

Richard Swinburne and the Argument From Order*

I. Principle of Evidential Justification: Swinburne assumes that *if some hypothesis H is the best explanation for some data D, then D are evidence for the truth of H*. There's a link between the explanatory power of a hypothesis and its rational acceptability or justification.

II. Theistic Explanatory Claim: There are fundamental features of the universe, *F*, for which theism, *T*, provides the best explanation.

III. The Relevant Features of the Universe

- A. The universe exhibits beauty (F1) (p. 49)
- B. The universe includes human persons and animals (F2) (pp. 50-54)
- C. The universe is fine-tuned for life (F3) (pp. 54-62)
- D. The universe contains different objects (small and large, and which fall into different kinds) that behave in exactly the same way. (F4) (pp. 45-46)
- E. The universe contains environments that can be used by humans and animals to bring about other good states of affairs. (F5) (pp. 46-49)

NOTE: A, B, and E are good states of affairs. C is necessary to B, and D is necessary to E. Arguably B, C, D, and E individually and collectively entail A. So this is a kind of “package deal.” The desideratum of manifesting beauty is achieved while simultaneously achieving other good states of affairs.

IV. Criteria for Explanatory Efficacy – see Handout II

- A. Hypothesis H is simple.
- B. Hypothesis H leads us to expect data D.
- C. There is no rival hypothesis, *H**, of at least equal simplicity, that would lead us to expect D (to the same degree).

V. Application of Criteria to Theism

- A. Theism is simple. – see Handout III
- B. Theism leads us to expect a universe of the sort specified by F1-F5.
 - 1. God is capable of creating a universe with F1-F5 above. By virtue of being omnipotent, God has the power to bring about a universe with F1-F5.
 - 2. God is omniscient and so God has the requisite knowledge to create a universe with F1-F5 above.

* This handout is a summary of chapter four of Swinburne's *Is there a God?*

3. God is perfectly good, so he has reason for producing good states of affairs. Among such good states of affairs are F1, F2, and F5 above. He will also seek to bring about whatever is necessary for F1, F2, and F5. F3 is necessary to F2, and F4 is necessary to F5. So God has reason for bringing about F1–F5 as a kind of cosmological package. These goods fit with each other in various ways and are mutually reinforcing.

C. There is no equally simple hypothesis that leads us to expect F1-F5 to the same degree. According to Swinburne, the materialist hypothesis is a more complex hypothesis than theism.