

(A) Explain Hume's objections to teleological arguments

Teleological arguments argue from a general pattern of order/design to the necessity for there being an original "designer" of the universe, i.e. "God". The word "teleological" is derived from the Greek word *telos*, meaning end or purpose. This argument has been one of the most persuasive of all the traditional arguments of the existence of God.

In Hume's dialogs concerning natural religion he uses the characters Cleanthes and Demea to put forward a posteriori and a priori versions of the design argument. His own character, Philo, puts forward critiques of the arguments.

Cleanthes' argument is based on a belief that the world has great design and that this necessarily implies a great designer. This is similar to Paley's analogy of the watch maker; Voltaire emphasised his analogy by stating "If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great Architect, then I consent to be called a fool."

Hume's criticisms of Cleanthes are not of the deductive nature of his argument, but are based on what he believes would be the dubitable God which Cleanthes would have of the designer of our imperfect world. Also, Hume puts the possibility that there may be many Gods as many complicated things have a number of designers, who's to say there is only one designer? The manner in which Hume puts his own views across (by being a character arguing with other characters in his work) emphasises his patronising view of those who believe in the teleological argument. Hume states that due to there being disease, natural disasters and many imperfections in our world then Cleanthes cannot argue for a benevolent and perfect designer/God thus, as an argument for the existence of a typical Christian God it is inadequate.

Hume's other critique of the a priori argument is more fundamental; why does order have to imply design? Whilst "Philo" accepts that the world has order, he believes it could have resulted from the work of a designer but also could have arisen by chance. Dawkins emphasised Philo's opinion by writing his book "The Blind Watchmaker" and later on an online scientist (cdk007) supported Dawkins view by creating a video describing that out of a heap of watch components a functioning watch could be created without a designer. This supports Hume's view that a designer is not necessary. This is supported by the Epicurean hypothesis. Our world is the fortuitous result of the collision of arrangements of atoms and the evolution of the world and human culture can be explained by "the survival of the fittest" without us having to argue any "natural purpose" or "divine design".

A major factor in Hume's challenge to the teleological argument is that you cannot understand the design of the universe in the way we would understand the design of a man made product which is often the result of many minds collaborating to produce the best design. That would argue for a pluralist view of God rather than just a single. Hume did not expect us to be able to understand God in the way that we make sense of the physical world around us. Hume would also point to the evolution of our world as an argument against the teleological argument. Given the way living creatures have adapted to their environment to survive, thus the original "design" has imperfections which are addressed in natural selection.

(B) “God is the most likely explanation for design in the universe”. Discuss.

In examining this question, the key phrase is “most likely”. In exploring the existence of God we are drawn to look at what is “probable” or “most likely” rather than “what is”. Many believers in God accept that there needs to be a leap of faith as without it religion is undermined as faith is the integral part of belief in a God. However, there is value, as Hume has shown, in exploring the likelihood of there being a benevolent God and arguments supporting His existence.

For Christians, by far the most popular of all the traditional arguments for the existence of God is the argument from or to design – the teleological argument. There are two versions of the argument for believing in God due to design in the universe; one is that we can deduce the existence of God from instances of design (teleological) and the other is an argument from experience of a regulated and organised world to the conclusion that this must be the work of a designer (Providence). God is a probable or possible explanation for either version of the argument, but that does not make him necessarily exist.

One of the criticisms of the teleological argument is that complexity does not imply design. The teleological argument assumes that because life is complex, it must have been designed. Life or objects are described as ‘ordered’, which implies that an intelligent designer has ordered them. However, in reality, there are examples of systems that are non-random or ordered simply because they are following natural physical processes which may or may not fit together into an ordered universe. Arthur Brown however used science to support the argument for design and gave the existence of the ozone layer as an argument that it must prove a creator's interference as its design was to protect life which could not have happened by chance.

Some critics could also claim that to support the design argument would be committing a logical fallacy as the design claim is often unexplained or unsupported by scientific evidence. Supporters of intelligent design assume that natural objects and man-made objects have similar properties, therefore both must be designed. However, different objects have similar properties for different reasons, for example stars and light bulbs. Proponents must therefore accept that only intelligent design can create orderly systems or the argument is invalid. Exploring further the sheer variety of objects and substances in the world which appear to be designer or well ordered may also lead to a belief in a number of God's who might not always be working together, thus this would not support the argument of an omnipotent, omniscient God.

As Voltaire argued, however talented and intelligent such a designer might be, there is nothing to lead us to believe in the God with the qualities of a Christian God. For example, it says nothing about Him being infinite in his powers. Opponents of the teleological argument also point to evolution as an argument supporting their view and emphasise of how science and the DNA of objects has more importance in the change of design in our world than a God could have. A counter argument to this, however, is that scientists can give no explanation of how the DNA of objects originated and why as that is straying into the limited field of abiogenesis.

Philosophers from Aristotle through to Dawkins have debated what this argument has to say about the problem of infinite regress – if the universe must be designed why should its designer not also be designed and so on? Thus it brings us back to the major

problem of using the design argument to prove the existence of God because who designed the designer? Counter arguments have been that the designer does not have to be as complex as the objects he designs and that God contains within his essence the ability to design and order the universe and does not need a designer himself.

What is persuasive about using the design argument to prove the likelihood of God's existence is that we generally interpret our world as being ordered and not completely chaotic. There is no compelling evidence from the design argument that God exists as the Christian God whose qualities are clearly taught through the Bible. However, if one is looking for God as a likely explanation of design in the universe the fact that the universe appears to not be randomly created does lead one to suppose that it must have been created by a powerful entity, however it would require a leap of faith to conclude that this entity is God. Those who argue against the teleological theories however do not in general provide a positive alternative as to how the universe began but rather focus on its faults.