

1 (b) (i) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the design argument for the existence of God?

1(b) (ii) Comment on the view that the weaknesses are more convincing than the strengths?

The design argument, known as the Teleological argument, comes from the Greek word 'Telos' which means purpose. The basic premise, of all teleological arguments for the existence of God, is that the world exhibits an intelligent purpose based on experience from nature such as its order, unity, coherency, design and complexity. Hence, there must be an intelligent designer to account for the observed intelligent purpose and order that we can observe. Philosophers use the design features of purpose, regularity and order in the world for proof of a designer i.e. the God of classical theism.

William Paley put forward the most famous argument in a book called 'Natural Theology', and argues from 'design qua purpose' and 'design qua regularity'. From design qua purpose, Paley argues that the world has purpose, which shows evidence of design, therefore there must be a designer i.e. God. This is echoed in the bible where it says, *"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."* (Romans 1:19-20). This passage in the bible explains that God is all around the world in the things that have been made; therefore God has shown himself to exist through design.

Paley used a watch analogy to argue design within the world by explaining that if you look at a watch, which all the pieces fit together with the purpose of telling time, you wouldn't think that this was just coincidence or natural occurrence would you? So therefore why should the world be thought of any differently to this? A watchmaker is to a watch as God is to the universe; they are both intelligent creators and designers. Paley also applied the watch principle to the human eye as it has many parts, which work together to produce sight.

Arguing from 'design qua regularity', Paley uses Newton's law of motion and gravity and astronomy to show regularity within the world. Planets follow the same orbit because of gravity, someone external therefore had to put gravity in place i.e. God. Arthur Brown supports this in his work *from footprints of God* (1943), where he said that the ozone layer is at the exactly right thickness to prevent every living thing from dying therefore showing design and evidence of a designer, God. Aquinas also argued design from 'design qua regularity' because he explained that the human body works in regularity as well as the universe and therefore points to an intelligent designer, again God.

FR Tennant and Richard Swinburne present supporting arguments for Paley and Aquinas. Tennant states that there are too many coincidences in the world for there to be no designer. The conditions in the world are so precise and perfect, that any change in them would cause disaster as life is fragile, therefore there has to be a designer; God. A designer (God) must have given us the ability to sustain life. In addition the world has rules, which impose natural order, which without these there would be chaos. The three points mentioned above, the ability to recognise order, the ability to

sustain life and the ability to evolve are the points that are known as the anthropic principle. Swinburne holds that the complexity of the universe is unlikely to be the result of chance. He regards God as the creator and designer as a more simple and probable explanation. This way of thinking can be paralleled to Ockham's Razor. This is the idea that the simplest explanation is the most likely one. Tennant also believed that God gave us the ability to appreciate beauty such as music and the natural world. Therefore, the beauty of the world points to God as a creator.

However, the world is not perfect, there are too many faults such as natural disasters for there to be a designer (God). Lots of random coincidence from evolution would lead to faults. Mill said that evil and suffering does not point to an all - loving God. Even if evidence does point to a designer, it doesn't immediately mean that it's the God of classical theism, it could be an evil God who is using the world for his own ends. However in countering, believers would argue that the faults are down to humans abusing free will.

Hume said that we could only gain knowledge from experience, we cannot comment on the creation, as we did not experience it. However believers would say that it might not be proof, but the evidence points to a creator and designer, God. Furthermore Hume said that effects resemble causes, there are flaws in the world, but the God of classical theism is perfect, therefore this isn't logical. But this doesn't destroy the design argument for the existence of God, as they still need a designer. He also criticised the watch analogy by saying that people don't think a carrot has a design; it is just down to evolution not God as a designer. But believers would say that we need necessities as well as beauty but it still shows design.

The epicurean hypothesis states that the universe is made up of particles, initially the universe was chaotic but gradually natural forces evolved into an ordered system. As these particles have been around for eternity it was inevitable that an order would be established, but this is not down God the designer.

Kant suggested that there isn't really an order in the universe as it is just something our minds like to create. However, this isn't true as no other planet has the ability to sustain life and animals such as lions create a natural hierarchy.

Darwin would say that the earth is down to natural selection, as the most well adapted species have survived and the other creatures will have died out. This echoes Herbert Spencer who said that it was down to the "Survival of the fittest", not of a God who is a designer. However this doesn't disprove the existence of God as a designer as he may have designed the 'fittest' 'well-adapted' creatures in the world.

Richard Dawkins said that changes in DNA are random and leads to diversity in nature. He also proposed a blind watchmaker, as nature and evolution are blind to design. However God may have been the one to give us the ability to evolve.

In conclusion, if there was an overgrown garden with beautiful flowers, some would say there must be a gardener to maintain the flowers. On the other hand, some would say there cannot be a gardener because why would there be weeds? This is in line with the design argument as it is down to interpretation and faith. The strengths don't

necessarily prove God because it is down to experience and “personal taste” (Paul Davies), which we cannot prove. It is therefore a posteriori and an inductive argument. It is furthermore only probable that God exists due to the design argument, as there is no proof only probability. Therefore the weaknesses are more convincing than the strengths.