1. Explain how the teleological argument attempts to prove that God is the designer of the universe. [30]

Paley’s famous teleological argument was based on a watch analogy. He said when walking in a field if you saw a stone you would think it had been there forever but if you saw a watch you would wonder who dropped it. A watch has complexity, order and purpose, just like the universe, so could not have been made by chance. A watch maker designed the watch so God designed the universe. This argument shows the universe had to be designed so God must exist. Because he uses the purpose of the watch his argument comes from design qua purpose. Paley also talks about the tides and the human eye to show other complex things in the universe that would need to be designed to work. This shows design qua regularity.

Aquinas, a C13th Philosopher, wrote an argument of design qua regularity based on an archer and an arrow to show that there is a divine intelligence behind everything lacking innate cognition. Just as the arrow would be unable to reach its target without the archer, many things in the universe would not be able to reach their purpose without being directed. Aquinas said a divine intelligence was behind all things and which directed them to follow a natural law. This divine intelligence is God.

Both arguments use analogy of complex things in the world to prove God exists as the designer of the universe.

The Anthropic argument or finely tuned argument says that the universe must have been designed for humans to exist as the chances of this happening by chance are too small. God must have designed and created everything perfectly with human existence in mind. This argument is supported by philosophers and scientists including FR Tennant.

The Aesthetic argument is another argument that argues because beauty exists the universe must have been designed. Science cannot explain the existence of beauty so it must be designed. This argument is not as strong as the others as it does not use analogies or science to support it.

In conclusion the teleological argument argues that the universe is designed because it is complex, has order and purpose, and the chances of this happening randomly seem extremely unlikely, and beauty exists. Therefore God must have designed the universe as God is the only other explanation. Many people believe this to this day.

Score out of 30:

Level:

Why:

What was good:

Advice to candidate to improve:

1. Explain how the teleological argument attempts to prove that God is the designer of the universe. [30]

The teleological argument comes from the word ‘Telos’ which means end purpose. The argument is aposteriori so uses examples and evidence from the world to support its claims and is therefore deductive. It is an old argument that comes from Plato who called the designer God a ‘demiurge’.

Aristotle also talked about a designer God in his ideas of an unmoved mover and his theory of the four causes. All things need a cause and Philosopher Aquinas believed this cause was God. C13th Aquinas was influenced by Aristotle’s ideas and said that all things needed direction to fulfil their purpose, just like an arrow needs to be directed by an archer to hit its target. But even things lacking their own intelligence are directed, such as the planets and the waves coming in and out, so what directs them? Aquinas said this must be God as nothing else but an intelligent designer could direct such things. Because this argument uses an analogy of things being directed or regulated this is called design qua regularity. Aquinas wrote this in his book ‘Summa Theologica’ and it is known as his 5th way.

William Paley also put forward a teleological argument which is the most famous today. He argues design qua purpose as his argument is based on the purpose of things in the universe. He uses the analogy of a watch and a stone. He says when you are walking in a field and find a stone and watch, if you compare them you would know the stone has been there forever but you would not think the watch had. This is because the watch has order and complexity in it to fulfil its purpose. It could not have happened by chance as it is too complex and fulfils its purpose, so must have been designed. He says like the watch the universe is very complex and has order to fulfils its purpose (its purpose is to sustain life, which it does) so as the watch has a watch maker the universe has a universe maker which can only be God. This argument therefore shows God must exist as otherwise how else could God design the universe. Paley also refers to other examples such as the human eye or the orbit of the planets to support his argument.

However there are more modern arguments for the teleological argument that are different as they move away from analogy as it can anthropomorphise God. These are the anthropic and aesthetic arguments.

FR Tennant created the aesthetic argument and it was supported by R Swinburne. They said that humans appreciate beauty in the universe yet beauty does not have to exist and cannot be explained by natural selection, evolution or the big bang. So how can beauty exist? Tennant said beauty must be the signs of a benevolent designer who created beauty for humans to enjoy and appreciate.

The anthropic argument is based on the fact that humans exist even though it is extremely unlikely that the perfect conditions for our existence arose by chance. This is an argument against ideas like the big bang and evolution happening randomly by chance without any design. The ozone layer is the perfect thickness for humans to survive, also the oxygen ratio is perfect so how could this have happened by chance? This argument is supported by both theists and scientists such as John Polkinghorne and Paul Davies.

In conclusion these are all arguments to say that God must exist as the designer of the world. They show how the world is complex, ordered, fulfils its purpose, follows natural law, and is the perfect condition for human life even with the benefits of beauty. These arguments argue that this could not have happened by chance so the only conclusion is a divine designer which must be God. The fact that this argument has been going for so many years shows how strong it is.

Score out of 30: Level:

Why:

What was good:

Advice to candidate to improve:

1. Explain how the teleological argument attempts to prove that God is the designer of the universe. [30]

The teleological argument is an aposteriori argument for the existence of God which stems from the Greek word ‘Telos’ meaning end purpose or goal. The argument uses evidence and observations of apparent design in the world to demonstrate through deductive logic that only God could have designed the universe and thus must exist. However due to the subjective nature of aposteriori arguments the teleological argument can only ever be inductive and as such has led to many criticisms over the years. But despite this, a strength of aposteriori arguments is their ability to adapt to new evidence so although reformulated, the teleological argument has survived and exists to this day in more modern forms.

The most famous teleological argument comes from an C18th priest named William Paley. In his book ‘Natural Theology’ he proposed his argument through the means of analogy. He states that suppose you found a stone whilst walking through a heath. You would discard it without any thought as to how it came to be there. However suppose you discovered a pocket watch. You would not discard the watch with the same assumption, that it had come to be there totally by chance and of natural means. You assume it had in fact been dropped. On closer inspection you observe all the intricate cogs and wheels within it. This complexity allows the watch to fulfil its purpose of telling the time. This could not have come about by accident but must be a product of design. Paley goes on to state that the universe is far more complex and intricate than a pocket watch, and also fulfils its purpose of supporting life. So should we assume that like the simple stone the universe had come to be so complex and intricate with such purpose by chance, or rather could we assume that as the watch has a watch maker the universe must have a universe maker. Paley concludes stating that the only being capable of the role of universe maker is God, and as the universe exists, so therefore must God.

Because this argument is based on the complexity and order necessary to fulfil purpose this argument is known as ‘design qua purpose’ (by virtue of).

The teleological argument however dates a lot further back than the C18th. In fact records show us that ancient Greek philosopher Plato c.300BCE made reference to a ‘cosmic craftsman’ known as the ‘demiurge’. Likewise his pupil Aristotle went on to create a great ripple in the teleological field by influencing C13th Christian Theologian St Thomas Aquinas with his theory of the four causes. Aristotle believed that everything in the universe had potential but needed something to cause it to fulfil this potential. For example, an egg and a sperm have the potential to become a baby but this can only be actualised by means of very specific cause. Aquinas was interested in the causes of things that did fulfil their purpose, for example, the orbit of the planets. Because Aquinas would go on to argue from the apparent cause and regularity of things his argument is known as design qua (by virtue of) regularity.

Aquinas published his version of the teleological argument in his book ‘Summa Theologica’, known as the 5th way (it was the last of five arguments to prove the existence of God). Building on the ideas of Aristotle, Aquinas used analogies to demonstrate that all things require direction or ‘governance’ in order to actualise their potential. For example, as an archer directs his arrow to hit the target, something must direct ‘innate things lacking cognition’ to fulfil their end goal, such as the scheduled movements of the tides, the meticulous orbit of the planets or even the trees shedding their leaves in the autumn season. What intelligence is directing these acts as clearly they are lacking in intelligence themselves? For Aquinas, the only possible director of such things would be a being or divine intelligence and omnipotence, namely God. Thus God must exist as such governance is evident within the world.

Clearly both Paley and Aquinas’ arguments rest heavily on the method of analogy which is open to much criticism (infamously critiqued by C17th Philosopher David Hume), however more modern teleological arguments can be seen to have responded to such weakness as they no longer use analogies. Instead they refer to scientific knowledge.

The Anthropic Principle is a C20th teleological argument based on the scientific knowledge we have about the origins and make-up of the universe. Science is able to tell us exactly how complex and perfectly balanced the chemicals in the atmosphere and ozone are to enable and sustain life. Physicist Paul Davies states that the chances of the universe developing with such perfect conditions as to sustain human life is the same as an archer hitting a one inch target from a billion light years away. The argument in its basic form states that the very fact that human life exists in light of the mathematic probability of such perfect conditions occurring by chance, entails that the universe must have been designed specifically to sustain such human life. Hence the argument is known as the ‘anthropic’ principle, the word ‘anthropos’ meaning humankind. The argument goes on to imply that the only being capable of initiating the process and evolution of the universe is ‘God’. This argument is greatly supported by Philosophers FR Tennant and Richard Swinburne and can be seen as a direct challenge to the traditional criticism posed by David Hume known as the Epicurean Hypothesis which states that the universe could have been a result of chance if given enough time.

The second modern teleological argument differs to the anthropic as it does not use scientific knowledge to support its claim but rather appears to be a response to the theory of natural selection which has been used to challenge traditional teleological arguments. The aesthetic argument was formerly proposed by FR Tennant and has also been supported by Richard Swinburne. The argument stems from the fact that human’s appreciate beauty in the world, but goes on to argue that the existence of beauty and more specifically human appreciation of beauty is not necessary in terms of survival so cannot be accounted for by evolution and natural selection. What then can be the cause of beauty and our ability to appreciate it if not a benevolent designer? Thus as beauty exists a divine designer, namely God, must exist.

In summary, the teleological argument has changed greatly over the ages employing aposteriori techniques such as analogies and more recently scientific observations of the universe to support the claim that the universe is in fact designed and the only possible being capable of such design is the being known as God and thus God must exist.

Score out of 30: Level:

Why:

What was particularly good:

Advice to candidate to improve: