

Paper 1: June 4th 2019 Morning: Arguments Based On Observation

Many look around and decide whether what we see/ observe points to God. St. Paul said there was evidence around us (Romans 1). This approach is known as “a posteriori” – knowledge comes from observation/ experience to reach conclusions. 2 (of many) a posteriori approaches are: **The Teleological Argument** (from the Greek telos, argues from the purpose and design of the world) and **The Cosmological Argument** (from the Greek cosmos, argues from the explanation / origin of the universe).

The Teleological Argument: St. Thomas Aquinas thought God gave us reason so we could learn about God. He believed we achieve our purpose due to God. **Influenced by Aristotle** (newly translated at the time), he believed all things have a purpose. *But something has to make this happen, a guide. This is God. Aquinas entitles his argument “From The Governance Of The World.” It is his 5th Way.* Things lack knowledge (eg natural bodies like rivers) but act for a purpose / end (from our observation). This acting always leads to the best result. This must happen not by luck but by design or intention or deliberate act. **Anything which lacks knowledge (natural bodies are all things of less intelligence than God) need something with knowledge to guide just as an arrow needs an archer to get it to its target.** There is an intelligent being, God, that directs all natural things, with less intelligence than God, to their end and ensures things get to their purpose. *The world is governed by God, the guiding force that makes things deliberately achieve their purpose.* The arrow needs an archer, it does not fire itself, the natural body (eg planets, rivers) needs God.

The Teleological Argument: William Paley, Archdeacon of Carlisle, argues from regularity, order, intricacy, purpose and design. He was influenced by science which discovered that gravity was a controlling force and the planets rotate around the sun. Sir Isaac Newton saw the universe as a mathematical machine-like system of simple, predictable natural laws/rules. **Paley observed that complex objects work with regularity and order from the seasons of the year, to gravity and planet rotation. This seems to be the result of the work of a designer who put order and regularity in place deliberately. He observed that things seem to have been put together deliberately for a purpose – the human eye, fishes’ fins, birds’ wings, intricate cells, planets. This pointed to a designer - God.** Science proved to Paley evidence of design on large and small scales and God looks after humans. *In “Natural Theology” (1802), Paley imagines walking on a heath. If he came across a stone, he would explain its origins using natural causes but if he stumbled upon a watch (the pocket watch had just been invented) we would conclude (based on intricate cogs and springs) that its design was not based on chance but a watch maker. “What is true of the watch is true of the world”* which was more complex. said Paley. **There must be a world maker or creator God. This would apply if we had never seen a watch before or it did not work perfectly or we could not figure out how it worked. There would still be enough evidence of design.** The world is like a machine with a maker. Patterns found in nature explicable with reference to cosmic designer.



David Hume's Criticisms Of Both Arguments: Hume pre-dates Paley

- 1. Not everything has or needs a cause or has a purpose. This is a logical fallacy or error in logic. It assumes things.** Modern science (Quantum mechanics) and Bertrand Russell support Hume here.
- 2. Why cannot the universe just necessarily exist with no cause if God is meant to.** Bertrand Russell - the universe was "brute fact" exists without explanation.
- 3. Hume was an empiricist.** We cannot speak of the design/creation of the world or creation because we do not have sufficient experience to draw conclusions.
- 4. Paley's analogy is not appropriate.** It is not necessarily true that the world is like a watch/ looks designed/is a machine. "It is more organic than mechanic. More animal or vegetable than watch or knitting loom." (Hume)
- 5. The Epicurean Hypothesis.** Given an infinite amount of time, all particles in the universe could combine in every possible combination. Eventually, a stable environment would be created and that could be the world now. Randomness explains the universe. Order can come from chance. Logical fallacy otherwise. Given infinite time and monkeys, monkeys will eventually type out Shakespeare.
- 6. Causation:** It is a scientific mystery what happens at the precise moment of cause and effect. Cause and effect are just a statistical correlation anyway. Furthermore, God is not a chemical, physical, biological cause. We have no known process / model/ experiments to understand such unknowable cause.
- 7. Necessary Beings no not make sense.** See criticisms of ontological. Logical fallacy.
- 8. The Problem of Evil questions purpose.** What is the purpose of nettles? JS Mill: Natural Evil makes God a murderer. Voltaire eg 1755 Lisbon earthquake.
- 9. What about the nature of the God supposedly proven?** How do we infer cause from looking at effects? Our world is finite and imperfect, why would God be the opposite? How can we make big statements about God - Hume uses the example of a pair of scales where one side is hidden - just because we know one side of the scales is heavier than the other, we don't know the exact weight of the other side and we cannot say it is infinitely heavier. Even if we do see evidence of a designer, this evidence does not tell us about the designer's nature. Hume says the world could be part of a series of "trial and error" experiments by an "infant deity" or "stupid mechanic" who has subsequently abandoned it. Hume says there could be many designers just as there are for a ship or a house. Why does there need to be one God? The designer could be immoral. Creators of perfect ships not necessarily perfect people. The designer could be an angel/demon. Is the watchmaker alive?
- 10. Too big a jump from Aquinas' God to the God of Christianity. Logical fallacy.**
- 11. Effects are not produced by 1 cause. Your RS grade is not down to one thing.**
- 12. Cause is a psychological concept** imposed by our minds and we cannot make links between cause and effect beyond experience. Purpose is an illusion.
- 13. The Fallacy of Composition. A Logical Fallacy.** We cannot jump from the idea that just because everything in the universe has a cause or reason to exist then the universe must have a cause or reason. Just because we explain the cause of a collection of 20 particles it does not mean that you can explain the cause of the group. Russell - just because we have a mother does not mean the human race has.
- 14. Error in logic (Logical fallacy) to say infinite regress cannot happen.**

Evolution presents an alternative explanation as to how the world could exist as it does. If evolution is accepted, there does not seem to be the need for a designer though religious believers might feel this could work alongside belief in God and God used it as a tool to make things the way they are. Charles Darwin defined evolutionary thinking in “The Origin of Species” (1859). He outlined evolution by natural selection – things exist as they are because of natural methods, selecting what will survive and what will not. 20th century developments in genetics have supported this. **The theory:** Species reproduce and pass on their genes to the next generation. This places emphasis on the world not God. **As genes are passed on, mutations, which change the characteristics of species, occur in subsequent generations not because of a designer but because of nature or chance.** These mutations lead to two types of species around at one time. **Those that are fittest or most able to survive will be the ones that do well, they are the most suitable for their environment and adapt to fit this and reproduce and their are characteristics passed on to the next generation.** So, change occurs not because of a designer but by brutal nature competing against nature for survival makes change not a designer. Paley’s bird’s wings may be explained by an original bird having to escape predators or the shape of a bird’s beak owing to food. **This removes the guiding hand of God involved in creation. Nature even allows species to go extinct** (like dinosaurs) questioning why would God allow such waste or design such species. **Evolution takes place over very long periods of time not all at once as Genesis suggests.**

The Anthropic Principle is a modern version of these arguments. It observes that the universe seems expertly fine-tuned for human life to exist and states it seems more likely that this is the result of deliberate design rather than happening by chance at tremendous odds. If the Earth were closer or further from the Sun, human life not possible. The universe was created by the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago. The laws of nature were not as we know them – the universe was in a bubble. 300,000 years after the Big Bang, the universe has cooled enough for atoms to form and their collision created the shape of the universe. Religious believers can still believe in the Big Bang alongside God. **Richard Swinburne finds the universe simple with a few hundred elements functioning to some simple physical laws.** Yet these lead to richness. God is simplest explanation. **FR Tennant: Ability to recognise beauty in the world not explained by evolution.** **Ockham’s Razor:** Do not multiply theories beyond necessity. When we have 2 competing hypotheses the one with the smallest number of assumptions is likely to be true. **Thinkers focus on God’s relationship not just about the beginning / cause.** God’s loving embrace sustains the universe. Tillich called God “the ground of all being.” **Frederick Copleston** advocated Aquinas’ 3rd Way in his debate with Bertrand Russell.

A posteriori arguments can appeal because they provide evidence we see. We work from experience first. We see order, beauty, purpose, the universe around us. How do we explain this? God’s handiwork would, in theory, be apparent. On the other hand, others see chaos and suffering. Our experiences can deceive us. So, our experiences are not universal and that is a weakness of a posteriori arguments which can only suggest not prove. A priori arguments work with defined terms with logic. Only logic can be reliable and cannot be contradicted. A strength and a weakness of such arguments is that new evidence may emerge which needs review. Both types contain logical fallacies.