Natural Religion in the Age of Newton: Paley and Hume
editorial comments by W. Kimler

Although the Rev. William Paley's *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature* appeared in 1802, the work is best seen as a summation of the eighteenth-century concern with finding a middle way between skeptical rationalism and religious enthusiasm. Newtonian science inspired a broad application of empiricism and rationality to an understanding of the world, including theology. Paley (1743-1805) saw excessive rationalism as a dangerous path to doubt and even atheism, but also rejected an emotional foundation for belief in God. Born in 1743, after an academic career at Cambridge and then moving higher in the Anglican church, he turned to philosophical works in his sixties, publishing highly popular books on morals, political values, and Christianity. One way to see his *Natural Theology* is as the best expression of the widely held view among Newtonian philosophers, beginning with Ray and Clarke and Derham and continuing through the 1700s. Paley derives from nature two arguments—a proof of the existence of God as the Designer of the universe, and evidences for the attributes of such a God.

Excerpts from Paley's *Natural Theology*
quotations from edition of 1809, at http://www.darwin-online.org.uk/

CHAPTER I.
STATE OF THE ARGUMENT.

IN crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever: nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? why is it not as admissible in the second case, as in the first? For this reason,

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and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it. To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts, and of their offices, all tending to one result:-- We see a cylindrical box containing a coiled elastic spring, which, by its endeavour to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought for the sake of flexure), communicating the action of the spring from the box to the fusee. We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which catch in, and apply to, each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer; and at the same time, by the size and shape of those wheels, so regulating that motion, as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time. We take notice that the wheels are made of brass in order to keep them from rust; the springs of steel, no other metal being so elastic; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work, but in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not be seen without opening the case. This mechanism being observed (it requires indeed an examination of the instrument, and perhaps some previous knowledge of the subject, to perceive and understand it; but being once, as we have said, observed and understood), the inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker: that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

I. Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist

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capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what
manner it was performed; all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and, to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, if he be unseen and unknown, but raises no doubt in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

II. Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to show with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

III. Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts, concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case; if by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or the connexion by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts which might be spared, without prejudice to the

IV. Nor, fourthly, would it invalidate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

V. Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watch-maker.

VI. Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so:

VII. And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of metallic nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order, according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the law does nothing; is nothing. The expression, "the law of metallic nature," may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear; but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him, such as "the law of vegetable nature," "the law of animal nature," or indeed as "the law of nature" in general, when assigned as the cause of phænomena, in exclusion of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

VIII. Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He
knows enough for his argument: he knows the utility of the end: he
knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These
points being known, his ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning
other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness
of knowing little, need not beget a distrust of that which he does know.

After several chapters of examples of the application of this reasoning,
Paley rather triumphantly insists that all the cases are not in fact needed.
It is not a chain of reasoning that makes the case. Rather, one example
would suffice to prove the Designer, even if all the rest of the world were
 disorderly. That is because science knows no way to explain order and
complex function arising without a designer:

WERE there no example in the world, of contrivance, except that of the
eye, it would be alone sufficient to support the conclusion which we draw
from it, as to the necessity of an intelligent Creator. It could never be got
rid of; because it could not be accounted for by any other supposition,
which did not contradict all the principles we possess of knowledge; the
principles, according to which, things do, as often as they can be brought
to the test of experience, turn out to be true or false.

CONTRIVANCE, if established, appears to me to prove every thing
which we wish to prove. Amongst other things, it proves the personality
of the Deity, as distinguished from what is sometimes called nature,
sometimes called a principle: which terms, in the mouths of those who
use them philosophically, seem to be intended, to admit and to express an
efficacy, but to exclude and to deny a personal agent. Now that which can
contrive, which can design, must be a person. These capacities constitute

personality, for they imply consciousness and thought. They require that
which can perceive an end or purpose; as well as the power of providing
means, and of directing them to their end. They require a centre in which
perceptions unite, and from which volitions flow; which is mind. The acts
of a mind prove the existence of a mind: and in whatever a mind resides,
is a person. The seat of intellect is a

person. We have no authority to limit the properties of mind to any
particular corporeal form, or to any particular circumscription of space.
These properties subsist, in created nature, under a great variety of
sensible forms. Also every animated being has its sensorium, that is, a
certain portion of space, within which perception and volition are exerted.
This sphere may be enlarged to an indefinite extent; may comprehend the
universe; and, being so imagined, may serve to furnish us with as good a
notion, as we are capable of forming, of the immensity of the Divine
Nature, i.e. of a Being, infinite, as well in essence as in power; yet
nevertheless a person.

"No man hath seen God at any time." And this, I believe, makes
the great difficulty. Now it is a difficulty which chiefly arises from our
not duly estimating the state of our faculties. The Deity, it is true, is the
object of none of our senses: but reflect what limited capacities animal
senses are.

. . . The great energies of nature are known to us only by their
effects. The substances which produce them, are as much concealed
from our senses as the Divine essence itself. Gravitation, though constantly
present, though constantly exerting its influence, though every where
around us, near us, and within us; though diffused throughout all space,
and penetrating the texture of all bodies with which we are acquainted,
depends, if upon a fluid, upon a fluid which, though both powerful and
universal in its operation, is no object of sense to us; if upon any other
kind of substance or action, upon a substance and action, from which we
receive no distinguishable impressions. Is it then to be wondered at, that
it should, in some measure, be the same with the Divine nature?

. . . Mechanism is not itself power. Mechanism, without power, can do
nothing. Let a watch be contrived and constructed ever so ingeniously; be its parts ever so many, ever so complicated, ever so finely wrought or artificially put together, it cannot go without a weight or spring, i.e. without a force independent of, and ulterior to, its mechanism. The spring acting at the centre, will produce different motions and different results, according to the variety of the intermediate mechanism. One and the self-same spring, acting in one and the same manner, viz. by simply expanding itself, may be the cause of a hundred different and all useful movements, if a hundred different

and well-devised sets of wheels be placed between it and the final effect; e.g. may point out the hour of the day, the day of the month, the age of the moon, the position of the planets, the cycle of the years, and many other serviceable notices; and these movements may fulfil their purposes with more or less perfection, according as the mechanism is better or worse contrived, or better or worse executed, or in a better or worse state of repair: but in all cases, it is necessary that the spring act at the centre. The course of our reasoning upon such a subject would be this. By inspecting the watch, even when standing still, we get a proof of contrivance, and of a contriving mind, having been employed about it. In the form and obvious relation of its parts, we see enough to convince us of this. If we pull the works in pieces, for the purpose of a closer examination, we are still more fully convinced. But, when we see the watch going, we see proof of another point, viz. that there is a power somewhere, and somehow or other, applied to it; a power in action;--that there is more in the subject than the mere wheels of the machine;--that there is a secret spring, or a gravitating plummet;--in a word, that there is force, and energy, as well as mechanism.

... If, in tracing these causes, it be said, that we find certain general properties of matter which have nothing in them that bespeaks intelligence, I answer, that, still, the managing of these properties, the pointing and directing them to the uses which we see made of them, demands intelligence in the highest degree.

There may be particular intelligent beings, guiding these motions in each case: or they may be the result of trains of mechanical dispositions, fixed beforehand by an intelligent appointment, and kept in action by a power at the centre. But, in either case, there must be intelligence.

CHAPTER XXIV.
OF THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEITY.

IT is an immense conclusion, that there is a GOD; a perceiving, intelligent, designing, Being; at the head of creation, and from whose will it proceeded. The attributes of such a Being, suppose his reality to be proved, must be adequate to the magnitude, extent, and multiplicity of his operations: which are not only vast beyond comparison with those performed by any other power, but, so far as respects our conceptions of them, infinite, because they are unlimited on all sides.

Yet the contemplation of a nature so exalted, however surely we arrive at the proof of its existence, overwhets our faculties. The mind feels its powers sink under the subject. One consequence of which is, that from painful abstraction the thoughts seek relief in sensible images. Whence may be deduced the ancient, and almost universal propensity to idolatrous substitutions. They are the resources of a labouring imagination. False religions usually fall in with the natural propensity; true religions, or such as have derived themselves from the true, resist it.

It is one of the advantages of the revelations which we acknowledge, that, whilst they reject idolatry with its many pernicious accompaniments, they introduce the Deity to human apprehension, under an idea more personal, more determinate, more within its compass, than the theology of nature can do. And this they do by representing him exclusively under the relation in which he stands to ourselves; and, for the most part, under some precise character, resulting from that relation, or from the history of his providences. Which method suits the span of our intellects much better than the universality which enters into the idea of God, as deduced from the views of nature. When, therefore,
these representations are well founded in point of authority (for all depends upon that), they afford a condescension to the state of our faculties, of which, they who have most reflected on the subject, will be the first to acknowledge the want and the value.

Nevertheless, if we be careful to imitate the documents of our religion, by confining our explanations to what concerns ourselves, and do not affect more precision in our ideas than the subject allows of, the several terms which are employed to denote the attributes of the Deity, may be made, even in natural religion, to bear a sense consistent with truth and reason, and not surpassing our comprehension.

These terms are; Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, eternity, self-existence, necessary existence, spirituality.

CHAPTER XXV.
THE UNITY OF THE DEITY.

OF the "Unity of the Deity," the proof is, the uniformity of plan observable in the universe. The universe itself is a system; each part either depending upon other parts, or being connected with other parts by some common law of motion, or by the presence of some common substance. One principle of gravitation causes a stone to drop towards the earth, and the moon to wheel round it. One law of attraction carries all the different planets about the sun. This philosophers demonstrate. There are also other points of agreement amongst them, which may be considered as marks of the identity of their origin, and of their intelligent author.

CHAPTER XXVI.
THE GOODNESS OF THE DEITY.

THE proof of the divine goodness rests upon two propositions; each, as we contend, capable of being made out by observations drawn from the appearances of nature.

The first is, "that, in a vast plurality of instances in which contrivance is perceived, the design of the contrivance is beneficial."

The second, "that the Deity has superadded pleasure to animal sensations, beyond what was necessary for any other purpose, or when the purpose, so far as it was necessary," might have been effected by the operation of pain.

This argument for benevolence depends on a complexity as discovered by science — that all the parts of animals work together so cleverly for the use of the animal. Such a "felicity of result" must be "an exertion of benevolence creation," and a benevolence "minute in its care, how vast in its comprehension!" [p. 455].

One historical peculiarity of Paley's work would appear to be the fact that, although the book is a long discussion of the argument from design, Paley never even mentions David Hume's famous demolition of that argument in his Dialogues concerning Natural Religion (1779). For one thing, Paley's views were well-formed by this time. More importantly, it was widely held among British intellectuals that Hume's arguments were unconvincing. Hume's impact was greater in the 1800s, his ideas appearing in a variety of empirical and skeptical treatments of knowledge.

Acknowledging that in the 1700s thoroughly skeptical philosophy was a minority view, Hume (1711-1776) still serves as a good example for us of the impact of science and empirical reasoning. Hume's argument nicely outlines the alternatives. He also provides an example of how empirical rationalism could be taken to one end of the spectrum of views on religion. For Hume, the foundation of knowledge is empirical experience. Sensory experiences are all isolated states, and our ideas about the world and causes are ideas about the connections among experiences. However, he thought that human understanding can never discover real connections, and so never confirm beliefs. This put him at odds with both traditional theological reasoning and with the newer theological arguments from design. The older view, and traditionally the foremost intellectual defense of religion, was that God can be known to exist by reason, but that our human understanding is inadequate to comprehend His attributes and actions. Newtonian natural theology took the opposite tack, that the only proof of the existence of the deity is the argument from design. It was sufficient proof, but human reason could also determine His attributes through the evidences of nature. To deny this would be atheism.

Hume's skeptical view used principles of reasoning to undercut both theological views. Agreeing that an empirical argument was the only true approach to knowledge, as matters of fact, and so the traditional view is rejected. He then proceeds to demonstrate that the necessity of a
designer cannot be confirmed by empirical experience, just as we cannot truly determine ultimate causes. Thus we’re left with no possible proof of the existence of God, with a suspension of judgment as the only reasonable position.

Excerpts from David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*  
[quotations from the Works (1854), ed. Kemp Smith]

The view of Philo [the empiricist skeptic], that reason alone cannot provide proof:

The vulgar, indeed, we may remark, who are unacquainted with science and profound enquiry, observing the endless disputes of the learned, have commonly a thorough contempt for philosophy; and rivet themselves the faster, by that means, in the great points of theology which have been taught them. Those who enter a little into study and enquiry, finding many appearances of evidence in doctrines the newest and most extraordinary, think nothing too difficult for human reason; and, presumptuously breaking through all fences, profane the inmost sanctuaries of the temple. But Cleanthes will, I hope, agree with me, that, after we have abandoned ignorance, the surest remedy, there is still one expedient left to prevent this profane liberty. Let Demea’s principles be improved and cultivated: let us become thoroughly sensible of the weakness, blindness, and narrow limits of human reason: let us duly consider its uncertainty and endless contrarieties, even in subjects of common life and practice: let the errors and deceits of our very senses be set before us; the insuperable difficulties which attend first principles in all systems; the contradictions which adhere to the very ideas of matter, cause and effect, extension, space, time, motion; and in a word, quantity of all kinds, the object of the only science that can fairly pretend to any certainty or evidence. When these topics are displayed in their full light, as they are by some philosophers and almost all divines; who can retain such confidence in this frail faculty of reason as to pay any regard to its determinations in points so sublime, so abstruse, so remote from common life and experience? When the coherence of the parts of a stone, or even that composition of parts which renders it extended; when these familiar objects, I say, are so inexplicable, and contain circumstances so repugnant and contradictory; with what assurance can we decide concerning the origin of worlds, or trace their history from eternity to eternity? [p. 131]

Demea’s [the orthodox traditionalist] response, that divine attributes are beyond our comprehension:

No man, no man at least of common sense, I am persuaded, ever entertained a serious doubt with regard to a truth so certain and self-evident [as the Being of a God]. The question is not concerning the BEING, but the NATURE of GOD. This, I affirm, from the infirmities of human understanding, to be altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us. The essence of that supreme Mind, his attributes, the manner of his existence, the very nature of his duration; these, and every particular which regards so divine a Being, are mysterious to men. Finite, weak, and blind creatures, we ought to humble ourselves in his august presence; and, conscious of our frailties, adore in silence his infinite perfections, which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. They are covered in a deep cloud from human curiosity. It is profaneness to attempt penetrating through these sacred obscurities. And, next to the impiety of denying his existence, is the temerity of prying into his nature and essence, decrees and attributes. [p. 141]

Philo’s rejoinder, agreeing on reason’s limitation only to reject Demea’s reasoning that we have to accept incomprehensibility:

Our ideas reach no further than our experience. We have no experience of divine attributes and operations. I need not conclude my syllogism. You can draw the inference yourself. And it is a pleasure to me (and I hope to you too) that just reasoning and sound piety here concur in the same conclusion, and both of them establish the admirably mysterious and incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Being. [p. 142]

Cleanthes’s [a cautious philosopher] use of the mechanist philosophy to provide the traditional basis for an empirical argument from design:

Look round the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain.
All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which raves into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human designs, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since, therefore, the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature 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. By this argument a posteriori, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence. [p. 143]

But Philo rejects the analogy of mind or intelligence at work, because we are so limited in our experience, and makes an argument for prudent suspension of judgment:

And can you blame me, Cleanthes, if I here imitate the prudent reserve of Simonides, who, according to the noted story, being asked by Hiero, What God was? desired a day to think of it, and then two days more; and after that manner continually prolonged the term, without ever bringing in his definition or description? Could you even blame me, if I answered at first, that I did not know, and was sensible that this subject lay vastly beyond the reach of my faculties? You might cry out sceptic and raller, as much as you pleased: but having found, in so many other subjects much more familiar, the imperfections and even contradictions of human reason, I never should expect any success from its feeble conjectures, in a subject so sublime, and so remote from the sphere of our observation. When two species of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can infer, by custom, the existence of one wherever I see the existence of the other; and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case [the entire universe], are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a serious countenance, that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art like the human, because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient, surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance. [p. 149]

Philo’s argument against inferring a perfect designer, and the ability to discern any specific attributes of such a designer:

But were this world ever so perfect a production, it must still remain uncertain, whether all the excellences of the work can justly be ascribed to the workman. If we survey a ship, what an exalted idea must we form of the ingenuity of the carpenter who framed so complicated, useful, and beautiful a machine? And what surprize must we feel, when we find him a stupid mechanic, who imitated others, and copied an art, which, through a long succession of ages, after multiplied trials, mistakes, corrections, deliberations, and controversies, had been gradually improving? Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out; much labour lost, many fruitless trials made; and a slow, but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making. In such subjects, who can determine, where the truth; nay, who can conjecture where the probability lies, amidst a great number of hypotheses which may be proposed, and a still greater which may be imagined?

And what shadow of an argument, continued Philo, can you produce, from your hypothesis, to prove the unity of the Deity? A great number of men join in building a house or ship, in rearing a city, in framing a commonwealth; why may not several deities combine in contriving and framing a world? This is only so much greater similarity to human affairs. By sharing the work among several, we may so much further limit the attributes of each, and get rid of that extensive power and knowledge, which must be supposed in one deity, and which, according to you, can only serve to weaken the proof of his existence. And if such foolish, such vicious creatures as man, can yet often unite in framing and executing one plan, how much more those deities or demons, whom we may suppose several degrees more perfect! [p. 167]

... But further, Cleanthes: men are mortal, and renew their species by generation; and this is common to all living creatures. The two great sexes of male and female, says Milton, animate the world. Why must this circumstance, so universal, so essential, be excluded from those numerous and limited deities? Behold, then, the theogony of ancient times brought back upon us.

And why not become a perfect Anthropomorphite? Why not assert the deity or deities to be corporeal, and to have eyes, a nose, mouth, ears, etc.? Epicurus maintained, that no man had ever seen reason
but in a human figure; therefore the gods must have a human figure. And
this argument, which is deservedly so much ridiculed by Cicero,
becomes, according to you, solid and philosophical.

In a word, Cleanthes, a man who follows your hypothesis is able
perhaps to assert, or conjecture, that the universe, sometime, arose from
something like design: but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one
single circumstance; and is left afterwards to fix every point of his
theology by the utmost license of fancy and hypothesis. This world, for
aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior
standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who
afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance: it is the work
only of some dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of derision to his
supersiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in some
superannuated deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures,
from the first impulse and active force which it received from him. You
justly give signs of horror, Demea, at these strange suppositions; but
these, and a thousand more of the same kind, are Cleanthes's
suppositions, not mine. From the moment the attributes of the Deity are
supposed finite, all these have place. And I cannot, for my part, think that
so wild and unsettled a system of theology is, in any respect, preferable to
none at all. [p. 168]

A further argument against the analogy of human mind and a designer,
removing the discernment of divine attribute of benevolence in nature, is
to point to a litany of misery and suffering in both the animal and human
world. Given the observed world, how can one

. . . assert the moral attributes of the Deity, his justice, benevolence,
mercy, and rectitude, to be of the same nature with these virtues in human
creatures? His power we allow is infinite: whatever he wills is executed:
but neither man nor any other animal is happy: therefore he does not will
their happiness. His wisdom is infinite: he is never mistaken in choosing
the means to any end: but the course of Nature tends not to human or
animal felicity: therefore it is not established for that purpose. Through
the whole compass of human knowledge, there are no inferences more
certain and infallible than these. In what respect, then, do his benevolence
and mercy resemble the benevolence and mercy of men? [p. 198]

And on purpose in Nature:

But what, I beseech you, is the object of that curious artifice and
machinery, which she has displayed in all animals? The preservation
alone of individuals, and propagation of the species. It seems enough for
her purpose, if such a rank be barely upheld in the universe, without any
care or concern for the happiness of the members that compose it. No
resource for this purpose: no machinery, in order merely to give pleasure
or ease: no fund of pure joy and contentment: no indulgence, without
some want or necessity accompanying it. At least, the few phenomena of
this nature are overbalanced by opposite phenomena of still greater
importance. [p. 198]

Philo's final, pragmatic conclusion:

If the whole of Natural Theology, as some people seem to maintain,
resolves itself into one simple, though somewhat ambiguous, at least
undefined proposition, That the cause or causes of order in the universe
probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence: if this
proposition be not capable of extension, variation, or more particular
explication: if it affords no inference that affects human life, or can be the
source of any action or forbearance: and if the analogy, imperfect as it is,
can be carried no further than to the human intelligence, and cannot be
transferred, with any appearance of probability, to the qualities of the
mind; if this really be the case, what can the most inquisitive,
contemplative, and religious man do more than give a plain,
philosophical assent to the proposition, as often as it occurs, and believe
that the arguments on which it is established exceed the objections which
lie against it? Some astonishment, indeed, will naturally arise from the
greatness of the object; some melancholy from its obscurity; some
contempt of human reason, that it can give no solution more satisfactory
with regard to so extraordinary and magnificent a question. [p. 227]