

Does Hume's Skepticism Remove Rational Belief in Theism?

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Through this discussion, I wish to present clearly the arguments of David Hume against natural religion as they are presented in his book, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The hypothesis I wish to address is whether or not Hume's radical skepticism has made rational belief in a theistic Creator irrational. Now to be clear, what I mean is *not* that belief by faith is irrational. Rather, I aim to investigate through stimulated research if there are rational reasons to infer a Creator from nature as a *supplement* to personal faith. My investigation will deal both with literature of Hume's time as well as contemporary responses to the objections he raised. I will precede to answer my hypothesis by first presenting Hume's objections and then responding to them in kind. I shall attempt to present fair arguments for both Hume's position as well as my own; however, by the nature of philosophy and its readers, all are in some way biased. It is my hope the reader will approach the subject matter as openly as possible for the sake of truth and inquiry.

Before I discuss Hume's objections to natural theology, it's important for me to discuss Hume's problem of causation. The unexplained phenomena of cause and effect that Hume questions, rests at the heart of many of his objections to natural theology. Throughout his critiques of natural religion, Hume posits this problem of causation as to what prevents humans from accessing any sort of Creator directly. There is a distinct gap between the two that, according to Hume, comes from the problem of causality. Hume will point out that the cause and effect of these ideas; namely the created and the Creator, have no identifiable connection. As an example, imagine dropping a rock. As you might expect, the rock falls to the ground, as it has each time before when you dropped it. Hume demonstrates that there is no *necessary connection* between say, a rock being dropped followed by its falling. The rock being dropped and the rock

falling are two *distinct* events. As Hume writes, “every effect is a distinct event from its cause” (*Enquiries*, 47). Hume asks, do we ever experience the *impression* of cause and effect between letting go of the rock and the rock falling? Is there any *a priori* connection between these two separate events that may establish the conclusion the event will happen *every time* hence forth? Hume does not believe so. Rather, we must refer to past experience and, in essence, make an “educated guess”, as to what will happen. Hume writes, “In vain, therefore, should we pretend to determine any single event or infer any cause or effect without the assistance of observation and experience” from the past (*Enquiries*, 34). One cannot know that cause *A* will *always* be the cause of *B*. The best we can do is develop *habit* or *custom* of the event from our experience to be referenced when a particular situation is encountered in future experience.

This problem of causation ripped a hole in the fundamental tenets of human understanding. It did not only damage religion, but also science. Science is unable to account for any necessary connections between cause and effect, which cast shadows on whether any true knowledge is attainable. In order to advance any further with this paper, I must take a few minutes to address this problem.

From those who have attempted solutions to this problem, the first and arguably most predominate of them was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who attempted to justify that our minds are ordered in such a way that, while we cannot *see* cause and effect, we are programmed with an understanding that it does in fact occur. Kant wants to show when “we experience that something happens, we in so doing always presuppose that something precedes it, on which it follows according to a rule” (Dicker, 152). There must be, according to Kant, some rule or law that our minds perceive in order to make this possible. The major goal of

Kant's philosophy is to take what we experience, and, in a sense, reverse engineer how we come to have that experience. Rather than *do* we perceive cause and effect, Kant asks *how*? Georges Dicker, in his book *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics*, summarizes this argument into a three premise followed by conclusion format, which goes as follows:

Premise 1) We cannot know by observation that an event - a transition from a state A to a state B - is occurring by knowing that the perceptions of A and B occur in the idea A, B, or by knowing that the perceptions of A and B are irreversible.

Premise 2) If (1), then the only way we can know by perception that an event - a transition from state A to a state B - is occurring, is by knowing that B follows A according to a rule; which is to say that the event has a cause.

Premise 3) If the only way we can know by perception that an event - a transition from a state A to a state B - is occurring, is by knowing that B follows A according to a rule (that the event has a cause), then any event such that we can know of its occurrence by perception must have a cause.

Premise 4 - conclusion) Any event such that we can know of its occurrence by perception must have a cause.

I shall conclude my response to the problem of cause and effect here for to go further would lead my conversation further astray than it already has gone. I shall conclude and presume for the rest of this discussion in accordance with Kant that our minds have *some* faculty that understands and comprehends cause and effect, though I do not know what that may be. In the words of Kant, the "experience of an event (i.e. of anything as *happening*) is itself possible only on this assumption" that our minds are in fact able to perceive cause and effect. Thusly, my

paper will assume the validity of cause and effect as I respond to Hume's arguments against natural theology.

Hume's famous critique against natural religion, discussed through the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, total to six arguments that are brought against natural theology. I will do my best to address and respond to the extent of my understanding. The format I'll adhere to is addressing Hume's critique and then responding with reference to more contemporary reflections on the problems addressed by Hume. I understand the objection may be raised that it is unfair to critique someone using information they may not have had access to, but I believe that if the purpose herein is the advancement of knowledge, using older solutions will not allow for such advancement. I do not believe the contents of this paper will disprove Hume or anything of the sort, but I am attempting responses against his objections that seem reasonable answers.

Objection 1) *If the universe is caused by a Creator, all we can know about the Creator comes from His creation.*

The first argument Hume presents addresses what knowledge may be inferred about a Creator simply by observing creation. This objection is in response to theists who defend the famous teleological argument, known as the argument for nature's design, which postulates that the order present in nature supplies evidence that there is in fact an intelligent designer who created the universe. Hume objects that there is no *necessary* connection between the created and the Creator, as described earlier by his problem of causation. How can we infer a cause from the effect? Taken into account, all the theist *really* can experience is God by faith. J.C.A. Gaskin writes in his essay, "Hume on Religion", that attempting to uncover a Creator from the created

means one “can *only* attribute to God (or the gods) whatever degree of power, intelligence, foresight and so forth” that is needed to create the universe we observe (Gaskin, 494). In other words, we may only posit what is needed to have what we currently observe, no further.

If there is a God, all of his qualities and knowledge would be considerably above that of human kind. For this reason, Demea from Hume’s *Dialogues*, claims that the Supreme Being “is totally incomprehensible; and that the infirmities of our nature do not permit us to reach any ideas which in the least correspond to the ineffable sublimity of the Divine attributes” (*Dialogues*, 39). Humans can only know the creation, not the creator according to Hume. Inferences made about God may only be done on faith.

Response 1) Qualities may be attributed to a Creator from creation.

In response to Hume’s critique that one may not infer any information about a Creator is from the created, I aim to demonstrate that in fact, given our knowledge of the universe in accordance with modern cosmology, should there be a Creator, we may infer many of the qualities normally attributed to the concept of the traditional theistic Creator. In order to accomplish this, I shall begin by demonstrating first that the universe is finite in the past. The purpose here is merely to show that the universe is in fact an *effect* of some cause. Should the universe be infinite in the past, I believe this would make the entire issue moot, for there would be *no* cause to create *any* effect. Hume, I think would agree, that if the universe is infinite, it simply adds to the case we cannot know about the Creator from the created for there simply would be no *creating* moment! Should I be successful in demonstrating the universe as finite, I will then consider theistic and naturalistic explanations of its cause. In so doing, I aim to

postulate the existence of a Creator, from which I shall be able to attribute particular qualities traditionally accepted by theistic tradition based. Should I be successful here, it will *not* demonstrate some of the certain traditional characteristics normally attributed to a theistic Creator such as benevolence or all knowing. It will leave us solely with a Creator of the universe.

Is the universe finite or infinite in the past?

As mentioned in the introduction to this segment of the discussion, I feel this question has important bearing on Hume's objection. If the universe is infinite in the past, then cause and effect may not be inferred about any beginning to the universe, hence no relation to the Creator may be made at all. Should the universe be *finite* in the past, then Hume's objection stands, which also means it must be addressed.

An actually infinite universe, along with an actually infinite number of anything, comes with a string of problems which render it's actually unlikely. For example, if the universe is infinite in the past, then the number of cause and effect relationships in the past is also infinite. There is no *first* cause, but rather an unending chain of events. In response to this, I will argue against an actually infinite universe via the following premises:

Premise 1) An actually infinite number of things cannot exist.

Premise 2) A beginning less series of events in time entails an actually infinite number of things.

Premise 3) Therefore, a beginning less series of events in time cannot exist.

For premise 1, let's consider the mathematician David Hilbert's and his own "Hilbert's Hotel" analogy to demonstrate some of the absurdities associated with an actual infinite. Picture a

hotel with an infinite number of rooms and then picture each of the rooms as occupied. Should someone come to the desk and ask for a room, the proprietor only has to say “sure!” He then moves everyone up one room. Those in room #1 move to room #2, and so on and so forth. Remember, each room was *already* occupied, but because there are an *infinite* number of rooms, they can just move up one more room, leaving an empty room for the new guests. It’s interesting to note that there is *still the same number of people in the hotel*: an infinite. To push this example a bit further, imagine an *infinity* of new guests coming to the hotel (as if it was not full enough), all the proprietor has to do is shift everyone who is already in the hotel into a new room that is twice the room number of the one they left. So guests in room #1 go to room #2, those in #2 to #4 and so on and so forth, allowing for an *infinity* of new guests to have a room while at the same time still having the *same number of total guests* in the hotel. This thought experiment can be extended to when guests leave as well. As a result, Hilbert’s Hotel demonstrates that an actual infinite cannot exist for absurdities result. Now, it may be postulated that infinity is simply a notion that we don’t have a clear understanding of, but, as philosopher William Craig points out, “infinite set theory is a highly developed and well-understood branch of mathematics, so that these absurdities results precisely because we *do* understand the notion of a collection with an actually infinite “ (*Reasonable Faith*, 96-97).

Premise 2 is simpler to respond to than premise 1, for it entails that if the universe never had a finite beginning, then the number of events would be infinite in the past. This leads us back to premise 1, for it would entail an actually infinite past. Thus, the conclusions from premise 1 also apply here.

Premise 3 follows logically if the two above premises are shown to be true, as I believe they have. Other arguments have been brought forth to demonstrate the problems with a past infinite, but I shall not address them here in the interest of time. It should be noted that Hume himself did not believe that an actual infinite was possible. He writes to John Stewart in 1754, “But allow me to tell you that I never asserted so absurd a Proposition as *that anything might arise without a cause*” (*Reasonable Faith*, 93) It should be noted that in the Dialogues, Hume does in fact argue that if one has explanations of many parts, one has an explanation of the whole. Such arguments have been refuted by philosophers such as Richard Swinburne in his book *The Existence of God*, who concludes “that the existence of the universe over infinite time would be, if only scientific explanation is allowed, a brute inexplicable fact” (Swinburne, 126).

I shall now demonstrate reasons to maintain the universe is finite in the past. My argumentation shall follow that of the Kālam cosmological argument.

Premise 1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

Premise 2) The universe began to exist

Premise 3) Therefore, the universe has a cause for its existence.

I shall focus my attention on premise 2, for demonstrating this premise will imply the other two. As demonstrated in the segment prior, an actually infinite presents odd and unorthodox conclusions that cannot be reconciled in the real world. In addition to the philosophical arguments already present against a infinite universe, the scientific discovery of the Big Bang has provided strong evidence that the universe did indeed have a beginning some 14-15 billion years ago. When Edwin Hubble discovered the red-shift in 1929, he also showed

that the universe is expanding equally in all directions, which implies that it may be *equally* retracted to one mathematical point. Paul Davies, in his book *The Last Three Minutes*, writes that the universe's expansion “means that *space* [was] compressed to nothing. In other words, the big bang is the origin of space as well as of matter and energy” (Davies, 23). This implies that at some point in the past, the universe may be retracted to a single point that acted as the start of its expansion.

Alternate explanations have been postulated to avoid this finitude of the past, such models of the universe include, but are not limited to, the multi-world hypothesis, cold dark matter theories, steady state models, and oscillating models. For the sake of time, I shall not diverge into any of these theories, but it must be noted that none of these theories have matched the evidence provided by the Big Bang explanation. Many scientists and philosophers have proposed objections to these infinite universe theories in length detail. However none quite as notable, at least in terms of empirical evidence, than the work done by Alexander Vilenkin, Alan Guth, and Niels Bohr. As outlined in Vilenkin's book, *Many Worlds in One*, they postulated, and demonstrated, a theorem which provided incredibly strong evidence that, *regardless* of differing models to explain the universe and its operations, it *must* have originated from a single finite point in the past. Vilenkin writes in his book, “With the proof [of a finite past] now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe” (Vilenkin, 176).

In summary, thus far I have demonstrated there are good reasons, both scientific and philosophical, for maintaining the finitude of the universe in the past. Now I will turn to explanations addressed by naturalism and theism in regards to the origin of the Big Bang.

Naturalism has thus far been unable to demonstrate throughly what came *before* the Big Bang, if anything. The primary reason for this is the Big Bang constitutes, as Davies writes, the moment *space, matter, and energy* came into existence. Such a conclusion results advance the notion of *create ex nihilo*, creation from nothing. Before the Big Bang, there was literally *nothing*. Davies emphases, “It is important to realize that according to [the Big Bang theory] there was no preexisting void in which the big bang happened” (Davies, 23). Thus, under naturalism creation stops there, with the Big Bang. Any and all effects come from that precise moment, from nothing. Now this explanation seems unsatisfactory, but how should we respond to the current evidence that something came from nothing? We may go back further and further in the past, but as there none the less seems to be an absolute starting point that needs to be addressed. Philosopher Michael Martin comments that “despite...claims that theories postulating the universe ‘could pop into existence uncaused’ are incapable of ‘sincere affirmation,’ such similar their are in fact begin taken seriously be scientists” (Martin, 106). Martin is quite right! It’s because that’s what the science shows, something from nothing! So the question becomes, what came before it?

Here, the theist may respond by positing a Creator as what came *before* and consequently created the Big Bang. As an eternal entity, this Creator existed timelessly before the Big Bang (for time, as fore-mentioned, came into existence with the Big Bang).

A common objection raised here, as is asked by Richard Dawkins in his book, *The God Delusion*: if God created creation, who created God? This question is in itself question begging, for it assumes God was created. None of the major religions believe in *created* gods. God in this sense is an eternal entity, as philosopher of mathematics and science, John Lennox stated in his

debate with Richard Dawkins, God is uncreated and the universe was created by Him. The question who created God by definition does not apply to him, for he is eternal. To those who object to the notion of an eternal Creator, I would ask what would the nothingness before the Big Bang be if not eternal?

In my efforts to attribute qualities to this Creator, I must make the distinction between a personal and non-personal Creator. These two are terms are used to signify causes for the Big Bang, a non-personal Creator falling under naturism, while a personal creator falling under theism. A non-creator hypothesis or mechanism that generated the Big Bang has one simplistic problem that would need to be addressed to make it valid. If there was a mechanism before the Big Bang that caused the Big Bang effect, it would be non-personal, meaning it would not have the freedom to create when it chose too. If this was the case, the universe would have been created an infinite time ago, for the mechanism would not have the ability to control its production. In contrast, if we advance agent causation, as I have attempted to do, we have, Craig points out, “a personal agent who freely chooses to create a universe in time” (*Reasonable Response*, 206). This agent has the free will to create when it chooses to do so, hence explaining why the universe was created 14 billion years ago instead of 50.

Considering what has been demonstrated thus far, the universe is finite in the past and the best explanation for its beginning is some sort of Creator, for otherwise we are left with something from nothing, which goes against the age old saying of of science that Parmenides muttered, “from nothing, nothing comes”.

Now the question Hume asks becomes important, for can we know anything about the Creator from the created. As I stated in the introduction, I am aim to show that particular

qualities of a Creator may be posited based off what is found in the preset universe. Even if we stick with the premises established by J.C.A. Gaskin earlier described, we can still get quite a few qualities from nature alone! We may assert, as Craig does, “that there exists an uncaused, beginning less, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, enormously powerful, indeterministic, cause of the universe” (*Reasonable Response*, 206). These attributes sound very much like the traditional creative powers of a theistic Creator. Hence, from inference to the best explanation, naturism which has no answer to what created the universe in comparison with theism which postulates a Creator, a Creator seems the best explanation.

To wrap this segment together, I have demonstrated through philosophical and scientific argumentation that there are good reasons for believing there was a first cause. Between the explanatory power of theism and naturalism on this point, theism seems more likely given it's the only position that offers a solution as to what came before the Big Bang. Attributes may then be added to the Creator that are in line with is normally understood to be a theistic Creator.

Objection 2) Why should we postulate only one designer of nature and not many?

The second objection Hume poses to the theist asks, why does nature only need one designer? Hume asks us to think of construction projects, in which "A great number of men join in building a house or ship, in rearing a city, in framing a commonwealth" (*Dialogues*, 89).

Given that, in our experience, teams of people work together to accomplish complicated goals, “why may not several deities combine in contriving and framing a world” in a likewise fashion (*Dialogues*, 89)? How, from nature, are we to infer that only one creator exists? If the cause and its effect cannot be shown to be *necessarily* related in some sense, what suggests a single Deity

figure? J.C.A. Gaskin states, "if valid, the inference from design could equally well establish a number of conclusions incompatible with monotheism...[including] it is a discard experiment in universe making or the product of a second-rate god; that it is the creation of a deistic god" (Gaskin, 493). Hume asks why "could he assign any just reason why he adheres to one idea or system, and rejects the others which are equally possible", emphasizing we have no *necessary* connection that creation is linked to a single Creator (*Dialogues*, 24).

Response 2) More designers requires more explanation.

In response to Hume's conjecture that the universe, based on our experience of human construction and design, could have been designed by multiple designers or that possibly it's just a discarded universe, I aim to explain that to postulate more explanations, as Hume suggests, only complicates the question and any further explanations. With respect to Hume's house analogy, it seems logical to me that some houses can indeed have only one designer, who lays the laws or "construction plan" for its creation. Let us consider for the sake of argument the existence of multiple designers. If there were multiple designers, we could ask "why are there just 333 deities (or whatever the number is), why do they have powers of just the strength which they do have, and what moves them to cooperate as closely as obviously they do" (Swinburne, 141). Further, as Cleanthes from Hume's *Dialogues* writes, "to multiply causes without necessity is...contrary to true philosophy" (*Dialogues*, 85). The multiple designers argument may be applied to Ockham's Razor, which states that entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily. Now, the objection may be raised that an invisible Creator with unlimited power is more

complicated than just accepting the universe as all there is. But is this the case? In so doing, one would have to explain the many facets present in the beginning of the universe while accepting, as far as modern science has uncovered, that it came from nothing. Or in the case of multiple designers, as Swinburne points out, explanations for each of the designers would need to be addressed. How they are connected, the limits of their power, etc. This to me seems considerably more complicated than the traditional theistic hypothesis.

Objection 3) Can we know that kind A always causes kind B?

Hume's third objection deals with causation, the relationship between cause and effect. Philosopher Georges Dicker summarizes the issue of cause and effect by noting humans observe how "one event follows another; but we never can observe any time between them", showing that "Hume is saying that we simply do not have any idea or concept of a necessary connection between events" (Dicker 106, 110). Drawing from what I mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this paper, Hume claims we can only know the cause of a particular effect of which we have had repeated experience, hence we are able to develop in our mind a "constant conjunction" to act as the bridge between events, allowing us to connect them in some pattern.

J.C.A. Gaskin puts it another way, "we have warrant for calling *A* the cause of *B* only if objects of *kind A* have constantly occurred prior to, and contiguously with, objects of *kind B*" (Gaskin, 493). Hume now takes this basic argument and applies it to the beginning of the universe, for which theists will claim was an act of a Creator. Hume objects by saying that since the start of the universe was a unique event, we do not experience it regularly in nature; hence, it cannot be fully understood in any capacity. Thusly, how can we attribute it to a Creator (or creators) with any certainty? Further, how can one ever have the experience of such a causation

in the first place? Hume writes, “it would be impossible for him at first to assign the cause of any one event, much less of the whole of things, or of the universe” (*Dialogues*, 42). We have never experienced the beginning of the universe happening again since the single event projected about 14 billion years ago, let alone experiencing it over and over again so we may predict it with fair certainty. Based on this inference, how can we make accurate conjectures about the universe based on experience? As a follow up, how can we relate it to a designer God if we never experience such a relation?

Response 3) We may have understanding of the universes beginning.

As discussed above, Hume's third objection is that kinds of objects that have a constant conjunction of a cause and effect relationship can be predicted and that the universe, being a singular event, prevents us from being able to apply our experience in understanding it's beginning.

As I was reflecting on Hume's point, it occurred to me that his objection of kinds causing like kinds does not impact the theist's view of the universe at all. My reasoning for this is Hume is *not* saying there was no cause to the universe, or that the universe is infinite in the past. This objection only shows that the beginning of the universe was a unique event. We are unable to postulate any “constant conjunction” between the universes cause to its effect. But notice again, Hume is *not* denying there was a first cause, he's merely saying we don't understand the cause and effect relationship that was present. The theist only needs to show that there was in fact a *singular* beginning to time, space, and matter. By doing so, they are able to suggest it as evidence to be added to the accumulative case for a Creator's existence for reasons already

mentioned in length earlier in this paper, namely, that the universe came into being from *nothing* based off philosophical and scientific evidences.

In addition, through the years of scientific advancement, mathematics has been quite justified by its repeated use and ability to predict complex concepts. Mathematics is the language of nature, and the one who understands it understands its workings. Through the use of mathematics and our understanding of them we have come to understand the presence of order in the universe including the apparent fine tuning of the universe for intelligent life. In relation to the cause and effect problem, both mathematics and technology allow for the constant testing and examination of our universes beginnings through complex simulations. In effect, this type of research provides grounds for creating a “constant conjunction” about the universes beginning from mathematical reconstruction through the use of computer technology. Replication of the universes origins are now possible because of our understanding of mathematics and mastering of technology. We may create a model in a computer and run it through tests until it’s a comparable representation of nature. As an extra thought, both the computer and nature itself operate by use of mathematical laws. It’s interesting to notice how the same principles may be intertwined with science to produce such vastly different conclusions.

Objection 4): The problem from Analogy.

The fourth objection Hume presents is the well known problem of analogy. Hume discusses how humans have a knack for creating analogies to better understand the nature of things, without taking into account *all* the similarities, or rather lack thereof. To better understand the complexity of nature and its apparent order, humans compare it to a machine or

work of art, both of which are created concepts. According to this analogy, there must be a creator with a mind similar to humans who could create such beauty and complexity in the universe and to act as the first cause. Notice how seeing it as a human mind further relates to the nature of the human mind, in a circular fashion. Hume poses the following question to the theist who believes any potential Deity is similar to humans. In so creating an analogy, do we ever consider *all* the factors that go into it? There may in fact be more *dissimilarities* between two concepts than similarities with reference to analogy. One example that people, including Hume take up, is by analogy you can't take only the good aspects of similarity, so to speak, and drop those you don't want. In particular, the existence of evil in the world, should evil be attributed to a Creator because it is apparently a part of the created?

Hume references how the Brahmans believed that a deistic spider spun the universe into existence. To us, such a belief seems odd, but that is only because we are accustomed to the thought of a human like Deity. Hume writes, "were there a planet wholly inhabited by spiders, (which is very possible,) this inference would there appear as natural and irrefragable as that which in our planet ascribes the origin of all things to design and intelligence" (*Dialogues*, 112).

If the theist is to maintain analogies as ways of demonstrating rational belief in a Creator, they will need to address the anthropomorphic issue and its relation to the problem of analogy.

Response 4) Analogies are no longer needed for such explanation.

To Hume's claim that analogies are poor and incredibly inaccurate representations, although this

does not harm the position I have thus far defended. I agree that to some extent that analogies may be misguided in their comparisons. However, the use of analogies for natural theology have become less critical for argumentation because, as Laura L. Garcia writes, “current versions of the design argument process not in terms of analogies between the universe and human artifacts, but as arguments to the best explanation of the data of our experience” (Garcia, 339). The debate centers around which world view has the correct interpretation of the evidence.

With that in mind, I do believe analogies are helpful in allowing humans to understand the nature of our world. It appears to me that analogies are not used as *arguments* for a position, but rather as a way to explain a potentially complex philosophical argument. They are an aid for comprehension, not a weapon for debate.

Objection 5: We cannot know design A Priori.

The fifth objection to design is it's not known a priori (without experience), it is only known a posteriori (after experience). Design, according to Hume, is a way we label nature, but not necessarily how nature actually is. Design is simply part of our lens for viewing the world. As Hume writes, “order, arrangement, or the adjustment of final causes, is not of itself any proof of design; but only so far as it has been experienced to proceed from that principle” (*Dialogues*, 42). As humans, it's merely another label we attribute to the nature around us. Further, we do not experience *all* that nature has to offer, so ascribing it with order, according to Hume, is fallacious because there are indeed instances where chaos resides.

Response 5) We may know of design a priori

In response to Hume's objection, I shall offer a five premise argument *for* design based on *a priori* judgements. Should this argument be successful, it will show that there is a higher *probability* that our universe has been created by a Designer rather than some non-personal process. We begin from the fact that the world comprised of a relatively small number of kinds of thing, namely, the fundamental particles of physics. This argument aims to put forward an explanation as to *why* recurrence of kinds occur. The advantage of *a priori* design arguments is it demonstrates recurrence as a *necessary truth*. Should analogy be used (as advanced by the theist Cleanthes' in Hume's book), one leaves oneself open to criticism. Analogy requires, as Hume points out, the *ruling out* of *all* dissimilarities as irrelevant between the analogue and the target. Philosopher Mark Wynn of Catholic Australia University adds that, "an analogy reflects merely a contingent truth to do with behavior of our world, then there is no expectation that the same relation will obtain between things in the world and some further reality" (Wynn, 172). It must be granted that analogy is *simpler* and less contrived. Yet an attempt *a priori*, while complicated, is a more solid argument as a whole. Let's consider the following premises

(I) If a number of things have causes of *different* kinds, or in one more cases no cause at all, then there is no reason to expect them to resemble one another closely by kind, in the absence of further information regarding their character.

(II) If a number of things derive from the same cause or same kind of cause, then there is some reason to expect them to resemble one another closely by kind, in the absence of further information regarding their character.

I take these premises to be *a priori*. With regard to premise (I), if all that can be known are causes of *different* kinds or no cause at all, we know *nothing* that would help determine the origins character and there is then no reason to expect recurrence of kind. Given there's no knowledge of the character individually, premise (I) is admissible *a priori*.

With premise (II), we *do* have *some* reason to expect recurrence of kinds. Granted, the origin may change output depending on the environment or because it has the ability to exercise different powers in the same environment, but this premise does not rest on any necessary conjunction between sameness of source or kind of source and sameness of the effect. However, assuming the environment and the origins behavior is constant, the sameness of the effect will follow by definition.

Given the two premises discussed thus far, I will demonstrate that like kinds more likely originate from a *single source* instead of many sources of the same kind. The problem with recurrence from many sources of the same kind is it faces the issue of infinite explanatory regress, for we would be explaining resemblance by reference to another set of things. Thus, we should only consider that like kinds come from a *single* source.

The next task of this project is to demonstrate that the single source may possess *more* powers than are needed for creation. To explain this *a priori*, consider the following premise.

(III) If two possibilities have the same general character, then they have the same probability *a priori*.

Consider a square. *A priori* what are the chances that the square is 1.2cm or 1.3cm in length? They are the same probability *a priori*. Since the two are so alike in nature, there is no consideration that is relevant to one and not to the other.

If we apply premise (III) to the single source, we may say the probability of the single source having more power than is required for its function is the *same* as the probability that the single source has *just* the amount of power required to complete its function. The range in difference between what's required and excess in powers is respectively small enough to not alter its general character. Hence, premises (I-III) demonstrates that recurrence by kind occurs from the activity of single cause that may possess powers greater than what is required to produce the desired effect.

Given the argument thus far, we may now apply these *a priori* judgements to design *a priori*. Now, particles of physics resemble each other by kind and behavior is subject to statistical regulation (meaning varying levels of disorder). We may rightly ask why our universe has this level of disorder instead of more or less order. Going back to premise (III), we may assume the probability *a priori* of more or less disorder without change in character of the single source. Given the probability of powers for either more or less disorder, we may say that the designer sees value in design, for it's able to choose, recognizing that order is preferable to disorder. To explain *why* it may choose differing levels of order, consider the following two premises.

(IV) The more precisely defined a hypothesis, the lower its probability *a priori*.

The more precise the power we are defining, the less probable it is to be known *a priori*.

Let us consider the following two hypothesis. Let h1 stand for a designer and h2 stand for a non-personal designer. Now consider them with their potential power for creation added: h1(i) and h2(i). As of now, these two are equal, until we add one last *a priori* principle.

(V) The good is of its nature is *attractive*.

H1(i) is of higher probability because, by the nature of a designer (premises I-III), it can choose order (the good) over disorder (premise III). H2(i) however requires further and more precise explanation as to *why* it may "choose" order from not. Allow me to close this argument with a quote from M.A. Corey in his book *God and the New Cosmology on Cosmic design*:

A large number of cosmic "coincidences" have in fact occurred in our universe, and it is precisely these "coincidences" that have enabled life to evolve on this planet. In other words, it isn't the reality of these "coincidences" that is at issue here; it is how we are to interpret their underlying meaning that constitutes the issue. The question thus boils down to the following: are these "coincidences" *so* numerous and *so* compelling that we are virtually forced into acknowledging Divine Origin to them?" (208, Corey)

Objection 6) Why must we stop with God as the best explanation?

The sixth and final objection deals with why we must posit a reason for the universe's existence? Or rather, why one should have to posit God as the reason and stop there? Why does the universe require "an explanation: that it cannot itself be accepted as the ultimate brute fact" (Gaskin, 493)? Is the concept of God such a good explanation that further inquiry is not needed, Hume thinks not. In addition, to state that God created all things, Hume thinks, means the Theist have to explain what created God? One finds themselves going back and back into infinity. Hence, Hume states "It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself" (*Dialogues*, 76). It's clear Hume is unsatisfied with stopping at a Deity to be the creator of the universe.

Response 6) The search for evidence has not stopped.

The search for other explanations and evidence have not stopped. More than likely in response to the critiques of Hume, the advancement of science has progressed in order to establish the fundamental workings of our world and universe. On a personal level, I do not believe science can disprove religion or belief in a Creator. They are quite different subject matters that address different questions. Richard Swinburne writes of science being able to address specific issues of our universe, such as "why an electron exerts just the attractive force which it does" while it is unable to explain more general laws such as "why all bodies do possess the same vey general powers and liabilities" (Swinburne, 140). From arguments present in *knowledge of Creator from the Created*, it seems to me that a Creator is a better explanation of the available evidence than that of naturalism. Science and religion are not contradictions in

anyway. It's not a satisfactory answer to posit the universe as all there is. In a similar way, science cannot *prove* there is a Creator. You may infer to science as evidence for one, but a undeniable proof is not possible. I believe John Hick sums it up well when he writes "Since theism and naturalism can each alike lay claim to prima facie evidences and must each admit the existence of prima facie difficulties, any fruitful comparison must treat the two alternative interpretations as comprehensive wholes, with their distinctive strengths and weaknesses" (Rowe, 343). From hence, it comes down to personal beliefs.

In conclusion to this paper, I shall briefly sum up what has been discussed throughout. To restate the hypothesis I sought to answer, I questioned whether Hume's radical skepticism and objections to natural theology cause irrational belief in a theist Creator apart from faith. I believe I have presented many arguments in an attempt to reply to Hume's original objections to natural theology, focusing primarily on the objections as they appear in his book *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. It is my conclusion that Hume's skepticism has not maintained the same force as it may have at one time. That being said, as it is shown in both the literature and lectures on the subject, this is very much a live topic not to be completely answered in one paper. I have worked to answer his critiques to the best of my abilities with the resources available to me, to present what I believe a starting case for theism based on observation and scientific inquiry. I am open to the critiques as to enhance my understanding and develop my paths of reason.

Hume's views on religion often tip-toe around what his personal religious views are. From reading his primary work on religion, *The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, I find myself falling into what I believe as the majority belief that Hume is an atheist who is repressed

from saying so due to the society and time period for which he lives. My basis for this conclusion comes merely from the content of the arguments presented by the speakers in the Dialogues. It's my impression that Philo (the skeptic) has the most dynamic and deep cutting objections to natural theology, whereas Cleanthes' (the theist) rebuttals do not seem to carry much force. When I read through it, Cleanthes' seemed to focus on old and simpler arguments that had been around longer before Hume in at least some form. Philo, on the other hand, seemed to be speaking arguments original to Hume and his philosophy. As a theist, I never felt completely moved by the arguments presented by Cleanthes', whereas the arguments from Philo were quite interesting and powerful!

As a personal reflection, those who write about Hume and his work, as I have, gather a respect for his ability demonstrate the simplest assumptions humans take for granted, and how doing so leaves wide gaps our understanding. Hume has demonstrated throughly to me the great value found in the studies of philosophy; namely, the world is not as it may appear. Life is complicated, and philosophy attempts to answer its great questions.

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