

Introduction to Philosophy

Proving the Existence of God: Intelligent Design

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

Reading

- William Paley, "The Argument from Design".

Background

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, numerous books were published arguing that the existence of God was required to explain this or that feature of the world we observe. As we have already seen, David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* was severely critical of these teleological arguments. Two decades after Hume's indictment, William Paley produced one of the most influential works defending the teleological argument. Paley is best remembered for his striking example of finding a watch upon a heath, an image still evoked today by defenders of the theory of intelligent design.

Questions

1. What is Paley's story about finding a watch upon a heath? When finding this watch, what is a rational person supposed to conclude? What argument does Paley give for this conclusion? What does any of this have to do with the existence of God? Did God put the watch on the heath or is Paley making a different point?
2. Recall Hume's critique of the teleological proof of God's existence. Does this critique apply to Paley's argument here? If so, which position is supported by the strongest and most compelling argument? If not, why is Paley's argument except from Hume's criticisms?