

GOD: Teleological Argument

Lecture 6

Phil 1000, Fall 2008
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Outline

Review

- Teleological Argument (Paley's Watch)
 - Not just existence of God, but characteristics of God
 - Order and Design
 - Two versions: Abductive and Deductive

Cleanthes' Analogy

- Version 3: Analogy
- Preliminaries: Arguments by Analogy
- Hume's (Philo's) criticisms

Closing Thoughts on the Teleological Argument

2

Version 3: Cleanthes' Analogy

Look round the world, contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions to a degree beyond what human sense and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which ravishes into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance – of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble, and that the Author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed. But this argument *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity and his similarity to human mind and intelligence. (p. 39)

Standardize the Argument

3

Cleanthes' Analogy Version 3

Summary: The world is nothing but one great machine, with parts adjusted to each other with great accuracy. The adapting of means to ends resembles exactly the productions of human contrivance – but it much exceeds human ability. Since the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; There exists an Author of nature similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties.

P1: The world is like a very complex machine.

P2: Machines are designed and created by intelligent creatures.

C: (By analogy) There exists an intelligent designer/creator of the world, God.

4

Analogies

- Uses of Analogy:
 - Illustrate a point or idea
 - Suggest additional inquiry (e.g., science)
 - Inferential support (arguments)
- Argument by Analogy:
 - Claims that two things are similar in many respects
 - Concludes they are probably similar in some other respect
 - Inductive/Probabilistic support
- Chief point of evaluation:
 - Depends on how similar the two things really are...
 - Strong Analogy = adequate number of relevant similarities and few relevant dissimilarities.

5

Arguments by Analogy

Form

P1: A is like B. (A and B share properties w, x, y.)

P2: B has the property z.

C: A also has property z. (Probably.)

Notes:

- Inference is probabilistic (inductive), relying on strength of analogy (similarities).
- Similarities between A and B (w, x, y) must be relevant to target property in conclusion (z).
- The more relevant similarities, the better.
- But must also consider relevant dissimilarities.

6

Cleanthes' Analogy Version 3

Summary: The world is nothing but one great machine, with parts adjusted to each other with great accuracy. The adapting of means to ends resembles exactly the productions of human contrivance – but it much exceeds human ability. Since the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; There exists an Author of nature similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties.

Is this a good argument by analogy?

P1: The world is like a very complex machine.

P2: Machines are designed and created by intelligent creatures.

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7

Three Evaluations

1. Weak Analogy:

The world/universe and machines have many relevant dissimilarities. For example, the world and machines are made of different materials, the world is not perfect, not everything works well together, the world is more like an organism than a machine. Not clear this is a devastating objection.

How would a defender of the argument reply?

8

Three Evaluations

2. Questionable Similarity:

The reason we know machines are designed and created by intelligent creatures is because we have experience of machines being designed, etc. But we don't know this about worlds (or other organisms). It may be that worlds come about by means very different than our experience tells us. We have only one world/universe to base our inference on, so the argument rests on to few experiential bits of evidence. (Cf. Fallacy of hasty generalization.)

How would a defender of the argument reply?

9

Three Evaluations

3. Questionable Conclusion:

Even if we accept the analogy, the conclusion is not what Cleanthes might want. The closer the similarities in an analogy, the stronger the conclusion. So, it should follow that what is true of machine designers is also true of God. For example, God may be fallible, multiple, no longer exist (or care about the world), or even malevolent; and the world may be a mistake or a "rough draft" not intended to be the final version.

How would a defender of the argument reply?

10

Closing Thoughts

- Teleological Argument
 - is intuitively appealing;
 - is ambitious: not just that God exists but some characteristics of God – intelligent.
- But, faces some serious problems:
 - Alternative explanations of order/purpose in nature may be more plausible... Natural vs. Supernatural explanations...
 - The connection between order/purpose and intelligence is not so obvious.
 - Identifying order and purpose in nature may be a product of human "perception" not real-world characteristics.
- Furthermore:
 - If one accepts the teleological argument as reasonable, then the problem of evil is particularly troubling.

11

Next Time

- Read Dostoevsky, p. 72 and Mackie, p. 7
- Answer reading questions for them, posted on the course schedule (pdf).
- Think about how serious the problem of evil is or isn't for the existence of God.

12

Key concepts

- Teleological Argument
- Version 1: Abductive Argument
- Version 2: Deductive Argument (MP)
- Version 3: Argument by Analogy
- Criticisms (and Replies)