

Assess What Can Be Concluded From the Teleological Argument (24marks)

The teleological argument (often referred to as the Design Argument) deciphers that the world cannot have been a chaotic chance occurrence, but rather a well designed creation with a supreme creator who Paley observes to be God. For the purpose of this argument, we are referring to the God of classical theism who is supposedly, “all-loving,” “all-powerful,” and “all-knowing.” The word ‘telos’ is Greek for aim, goal or purpose and the word ‘logos’ means reason and the relevance of these can be seen throughout the argument as countless philosophers over a period of more than 200 years have tried to prove, using this argument, that the world was created with an aim and purpose by God.

With the publishing of the Natural Theology (1802) came the first comprehensive and detailed description of the Teleological Argument, by the Peterborough born William Paley, although Hume had published a similar idea many years previously. Paley was a devout Anglican and sought to prove the existence of God through reason, at the time he published many books about Christianity and philosophy which were very influential.

Paley explains his argument simply to the reader by using an analogy of himself stood on a heath. He observes two objects initially, a stone and a watch. As he comes across the stone he decides that there is nothing to make him think other than that it has always been there and it has occurred naturally; it requires little or no explanation. However he then compares this to a watch which clearly has intricate parts and cannot have occurred. Despite having never met a watch maker he is aware that one must exist, for the watch is far too complex to have just happened and its purpose is great so it must have been designed and crafted to fulfill that purpose. The apparent order and design manifested within the watch are key to his argument due to the concepts which they represent. In the universe it is possible to see examples of both design and order; arguably reflected in the watch.

Further justification is provided as Paley as he uses this idea and applies it to the natural world. He uses examples of the human eye and the wings of a bird to illustrate his point. The apparent order and design present in these he argues cannot be purely down to ‘chance.’ This could potentially be applied on a larger scale to the world as a whole.

There are combined conclusions: that the watch has a maker, and therefore the world (being far more complex) has a maker. This maker and designer is God. Secondly, the being that made the world must be far more intelligent than the watchmaker as it is on a larger scale. The world-maker must be extremely powerful and clever therefore must be God. Paley was also able to preconceive critics of his argument and therefore devised a series of points which defended his argument.

A major flaw in the argument could be that the world is not perfect and therefore how could it have been designed by the widely accepted ‘all-loving’ God? This is explained by Paley as machines not all being perfect and failing to work sometimes. The fact the world isn’t perfect doesn’t prove that there isn’t a designer. This is a valid point however if you make this assumption that sometimes things go wrong then it would suggest that

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God is not 'all-powerful' or that he had, as some believe, ceased to exist after creating the world.

We know little about the world; however this does not alter the fact that design has taken place. If we still didn't know everything about a watch then we would still be able to conclude that it had a maker. This is arguable though because scientists are frequently coming up with new theories of natural creation such as evolution and 'the big bang.' Some would dispute that God designed evolution to develop the world though.

Finally, Paley deduced that just because we had not seen God then that doesn't mean he doesn't exist, the fact you may not have seen a watch maker does not mean they do not exist so it's the same principle. In modern-day terms, we cannot see air yet accept and know that its there, in contrast though there is far more evidence for air than something of such a huge scale like the world.

Hume's argument (depicted by three characters; Demea, Cleanthes and Philo), preceded The Natural Theology by several decades, but had several major similarities when he undertook the role of Cleanthes:

- Both agree that the world works- although Hume uses the analogy of a machine, both Hume and Paley seem to agree that it works quite well despite a few minor flaws.
- Machines and devices have a human designer, but for the world there must be a bigger designer. I.e. God.
- The amount of accuracy and perfect in the world is far greater than could be achieved by any human.
- If a God does exist he is far more intelligent than humans.
- Both arguments go from a human invention, to a human inventor, to a God.

Hume however can already see significant problems with his argument, and so as the character Philo, he starts to evaluate the problems with the argument. The most important of his criticisms being that using an analogy to contrast the world with a human created object was inappropriate, as they are on two entirely different scales. We have experience in everyday life of many things being built and created but as far as we are aware there is nobody yet creating a new universe. This is a strong argument as many would argue a watch and the universe are by no means comparable. In contrast there would also be the argument that God had designed and created the watchmaker with the skills to be able to make the watch, which would further the argument for an ultimate designer.

The second of Hume's criticisms only weakens his first; he himself then uses the analogy of the world being like a vegetable and less mechanical. Hume (as Philo) suggests that the world grows of its own accord through nature therefore does not have a designer unless it is extremely similar to a human object. However, all human objects vary in size and complexity, with many natural phenomena now being able to be explained or recreated (e.g. the cloning of sheep, artificial methods of pregnancy or the growth of organs outside the body) which may suggest that eventually we could create a world.

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This would support the idea that God is a supremely intelligent being if he is able to already create something as complex as the world.

From the evil in the world, we cannot assume an all-loving God, and from the diversity in the universe we cannot assume only one God; this contradicts the theory of the God of Classical Theism. There is also the argument that the cause of anything is only great enough to have caused its effect. From this we may establish that a contingent world would not have been created by a necessary being, i.e. God. The idea that there may be multiple God's was illustrated by an analogy of a ship: A ship has many builders, why can a world not have the same with many world builders? Several Gods may have co-operated on creating the world. Following on from this, Hume argues that if it's not the God of Classical Theism then why not an apprentice God? This would provide feasible explanation for the imperfections existent in the world. Furthermore, the teleological argument fails to prove the current existence of a God as the creator of the world could now be destroyed as is suggested by some Christians, this would add further explanation to the imperfections in the world.

Hume's arguments should not be disregarded as although they differ from Paley's slightly in that they both use different analogies, Hume provides far more criticisms for his argument which come from a wider variety of approaches. In my opinion despite Paley's argument having a stronger case due to its relevance in modern society and links to an individually specified object, unlike Hume who seeks to relate to a wider population by using a more generalization of a man-made machine. It should also be taken into account that machines fail because of human error in design, manufacture or operation, an omniscient God would be argued to be beyond the realm of error.

This could however be countered if we are to presume that the God who created humans, did so with the intention of leaving them to care for the world. The concept that God allowed man to sculpt and protect the world also raises the issue that God must've created man to have free will, to be able to make decisions and therefore create and develop the world as man sees fit. This does not discount the teleological argument as who designed the world initially and the humans in which to care for it?

If the universe didn't fit together then it simply would not be a universe. The theory of Epicurean Hypothesis states that infinite particles all in motion must eventually fall into an order that allows them to be stable and their potential realized. This occurs purely through chance and is not the work of any supreme being. To contrast this some would argue that God designed those particles and he designed them knowing that they would eventually reach that formation.

Richard Swinburne (1934 to present) gave three objects to Hume's criticisms. He argued that the universe is not necessarily unique and therefore we cannot draw conclusions about its origins. Science is frequently coming up with and proving theories to do with the universe. Secondly Swinburne saw that if the world was like a vegetable then it does not explain the fact that laws of nature have operated all across time, such as gravity and

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show far more complexity than a developing vegetable. He also disagrees on the concept that an effect only has a cause sufficient to create it; causes are also capable of having other characteristics other than those directly responsible for creating the effect. Therefore Hume's third criticism relies totally on false evidence.

Swinburne's criticisms of Hume's objections are strong, as there is clear evidence of laws of nature that allow us to operate and function. These have not grown or developed over time like the vegetable Hume describes, but rather have been there since the world was created as far as we are aware. For the third point Swinburne uses scientific evidence which can be proved or disproved, therefore adding strength to his argument.

John Stewart Mill (1806-1873) shared similar views to Albert Camus (1917-1960) in challenging the teleological argument, and almost a century later, at the time of Camus' work, Mill's views were still valid. Although the teleological argument may lead to the idea of a God and creator, it does not point to the Christian concept of God. This is largely due to the evil in the world (e.g. volcanoes) and in three essays published by Mill's he points out: "Nature kills at random and inflicts tortures at apparent wantonness...if the maker of this world can do all that he wills, he wills misery, and there is no escaping this conclusion." This infers that God is not in fact benevolent, omnipotent or omniscient. John Keats supports this in his poem with the line, "the Vale of the Soul Making, although the evil is still evil."

Hume and Mill both eventually reach the conclusion that if we carefully look at the world then we can conclude that a God is imperfect and limited in his powers, which is not a problem, but is such a God worthy of worship? Maurice Wiles argued not: a God who ignored the holocaust but saved one individual and a God who fed 5000 yet ignores the starving and dying in third world countries.

Darwin's theory of evolution is probably the biggest threat to the teleological argument as it explains a natural way that everything has developed to its current state, yet is in extreme conflict with the Christian view of the creation of the universe:

- Genesis claims that God created man and he did so in his own image, whereas natural selection would suggest that man's higher faculties came from a lengthy process of evolution and 'survival of the fittest.' This called the reputation of the bible into question.
- Genesis shows man to have fallen from perfection into sin and evil, whereas Darwin shows them to have developed rationally over millions of years.

Generally this argument was a mechanism to prove how many wonders came into existence without a God. Unlike had previously been considered.

Darwin however said, "Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force, but at other times it seems to go away." He was referring to the fact that man cared for the weaker members of society, when his theory in fact deciphers that they shouldn't. Nor could it explain their morals or unique personalities.

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Similarly James Sadowsky contemplates that evolution is God's way of creating and that he designed the universe to evolve itself, knowing exactly how it would do this. This does not however explain the existence of genetic disorders. If God had created evolution to run the way it does, then why would he have included terrible disease passed through generations? Unless God was, as Hume suggests, not all-loving.

The ideas of Sadowsky and later F R Tennant became known as the Anthropic Cosmological Principle. This suggests that God and evolution are compatible in the sense that if things hadn't been created exactly as they are evolution could not have taken place and therefore the universe must have had a designer. This argument is a successful one for me, as it would support the view that God created the world then ceased to exist or that he created beings that would evolve to be humans, with their own free will. This would also justify the imperfections in the world as the free will given to humans allows them to do as they wish with the world.

In conclusion, the argument may evoke a greater sense of wonder amongst people, although is unlikely to convince atheists as to God's existence. Criticisms of the argument will fail to dishearten those who already view the world with fascination either. The argument does not prove the existence of one God or a God that is any of the characteristics outlined in the Classical Theistic description of God. The a posteriori nature of the argument means that it is not logically compelling yet fascinates countless numbers of people.

In my own opinion I find the Anthropic Cosmological Principle most compelling with the ideal that God did have a hand in the creation of the universe yet much of it still relies on the natural process of evolution, which despite remaining a theory has strongly supporting scientific evidence (e.g. the pea plant experiment).