

Candidate 1 evidence

Philosophy of Religion Essay

To what extent do you agree with scientific responses to the teleological argument?

Teleological arguments are arguments that seek to prove the existence of a god through the idea that there are things in nature that are so fit for purpose that it wouldn't be possible for them to have come about just by chance. The word teleological is derived from the word telos, which means end or purpose. There are multiple philosophers who have their own Teleological arguments, such as Aquinas, Paley, Tennant and Montefiore.

All of the teleological arguments are a posteriori, meaning that they are derived from observations made of the world around us, the natural world provides the evidence required for these arguments. Similar to the way that science looks to observation for the evidence to support theories and facts. For example Paley takes the observation that the webbed feet of ducks are incredibly fit for the ducks purpose of mainly swimming, this too would be observed and confirmed by science and observation. I agree that this is a strength of the teleological argument on the whole, and that it is vital to have proper evidence to create premises of an argument and find the conclusion. Teleological arguments could be contested by certain religious people as they believe that god is beyond reason and logic, not requiring any other explanation than a spiritual one. Additionally, teleological arguments are inductive, meaning that they have true premises and a promising hypothetical conclusion, this is also used a lot in science as they have cases where the conclusions are falsified. Science is evidence based, and is also falsifiable, just like the teleological arguments, so I would agree that the inductive and a posteriori nature of teleological arguments is a strength and I agree with the science that proves that strength as I can observe it myself in the world around me. They apply logic and reason just the same as scientific research does, and I think that is a positive about these arguments.

The argument from intelligent design is the argument that was developed by FR Tennant using modern day scientific understanding of the natural world to suggest that a designer god is a logical explanation to the universe. There are three main principles of the intelligent design argument, Fine tuning, the aesthetic principle and irreducible complexity. Fine tuning is the idea developed by Hugh Montefiore that tells us about how there are many different physical constants that are just right for the universe to have been able to develop under, and that if there was just one constant it could be argued as an anthropic coincidence, however Montefiore argues that there

are far too many of these constants for it to be categorized as a coincidence and therefore there must be some kind of designer God behind it. Russell Stannard agrees with the fact that there are these physical constants on an atomic level, which furthers Montefiore's point as it gives it the correct evidence. I think this is the strongest of the principles of the argument from intelligent design, as it has the strongest evidence, and it wasn't taken from the bible which has little empirical evidence to back it up. However science cannot agree that the reason for all these physical constants lining up to create our universe is a god, simply because there is no evidence to suggest that it could be a god. There is evidence found by scientists about the age of the universe, which further convinces me that it could be possible that the universe came to be in this way because of chance. I agree with the scientific response of Stannard, but I do not think that it proves a designer god in the way that Montefiore wishes for it to. Overall, I think that the science proves the fine tuning argument to be incorrect, which I agree with based on the evidence that would point me to assume that the universe can have made life this way on its own over billions of years. Additionally, there is the theory of the multiverse to consider, brought forward by chemist Atkins, he argues that the universe isn't so surprising as there might be many others just like it or many others that were not successful in sustaining life. I find this to be a weaker argument against intelligent design as I think that the multiverse creates more questions than it does answers, even more questions than a designer god would, such as who created the multiverse. Overall, I disagree with this response.

The next main principle of the intelligent design argument is the aesthetic principle, developed by FR Tennant. The aesthetic principle takes the scientific concept of evolutionary value and applies it to the music and art that humans appreciate. Tennant sees that humans can appreciate beauty and create it ourselves, but also believes that it serves no obvious evolutionary purpose, therefore a god must be responsible. Although, there is proof that humans can survive without creativity and music and only require food, water, basic shelter and rest to survive. There is also evidence that would suggest that beauty and art and music does have a key part to play in the survival of the human race, art and dance have been found to have been used a communication for centuries and aided the development of humans to what they are today. I think the aesthetic principle is weak, as there is so much evidence to support the necessity and the positive effects of art and beauty of the human race, such as the happiness that these things can bring can lengthen life expectancy, I think that is valuable to human evolution. therefore is disagree with this response as

I don't think it truly considers the evidence shown that supports the value of art and beauty as an integral part of human evolution.

The final principle of the intelligent design argument is the irreducible complexity argument, by scientist Behe. Behe suggest there are some things in the world that when broken as far down as possible in to the littlest components possible, reach a point where it is hard to assume that those tiny incredibly complex pieces could have any chain of causes to have caused them in the first place. Behe takes the example of a bacteria Flagellum to point out that it can be broken down into 40 parts but no further, and points out the incredibly complexity of the fact that all of those parts have to work together to allow the bacteria to function properly. Therefore it is concluded that there would need to be some powerful and intelligent being that could create these parts if they didn't evolve themselves, that being would be concluded as being god. This argument is strong in my opinion as Behe gives evidence and the logic behind it is plausible as we can observe the bacteria flagellum and see its complexity. However, I don't think that it is fair to assume that just because we have not found a explanation for those tiny little parts, doesn't mean that there isn't one that is waiting to be found, we just don't have the knowledge of how to find it yet. Similar to the theory of indeterminate events, we cannot say something has no cause just because we haven't been able to find it. It would be more logical to assume that there is a cause based on evidence of the world around us that all things have a cause for them, it would be irrational in my opinion to assume that something has no cause other than god just because we don't know everything about it yet. I partly disagree with this response, it has great evidence and makes good points but there is still no evidence of a god, and science is constantly evolving, meaning that there is every chance that the cause of the parts of the bacteria flagellum could be found tomorrow.

A scientific critique of the teleological argument is the theory of evolution from Charles Darwin. Darwin observed many animals and came up with the theory that things evolve due to natural selection and genetic mutation, not the design of a god. Random genetic mutations would take place over centuries, allowing for the occasional emergence of a dominant gene and survival characteristic such as a longer neck in giraffes to help them reach food. As these animals with the newer and more desirable genes would be more likely to survive and reproduce, allowing for that characteristic to take over the whole of the species as the others with the old genes wouldn't survive long enough to reproduce. Natural selection is the process by which the ones without the

good characteristics for survival would die off, leaving those with the better characteristics to populate the species. This critique completely removes the need for a god or any sort of designer, as the natural selection and random genetic mutations are the ones creating specific animal characteristics. Evolution is also able to explain extinction, which is a known fact due to evidence of the dinosaurs and dodos. A designer god cannot explain extinction as it wouldn't be a loving thing for a god to do. The theory of evolution even convinced some people to move away from their faith all together as it completely invalidates the genesis accounts and arguments for design. I agree heavily with evolution as a response to the teleological argument, as it is evidence based and we can see it in the natural world through skeletal remains of animals including early humans, DNA evidence that links humans to apes is very convincing to me. However an issue I do have is that Evolution cannot explain the human consciousness or why we are so different from other animals as it has been proven multiple times. Why can humans create languages, why can we imagine things and then make them?

Overall I believe that Evolution is an incredibly strong response using science and I almost completely agree with it. I do think that there could be room to allow the Christian god into the mix like the teleological argument seeks to do. I think that there could be a possibility for combining the two, having god as the driving force behind evolution, so that evolution does most of the work but god can still give the universe purpose and a value.

William Paley's argument employs the use of logic and reason, and evidence which is vital to science. There are two concepts that Paley uses that could be backed up by science. Design qua purpose and design qua regularity. Design qua purpose is the idea that there are so many things in the world that are so undeniably fit for purpose, such as the human eyes. The human eyes are fit for purpose so well to the point where they do not do anything else, this is proven by scientific investigation. Paley argues here that because of this great purpose that the human eye and so many other things have, it would seem likely that a god does exist to create those things, it's hard to believe that it came about just by chance. I agree with Paley's observation, the eye is incredibly complex, however I disagree that it could prove a god, there just isn't enough evidence and evolution is far more convincing. Design qua regularity is another idea built on the use of logic and observation and scientific findings, such as Newton's laws of physics, the idea is that things are in such great order that is specific for life, like how gravity isn't too strong or too weak for life. This would be strong if the earth didn't hold evidence of disorder, such as natural disaster, global

warming and famines. A god wouldn't allow things of that level of disorder to happen if it existed, so therefore despite the slight scientific support of these two concepts, I do not agree with them, they might prove a designer, but definitely don't prove a designer god and the Christian faith. I do not agree with these responses, they are weak, and although their evidence and logic is plausible, its hard to believe that god would be responsible without evidence combined with the fact that Paleys conclusion was most likely biased towards the conclusion of a god as he was an archdeacon.

Overall, I partly agree with scientific responses to the teleological argument. I very much agree with Evolution as I think it is the most plausible response that has the most evidence that can be observed in real time or when looking into the past through fossil records. I disagree with the argument from intelligent design, as although there are some good points made by Behe and supporting points by Stannard, i struggle to believe that those points are connected to a form of designer god, if there was empirical evidence i would believe it but there isn't, therefore i cannot. I do think however that a god could be used as the reasoning for the way the world is, and a god is what created the science to help us understand our world, but I cannot believe in a god that is present in design.