

INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

LECTURE FIVE

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT – PALEY’S VERSION

Watch Analogy

Some Humean Criticisms: 1 Analogy not close
 2 Alternative hypotheses available
 3 Theistic hypothesis explanatory overkill
 4 Theistic hypothesis useless for arguing back to otherwise unknown facts

Some Possible Criticisms of Some Humean Criticisms:

Re 2: Simplicity
Re 3: Simplicity
Re 4: Relevance

Another Humean Criticism: 5. How do you get your argument to stop at God? See last week.

All of which leaves Criticism 1. Is it plausible?

Anti-Humean’s first punch:	Biological Order
Humean (with time-travelled-in help) roundhouse:	Evolution
Anti-Humean’s second punch:	Still leaves instances of order unexplained

Fundamental laws of nature = instances of order incapable of naturalistic explanation

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT - THE FINE-TUNING VERSION

FINE TUNING

Various features of the constants, boundary conditions and laws of nature had to be almost exactly as they are if the universe was to be capable of sustaining life.

‘BAYES’ THEOREM’

Roughly, if you find some fact, A, and A would be more likely if another fact, B, obtained, then you have reason from A to think that B does indeed obtain proportional to the antecedent improbability of A. (More precise definition given in R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, page 64 and following)

‘The Curious Incident of the Half-eaten Kebab and the Traffic Cone in the Night Time’

- 1) Fine-tuning suggests it is antecedently improbable that the universe be ordered so as to be conducive to life.
- 2) Theism raises the probability of the universe being conducive to life.
Therefore, fine-tuning – via Bayes’ Theorem – raises the probability of Theism.

Some Possible Criticisms:

Not rational to require explanation of that which is a necessary condition of one’s being here
- Swinburne’s terrorist

Can't judge of probability here?

- 'This Particle Created by the God of Classical Theism ©'

No reason to think Theism raises probability of universe conducive to life?

For there to be reason, life would need to be 'trans-universally' valuable

- Astronaut

Inconclusive in itself

Anyway, people have different intuitions

Alternative hypotheses

- The Maximal Multiverse

A controversial claim

An infinite number of infinitely variable universes would be simpler than Theism.

-Monkeys and Typewriters

But even if it's simpler, one might still wonder whether such a multiverse would explain the fine-tuning of this universe. I (now [see below]) say not.

(My) Conclusion

The Design Argument, in its fine-tuning form, is a good argument for the existence of God.

CAUTIONARY NOTE

Most philosophers do not regard the Design Argument as a good argument; a sizeable minority however do and (as you'd expect) even more regard it as at least inductively supporting Theism. I've changed my mind from a complete dismissal of it to an acceptance of it as in itself good. I say why very briefly at the end of this lecture, but I give the argument that I currently endorse in a more articulate form in this lecture:-

T. J. Mawson, 'Explaining the Fine Tuning of the Universe to Us and the Fine Tuning of Us to the Universe', Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture, 2008.

The full text is available at <http://ora.ouls.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid%3A26d2f182-e4f1-44ee-954b-d519fd375565>.

If you want to hear me talking about it (as well as the meaning of life and why atheists should pray!), you can listen to me being interviewed about it on the website 'Commonsense Atheism'.

<http://commonsenseatheism.com/?p=8095>.

Also on that website – in another interview – you can listen to Neil Manson give a more lukewarm assessment of it. That's at <http://commonsenseatheism.com/?p=9079>. Neil Manson edited a very good collection of papers on the Design Argument, *God and Design*, Routledge 2003 and has contributed some interesting papers of his own to the debate – all easily findable from his website.

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