**Philosophy, Ethics, and Religious Studies Summer Bridging Task**

**The Design Argument for the Existence of God**

Read the following excerpt from William Paley:

“In crossing a beach, suppose I hit my foot against a stone. Suppose I were asked how the stone came to be there. I might possibly answer that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever. It would be difficult to show that this answer is absurd. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be asked how the watch happened to be in that place. I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given--that for anything I knew the watch might have always been there--would be an acceptable answer.

Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first? For this reason, and for no other: namely, that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive -- what we could not discover in the stone --that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose. The parts are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day. If the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it...

…Every observation which was made in our first chapter concerning the watch may be repeated with strict propriety concerning the eye, concerning animals, concerning plants, concerning, indeed, all the organized parts of the works of nature.”

*Natural Theology, 1801*

Watch the following clips relating to the design argument:

[William Paley's Watchmaker Argument](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWkp0iSeXIA)

[Stephen Fry on God | The Meaning Of Life | RTÉ One](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-suvkwNYSQo)

Answer the following questions:

1. Why does William Paley think the watch is different to the rock?

2. How does Paley consider the watch similar to the human eye?

3. How does the process of moving from watch to the existence of a watchmaker, link to the existence of God?

4. What evidence is there of ‘intelligent design’? Can you find any other examples in the world?

5. Do you think this is evidence that there is a God?

6. What are the main objections to this ‘design argument’? How could worldwide events in 2000-2025 be used as evidence against ‘intelligent design’?

7. Overall, do you think the design argument is successful as evidence for God’s existence?

Further Research

1. Research the ‘Anthropic Principle’

2. Research the arguments from Richard Dawkins and David Hume against the idea of ‘intelligent design’.

Further Reading

<https://pages.uoregon.edu/sshoemak/323/texts/william_paley.htm>

[https://philosophynow.org/issues/50/The\_Return\_of\_the\_Design\_Argument#](https://philosophynow.org/issues/50/The_Return_of_the_Design_Argument)

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/evolution-intelligent-design>