

B- Teleological Arguments for the Existence of God



Spec Check

Teleological Argument

St Thomas Aquinas' fifth way – concept of governance; archer and arrow analogy. William Paley's watchmaker analogy – analogy of complex design. F R Tennant's anthropic and aesthetic arguments – the universe specifically designed for intelligent human life.

Challenges

David Hume – problems with analogies; rejection of traditional theistic claims; designer not necessarily God of classical theism; apprentice God; plurality of Gods; absent God
Alternative scientific explanations including natural selection

The effectiveness of the Teleological Argument
Is the Teleological argument persuasive in the 21st Century?
Are scientific explanations more convincing for the design of the universe?

The Teleological Argument

- **Telos** = End/Goal/Purpose
- It is an argument based on the premise that the world appears **designed** and that natural properties move towards their intended purpose
- It rests on the concept of **'governance'** – the suggestion that an intelligent being must have designed and must govern unintelligent properties to help them move to their final purpose
- It is influenced by Aristotle's ideas that everything has a **'final cause'** or purpose

The Teleological Argument

- **Q. Consider this pen:**
- What is it's final purpose?
- How can an unintelligent object such as a pen be capable of writing an essay?
- **A.** *An intelligent being (a human) must govern the unintelligent object (the pen) to fulfil its final purpose of writing*
- Can we apply the same argument to natural properties in the world?



Aquinas' 5th Way - Governance

- Aquinas' **5th way** to prove the existence of God is through the 'teleological argument'
- He was again heavily influenced by the works of **Aristotle** over 1,000 years his predecessor
- Aquinas argued that all unintelligent natural properties in the world reach their final goal through the governance of an **intelligent being – God**.
- *'The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly' – Summa Theologica*

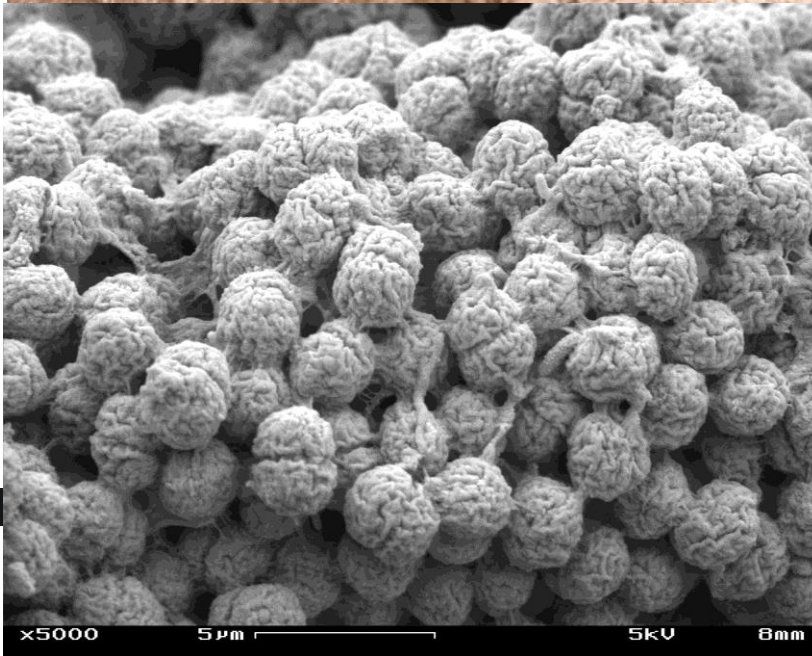
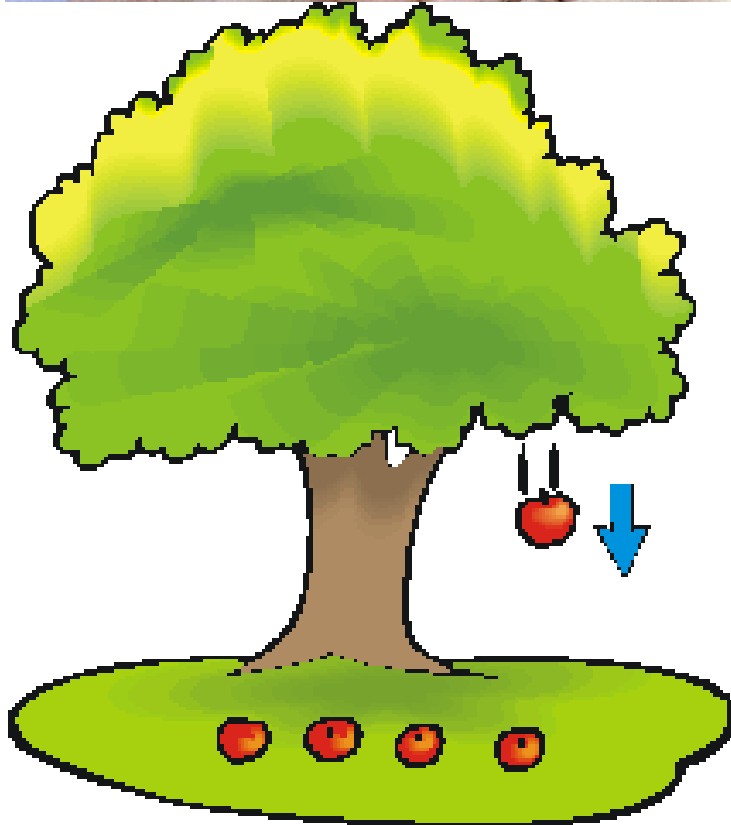
Aquinas' 5th Way – Arrow and Archer Analogy

- Aquinas used the analogy of an **arrow and an archer** to illustrate his point (archery would have been a popular sport in his day)
- An arrow is an unintelligent piece of wood which is capable of hitting a target. The arrow requires the direction (or governance) of an intelligent being (a human) to move it to its **final goal** (the target).
- This can be seen in **natural properties** in the universe – trees / animals / the sea and the stars
- *‘Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore, some intelligent being exist by whom all natural things are directed towards the end; and this being we call God’ – Summa Theologica*

William Paley

- 18th Century
- British Theologian
- Wrote '*Natural Theology*' in which he argued that the complexity of natural design in the world must be evidence of God's existence
- Lived at a time of scientific and natural discovery





Paley – Watchmaker Analogy

- **TASK:** In pairs, read the 3 key quotes from Paley's work and paraphrase them in your exercise book



Paley – Watchmaker Analogy

- **Key Quote 1**

- *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 forever: nor would it perhaps be very easy to shew the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be enquired 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 have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as the stone?*

Paley – Watchmaker Analogy

- **Key Quote 2**

- *...when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what could not be perceived 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 to point out the hour of the day; that, if the several parts had been differently shaped 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...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 who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use...every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature; with the difference, on the side of nature, of being greater and more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation.*

Paley – Watchmaker Analogy

- **Key Quote 3**

- *This is the scale by which we ascend to all the knowledge of our creator which we possess, so far as it depends upon the phenomena or the works of nature. Take away this, and you take away from us every subject of observation and ground of reasoning; I mean, as our rational faculties are formed at present. Whatever is done, God could have done without the intervention of instruments or means; but it is in the construction of instruments in the choice and adaptation of means, that a creative intelligence is seen. It is this which constitutes order and beauty of the universe.*

Paley – Complex Design

- Paley believed that natural properties are ‘**Design qua purpose**’ = designed by the virtue of purpose.
- A **complex** watch needs a watchmaker to explain how it came into being.
- Using evidence from the natural world and how things fit together for a **purpose**, it is clear that the universe, like the watch, is complex and must also have a **designer**.
- The complexity of nature is far greater than any machine human beings can make.
- Thus the whole of nature requires a **grand designer**. **That designer is God!**
- Paley also argued that such complex design in creatures even as small as the ant prove that God must be a **benevolent designer**
- *Paley used other examples to support his argument such as birds sitting on eggs to provide an incubating environment as well as the complexity of the human eye*

Scientific Challenges Against Paley

- What do you think that main challenge against Paley's argument is?
- Evolution!
- Charles Darwin (19th Century English Naturalist) argued in his book, *The Origin of Species*, that random chance organises life in the universe
- Species are not well adapted to their environment because of benevolent design by God, but instead because they have adapted to their surroundings and passed on favourable characteristics

Scientific Challenges Against Paley



F.R Tennant

- **Contemporary** 20th Century scholar
- Wrote *PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY*
- Tennant's work stems from and accepts as true **Darwin's** evolution theories, a theory which hadn't been discovered when Aquinas and Paley were writing their theories
- Tennant argues that evolution **coincides** with the **probability** of a designer God.



Tennant's Anthropic Principle

- **Anthropic** = relating to humans
- Tennant's teleological argument is centred on the fact that the universe provides **precisely the elements** that make human life possible
- [The Anthropic Principle](#)
- Using the information in the clip you have just watched, how would you explain what is meant by 'The Anthropic Principle'?
- **Anthropic Principle** = the argument that the natural laws of the universe have been 'fine-tuned' to allow human life to exist.

Tennant's Anthropic Principle

- Tennant used 3 pieces of evidence to support his anthropic principle:
 1. **Rationality** - The world holds itself up for rational analysis from which we can deduce its workings.
 2. **Evolution** – The process of evolution, through natural selection, has led to the development of intelligent human life – to the degree that intelligent life can observe and analyse the universe that it exists in.
 3. **Necessities for life** - The world in which we live provides precisely the necessities for life to be sustained.

Brendon Carter's Anthropic Principle – A*

- Other versions of the anthropic principle have been suggested by other scholars
- The term '*Anthropic Principle*' was first coined by British astrophysicist **Brendon Carter** in 1974.
- He proposed a '**weak**' and '**strong**' Anthropic Principle.
- **WEAK** = "*We must be prepared to take into account the fact that our location in the universe is necessarily privileged to the extent of being compatible with our existence as observers*".
- We exist because the universe has produced the conditions for life to evolve.
- We couldn't observe the universe if such conditions didn't exist.
- **STRONG** = "*The universe (and hence the fundamental parameters on which it depends) must be such as to admit the creation of observers at some stage.*"
- It is necessary for the universe to have these conditions.
- The universe was 'constructed' and could not have come into existence in any other way.
- The universe was designed with the ultimate purpose of producing human life.

Other versions of the Anthropic Principle – A*

- British mathematical physicist **Roger Penrose** calculated that the odds that a fine-tuned universe could have accidentally evolved are 1 part in **10 to the power of 10 to the power of 123**.
- As Penrose puts it, that is a “number which it would be impossible to write out in the usual decimal way, because even if you were able to put a zero on every particle in the universe, there would not even be enough particles to do the job.”

Tennant's Aesthetic Principle

- Tennant also uses the **Aesthetic principle** to prove that the universe must be designed for human life
- **TASK:** Read page 19 of your textbook and answer the following questions
 - 1. Define 'aesthetic'
 - 2. What do humans have an appreciation for that other animals do not?
 - 3. Is human appreciation of beauty essential for our survival?
 - 4. What can our appreciation of beauty tell us about God?

Tennant's Aesthetic Principle

“Nature is not just beautiful in places; it is saturated with beauty – on the telescopic and the microscopic scale. Our scientific knowledge brings us no nearer to understanding the beauty of music. From an intelligibility point of view, beauty seems to be superfluous and to have little survival value.” (F.R. Tennant, ‘Philosophical Theology’).



AO1 – Essay Skills

- Explain teleological arguments for the existence of God (20)
- Explain Aquinas and Paley's teleological arguments for the existence of God (20)
- Explain the developments of the teleological arguments for the existence of God as presented by Tennant (20)

- In pairs, plan your given essay response

Consolidation Tasks

- 1. Complete 'lean learning sheet B' in your workbooks
- 2. Write a list of the key points for: Aquinas' 5th Way, Paley's Complex Design, Tennant's Anthropic Principle, Tennant's Aesthetic Principle
- 3. Complete a Venn diagram on the three scholars: Aquinas, Paley and Tennant – what are the key similarities and key differences in their arguments?

