

## PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CLASSICAL THEISM AND THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper provides a philosophical examination of the teleological argument as a justification for the existence of the God of Classical Theism. It begins by defining Classical Theism, with its tenets of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent creator who exercises providential control over the universe. The traditional teleological argument, which infers a divine designer from the perceived order and harmony in nature (the "watchmaker" analogy), is presented and analyzed, with a focus on the intricate design of the human body and eye. Subsequently, the paper critically evaluates significant challenges to this argument. These include the difficulty of discerning divine purposes, the problem of disharmony and suffering in the natural world (e.g., predation, natural disasters), and the powerful rival hypothesis of Darwinian evolution, which explains apparent design through natural selection and random variation. Alternative explanations for evil and disorder, such as the "devil hypothesis," are also considered. Finally, the paper assesses the "Wider Teleological Argument," which focuses on the universe's general capacity to support life and moral development. The analysis concludes that the teleological argument, in both its

traditional and wider forms, fails to provide sufficient support for the omnipotent God of Classical Theism and may instead point toward a limited deity or no deity at all.

**Keywords:** *Classical Theism, Teleological Argument, Argument from Design, Providence, Philosophy of Religion, Problem of Evil, Evolution, Intelligent Design.*

## INTRODUCTION

**Classical Theism and Providence** Theism is the view that there is one God who creates the world and exercises providential control over it. The English word 'theism; is simply taken from the Greek word *Theos*, which means 'God 'classical theism adds that God is all-powerful (omnipotent), is all-knowing (omniscient), and is present everywhere (omnipresent). Furthermore, this God is said to be perfect in every way, everlasting, good, and in no way dependent upon the world for his existence.

According to classical theists, God made the world out of nothing. Why did he make it? Because he wanted to share his love with finite creatures. *Deism* is the view that God, once he creates the world, set it to run on its own and according to its own laws, without further divine intervention. By contrast classical theists hold that God not only created the world with a certain purpose or purposes in mind but is actively involved in directing the world in fulfilment of his purpose or purposes. Hence, the "hand of God" is said to be seen at work in both nature and human history. The word 'providence' is often used to refer to what is taken to be God's control in the universe. You have doubtless heard people say on various occasions that such and such a happening is the will or purpose of God. Classical theists believe that despite opposition from human sin and other evil forces, God is still carrying out his plan with providential skill and care. True, things may sometimes look bad, but God is said to be steadfastly at work directing the great historical drama and leading it toward its ultimate goal.

**God's Design in Nature** One of the famous arguments for the existence of the God of classical theism is often referred to as the *teleological* argument. The word 'teleology 'is based on the Greek word *Telos*, which means simply "end", "goal", or

even “fulfilled purpose.” The teleological argument for God’s existence has two major parts. The first has to do with *history*, the second with nature. As noted above, classical theists sometimes argue that the directing influence of God may be seen in the course of history. Classical theists who in one way or another subscribe to the teleological argument believe that the hand of God may be seen also in the grand system of nature", in which they see not only orderliness but deliberate design. This they take to be the manifestation of a superior intelligence. One of the most popular biblical texts for subscribers to the teleological argument is psalms 19:1, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (RSV).

A great number of classical theists believe that there are widespread orderliness and harmony in the world of nature. Things are regarded as fitting together somewhat like the parts of a watch. Indeed, watchmakers are actually setting their watches by the regular patterns of the heavenly bodies, which are regarded as having been "set" by God. Before Charles Darwin wrote *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 many scientists seemed to think of the universe or nature as being far less immense in time and space than scientists now believe it to be. They could think of it as something like a grand clock, with countless parts and pieces all working together efficiently and with marvelous precision. But beginning with the middle of the nineteenth century, the steady labors of astronomers, biologists, physicists, and other natural scientists have been producing a much more complex picture of the universe. The question now is: Is the universe stills a perfect harmony even though it is far more complex than people once believed it to be? Or is the universe, because of its great complexity, *not* a perfectly harmonious system?

I once owned a watch for twenty years. It was a comparatively simple piece of machinery, with no calendar and no alarm bell. It had few problems. Then I purchased a more complex watch. Within months it partially broke down. The calendar system and the alarm system seemed to interfere with each other. The watch would keep time, but its other functions proved unreliable. So, I exchanged it for another, which proved to be no better than the former one. Finally, my money was refunded, and with an additional sum of money I purchased still another watch. For a

few months now it has been working smoothly. It keeps time rather well. Its calendar system is perfect. And the alarm bell also works—but not perfectly. It is sometimes off by as much as twelve minutes, although I cannot know when it will be inaccurate and when it will buzz exactly as set.

Some thinkers look upon the universe as a stupendous system of systems—like my multi-functional watch, only infinitely larger and more variegated. But do all the systems of the universe work together in perfect harmony? Do they all do exactly what they are “supposed” to do? Many classical theists think that the universe is a magnificent and glorious harmony. And they believe that it shows definite signs of a supremely intelligent mind. A perfectly running complex watch indicates that it is the work of a very intelligent human mind. Actually, in Switzerland watches are usually made in factories or shops where a *number* of workers help shape the parts and put them together. No one person makes an entire watch. However, those who accept the teleological argument are not willing to say that nature is the work of many deities forming a holy committee. The Jews and Muslims in particular are strictly opposed to anything like polytheism. Christians, too, insist that they are not polytheists, though some of their critics say that their doctrine of the Trinity is a long step in the direction of polytheism. (According to the doctrine of the Trinity, God is “three persons in one.” All three divine persons are supposed to have been involved in creating the world and also in sustaining it at every moment. Some Christians seem to imply that the three divine persons divide their work among them, so that one carries out one task more directly than do the others. Each has his particular specialty, although all three are involved in the total undertaking of the Trinity.)

The existence of a watch is no mere accident. It is not simply the chance accumulation of parts that just happen to fit together with superb precision and design. Similarly, according to the teleological argument, the universe did not just happen. It was created by a purposive, rational, and orderly cosmic inventor—namely, God.

**The Orderliness of the Human Body** "For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb." In these words, the psalmist expresses the classical theistic position that even the inner workings of the human organism

were designed and created by God. The complexity and general harmony of the members of the body are indeed enough to stagger the mind of any engineer whose envy has not beclouded his mind. In expressing his admiration of the dynamic harmony among the vital organs of the human body, a contemporary biomedical researcher writes:

Our smooth-muscle cells are born with complete instructions, in need of no help from us, and they work away on their own schedules, modulating the lumen of blood vessels, opening and closing tubules according to the requirements of the entire system. Secretory cells elaborate their products in privacy; the heart contracts and relaxes; hormones are sent off to react silently with cell membranes, switching adenylyl cyclase, prostaglandin and other signals on and off; cells communicate with each other simply by touching; organelles send messages to other organelles; all this goes on continually, without ever a personal word from us. The arrangement is that of an ecosystem, with the operation of each part being governed by the state and function of all the other parts.

Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others who hold to classical theism regard the intricate workings of the human organism as clear evidence of the existence and creative activity of the mind of God. A passage from one of the Old Testament psalms expresses these believers' feelings: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

**The Eye as a Marvel of Divine Engineering** Could the eye have just happened? Those who use the teleological argument to support belief in the existence of God sometimes call attention to the eye as a profound piece of evidence of a superior intelligence at work in nature. Even some writers who are not strictly classical theists are greatly impressed with the intricate detail and refinement of the eye. One of them comments: "It must not be forgotten that all the parts of an organism are necessarily coordinated." How could all the numerous parts of the eye come together with such perfection? Even if the perfect combination had come about once by pure chance, why should we expect this good fortune to be continued and repeated so many times? The theist can only conclude that the good fortune did not arise by pure chance but by the directing power of God. The eye is seen as a marvel of divine engineering.

## Some Problems for the Teleological Argument

**A Question of Ends or Purposes** Those who rely upon the teleological argument sometimes confuse two issues of internal harmony. Given a particular entity (e.g., the eye, the nose, or the solar system), we may as if the several members composing it do in fact work to gather harmoniously, with no member upsetting the activity of another. The second question is a much more difficult question to deal with. Perhaps we should say that the nose was designed by God to serve a number of purposes. For example, the deity may have foreseen that someday the eyes of some human beings—marvelous as they are—would not always function perfectly for reading or for seeing at great distances. So perhaps God simply added on a protruding nose in light of his knowledge that eventually some human beings would need something on which to hang their eyeglasses. Furthermore, the need for glasses creates jobs for lens-grinders, oculists, and others. In this way the protruding nose indirectly helps solve the unemployment problem that God undoubtedly knew would eventually come about.

Or perhaps God simply designed the nose to function as a small drainage system. Or, just as the ducts in the attic of a house were designed to carry both cold air in the summer and hot air in the winter, so perhaps God designed the nose to do more than one job. And why not? This would surely make for more compactness. Imagine how awkward we would be if, for every activity and function, we had to have an additional part built into our organism. Instead of a nose to take care of many functions, we would have to have a whole warehouse of parts—a breather, a sneezer, a drainage outlet, a smeller and sniffer, a lump for our glasses to rest on, etc. To be sure, the nose sometimes gets in the way of kissing, but then, that may be one of God's ways of keeping our passions in check.

Ingenious? We could probably go on showing how the nose is a wondrous instrument for doing many useful things. Unfortunately, what this seems to boil down to is this: For every way we can find to use the nose, the teleological argument tends to assume that God had in mind that the nose be put to use in these very same ways. It is, of course, fortunate for hunters that the tail of the cottontail rabbit is white, but can we be sure that God had it in mind to make the cottontail an easier target for hunters?

Consider the many functions of the human leg. Did God design it for kicking field goals? Did he have in mind karate kicks? Jogging? Trapeze stunts? Dancing? Indeed, how do we discover what exactly God had in mind when he is supposed to have designed the leg? Consider the hand. It is a source of many activities or functions—from washing one's face to holding a pornographic book. Exactly what did God design the hand for? More complicated are entities such as Mars and fleas. Can we say that God had something specifically in mind when he made Mars? If not, then can we say that it serves his purpose? Let us assume that God designed fleas. Why did he? Are they today serving perfectly his goal for them? If we do not know what that goal is, then we cannot determine whether the fleas are doing what was expected of them.

**General Ends and Purposes** Understandably, sensitive classical theists are sometimes hesitant to speak of God's specific and exact goals or purposes. In times past, believers were often very sure that they knew what God had in mind for their lives or for the lives of other people. In one Baptist college a few years ago, a young Christian announced to a pretty coed that God had directed him to marry her. Although she was a devout Christian, the young woman insisted that the Heavenly Father had not revealed his divine design to her on this matter. We might suspect that the young man confused his own designs on the woman with God's design for their separate lives. The point here is that today a large number of Christians are more sensitive to the natural and cultural variables of life than perhaps were some Christians in times past. Rather than the Lord's will, the young man's own id may have moved him, unless the Lord was working "through" the man's id. Christians still believe that God works in mysterious ways, and they are often willing to leave it a mystery. But this appeal to mystery does a disservice to the teleological argument. For if we cannot know exactly what God's goal or will is, and then we cannot honestly conclude that the members and parts of the world are in fact serving the divine purpose or purposes.

Much of the teleological argument rests on the claim that the world can be understood as shaping up under the direction of God. But if we do not know what God is about, what his ends and purposes are, then we cannot be sure that the means that we observe are in fact serving their ends. It may be that God has failed miserably

to carry out his designs. If he designed to "save" everyone, he will apparently not succeed if the doctrine of hell is to be taken seriously at all. Classical theists seem to be caught in something of a dilemma. If they become too specific in naming God's purposes, then they end up in great controversies among themselves in their attempts to say what these divine purposes are. One group of believers claims one thing, a second group claims another, and so on and on, until the teleological argument becomes choked in a cloud of dust. On the other hand, if the divine purposes are too general, then the teleological argument—or at least a great portion of it—never actually says anything that can be nailed down, in which case it is unintelligible at best and verbal trickery at worst. A few years after the Supreme Court had decided against segregation, a clergyman in Chattanooga, Tennessee, stated that while God's purpose was to have integration in heaven, his purpose on earth was to maintain segregation. The noted early-nineteenth-century preacher and college president Lyman Beecher thought it was the will of God to deny to blacks of his time social equality with whites. The art of divining the purposes of God in historical settings seems to vary greatly from one religious group to another.

Some Christians and Jews imply that God's will must be defined as whatever is decent and good. This means that the real and difficult task is to try to decide on the decent course of action in a temporal setting and to forget about divining God's intentions and purposes. In order for the teleological argument in support of the existence of God to be an argument at all, it must specify something. It must say what God's goals and designs are and are not. Then it must show that in fact these goals have been considerably approximated. This is a risky argument because it opens the possibility that it might be falsified. That is, the teleological argument could conceivably be used *against* classical theism if it does not work. In a later chapter we will deal more thoroughly with the question of God's putative goals and his success or failure in achieving them. We can now focus on that part of the teleological argument which deals with the harmony of the parts of nature.

### **The Challenge of Disharmony in Nature**

It is unfortunately true that a great number of college students complete their degree without any notion of the revolution that Charles Darwin's research and theorizing

produced in the world of ideas. Darwin was perhaps one of the first human beings to grasp in any profound way the enormous amount of time that passed before our arrival on the scene. He also made us aware of the enormous amount of waste that has gone on at the biological level of existence. As a later writer has noted,

Hegner, in his amusing and informing book, *Big Fleas Have Little Fleas*, mentions a protozoon one individual of which is able to have 28,000,000 offspring in a single month—a rate of propagation such that if unchecked, it would fill the physical universe with this species. The struggle for survival entails a death rate among protozoa which causes the figures of the national debt to pale into insignificance. Southerland, in *The Origin and Growth of Moral Instinct*, has calculated that the number of fish that are eating other fish in any given minute is about equal to the number of drops of water going over Niagara Falls in that minute.

The same writer goes on to note the numerous unsuccessful biological experiments, the many species that simply failed in their struggle for survival. Despite romantic notions of nature, the fact seems to be that much of the animal kingdom lives in perpetual fear and at war with other animals. Martin Luther used to think that birds sang to the glory of God, whereas more informed students of bird life have concluded that the bird's song serves largely as a warning to other birds to keep away from his personal territory. The illness, death, aggression, surds, and destructive patterns in nature do not measure up to a notion of harmonious nature. The Old Testament psalmist may have said that the heavens manifest the glory of God, but the apostle Paul wrote that "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now." It is not that the two biblical writers had in mind two worlds of creation. It is simply that the psalmist saw harmony in nature, whereas Paul saw considerable disharmony. Perhaps one reason that these two very diverse interpretations can exist in the same Bible is that the universe seems to have both a measure of order and a measure of chaos. Indeed, if the picture of the world that science has thus far made possibly comes anywhere near to the truth, then we must say that most regions of the vast universe "are filled by chaotic radiation."

The teleological argument seems to select the harmony while ignoring the great amount of disharmony and conflict in the cosmos. Old-time theologians used to put

forth the argument that the disharmony in nature really serves God's purpose, too. For example, they supposed a tornado to be God's judgment on the very wicked. Unfortunately, in the spring of 1974 a tornado swept through the campus of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and created considerable damage, uprooting many great and beautiful trees. Less than fifteen years before, another Southern Baptist school—Baylor University, a thousand miles away in Texas—had been affected by a tornado, and a philosophy teacher there had been killed. The teacher hired to replace the dead professor was an atheist; but while the atheist remained on campus, the Baptist college was not threatened by another tornado. If tornadoes are not a part of the harmony of nature, but rather are God's special instruments of punishment, then must we conclude that the Lord of the universe has it in for Southern Baptists? The prostitution and gambling in Las Vegas have not been hit by a tornado. So is God more set against Southern Baptists than against Las Vegas? These may seem silly questions to today's Christians, Muslims, and Jews, but the questions come from the same line of thought that many of these classical theists have embraced in past generations.

As philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and perhaps David Hume have suggested, the argument based on order and harmony in the universe will not support the conclusion that there is a good deity whose knowledge and power are unlimited. The teleological argument might, however, support the hypothesis of a deity who, though good, is limited in his power to keep nature under perfect control. In short, the case for classical theism cannot count on the teleological argument to help it, for the argument better supports the hypothesis of either no God at all or a limited God. Classical theists usually concede that the teleological argument is not a compelling argument for their God, but they think that it is a supportive argument. That is, this argument from design is taken to be a part of a cluster of reasons which, when combined together, support belief in classical religious theism. one leg will not hold up a table, but when combined with three other legs, it will do the job. Opponents of this argument reply that the arguments for classical theism are more like links in a chain than table legs. If one of the links is weak—as the teleological argument is—then the entire chain is thereby just as weak. Furthermore, say these opponents, the evidence that the argument from design relies upon may better be

used in support of at least two views other than classical theism. That is, (1) either God's power, though great, is less than what classical theism requires, or (2) there is no God at all. The theory of evolution seems to be more compatible with either of these two views than it is with classical theism.

### **Evolution: A Rival Hypothesis**

**No "Pure Chance"** The theory of evolution might fit either with the view of a benevolent and creative God whose power is limited or with the view that nature alone is the whole of reality: Before looking briefly at the theory of evolution as it relates to the question of God's existence, a misleading argument needs to be disposed of. Some classical theists—not all—make the argument that the eye and other genuinely marvelous things of nature could not have happened "merely by pure chance." It is difficult to determine who this theistic argument is directed against. Certainly, those who accept a present-day version of Darwinian evolution do not think that the eye developed by "pure chance" (whatever that would be). The whole point of the theory of evolution is to show how the eye did in fact develop by natural selection rather than by either "pure chance" or "supernatural miracle." We will soon come back to this controversy about so-called "pure chance."

When classical Christian theists say that God made the eyes of all animals and insects, they presumably do not mean to say that once upon a time there was no eye on the face of the earth and then the next minute—presto!—a fully developed eye simply popped into existence out of nowhere, as if by magic. To be sure, there doubtless are a number of theists who have a kind of magical view of God's involvement in the world. But we must give our attention to the more critical-minded theists. There are some theists who hold that the theory of evolution and some theory of God are compatible views. Whether evolution and *classical* theism can be blended is doubtful, but there are other versions of theism that might be more compatible with evolution. For the moment, let us consider the theory of evolution. One of its major theses is that species tend to die off if they happen not to develop means for coping with their environment. The dinosaur survived quite well for many years until his environment changed. Lacking the organs to meet the new conditions, the huge

animal simply perished. Certain species survive not because of their outstanding organs but because they propagate rapidly and numerously.

Another major theme of evolution is that the members of any given species are not all precisely alike. There are certain *variations* that come about. The important thing is that even though these numerous variations were not designed by cosmic intelligence, nevertheless some of them proved very useful in helping individuals, or at least the species, to survive in a changing environment. Of course, most variations do not have much survival value, but that is what might be expected of a process that develops without any overall cosmic designer. Implicit here is the view that nature is not simply a closed geometric scheme. Rather, the evolutionist regards it as having some temporal flow; that is simply the way nature is. Of course, the classical theist might ask *why* nature should be as it is. And the evolutionist might, in turn, ask a similar question with regard to God. Usually, the theist's answer is that God is just the way he is that is how he happens to be. This is not to say that God is what he is by "pure chance"; it means, rather, that God is the stopping point for explaining things. But similarly, the evolutionist might say that it is not by "pure chance" that nature is what it is; rather, nature is the ultimate stopping point for all explanations. There is no outside reason why nature as a whole should even exist, any more than, for a theist, there should be any outside reason why God as a whole should exist. The theist says God just exists, and that is that; and the evolutionist replies that nature exists, and that is that. However, the evolutionist believes that it is possible to explain in varying degrees how things develop *within* nature. The theory of evolution is concerned with tracing the gradual development of nature's organs and organisms.

**The Evolution of the Eye** Keep in mind that Darwin came up with considerable evidence to support his conjecture that numerous species have been developing for many more generations than was previously imagined by most scientists of his day. Darwin's conjecture was subjected to serious crossfire and testing, but it has held up powerfully well and is more thoroughly supported by evidence today than it was in Darwin's own time. Bats are blind. But they do have an organ that keeps them from crashing into trees and hillsides. Those bats *without* this added sensitivity, or something comparable, would predictably not survive as well as their more fortunate

relatives. According to the evolutionist, the ancient forerunner of the eye was not designed or planned by divine intelligence but rather occurred as simply one among numerous variations that happened to members of species. This proto eye, let us call it, was simply a new kind of sensitivity to objects in the environment. In its early forms it was merely a light-sensitive spot on the organism. It happened to be useful to animals in seeking food and in avoiding harmful conditions in the environment. This proto eye would normally have the side-effect of increasing the chances of an animal's survival. By contrast, those organisms without a similar sensitive organ would be doomed to destruction within certain kinds of environments. (To be sure, *inside* an organism are smaller organisms that in some respects are both parts of the larger organism and parasites upon it. The skin of the larger organism shields the smaller organisms against an environment that the larger organism usually copes with successfully.)

The point here is that at least some aspects of nature are more like a great battleground than like the neat watch-like systems imagined by some classical theists. There is an enormous amount of destruction and disharmony in nature. And yet there are also areas of cooperation. The human body, for example, is only one among countless organisms that may be regarded as a harmonious system of smaller organisms. Hence, nature has not only great disharmony, chaos, and destruction, but also countless systems of harmony and creative thrust. In that sense, nature seems to be the only example of perpetual motion, which is comparable to what in theology is God's self-creating power. Most evolutionists regard nature to be without any clear overriding goal, but nevertheless enormously variegated, rich, strewn with possibilities, and forever unfinished. In other words, there are more things in nature (past, present, and future) than are dreamed of in your theology!

**The Omega Point** Despite the fact that the universe does not seem clearly to be going toward any ultimate or omega point, classical theists nevertheless claim that because God transcends the universe, he will eventually bring it to its ultimate destiny. Critics of classical theism regard this boast to be hardly more than mere talk. The notion of an *ultimate* destiny for *living* beings may even be self-contradictory. Death is an ultimate end, but classical theists insist that a living *ultimate* end is

somehow possible. Apparently, the problem in this controversy is not so much to determine whether there is an ultimate end, as to determine whether the notion of a living ultimate destiny or end is intelligible.

**Multiple Functions of an Organ** Many evolutionists believe that, without making reference to any detailed designs of God for the world, they can go a long way toward accounting for the fact that one organ may serve more than one end or goal. Instead of saying that God designed the nose to hang glasses on, the evolutionists need only say that changing conditions made the nose useful in serving some of the interests of the organism that previously it had not served. Having an organ that serves the organism in one way is one thing; but it is another thing for this same organ (e.g., the thumb) to become used in new ways. The evolutionists believe that they do not have the embarrassment that classical theists have in trying to determine whether or not the new ways of using an organ are what the Lord God of the universe *intended* for it. Some classical theists reply that God, in effect, gave people some *general* features and organs, and then he gave them the free will to use the organs in whatever way they pleased, hopefully within moral limits. Sometimes this so-called "gift of free will" is regarded as a sort of invisible adaptable organ itself, not quite in nature but nevertheless having reality as a moral and spiritual entity. Unfortunately, this conjecture must be disqualified if it insists on exempting itself from ever being tested. At its best, it is a fruitful myth that eventually may yield well-formulated procedures for testing its claims. Whether the claims will hold is a question that must be pursued in another chapter.

### **The Devil Hypothesis**

Some classical theists think that a cosmic being other than God must be responsible for the destruction in the world. This other must be more powerful than human beings but less powerful than God. Earlier in this chapter, mention was made of tornadoes that adversely affected the interests of Baptists in Louisville, Kentucky, and Waco, Texas. In Louisville, the same previously mentioned tornado destroyed the home of a Baptist minister. Another Baptist minister decided to remain in his church during the storm in order to continue midweek prayer services. Instead of being restrained, the storm destroyed the church and killed the praying minister. Oral

Roberts has been saying for years that God is responsible for his school's remarkable growth and development. On June 8, 1974, however, a tornado hit the campus in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and destroyed the Oral Roberts Association Headquarters Building and inflicted heavy damage on the University Aerobics Gymnasium.

When destructive forces seem to go especially against Christian enterprises and interests, a shift in thinking is likely to come about in trying to explain the misfortune. Instead of saying that God caused the destruction of these Christian endeavors, many Christians feel it necessary to fall back on the devil hypothesis. The devil, enraged at the conspicuous numerical success of both the southern Baptists and oral Roberts' ministry, set out to destroy what he could of them. The famous Protestant reformer Martin Luther believed that storms were caused by the Devil and his associates. In his earlier years, Luther was himself struck by lightning, and this experience greatly impressed itself upon his memory. Like many Catholics of his day, he believed that storms were in actuality the chaotic activity of reckless demons. One apostle spoke of Satan as the "prince of the power of the air." A Catholic priest, Locatelli, wrote a book with the following interesting title: *Exorcisms Most Powerful and Efficacious for the Dispelling of Aerial Tempests, Whether Raised by Demons at Their Own Instance or at the Beck of Some Servant of the Devil.*

Considerable ambivalence exists among orthodox Christians as to whether God or Satan causes violent storms, tornadoes, and the like. A kind of shaky compromise between these two views contends that Satan does the destructive work but only within the limits that God establishes for him. This naturally raises the question as to why God should yield *any* ground to Satan. Some Christians go so far as to imply that when God wants to punish or to destroy, he delegates Satan to do the foul work on God's behalf. Other Christians seem to think that God will go to great lengths to protect Satan's "freedom of choice." In other words, one of the presumed purposes of God is to give human beings and Satan freedom of choice, even if it means Satan's disrupting the harmony of nature and destroying numerous values. Critics of this viewpoint point out that according to the admission of orthodox Christianity, Satan is *not* free to choose a better life for himself: he is not going to be reformed or redeemed. Most Christians do not pray for Satan's salvation. Hence, when God

presumably preserves Satan's freedom of choice, he seems to have restricted Satan's *range* of choices to only foul deeds and destructiveness. Satan is not free to do anything decent. Thus, such a limited horizon of freedom seems certainly of less value than the things that Satan is permitted or directed to destroy. If Satan were a kind of cosmic garbage collector eliminating the evils of the world, then the use of his services would reflect the wisdom and goodness of God. But the destruction and agony that Satan presumably brings about is more like the creation of destruction and waste than the elimination of it. It is not surprising, therefore, that even among Christians who believe that Satan does exist, there is a growing reluctance to designate exactly where Satan's hand is seen at work. When a child dies, some Christians say it is the will of God. Others say it is the work of Satan. Some say it is both. And, of course, there are other explanations which find no place for the Satan hypothesis at all. However, great evils and disharmony do still exist in the universe, and they must somehow be explained if the teleological argument for classical theism is to command respect. In Chapter VI this question of evil in the world will be more thoroughly examined.

### **The Wider Teleological Argument**

**Beyond the Traditional Version of the Argument** The wider or broader teleological argument is a significant modification of the traditional teleological argument. This new version does not stress the overall purpose of creation. Rather it stresses the existence of conditions that make possible numerous finite harmonies and purposes within creation. Or to state this point in another way, the overall goal of the universe is to make it possible for a vast array of finite forms of life to have their own interests and goals. God is conceived of as good and powerful if his world of nature provides the natural conditions for these creatures — including human beings — to satisfy as many of their desires and interests as possible. This viewpoint needs further elaboration.

**Thought and Thing Correspond Practically** First, the world might have been an unintelligible whirl of chaos negating all possibility of knowledge and communication. Fortunately, however, there is considerable correspondence between intelligence and the world of things. If this were not so, you and I could neither find

our way about nor make practical categories and generalizations that serve us in satisfying many of our aspirations.

**Evidence from Life** In the second place, the wider teleological argument uses evolution as evidence for the existence of God. Darwin spoke of chance variations. But where do these variations come from? The most original proponent of this wider argument, Frederick R. Tennant, points out that the Darwinian notion of the "survival of the fittest" already presupposes "the *arrival* of the fit." Without the vital push toward further evolving, nature as a whole would decline into sterility and death. Is it not therefore possible that some external Being is the source of this push?

**The Inorganic Environment** Professor Tennant is quite aware that his attempt to utilize the theory of evolution extracts a price. Unlike traditional teleologists, he can no longer speak of the special design of *each and every* product of evolution. Rather, the emphasis falls on general directivity in the process. This implies that there is a certain amount of free play in the universe, and that is where both the risk of danger and the possibility of freedom enter in. Nevertheless, a certain amount of harmony pervades the process of evolution. In fact, says Tennant, the unique assemblages of unique properties produce a vast and complex environment of the inorganic which the organic needs for its survival. Tennant is struck by the fact that this inorganic world seems itself in some ways to resemble an organism. He thinks that there is reason to suspect that the inorganic world is not the accumulation of blind rolls of the dice. Rather, he suspects "the dice to have been loaded."

**Aesthetic Experience** The coming together of intelligence and the organic realm not only makes practical knowledge possible but also produces beauty. The world contains appreciation and aesthetic values as well as knowledge. It is as if the emergence of the human mind brings out the best in nature, as if mind were nature's true fulfillment. Tennant might have noted that the aesthetic experience even exists for the "lower" species on the ladder of evolution. He is eager to argue that "Nature is meaningless and valueless without God behind it and man in front." What this means is that nature contains the objective factor making the experience of beauty possible, and the presence of the human species brings this possibility into realization. Nature, then, gives birth to the creature—man—that can more fully appreciate her. But

nature if it were blind, says Tennant, could not have brought about a creature with such capacity for appreciation of beauty.

**Moral Values** According to Tennant, morality is something that must be *won*; it is not simply bestowed upon human beings. Morality thus has its roots in nature. This is Tennant's way of saying that nature, rather than being blindly run, would seem to be the manifestation of a superior intelligence who designs to bring about the moral experience among human beings. One of Tennant's students, Peter A. Bertocci, adds that sometimes hardship and evil are disciplinary. The thought here is that moral values often cannot develop except through discipline, which itself comes in response to the hard conditions of life. Hence, just because there is hardship in the world does not entail that it is all contrary to the designs of a good God. The hardships often serve in generating moral values. But this raises a question about God's moral values. Many classical theists think that God enjoys great moral values even though he does not suffer temptations, hardship, and evil. So why his human creatures should be forced to endure such great hardships in order to enjoy moral values? Does God lack the power to create a finite person both free and morally developed?

### **Implications of the Wider Teleological Argument**

Bertocci develops Tennant's leads with clarity and thoroughness. But unlike Tennant, Professor Bertocci concludes that the teleological argument cannot support belief in classical theism. Very frankly he notes that sometimes hardships are *not* disciplinary. Indeed, they may beat a person down to the point where he is far from the vibrant moral and aesthetic human being spoken of by Tennant. Through a number of chapters Bertocci builds a case for the hypothesis of a God who is morally good but admittedly less than all-powerful and omniscient. Classical theism is thus judged to be indefensible. In a later chapter we will deal with the issue of evil in a world that is said to have been created by God.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has critically examined the teleological argument as a proof for the God of Classical Theism. The traditional argument, which posits that the intricate order of

the universe implies a divine designer, is compelling in its simplicity, particularly through analogies like the watchmaker and the complexity of the human eye. However, this position is significantly weakened when confronted with substantial counterevidence. The argument falters on the epistemic difficulty of identifying God's specific purposes for creation, leading to either untestable claims or internal contradictions among believers. More damagingly, the vast evidence of disharmony, waste, and suffering in nature directly contradicts the notion of a benevolent and omnipotent designer.

The theory of evolution presents a robust, naturalistic alternative, explaining the appearance of design through the non-purposive mechanisms of random variation and natural selection. This scientific framework accounts for both the "fit" of organisms to their environments and the widespread extinction and struggle observed in nature. Even the more sophisticated "Wider Teleological Argument," which posits a general directionality in the cosmos conducive to life, beauty, and morality, does not rescue Classical Theism. As thinkers like Bertocci have argued, the persistent and non-disciplinary nature of evil and suffering suggests that if a designer exists, that being is likely limited in power or knowledge. Therefore, the teleological argument, in its various forms, is insufficient to support belief in the God of Classical Theism and may even serve as evidence against it.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Building on the analysis presented, several avenues for future research are recommended:

1. **The Problem of Evil:** As the paper alludes to a more thorough examination in a later chapter, a dedicated study focusing on the logical and evidential problems of evil in direct response to the "Wider Teleological Argument" would be a valuable next step.
2. **Alternative Theistic Models:** The conclusion that the evidence might support a "limited God" invites further exploration of non-classical theistic models, such as Process Theism (as found in the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne), which posit a co-eternal relationship between God and the world.

3. **Contemporary Cosmological Arguments:** Future work could analyze how the teleological argument intersects with contemporary scientific discussions, such as the fine-tuning argument in physics (the anthropic principle), to assess whether modern science provides new ground for a redesigned teleological claim.
4. **Cognitive Science of Religion:** An inquiry into the psychological and cognitive origins of teleological thinking could provide insight into why the argument from design remains so intuitively appealing, regardless of its philosophical or scientific validity.

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