

regularity and order  
intricate complexity  
design or random result?



*Teleological*  
**ARGUMENT**

For:

**Thomas  
Aquinas**

(13<sup>th</sup> Century)

**William  
Paley**

(18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Century)

Against:

**David Hume**

(18<sup>th</sup> Century)

**John Stuart Mill**

(19<sup>th</sup> Century)

**Charles Darwin**

(19<sup>th</sup> Century)

## AQUINAS' TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT:

This argument is the fifth of Aquinas **Five Ways** (1-3 are his Cosmological Argument).

This argument is often known as **DESIGN QUA REGULARITY** - design as it relates to regularity; the order and pattern in the universe and how it works. E.g. blossom appearing on trees every Spring.

Aquinas stated that objects with no intelligence cannot act with this kind of purpose or regularity and therefore must be directed to do so by some intelligent being - God.

In the same way that an archer fires an arrow (an arrow cannot propel itself), God has given direction to natural bodies.

This order and regularity in nature is the way things reach their *telos* (end/purpose).

This order and regularity is not produced by objects themselves or by chance but is given by an intelligent being - God.

## PALEY'S TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT:

Paley's argument in addition to *design qua regularity* uses **DESIGN QUO PURPOSE**.

Paley uses an analogy to draw conclusions about the nature of the world and the need for a designer who provides purpose and regularity.

### Design quo purpose:

- Someone walking across a heath bumps their foot on a stone - he does not ask where it came from as there is nothing noticeable about it.
- If they stumbled across a pocket watch (nowadays a smart-phone) they would notice its complexity and mechanisms, the parts that all work together, enabling it to tell the time. The precise placement of pieces allows the purpose of the watch to be fulfilled.
- This requires a **watchmaker** to assemble this complex mechanism for a specific purpose.
- The natural world is far more complex e.g. human eye has many parts that work together for the purpose of seeing, number of teats on an animal is suitable for size of litter they have.
- Paley noted the **order** and **regularity** involved in planetary movements and in natural laws such as gravity and how these work within a narrow-range, making life possible.
- Such order and regularity and purpose requires an external designer - God.

### Paley was aware of the following and stated them as an address to Hume's criticisms:

- One encounters a watch, having never seen one before - but one would still infer 'design' and see the difference from the 'rock'.
- One does not need to know how a watch is made or how the parts work together in order to comprehend its purpose and that it was designed.
- Sometimes the watch may go wrong but this does not invalidate the idea that it was designed.

## CHALLENGES FROM HUME

- Hume was an empiricist (looks for observable evidence from the senses) and a sceptic (challenges arguments and studies evidence carefully).
- Watch analogy is flawed - the world does not 'look' like a machine but is actually more organic, something which grows and develops on its own.
- Evil - why would a designer engineer a world which contains evil?
- If the effects (the world) resemble the cause (God) then it speaks of an infant or inferior deity (due to the apparent cruelty and imperfections in the world), not the perfect God of **classical theism**. This 'designer' may not be present any more, or even alive.
- Why one designer? A watch may have a team of designers, why not a team of 'world-designers', each with a different skill? One might respond that God has all skills but this is faith-statement, not one based on the evidence we see.
- We have **experience** of how watches are made and so we can talk meaningfully about that, but we have **no experience** of how worlds are made, we have no others to compare it to. Therefore to speak of how the universe is designed and made is meaningless.
- If **intricate complexity** requires a designer (an intelligent mind) then why does this designer not require a designer, and so on?
- Other ways to explain the existence of our world - **EPICUREAN HYPOTHESIS**; natural forces will gradually form order from chaos. E.g. enough monkeys at enough typewriters will eventually produce some Shakespeare. This however is not **intelligent** act but is a **random possibility**.

## CHALLENGE FROM MILL

- Nature can be unbearably cruel and violent - animals give prey lingering and agonising deaths, earthquakes and hurricanes etc. cause untold misery. How can this be the product of a wise and all-loving designer?  
Richard Dawkins agrees, stating God must be a 'sadist' who enjoys spectator sports.

## CHALLENGE FROM DARWIN

- It is not 'design' that allows a species to survive but rather **mutations**, those which result in a feature more suited to survival will survive and be passed on. **Survival of the fittest**. Remember, Darwin did **not** know about genes or DNA but the principle is the same.
- Dawkins argues that DNA controls the destiny of a species, including humans, not the other way around.

# Strengths

- Aquinas' idea of regularity could well be valid - do we not naturally question when things do not behave as we'd expect?
- Neither Hume nor Paley knew what we know today. The universe is so **intricately** tuned - many constants and quantities are in such a narrow-range which allows life to exist. Are we to assume this is by **chance**? This could be said to support Paley's idea of design.
- Evolution may answer some of the question as to how life developed - but does it give **sufficient reason** as to underlying life-permitting conditions of the universe or indeed the origin of life? There is still an argument to be made for an instigator/designer.
- Is the **cruelty** or **evil** in the world a valid argument against design? Could it be that these are human definitions, from set viewpoints?

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# Weaknesses

- Is **purpose** something that exists innately within things or is it something that a human mindset **imposes** on things? We might think it exists where it does not.
- Using watch analogy is weak. We already **know** a watch is designed. Therefore we skip to a conclusion before we start.
- Does evolution defeat the traditional teleological argument? We can demonstrate how nature causes apparent 'design', e.g. the develop of eyes in multiple unrelated species - **convergent evolution**.
- Evolution certainly raises questions about **purpose**, if our species developed by chance then how can we have a specific purpose?

*blank for your own comments*