A quick overview

'This proof always deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and the most accordant with the common reason of mankind' - Immanuel Kant

- The Design Argument is 'a posteriori'
- Suggests that certain aspects of the universe are so perfectly adapted to fulfill their function that they display evidence of being deliberately designed.
- Such design can only be explained with reference to an intelligent, infinitely great designer – God.

The basic argument for design is:

- The universe has order, purpose and regularity
- The complexity of the universe shows evidence of design
- Such design needs a designer
- The designer of the universe is God

Some philosophers believe that the order and regularity of the universe is proof of a designer – this is **'design qua regularity'** and supported by St Thomas Aquinas

Other philosophers look at the way the parts of the universe fit together for a purpose or function. This is **'design qua purpose'**, supported by William Paley.

Classic Version – What did Aquinas say?

The Fifth of his Five Ways

- Many objects do not have the intelligence to work towards an end purpose themselves. (Aquinas used the example of an acorn whose end was an oak tree)
- Therefore, they must be directed by something that does have intelligence.
- Whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it is directed by some being endowed with intelligence.
- Therefore, there must be an intelligent being and this being we call God.
- Just as an archer (intelligent being) must direct an arrow (an object without intelligence), God must direct nature.

William Paley

What did Paley say?

William Paley's analogy of the watch has become the classic explanation 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…it had lain there forever… But suppose I 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 anything I knew, the watch might always have been there. Yet why should not this answer

serve for the watch as well as for the stone? For this reason…that when we come to inspect the watch we perceive…that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose….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 comprehended its construction, and designed its use…

- The watch could not be explained by saying that it had always been there.
- The watch has the feature of a manufactured machine in that the parts fit together to achieve a specific function (e.g telling the time).
- Manufactured machines are the result of intelligent design.
- Objects in nature are analogous to manufactured machines.
- Analogous effects have analogous causes.
- Therefore, objects in nature are the result of something analogous to intelligent design.
- The agent responsible for such design must be God.

The watch analogy illustrated the design relating to purpose argument. Paley also argued that regularity observed in the universe demanded an intelligent mind as explanation. This is known as his design relating to regularity argument. He illustrated this by appeal to the way planets obey laws in their movement. The agent responsible for such order and regularity must be God.

What is the difference between these two views?

- Aquinas looks at the regularity of action – that 'natural bodies' act in a regular fashion to accomplish their ends.
- The order in the world is proof of a designer.
- Paley looks at design and how things fit together for a purpose.
- Complex arrangements suggest an intelligent designer.

For discussion:

In what ways are Aquinas' and Paley's views (i) similar and (ii) different?

Which view is the most convincing?

Modern Versions: F.R. Tennant

Tennant, in his book; 'Philosophical Theology' said that there must be a designer because;

- The universe perfectly fits the development of life.
- The universe is designed in a way that allows life to grow and develop.
- Most importantly, it is designed to develop intelligent human life.
- This is the 'Anthropic Principle'.

Tennant also spoke of the 'Aesthetic Argument' – that human beings can appreciate and enjoy beauty, music, art, literature – none of which is vital to survival, but is there to develop qualities of beauty and love.

> Discussion: is beauty evidence of design?

Challenges to the teleological argument

Hume

Paley wrote his design argument 26 years *after* the death of Hume. Therefore Hume never read Paley's work, but Paley's argument from analogy was not original. In his book 'Dialogues Concerning Natural religion' Hume argued against the form of the design argument that Paley later popularized.

- Humans do not have enough knowledge to know if the world is designed or not.
- Our world is more organic than mechanical so would be better compared to a carrot than a watch.
- Similar effects do not necessarily imply similar causes.
- The existence of unpleasant features of nature suggests that God is not just and good.
- The analogy makes God more human than divine - if God is to be compared with a human designer then it limits him.
- The presence of order could be explained in many ways without reference to God.
- Unless the universe was an orderly place, people would not be around to comment on its existence.
- The universe could have come about by chance (e.g. Epicurean hypothesis).
- There could be many creators – a committee of gods.

Natural Selection:

- Natural selection gives the appearance of design – but it is blind, unconscious and an automatic process.
- The universe is purely mechanistic, driven by biological impulses.
- Evolution is carried on through random mutations in the genetic make-up of living creatures.
- This lead to a mistaken belief that there was a designer.
- The world is not designed.

For discussion:

In your opinion, which of these philosopher's views is the most convincing and which the least – why?

Challenges: is the Teleological Argument successful?

Arguments in favour:

- The universe exists and is not chaotic but orderly.
- The reasoning leading to the existence of God uses empirical principles.
- It is a centuries-old argument supported by many philosophers.
- it is an a posteriori argument and therefore based on empirical evidence.
- It supports many scientific notions.
- Similar effects have similar causes.
- Science tell us that laws exist but not why they exist.
- Nature seems to have laws that are constant.
- The universe seems fine-tuned for life for human beings.

Arguments against:

- The universe could be the result of a lucky chance.
- It does not follow that the designer must be God.
- There is no way to verify the truth of design claims.
- The world resembles more a carrot than a watch.
- To know that the universe must arise from intelligence we would have to have experienced the origin of the universe.
- The analogy with machines makes God more human than divine.
- There are unpleasant features of nature such as earthquakes and disease.
- The universe is bound to have the appearance of design since there could be no universe if parts of it were not mutually adapted.
- If the universe were not orderly we would not be around to comment on it. So it is not surprising we find order.

How successful are these answers?

As with the Cosmological Argument, the Teleological argument offers a powerful explanation for the existence of God and the universe, but cannot offer conclusive proof.

Key terms

Anthropic argument – nature planning in advance for the needs of human beings.

Qua – a Latin word meaning "as relating to".

Analogous – a comparison of two or more things to show how they are similar.

Natural selection – a key mechanism of evolution. It is the principle by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved and the trait passed on to the next generation.

Epicurean theory – given enough time, even in a random chaotic universe, order would still develop.

Theodicy – a justification of the righteousness of God, given the existence of evil.

Ockham's razor – the principle states that entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity. The name derives from the idea of 'shaving off' those entities that are not needed.

Aesthetic argument – nature planning in advance for the needs of human beings.

Aesthetic - human beings can appreciate beauty etc, none of which is vital to survival.

The Design Argument - Questions

1. Explain the meaning of the following terms:
   • Teleological
   • Aesthetic Argument
   • Anthropic Argument
   • Analogous
   • Epicurean theory

2. Explain how Aquinas' example of an archer and an arrow illustrates his argument for the existence of God.

3. Explain how Paley's example of the watch illustrates his argument for the existence of God.

4. Why does the theory of natural selection challenge the design argument?

5. Explain how Hume's suggestion that the world is better compared to a carrot challenges one form of the design argument.

6. How can the principle of Ockham's razor be applied to respond to the argument that the idea of the watch analogy leads to supposing a whole community of gods designed the universe?

7. Comment on the argument that unless the universe was an orderly place, people would not be around to comment on its existence.

8. Read this quotation and answer the following questions about it.

'The universe is ambiguous and we should not simply assume that God is the only explanation for its creation. It may, indeed, have a designer, and that designer may be very powerful and intelligent. However, it does not follow that this designer is all-powerful or morally perfect. The designer, in other words, need not be God. Like John Stuart Mill, we might say that the designer is loving, but surely the designer must also be limited in power, since there is so much that is wrong with the universe.'

   i.   In what sense is the universe 'ambiguous'?
   ii. Why does it not follow that the designer is morally perfect?
   iii. What evidence do we have to support the view of Mill that the designer is loving?
   iv. Why does the writer suggest that the designer is 'limited in power'?
   v.   What does the writer mean by the phrase 'there is so much wrong in the universe'?

Answers

1.
- Teleological - explanation by reference to end or purpose
- Temporal order - patterns of behaviour of objects, such as their behaviour in accordance with the laws of nature
- Aesthetic Argument - Relating to beauty
- Anthropic Argument - nature planning in advance for the needs of human beings
- Analogous - comparison of two or more things to show how they are similar
- Epicurean theory - given enough time, even in a random chaotic universe, order would still develop

2.
The arrow is non intelligent matter and requires something intelligent (the archer) to direct it. In the same way non intelligent matter in the universe (natural things) require an intelligent being (God) to direct them to their end.

3.
Objects in nature display similar features to manufactured machines (a watch). Therefore similar effects (order/purpose/benefit) have similar causes (intelligence). Therefore the cause of objects in nature must be God.

4.

Natural selection gives the appearance of design – but it is blind, unconscious and an automatic process. The universe is purely mechanistic, driven by biological impulses.

5.
A carrot is an object in nature but is not analogous to a machine. It is organic rather than mechanical and so does not require intelligence as a cause.

6.
Entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity. Therefore there is no need for multiple gods.

7.
The existence of an observer has no bearing on the probability of the occurrence of the events being observed. What needs explaining is the occurrence of the event not the fact that it can be viewed. (see Swinburne's card shuffling machine illustration)

8.

(i) It contains order and disorder, benefit and disadvantage, purpose and purposelessness.

(ii) Because the universe contains evil.

(iii) The existence of good in the universe. Mill argued that God has empowered human beings to fight against evil, though God himself is not powerful enough to overcome evil.

(iv) The Designer is not able to create a perfectly good universe or remove evil completely.

(v) He is talking about the existence of both moral and natural evil.