

that nature is God. For, recall the steps by which the reasoning proceeds. Something exists; for I, at least, do. Now, on the hypothesis that something exists, it must, if contingent, have had a cause; and so on. *If* contingent. But is any thing contingent? This essential question lies wholly outside of the argument now under consideration. To *assume* that *the universe* is contingent, is plainly illegitimate—that is, if the existence of a Divine Creator requires to be logically proved; for, the subtlest form of Atheism, the only form indeed which has sufficient plausibility to give it importance, is precisely that which teaches that nothing is contingent, but that all so-called contingent existences are phenomena of the One necessary All.

This brings me to the second argument—that from final causes, or from the general plan and special adaptations of the cosmical system. Some state the argument as follows: whatever indicates design is the work of a designer (this is laid down by Dr. Reid as a first principle of necessary truth); but the universe indicates design; therefore it is the work of an intelligent cause. This is evidently quite unsatisfactory; for the Major Premiss, Dr. Reid's first principle of necessary truth, is a mere truism. The veriest sceptic would admit that whatever indicates design implies a designer—the word *design* meaning nothing else than *what is in the mind of a designer*. If the argument be made to start from such a Major Premiss—an irrefragable, because an identical, proposition—the sceptic challenges the Minor. For what (he says) is the assumption, that the universe exhibits marks of design, in other words, exhibits marks indicating that it is the work of a designing cause, but the whole thing at issue? Some writers, seeing this, have constructed the syllogism more judiciously; laying it down as their Major Premiss, that, when we observe objects disposed in the manner which we describe by the term *order*, an intelligent Author of the arrangement is suggested to the mind. This is a true, and unspeakably important proposition. Its full significance we shall afterwards have to investigate. But meanwhile, looking at it as the Major Premiss of an argument, it seems plain that the argument so constructed does not possess any force of logical demonstration. It is sufficient to remark the three following particulars. *In the first place*, granting that an intelligent Author of the universe is suggested to the mind in the manner alleged, suggestion is not proof. *In the second place*, the conclusion deduced, if viewed as reached by logical inference, cannot be held to be absolutely certain. *Order is a matter of degree*. No one will deny that some measure of order might be brought about by unintelligent instruments; a degree somewhat greater is less likely to have so originated; and, as the order still continues to increase, the idea of its having been produced otherwise than by an intelligent agent soon becomes so utterly unlikely as to be, in fact, unbelievable. Yet, even when probability is indefinitely heightened, it never grows into certainty. Hence the argument under review concludes nothing with certainty. Let no one say that this is needless refinement. The distinction between what is only conceived as immensely probable, and what is known as absolutely certain, is one of the most vital in philosophy; and no where is it of more proper or obvious application than in the case before us. *In the third place*—what is the most fatal weakness of all—the argument, regarded simply in a logical point of view,