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## REMARKS ON P. S. WADIA'S 'PHILO CONFOUNDED'

In responding to Professor Wadia's paper in McGill Hume Studies<sup>1</sup>, I will attempt to show why his analysis of the illustrative analogies in Part III of the Dialogues fails to capture what it is that Cleanthes sought to accomplish through them.

On p.285, Wadia begins his discussion of Part III and admits to being bewildered because one expects Cleanthes to confine his illustrations to familiar things in the world around him. One wonders, however, why Wadia thinks the illustrations should be so confined, since it is precisely matters such as these for which the Design Argument is attempting to account through the hypothesis of an intelligent external artificer - an hypothesis which Philo refuses to accept in this regard. Contrary to what Wadia maintains, there is one occasion in Part III where Cleanthes' defense does have recourse to natural phenomena. On p.154 he asks Philo to *consider, anatomize the eye, and behold the male and female of each species, the correspondence of their parts and instincts, their passions and whole course of life before and after generation* to be persuaded that *the most obvious conclusion surely is in favour of design!* Cleanthes explains Philo's resistance to this *most obvious conclusion* as due to *too luxuriant a fertility, which suppresses your natural good sense, by a profusion of unnecessary scruples and objections.* (DNRI55) On two occasions in Part III - in the first paragraph and once again toward the end of the seventh - Cleanthes comments on Philo's 'blindness' in rejecting the inference from natural phenomena to an intelligent cause of design. Given this assessment of Philo by Cleanthes, the employment of imaginary examples is easily appreciated inasmuch as actual examples have been impotent in convincing Philo. Just how these imaginary examples are relevant to his position has yet to be discussed; but the use of imaginary illustrations is not bewildering.

In setting the stage for his central claim on Cleanthes' intended use of his illustrations, Wadia seriously misrepresents the disagreement between Philo and Cleanthes. At one point (p.286) he takes Philo to be arguing that empirical evidence regarding an intelligent designer is actually inconceivable. But, in fact, this was not Philo's position in Part II at all. Philo finds it easy indeed to conceive of the empirical evidence required to support the conclusion of the Design Argument, namely, the world must sufficiently resemble some thing which is known to be intelligently contrived to enable us to classify it as a further instance of that kind of thing. If this could be done, the principle 'like effects prove like causes' could be used to infer an intelligent cause for the design of the world. Philo, of course, denies that the required resemblance can be found. However, as I have shown, he never denies that it is conceivable.

One page earlier, Wadia offers an account of Philo's position in Part II which is also incorrect. He argues that since, for Philo, an inference to the existence of an intelligent designer of the world requires having seen worlds formed under our eyes, this claim amounts to saying that it is impossible for there to be empirical evidence relevant to the conclusion of the Design Argument, because no one can satisfy this condition. Philo's argument in Part II, however, is not this one. He begins by considering how the world must present itself to justify reasoning by analogy to an intelligent designer. And it is only because the required resemblances between the world and objects of human contrivance are not present, that he offers 'seeing worlds formed under our eyes' as a condition which must be satisfied if the inference to an intelligent designer is to be acceptable. Now since Philo himself entertains possible states of the world which, if they existed, would constitute evidence for an intelligent designer, Wadia is mistaken in attributing 'the impossibility claim'

to Philo. For Wadia to argue successfully regarding Philo's adoption of 'the impossibility claim' he must show that Philo has argued that it is impossible for the world to resemble objects of human contrivance - a position which Philo never puts forth for consideration.

If my reading of Philo's objections in Part II is correct, then the challenge to Cleanthes in Part III is not, as Wadia expresses it, 'to give descriptions of possible states of affairs which could obtain within our world which would force even a sceptic like Philo to posit an intelligent source who controls (at least some of) the laws of nature'. (p.286) Since Philo himself offered such descriptions, for Cleanthes to offer additional ones renders his effort at best redundant, and at worst, irrelevant, since Philo does not require such persuading. Philo's concern is that no description of the world, as we find it, can require a reasonable person to infer an intelligent cause of design. Cleanthes' task in Part III is to persuade Philo otherwise.

Having now shown what I consider to be mistaken in Wadia's reading of Philo's objections in Part II and the subsequent challenge to Cleanthes in Part III, I turn to Wadia's treatment of the illustrative analogies themselves.

1) In arguing for his claim that the Voice heard from the clouds is a miracle, Wadia asserts that it satisfies the three features which justify regarding an event as a miracle. Now, even if we agreed that these features do indicate the miraculous, and that since the Voice satisfies all these features, it is an instance of the miraculous, Wadia's thesis would be defective insofar as he wants to hold that for Cleanthes both illustrations in Part III serve the same purpose. Given the features Wadia sets out for regarding an event as a miracle, the Vegetable Library is not a miracle: nothing in Cleanthes' description of the Vegetable Library justifies claiming that it possesses religious significance, and nothing said by Cleanthes indicates that, at

least in terms of its immediate cause of order - descent and propagation - it cannot be explained in scientific terms. Furthermore, even in seeking its ultimate or original cause of order in intelligence, he has no intention of denying that this explanation is scientific: one need only recall his lengthy discussion in Part I where he emphasized that the Argument from Design is in accordance with accepted scientific procedure to be persuaded that he believes that his hypothesis of God is scientific in nature. And in putting forth the Vegetable Library analogy, Cleanthes is very clear - the first paragraph on p. 154 - that the entire procedure for inferring an intelligent cause for it is the same as that employed in the case of the world. Therefore, the 'scientific character' of what he is proposing is sustained in the Vegetable Library.

But if the Vegetable Library analogy does not satisfy the requirements for the miraculous partly because of the 'scientific character' of the inference to an intelligent cause, then the Voice analogy is also disqualified as a miracle: Cleanthes is again very clear (paragraphs 2 and 3 in Part III) that the treatment of the Voice with respect to its cause is the same as his treatment of the world and its cause; since the latter is 'scientific', the former is also. Neither illustrative analogy, therefore, satisfies the requirements Wadia urges for acknowledging the miraculous.

2) So far I have proceeded as though the three features cited by Wadia for acknowledging the miraculous are ones which Hume accepts. But, in fact, this is not so. In the essay on miracles, Hume has but one criterion for determining the miraculous: *A miracle*, he tells us in the essay, *is a violation of the laws of nature.* (EHU114) Hence, he argues that *there must therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation.* (EHU115) In illustrating his point, Hume writes:

*Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them?*  
(EHU114-115)

Now, the Articulate Voice, on this account of the miraculous, is not a miracle, nor is there reason to believe that Cleanthes held it to be one. For there is no indication in Cleanthes' description of the Voice that its occurrence constitutes a violation of accepted laws of nature - a strange omission, indeed, if he was seeking to characterize the Voice as a miracle in accordance with Hume's discussion in the essay. The fact that Cleanthes asks Philo to suppose that this voice were extended in the same instant over all nations, and spoke to each nation in its own language and dialect (DNR152) also counts against the claim that he holds it to be a miracle: no instance of an alleged miracle in Hume's essay has everyone everywhere as witnesses to the putative event. In fact, it is the limited number of witnesses which is one of Hume's chief concerns in his essay regarding the credibility of miracles.

And, finally, in this connection, it is strange to find Wadia relating Part III of the Dialogues to the essay on miracles at all. Wadia's paper makes it seem as though the focus of Cleanthes' illustrative analogies - at least part of the time - is whether one who observed the Voice or the Vegetable Library could but believe the evidence of his senses. If this were a correct reading of Part III, it would go some way toward supporting Wadia's reading of the connection between this part of the Dialogues and the essay on miracles. However, the truth of the matter is that at no time does Cleanthes ask Philo what his response to the Voice or the Library would be, if he were to observe them: Philo is never challenged with respect to the question of whether it would be more reasonable to discount the observations one

had made of these putative events than to accept them as observations of miracles. Cleanthes is only asking about the inference Philo would make about the cause of these phenomena, if they were observed. Cleanthes never so much as alludes to the fact that the challenge to Philo is one of reaching some verdict on the credibility or legitimacy of observations of the Voice or the Vegetable Library. Hence, the focus of concern in Part III is sufficiently different from that in the essay on miracles to conclude that the concerns in each do not coincide in any significant way. What I have said here also casts additional doubt in regard to Wadia's claim that Philo in Part II has adopted 'the strong position' regarding an intelligent cause of design: not once, in responding to Philo in Part III, does Cleanthes ever emphasize that these illustrative analogies are conceivable or possible states of affairs - an omission I find bewildering if this is (at least part of) what he is trying to establish.

3) Wadia correctly sees (p.285) that on two occasions Cleanthes explicitly states that his illustrative analogies successfully get around all the objections Philo has raised against the Design Argument. Wadia's interpretation, however, fails to explain how Cleanthes believes that the analogies accomplish this. There is an enormous gap between giving imaginary descriptions which require us to posit an intelligent source of design, and establishing that the world, as we experience it, requires an intelligent cause of design. Now, showing that descriptions of possible states of affairs require us to posit a certain type of cause cannot help to convince us that actual states of affairs have the same requirement, unless there are sufficient similarities between the descriptions of the possible and the actual to justify making inferences about the latter which are identical to those made in regard to the former.

And, in this, we find the chief difficulty with Wadia's account of Part III. He fails to search for the

similarities between the world and the Articulate Voice, and the world and the Living Vegetable Library, which lead Cleanthes to the position that inferences about the cause of the Voice and the Library are the same as one ought to make with respect to the world. Only in this way is the possible relevant to the actual for Cleanthes. And I suggest that it is in this connection that Philo's described response is to be understood. In Part I Philo urged that the success of the Pyrrhonian in attacking theological positions stems from the fact that the arguments employed typically run wide of common life and science. Since the triumph of scepticism is asserted in what has transpired to the end of Part VIII, the reason why Philo is 'a little embarrassed and confounded' must be sought in Part XII - the section in which the concern with the intelligence of the cause of the design of the world is renewed.

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1. McGill Hume Studies, ed. David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi, Wade L. Robison (Austin Hill Press, San Diego, 1979), pp.279-290.