

APOLOGETICS 3 – THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics - ἀπολογία apologia

The definition of Christian Apologetics is “the information that enables a believer to provide a defense for why a doctrine is believed.”

1 Peter 3:15 – But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

2 Corinthians 10:5 – We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

GOAL

1. To strengthen students of God’s word so that they reach a confident, steadfast belief in God, Jesus, and the Scriptures so that they will never fall.
2. To prepare the student to give a proper response to common challenges.
 - a. One may or may not actually give an answer.
 - b. The preparation is intended so that any challenge will not cause the student to doubt the truth of God, Jesus Christ.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This philosophical argument gives evidence for the existence of God by observing the world around us and states that, since things begin to exist, there must be an original, self-existing cause.

In the last lesson, we examined this argument and found it to be both biblically and logically sound.

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Teleological comes from the Greek word “τέλος telos,” meaning end, goal, or purpose.

The Teleological Argument is also known as the “argument from design and purpose.” It states that a designer must exist because the universe and living things exhibit marks of design in their order, consistency, complexity, unity (symbiosis), and pattern.

William Paley (1743-1805) is famously recorded as giving the watchmaker argument.

“If you found a watch in an empty field, you would logically conclude that it was designed and not the product of random formation. Likewise, when we look at life and the universe, it is natural to conclude there is a designer since we see how perfectly the universe and life forms operate.”

APOLOGETICS 3 – THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Generally, Paley's argument is as follows:

- Human artifacts are products of intelligent design.
- The universe resembles human artifacts.
- Therefore, the universe is a product of intelligent design.
- However, the universe is complex and gigantic in comparison to human artifacts.
- Therefore, there probably is a powerful and vastly intelligent designer who created the universe.

Everything observable has a design and a known purpose. The universe itself has a design, therefore the designer must be bigger, more powerful, and more intelligent than anything in the universe. That designer is God.

Pulling from examples in evidence and science, the complexity and unity of creation point to a designer. We will look more into this scientifically, but some examples are the eye, the nervous system, the cell, DNA, and others.

STRENGTH OF THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This argument is very simple to understand and has merit since humans are designers by nature, and it is natural to think in terms of things having a purpose. So, this can be an effective argument.

This argument can be used with almost any physical example.

REBUTTAL

The idea that the universe is designed is subjective. Where one sees design and purpose, one could argue he sees chaos and randomness. There are also various things in creation that seem to have no design or purpose.

The appendix and tonsils were thought to be vestigial organs. We know now that this is not the case; but for many years, this was thought to be a good rebuttal to design and purpose arguments.

WEAKNESS OF THE ARGUMENT

1. Arguments based on correlation or analogy do not demand causation.
 - a. If we find elements of chaos, disorder, or purposelessness, does this point to a lack of a designer?
2. We do not know if the designer of the universe is infinite or finite.
3. We do not know whether there was only one designer or many.
4. Without specific or special revelation from God, our observations do not lead to the one true God and Jesus Christ.

APOLOGETICS 3 – THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

BIBLICAL REVIEW

Many of the biblical references for the Cosmological Argument are also used for the Teleological Argument, but there are other verses that proclaim God as a God of order, design, and purpose.

Genesis 1:1 – God created all that we see and all that we do not see (Col 1:16-17).

Genesis 1:26-28 – God gave mankind, in the original creation, a purpose: fill the earth, rule over it, and rule over all creatures that are in creation.

Genesis 1:29-31 – The purpose for seeds, plants, and green things is to be food for animals. Everything that God made was very good.

Psalms 104:14-15 – God made all things, and those things can be used to make other things and have many purposes.

Psalms 139:13-14 – God is intricately involved in every life that comes into being.

Romans 1:20-23 – God's attributes are clearly seen in creation; it is man that suppresses that truth and speculates in darkness. God is incorruptible and His order is seen through His word and His creation.

CONCLUSION

Along with the Cosmological Argument, the Theological Argument is understood in the sphere of Philosophical Apologetics as being fundamental and effective.

Teleology is a broad category that includes several narrower ideas, such as fine-tuning, intelligent design, and irreducible complexity. We will discuss some of these points as we look at the Scientific Evidentiary Apologetics.

It cannot be overstated that these philosophical arguments do not conclude the God of the Bible. Therefore, we must understand their purpose and not conclude that these arguments are proof of God.

These are simply biblically-based defenses for the believer so that atheistic arguments do not cause the believer to waiver in disbelief or doubt.

This is a good defense and should be learned; we can also use these arguments to challenge the worldview of the atheistic unbeliever.

These first two philosophical arguments are based on what we read in Scripture, and it is confirmed in creation.