

## Teleological Argument

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### **The argument basically works as follows:**

- 1 -- The world contains order, regularity, purpose, and beauty.
  - 2 -- By looking at an object containing these properties, we may infer that it was designed.
  - 3 -- The world is an object containing the properties in P1
- CONCLUSION: the world was designed; the designer we call 'God'

### **Definitions:**

We call this the 'Design Argument' because it attempts to prove God through the concept of design.

It is also known as the 'Teleological Argument' from the Greek *telos*, meaning 'end' or 'purpose'. The argument claims that the world displays God's purpose or end-goal.

Some (not all) versions of this argument are called analogical arguments, because they attempt to make a proof based on analogy (comparisons).

### **History:**

#### **Ancient Greece**

The first design argument was put forward by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato.

In his work *The Timaeus*, Plato suggests that a cosmic craftsman ('the Demiurge') may have brought together the materials of the universe, to make it orderly and beautiful.

The argument was developed in more depth in Medieval philosophy, most notably by the 13th century Italian philosopher and monk Saint Thomas Aquinas.

#### **Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica:**

*The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.*

**William Paley:**

English philosopher and clergyman, 1743-1805.

Reforming tendencies, 'progressive' in the Church and abolitionist (opposed to the slave trade).

Author of Natural Theology (1802), his masterwork arguing for philosophical knowledge of God.

Chapter 2 of Natural Theology:

*In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer that for anything I knew to the contrary it had lain there forever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that for anything I knew the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first?*

**Watchmaker Analogy:**

If we found a watch on a heath, we would assume that it has some designer. By analogy, we could say the same of nature.

Nature displays purpose (e.g. birds have wings to fly) and regularity (e.g. planets orbit in regular motion). As with a watch, the attributes of purpose and regularity are suggestive of a designer.

**Paley's formal argument:**

1 -- From a complex object of many parts, containing the qualities of regularity and purpose, we may infer that it was designed.

2 -- The world and its contents are complex, and of many parts, containing the qualities of regularity and purpose.

3 -- We may infer that the world was designed.

CONCLUSION: the world has a designer - God

**F.R. Tennant and the anthropic principle:**

-- Cambridge academic and clergyman 1866-1957.

-- "Nature is meaningless and valueless without God behind it and Man in front."  
(Philosophical Theology, 1930)

-- Tennant is arguing that humanity is at the forefront of creation, because the circumstances of the universe uniquely and surprisingly enable human life to emerge.

-- Tennant was the first theist philosopher to use the fundamental characteristics of the universe as life-nurturing to offer a new form of teleological argument; many have since followed this path.

Weak and Strong anthropic principles:

‘Weak anthropic principle’

The circumstances in our universe are such that the emergence of life is possible.

This could fit in with theism (God has enabled life), but does not so clearly suggest the idea of creation.

### **Anthropologic teleological argument:**

1 -- The emergence of human life in our universe depends on numerous factors: planetary conditions, fundamental laws of physics, etc.

2 -- Human life has emerged in our universe.

3 -- A life-friendly universe such as ours is highly improbable; almost any other set of circumstances we can think of would have been life-hostile.

4 -- A designer or intelligent Creator would make sense of our improbable universe.

CONCLUSION: God exists

### **Richard Swinburne**

One of the most eminent modern philosophers of religion is Richard Swinburne, Professor of Philosophy at Oxford (retired).

Swinburne is the chief exponent of what Ward calls the “new design argument” – an argument which takes a different path from the pre-Darwinian argument of Paley.

His argument is set out in *The Existence of God*.

The “God” Conclusion:

Given the striking pervasiveness of orderly laws of nature, Swinburne asks, how are we to explain the universe as we find it?

Swinburne claims that scientists are able to define laws, say how they work, and discover new ones. However, what scientists may never do is find a basis for the most fundamental laws in the first place.

In other words, the scientific method cannot explain why there is deep and fundamental order in the first place.

If there is no possible scientific explanation for this, then we are required to look for another simple and elegant explanation – the most likely answer, he claims, is God.

**We will look at the evidence from the hard science of physics.**

## Considering the Atmosphere

-- any more mass (= more gravity)  
means a heavier, more destructive atmosphere with too much ammonia and methane

-- less mass (= less gravity)  
and we lose too much water

### Oxygen:

--any less?  
\_complex life slows  
or stops  
--none?  
no life  
--any more?  
everything burns a  
lot faster, and our  
bodies age quicker

### Ozone:

--less ozone  
and we roast in ultraviolet light from the sun  
--any more  
and we don't get enough of the sun's life-giving energy through to the surface =  
reduced plant growth

### Water and Water Vapor

-- Any more  
we get a runaway  
greenhouse effect  
which will fry the planet  
--less?  
life on land would suffer  
from meager to no rainfall

### Earth's Rotation:

--faster and winds get unbearable  
--slower and temperature differences get unbearable

### Earth's Molten Core:

--Protects us from the Solar radiation

## Considering the Moon

--its whole creation story  
is a thing of amazing  
wonder in itself...

--Creation of the Moon -- Video

## Considering our Neighbors

### **Venus, closer to the sun, has...**

--an atmosphere so heavy with carbon dioxide it's like being under a kilometer of water  
--a cloud cover of sulfuric acid...  
--a surface temp around 900°F  
--no water  
--no plate tectonics

### **Mars**

--has almost no atmosphere, no plate tectonics, and its water reservoirs are essentially frozen, so there is no life-giving water cycle

## **Jupiter & Saturn**

Jupiter and Saturn are at the perfect distance to:

--leave our sensitive orbit alone, but  
--protect us from nasty, earthbound comets and asteroids...

## Considering **the Sun**

-- our sun is the perfect  
age, mass, brightness, & generation for life...  
anything else, we're not here

--the **faint sun paradox** says that through an amazingly complex list of "coincidences," the sun increased in luminosity at the same rate the greenhouse gases were removed from our atmosphere so Earth could maintain a life-friendly constant temp for 4 billion years

## Considering **Other Stars**

--our sun wasn't born near other big and destructive stars like these four here in the Orion Nebula, the Trapezium Cluster

--the Trapezium Cluster are clearing away planet-making material from their siblings

--no planet-making material, no planets

--no planets, no TV

-- no TV, no life

--sun-sized stars eventually go out in a blaze of glory  
the sun will, too, a long time from now...

--but humans are here at exactly the right time to completely avoid this inevitable scenario

--many stars, like Betelgeuse in Orion, are bigger than our sun - they live much faster and violently and die much younger -- we have no big starry life-threatening neighbors

### **Supernovae:**

closer to us?

--life is exterminated

farther?

--not enough planet-building debris

-- more frequent?

life goes adios

-- more infrequent?

no planets

Video -- Journey Toward Creation

Considering  
the **Galaxy**

--closer to the nucleus,  
we get supernovaed, radiated to death,  
and thrown out of a stable orbit by other stars  
--farther,  
no planet-building material

Spiral Galaxy

-- it appears we are located in the perfect place within the perfect type of galaxy

Considering the Universe

-- at the edge, spirals survive - how?

-- living in the nasty inner places

leads to collisions!!! or...

-- cannibalism, in which one galaxy consumes another  
either way,  
no life

--we live in the perfect galaxy  
in the perfect part  
of a perfect cluster

the Creation Event itself... Video

Quotes:

Paul Davies (astrophysicist)

...evidence for design of the universe and of earth for human life could rightly be described as overwhelming. There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all...  
It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe...

Fred Hoyle  
(astrophysicist)

A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature...

Arthur Eddington (astrophysicist)

The idea of a universal mind or Logos would be, I think, a fairly plausible inference from the present state of scientific theory.

George Greenstein (astronomer)

As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency - or, rather, Agency - must be involved.

Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?

Arno Penzias (Nobel prize, physics)

Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say 'supernatural') plan.

Roger Penrose (mathematician)

I would say the universe has a purpose. It's not there just somehow by chance.

Antony Flew

(philosopher & former atheist)

...the argument to Intelligent Design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it.

...it seems to me that the case for an Aristotelian God who has the characteristics of power and also intelligence, is now much stronger than it ever was before.

Objections to the Teleological Argument

Appearance of design only

The multiverse

A Brute Reality