

# GOD: Teleological Argument

## Lecture 5

Phil 1000, Fall 2008  
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## Outline

### Review

- Cosmological Argument
  - Origins: Why is there something rather than nothing
  - Two versions: causation & dependency

### The Teleological Argument

- Some Preliminaries
- Paley's Watch: Version 1
- Paley's Watch: Version 2

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## Teleological Argument

- "Telos" = the purpose or end goal of something
  - Also known as "argument from design"
  - Has a long history...
- Attempts to do more than show merely that God exists, but also that God has certain characteristics: intelligence or intention
- Starting point is that the universe appears to have some goal or organization and so must have a designer...
- Several versions – We will discuss three.

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### Paley's Watch Version 1

Summary: 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... 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... when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive – what we could not discover in the stone – that is several parts are framed and put together for a purpose... the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker... Every observation which was made ... concerning the watch may be repeated with strict propriety concerning ... the works of nature. [Thus an intelligent creator exists, God.]

**P1:** The works of nature exhibit purpose/order.

**P2:** Either the order of nature is explained by "chance" or intelligent design.

**P3:** It is more likely that it came about by intelligent design – watch example.

**C:** There exists an intelligent designer, God.

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## Version 1: Abduction

- Abductive Argument (inference to the best explanation):
  - A phenomenon needing explanation (order of nature)
  - (At least) Two possible explanations (chance or design)
  - Supports the best of those explanations. (?)
- Chief point of evaluation: How well does the explanation accounts for the phenomenon compared to other plausible explanations?
  - Criteria: Simplicity (Principle of parsimony), Predictive success, coherence, fruitfulness. (We will discuss these more later.)
  - Are there alternative explanations not considered?

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## Version 1: Abduction

### Two points to consider:

- **P2:** Is there a third plausible explanation?
  - (Cf. fallacy of false dichotomy)
  - Evolutionary Theories (Natural Selection).
  - Neither pure chance nor design.
  - Complexity of nature may require "simple" explanation.
- **P3:** Is the watch example good support for P3?
  - Watches are artifacts... designed, we know from experience...
  - Stones?

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## Paley's Watch Version 2

Summary: 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... 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... when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive – what we could not discover in the stone – that is several parts are framed and put together for a purpose... the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker... Every observation which was made ... concerning the watch may be repeated with strict propriety concerning ... the works of nature. [Thus an intelligent creator exists, God.]

**P1:** If something exhibits purpose/order, then some intelligence must have designed it – watch example.

**P2:** The works of nature exhibit purpose/order.

**C:** There exists an intelligent designer, God.

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## Version 2: Deductive

- Deductively Valid Form: Modus Ponens (MP)
- P1 states a principle of reasoning (appealed to by Paley) that there is some necessary connection between order and design.

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## Version 2: Questions

Underlying **Assumption**: order = purpose/design?

- Is this a good principle of reasoning (assumption)?
  - Whence do we derive this principle?
  - Watches: artifacts vs. natural phenomena
- Why think the order in nature is purposeful, not random?
  - Is order in the “eye of the beholder”?
  - Also, plenty of “mistakes” or “inefficiencies” in nature, and plenty of bad things, too.

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## God?

- Do either of the versions considered today support the existence of God?
- Do either of the versions considered today support the characteristic of God as “benevolent designer/creator”?

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## Next Time

- Read David Hume, p. 38 (Parts II & V only)
  - Version 3: Argument from Analog
  - And criticism... (Cleanthes vs. Philo)
- Answer reading questions for Hume, posted on the course schedule (pdf).
- Think about how convincing analogies are or aren't.

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## Key concepts

- Teleological Argument
- Version 1: Abductive Argument
- Version 2: Deductive Argument (MP)
- Criticisms

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