Does God exist?

(part one)

Three Propositional Attitudes

Theism
  Belief in P

P = "God exists."

Atheism
  Disbelief in P

Agnosticism

  Withholding judgment about P

Three Philosophical Attitudes

Philosophical Theism
  The view that P can be proven

Philosophical Atheism
  The view that P can be disproven

Philosophical Agnosticism
  The view that P can be neither proven nor disproven

Proving God's Existence

A priori proofs [ontological]

All of the premises can be known prior to experience.

A posteriori proofs [cosmological, teleological/design]

At least one premise is based on experience.

Proofs of God's Existence

Ontological

The meaning of the word 'God' includes existence.

Cosmological

The existence of the world requires a creator.

Teleological/Design

The purpose/design of the world requires a designer.

Proving God's Existence

How do we prove the existence of something?

How do we prove the existence of something non-physical?

Teleology
and
Design

Teleological Argument
Aquinas's Fifth Way

(1) All things act for a purpose.   [Aristotelian view of nature]

(2) Acting for a purpose requires a mind.

(3) ∴ Some mind is behind the action of each thing.   [1, 2]

(4) Inanimate objects (rocks, planets, etc.) act for a purpose, but (by definition) lack minds.

(5) ∴ Some powerful external mind (i.e., God) guides the actions of inanimate objects.   [3, 4]

Greek:

   telos: end, goal, purpose

   logos: word, account

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Changing Views of Nature
Aristotelian vs Modern

Aristotelian

All change is teleological (goal-oriented).

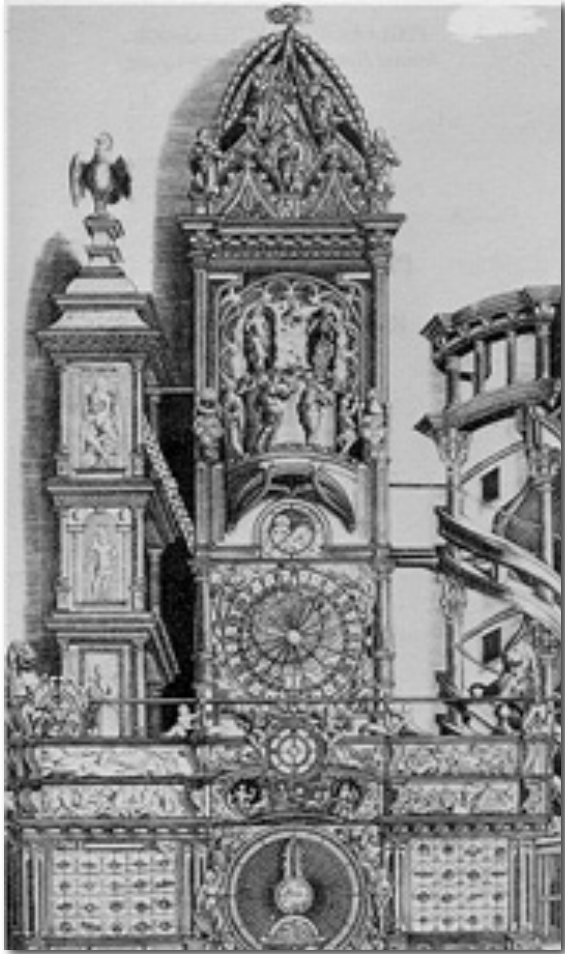(think of a hungry fox chasing a rabbit)

Modern

All change is mechanistic.

(think of the gears of a clock being turned by a spring)

The Clock and the Dog's Paw

Built by humans (1570-74)

"There is incomparably more art expressed in the structure of a dog's foot than in that of the famous clock at Strasbourg."

Robert Boyle (1627-91)

Built by God

Argument from Design

(1) Every machine-like structure is the product of a designing intelligence.

(2) The world is a machine-like structure.

(3) ∴ The world is the product of a designing intelligence.   [1, 2]

(4) The world's structure is so complex and perfect that only God could have designed it.

(5) ∴ God designed the world.   [3, 4]

William Paley
(1743-1805)

Argument from Design

What is a machine-like structure?

How would we know one if we saw one?

What are the necessary conditions of a MLS?

Argument from Design

Is the world a machine-like structure?

What are the parts?

Do they all work together?

What is its purpose?

Argument from Design (#2)

(1) Every machine-like structure is the product of a designing intelligence.

(2) This natural object, X, is a machine-like structure.

(3) ∴ X is the product of a designing intelligence.   [1, 2]

(4) X's structure is so complex and perfect that only God could have designed it.

(5) ∴ God designed X.   [3, 4]

> To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree possible.

Charles Darwin
(1809-1882)

Charles Darwin, who developed the mechanism of natural selection in his groundbreaking *On the Origin of Species* (1859), worried about how the eye could be explained naturally.
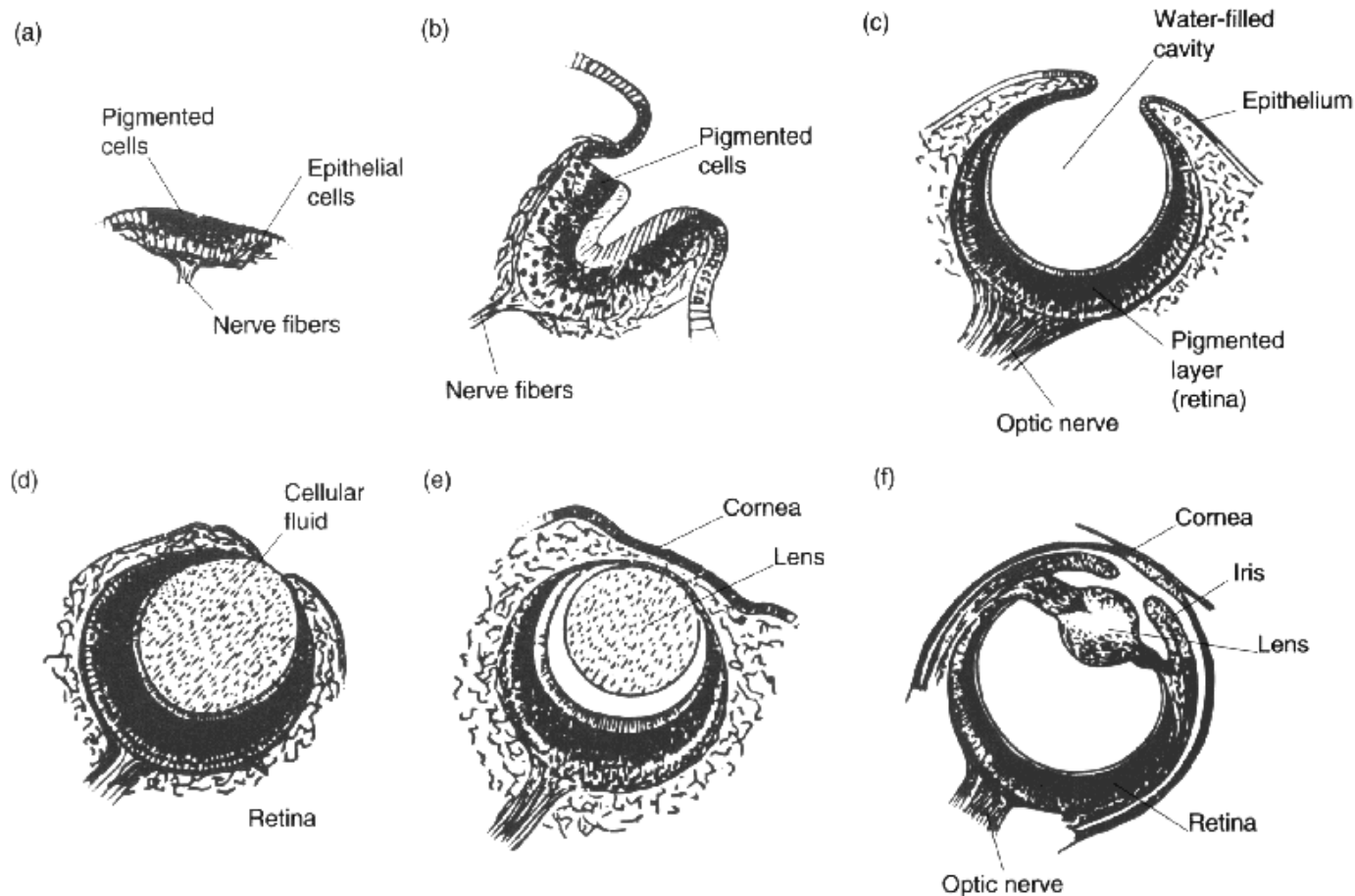
THE FIRST EYE?

(Illustration by Peggy Miller)

Modern-day Creationist's agree, and imagine that this is the first eye as postulated by evolutionism.
But what good is half an eye?
So the entire eye must have been created all at once, and how can this happen but from the hand of God?

Stages in the evolution of the eye, illustrated by species of mollusc. (a) a simple spot of pigmented cells; (b) folded region of pigmented cells, which increases the number of sensitive cells per unit area; (c) pin-hole camera eye (Nautilus); (d) eye cavity filled with cellular fluid rather than water; (e) eye protected by adding a transparent cover of skin, and part of the cellular fluid has differentiated into a lens; (f) full, complex eye (as in squid and octupus).

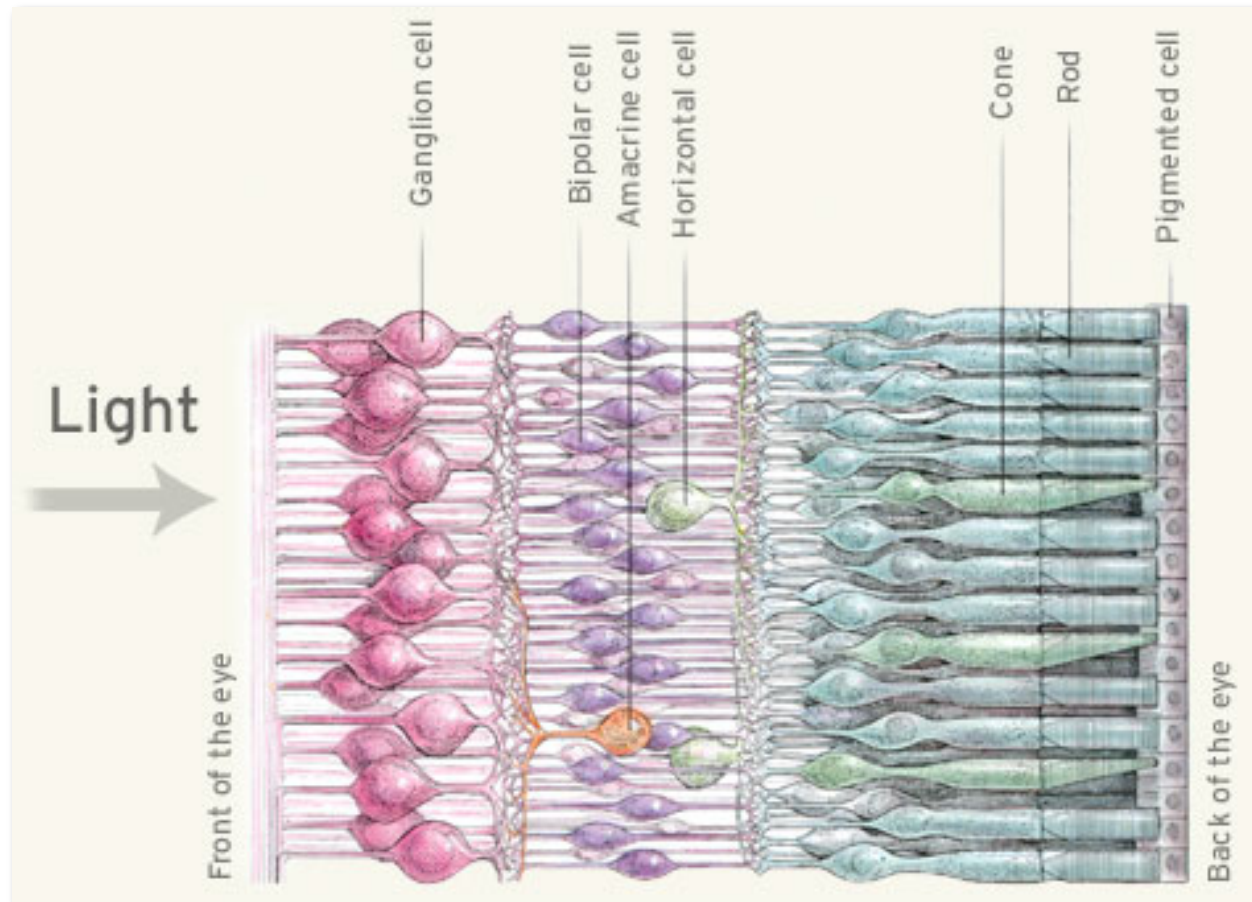Image courtesy of "Color Vision and Art" [http://webexhibits.org/colorart/]

The Blind Salamander (Eurycea rathbuni)

Typology of Design Arguments

Type I: From the Possibility of Science Itself
> God is necessary to guarantee the rationality of nature.

Type IIA: The Anthropic Principle
> The finely-tuned universe (that science reveals to us) points to a designer.

Type IIB: The Argument from "Irreducible Complexity"
> Some features of the biological world cannot be explained by science.