmological Argument).

For more material on the Fine Tuning Argument, and some parallels between it and the Design Argument in Hume’s day (before Darwinian explanation was available), see §9.3 of my “Critical Survey of the Literature on Hume and the First *Enquiry*”, in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding* (OUP, 2002), pp. 459-61.