

## What are the strengths and weaknesses of the design argument for the existence of God? (28 marks)

This argument is also called the teleological argument, it argues that the universe did not come around by mere chance, but some one or something designed it. This thing was God. This argument is a posteriori because the observation of the natural world is taken into the mind to conclude that there is a designer. The belief that the universe was designed by God was triggered by things like the four seasons; summer, spring, autumn and winter, which change through the year. The adaption of the human body and the structure of earth's natural things. All of this had to of been designed to make the universe come into order, have a purpose and regularity. The world is so complex and in order, God is believed to have so much power that he has to be the most probable designer of the universe. Such natural things such as trees, grass and flowers are each individual.

William Paley argued for the existence of God by reasoning that the world shows such complex structure that it must have been designed. He used analogy to compare the universe to a man made structure such as a watch. He argues that if we were to find a watch on the ground, we would naturally infer that it had not come into being by chance; rather that it had been designed for a purpose. He also argues that regularity in the universe also shows that the world must have been designed for example, Newton's laws of motion and gravity alone show there is design in the universe that did not come about by chance.

Paley's argument has both its strengths and its weaknesses. It appears to be a logical argument and most people would agree that if they were to come across a watch they would assume it had a designer. It is therefore easy to follow the argument and agree with its conclusion, that there is a God. By using the analogy of a watch, we can see more clearly the point that is being made; that as like effects have like causes, it is reasonable to assume that an intricately designed object such as a watch has a designer, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that our intricately designed universe has a designer. However the fact that the argument uses an analogy can also be seen as a weakness. David Hume criticised Paley's argument because he believed it was illogical to liken the universe to a vast man made machine. He believed the universe would be more believably likened to a vegetable or inert animal - something growing of its own accord rather than something made by hand. Hume believed that analogies were a poor way of arguing for the existence of God because they leave so much room for argument - for example, the watch that we assume has a designer could have in fact been designed by ten different people, and therefore we can say the same about the universe.

The second part of William Paley's argument is design regularity. For some people this argument is a very strong one as it has some scientific support. There are definite mathematical laws governing our universe, and evidence from astronomy such as Newton's laws of motion and gravity proves that there is design in our universe which hasn't come about by chance. So the argument is compatible with science and allows for events such as the Big Bang as a designer could have achieved them. The

argument gives the laws and events proven by science deeper meaning and understanding to many people.

FR Tennant has put forward two main principles which can be seen as both strengths and weakness for the design argument. These principles are the Aesthetic Principle and the Anthropic Principle. The aesthetic principle proposes that all humans have the ability to appreciate beauty, which is not necessary for human existence, but proves that this requires a designer, God. This is a strong argument because Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection only accounts for some things in nature, such as flowers etc... so re-enforcing the need for a designer. Also, beauty may be in the eye of the beholder and it may be due to cultural conditioning and may not exist as some sort of absolute. Moral awareness could ensure survival, meaning that there would be no need for a designer. This could make the design argument seem weak and only a probable conclusion.

The Anthropic principle claims that the universe is designed for the ultimate purpose of producing intelligent life. This means that certain conditions needed to have been designed to balance and tune our existence. The Universe has been 'fine tuned' by some intelligent power or entity. Swinburne argues that the Universe appears to operate according to a set of laws and the most probable explanation of this is God. Science can explain things that happen as a consequence of these laws but not the presence of the laws themselves. Conflicts against this could be that evidence may be discovered and used to challenge the principle such as scientific theories. The Anthropic principle relies that the proof isn't certain so it is still a probable outcome. This can be seen as a weakness but according to Tennant, human life is the culmination of God's plan so therefore chance is not a sufficient explanation. A number of questions can challenge this principle and makes the design argument seem slightly weak. Sum of these are: How easy is it to judge probability when we only have no knowledge of other possible Universes? Couldn't the order and regularity have come about by chance despite the enormous odds against it?

Another problem with the design argument is that it ignores a crucial and more easily established factor that is adaptation. Mechanisms don't have to be created, they can evolve and adapt. This is represented through Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution. Cumulative changes occur in a population over geological time. These changes produced at genetic level as organisms' genes mutate and reproduce and so therefore passed onto further generations. All the wonders of nature can appear designed to us, but in fact a few simple rules can build - over geological time - the semblance of design.

In conclusion, the main strengths of the design argument are that it's an inductive argument, meaning often used in everyday life so it increases strength of probability. The conclusion seems to follow reasonably from evidence. The main weakness' are that there are alternative interpretations and because it's an inductive argument it's only a probable conclusion.