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AN 'INCONVENIENCE' OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM

In Part II of Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion¹ Cleanthes maintains that the similarities between the works of nature and those of human contrivance, namely, the presence of means to ends relations and a coherence of parts, are sufficient to enable us to reason analogically to the conclusion that the cause of the design of the world resembles human intelligence. Cleanthes insists in Part IV that the ideas which we have of mind are 'just and adequate and correspondent' to God's nature. Philo, who throughout the discussion has insisted on 'the adorable mysteriousness' of the divine nature, responds to Cleanthes by saying that he will endeavour to show

the inconveniences of that anthropomorphism, which you have embraced; and shall prove, that there is no ground to suppose a plan of the world to be formed in the divine mind, consisting of distinct ideas, differently arranged; in the same manner as an architect forms in his head the plan of a house which he intends to execute. (D160)

It is the aim of this paper to explicate this 'inconvenience' of Cleanthes' anthropomorphism.

Philo begins by claiming that nothing is gained by Cleanthes' position whether it is assessed by 'reason' or by 'experience'. The judgment of reason is

that a mental world or universe of ideas requires a cause as much as does a material world or universe of objects; and if similar in its arrangement must require a similar cause. For what is there in this subject, which should occasion a different conclusion or inference? In an abstract view, they are entirely alike; and no difficulty attends the one supposition, which is not common to both of them. (D160)

Similarly, experience cannot perceive any material difference in this particular, between these two kinds of worlds, but finds them to be governed by similar principles, and to depend upon an equal variety of causes in their operations. (D161)

20.

Philo concludes that the type of argument employed by Cleanthes leads to an infinite regress:

How therefore shall we satisfy ourselves concerning the cause of that Being, whom you suppose the Author of nature, or, according to your system of anthropomorphism, the ideal world, into which you trace the material? Have we not the same reason to trace that ideal world into another ideal world, or new intelligent principle. (D161)

He then suggests, as though it will prove to be more satisfactory, that we should not go beyond the material world itself:

But if we stop, and go no farther; why go so far? Why not stop at the material world? How can we satisfy ourselves without going on in infinitum? And after all, what satisfaction is there in that infinite progression? ... If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other; and so on, without end. It were better ... never to look beyond the present material world. (D161-162)

In suggesting that it is better never to look beyond the material world, what precisely is it that Philo is advocating? George Nathan² maintains that "Cleanthes is unaware that Philo is trying to eliminate only the externality of the cause. He is not trying to deny its intelligence". (Chappell 410) Pike,³ on the other hand, interprets Philo's position as eliminating the requirement for a causal account of the order present in the world:

If we introduce an ordered mind in an effort to explain the existence of an ordered world, must we not provide a similar explanation of the ordered mind? But if we accept this demand, we shall have to introduce yet another intelligent being as the creator of the first. This explanatory chain can end only in an infinite regress. We would probably do better to assume that order in the material world is an ultimate fact that does not require explanation. Once we take the first step down the explanatory trail we are committed to go on forever. (Pike 157)

I will now examine critically the interpretations suggested by Nathan and Pike.

Certain questions suggest themselves regarding Nathan's position. First, what does Nathan mean by the intelligence of the cause? Second, what evidence is there that Hume does not want to deny the intelligence of the cause? And third, is Nathan correct in maintaining that Philo only wants to deny the externality of the cause, and not its intelligence?

To understand Nathan's sense of the terms 'rationality' and 'intelligence' (treated as synonyms in this context - see his article, p.421) we must examine what he says in other parts of his paper. The first clue to Nathan's interpretation occurs when he discusses the vegetable library illustration. He points out that there is an essential ambiguity in the word design throughout the Dialogues: "At some stages the meaning of "design" is taken to be that of the rational or intelligent order which is produced by an external agent or the intentions and plans of that agent. However "design" can also mean only the rational order itself without any further assumptions about external causes". (Ch.404) To determine whether an object has a rational order Nathan suggests the following:

...just as we call a mind rational because of its particular order, and not because of its cause, likewise we determine whether any other thing has an intelligent order by examining its structure and not by looking for the cause. For Hume the way of determining such order is by comparing something to objects which are acknowledged to be rationally ordered and then ascertaining what points of analogy are present in both. If the aspects which are found in the ordered product are also found in the item in question, then we can pronounce that item rational. Of course, human artifacts suggest themselves as the obvious paradigm for such comparisons. (Ch.407-408).

Nathan maintains that the rational order in human artifacts derives from the fact that there are "parts which are related

22.

to each other by the reciprocal relation of cause and effect and which also contribute to some general purpose of the object as a whole". (Ch.421) Hence, on Nathan's reading of Hume, non-human products can be regarded as rationally ordered provided they also possess these features.⁴ To be rationally ordered, therefore, there is no requirement of conscious design on the part of the cause. Nathan goes further and holds that where an effect displays the features which entitle us to regard it as rational or intelligently ordered, we can conclude that its cause is rational or intelligent, regardless of whether the cause is internal or external. Commenting on the effects of causal reasoning in man and similar results achieved through instincts in other animals (cases of external causes) Nathan writes:

Judging from the marvelous adaptation of means to ends which men evidence we must equally acknowledge a similar process on the part of animals. If man exhibits rationality, then so do other creatures. The fact of rationality is not diminished by the revelation that instinct is the cause of this amazing adaptive process. Rather, we are led to the conclusion that instinct possesses a rationality of its own. (Ch.407)

Speaking in connection with the vegetable library illustration which Nathan maintains must be regarded as having internal ordering principles he writes: "... even though the propagation of the natural volumes does not depend on conscious design, nevertheless the volumes are rational and are due to a rational cause. The character of the volumes remains unchanged, even if they did not have an external cause". (Ch.407)

Regarding the second question I raised in connection with Nathan's thesis, namely, is there evidence that Hume does not want to deny the intelligence or rationality of the cause of the design of the world, he argues as follows: "The ... principle which is responsible for the order in the universe has already been characterized as rational. It is rational or intelligent because its effects

resemble the intelligently ordered objects of human artifice". (Ch.421) We are now able to see why he holds that in Part IV only the externality of the cause of the design of the world is being attacked: since Nathan holds that Hume ascribes rationality to causes the effects of which have a relation of parts to each other and to a general purpose, and since these features are not questioned in regard to the design of the world in Part IV, he concludes that nothing said by Philo in this part is critical of the rationality of the ordering cause. Now, although it is true that nothing said by Philo in Part IV challenges the claim that the world is rationally or intelligently ordered, this is not sufficient to confirm Nathan's position. For his argument is that Hume nowhere challenges the rationality of the cause of the design of the world, and therefore, Nathan's major effort is to show that Hume is arguing for a rational (in Nathan's sense) internal principle of order for the world. Therefore, I propose to turn to the third question raised in connection with Nathan's paper to determine whether Philo wants only to deny the externality of the cause. This is best approached by determining whether Philo ever criticizes the rationality or intelligence of the design of the world.

In proceeding with this problem I believe it best to advance in two stages. First, I will examine passages which are held by Nathan (and others) to establish that Philo accepts the rationality of the world, and therefore of its designing cause, and I will show that these passages do not support Nathan's view. In the second stage, I will turn to the text to show that there are passages in which Philo shows why the rationality of the design of the world and of its cause cannot be established. One more point before we begin. Nathan maintains, as we saw, (and I believe that this is correct), that for an effect to be considered rational, and, therefore, for the cause of that effect to be considered rational, the effect must be so ordered that it satisfies two conditions, namely, there must

be a relation of parts to each other and to a general purpose. It is reasonable to hold that if the second condition is satisfied, then the first condition is also satisfied. That is, if the parts are so ordered that they lend themselves to some overall purpose, then the parts must be related to each other. Hence, claims of purposiveness allow us to conclude the existence of means to ends relations. Philo never denies that the design of the world exhibits means to ends relations. However, it is far from obvious that the existence of means to ends relations allows us to claim that there is a general purpose to whatever possesses means to ends relations. As we shall see, it is this very point with which Hume is struggling in seeking to determine whether the order we find in the world is a rational order. Philo will deny that reason can ever establish that the design of the world is purposive.

The first passage quoted by Nathan appears in Part X. Philo asserts: *You ascribe, Cleanthes (and I believe justly) a purpose and intention to nature.* (D198) At first glance, this passage appears to support the view that the design of the world is a rational one. However, I believe that the situation is somewhat more complex, and to show this I want to return to a passage spoken by Philo in Part II in which he speaks - as he does in the passage from D198 - of 'ascribing justly'. Philo there tells Demea and Cleanthes:

... as all perfection is entirely relative, we ought never to imagine, that we comprehend the attributes of this divine Being, or to suppose, that his perfections have any analogy or likeness to the perfections of a human creature. Wisdom, thought, design, knowledge; these we justly ascribe to him; because these words are honourable among men, and we have no other language or other conceptions, by which we can express our adoration of him. But let us beware, lest we think, that our ideas any wise correspond to his perfections, or that his attributes have any resemblance to these qualities among men. (D142)

At least in connection with divine attributes, 'justly ascribing' certain attributes to God does not involve any accuracy on our part in regard to such ascriptions: just ascription, in this case, is linked with a complete lack of comprehension of divine attributes, and a denial of any likeness between human perfections and those of God.

The passage spoken by Philo at D198 in which he acknowledges a purpose and intention to nature is expressed in a manner similar to the way in which he expressed his views about divine attributes in Part II. And, therefore, in reading the passage in Part X we should be open to the possibility that when Philo consents to a 'just ascription' of a purpose and intention to nature, he does not believe either that we understand the purpose and intention in nature, or that purposiveness as far as we understand it has any likeness to what is true of the world. In any case, the passage at D198 cannot be taken simpliciter as evidence that Philo holds that there is a purpose and intention to nature.

The second passage quoted by Nathan occurs at the end of Part X:

In many views of the universe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms; nor can we then imagine how it was ever possible for us to repose any weight on them. (D202)

In assessing this passage, the sentence preceding what I have quoted is relevant. Philo tells Cleanthes that *formerly, when we argued concerning the natural attributes of intelligence and design, I needed all my sceptical and metaphysical subtilty to elude your grasp.* The full point that Philo is making, therefore, is that in attacking the claim of intelligence and design, he employed sceptical (Pyrrhonic) arguments. However, often our perception of the world, particularly the adaptation of means to ends, strikes us so irresistibly that we can no longer deny the rationality of the world, even though we have been exposed to the sceptical

arguments against the rationality of the world. In fact, the sceptical arguments now appear to us as mere cavils and sophisms (and are such).

The structure of Philo's point does not lend itself to interpreting him as holding that there are reasonable (or analogical) grounds for believing in a purpose and intention to nature. Rather, what he says supports the view that a belief in purposiveness is an instinctive or natural belief. Notice that the concession to purposiveness follows the presentation of sceptical arguments. And notice further that it is a particular view of the world 'striking' us with 'irresistible force' which gives rise to the belief in purposiveness. These are characteristics not of a reasonable belief, but of a natural one.⁵

A third passage relevant to our present discussion occurs in Part XII where Philo again appears to assent to the purposive nature of the world:

A purpose, an intention, or design strikes every where the most careless, the most stupid thinker. (D214)

In understanding this passage it should be recalled that "carelessness" for Hume is a technical term which is used to characterize that state of mind which enables us to ignore the arguments of the sceptic and to be moved by our natural tendencies.⁶ Hence, again here Philo is suggesting that a belief in purposiveness is natural, and not rational.

The passages we have examined lend themselves to the interpretation that a belief in the rationality of the design of the world is not something which reason can establish. It is usual with Hume in his effort to establish a belief as natural to show why reason is unable to establish the belief in question. I will now show that this standard practice of Hume's is also present in the case of the claim regarding the rationality of the design of the world.

The challenge to Philo to determine whether the world possesses a rational design is made by Cleanthes at the end of Part V: ... *by the utmost indulgence of your*

imagination, you never get rid of the hypothesis of design in the universe; but are obliged, at every turn, to have recourse to it. (D169) Cleanthes' challenge is met by Philo in Part VIII. In this section, Philo proposes the following:

Suppose ... that matter were thrown into any position, by a blind, unguided force; it is evident that this first position must in all probability be the most confused and most disorderly imaginable, without any resemblance to those works of human contrivance, which, along with a symmetry of parts, discover an adjustment of means to ends and a tendency to self-preservation. If the actuating force cease after this operation, matter must remain for ever in disorder, and continue an immense chaos, without any proportion or activity. But suppose, that the actuating force, whatever it be, still continues in matter, this first position will immediately give place to a second, which will likewise in all probability be as disorderly as the first, and so on, through many successions of changes and revolutions ... Thus the universe goes on for many ages in a continued succession of chaos and disorder. But is it not possible that it may settle at last, so as not to lose its motion and active force ... yet so as to preserve an uniformity of appearance, amidst the continual motion and fluctuation of its parts? This we find to be the case with the universe at present.

Every individual is perpetually changing, and every part of every individual, and yet the whole remains, in appearance, the same. May we not hope for such a position, or rather be assured of it, from the eternal revolutions of unguided matter, and may not this account for all the appearing wisdom and contrivance which is in the universe? Let us contemplate the subject a little, and we shall find, that this adjustment, if attained by matter, of a seeming stability in the forms, with a real and perpetual revolution or motion of parts, affords a plausible, if not a true solution of the difficulty. (D184-185)

A blind unguided force - of the sort which this hypothesis postulates - could not be considered a rational

designing principle in Nathan's sense. Now, if reason will always be confronted with the possibility that the cause of the design of the world is not a rational principle of order, and if only a rational principle of order can produce a rationally ordered effect, it follows that reason cannot establish that the world is a rationally ordered effect. The question we must now answer is why can reason not be convinced that the design of the world is a rational one.

Hume's answer to this must be that means to ends relations and a coherence of parts - features of the world which we can verify - do not ensure that there is a general purpose to whatever it is that possesses these features; for if they did, then their presence would rule out the possibility that the cause of design is a 'blind unguided force'. I believe that the point Hume is anxious to make is that purposiveness is not reducible to means to ends relations and a coherence of parts, nor do these features ensure purposiveness. If means to ends relations and a coherence of parts were either the same as a general purpose or features ensuring a general purpose, then these features would ensure that the object is rationally designed, and hence has a rational cause. But since we can deny the rationality of the cause even when these characteristics are present, it follows that a general purpose cannot be known or inferred merely from the presence of these features. If we take a machine or an organism as items which satisfy the requirements of a rational design, much can be learned about Hume's views on purposiveness and rational design. Machines and organisms all possess means to ends relations and a coherence of parts as well as a rational design, and therefore Hume's point is that it is a common error to confuse these characteristics with the notion of a general purpose, or to believe that these characteristics ensure a general purpose. Nathan himself has fallen into this confusion when he tells us that

For Hume the way of determining such [rational] order is by comparing something to objects which are acknowledged to be rationally ordered and then ascertaining what points of analogy are present in both. If the aspects which are found in the ordered product are also found in the item in question, then we can pronounce that item rational. Of course, human artifacts suggest themselves as the obvious paradigm for such comparisons. For this reason Cleanthes' illustrations are especially apt. His comparison of the universe to machines, houses and books is useful because they all exhibit an intelligent structure.

What Hume is trying to show is that the presence of means to ends relations and a coherence of parts is not sufficient to claim that an object possesses a rational structure and a rational cause, and that, therefore, more is required before such a rational structure can be confidently affirmed. What more is needed?

A clue to answering this is provided by Hume in a passage in Part VIII which immediately follows the one we have been discussing. Philo asserts:

It is in vain, therefore, to insist upon the uses of the parts in animals or vegetables, and their curious adjustment to each other. I would fain know how an animal could subsist, unless its parts were so adjusted? Do we not find, that it immediately perishes whenever this adjustment ceases, and that its matter corrupting tries some new form? It happens, indeed, that the parts of the world are so well adjusted, that some regular form immediately lays claim to this corrupted matter: And if it were not so, could the world subsist? Must it not dissolve as well as the animal, and pass through new positions and situations; till in a great, but finite succession it fall at last into the present or some such order. (D185)

According to this passage, means to ends relations and a coherence of parts are necessary for an object's existence: without these features nothing can exist. Where an

object comes into existence through a 'blind unguided force' the object and its particular set of causal relations are not brought into existence purposively. On the other hand, where an object and its particular set of causal relations come into existence through some guiding force (or principle) the resulting design is purposive. For the designing principle to bring about such an object, it is not necessary, according to Hume, that it be aware of the object it is designing:

A tree bestows order and organization on that tree which springs from it, without knowing the order: an animal, in the same manner, on its offspring: a bird, on its nest: And instances of this kind are even more frequent in the world, than those of order, which arise from reason and contrivance. (D179)

What is required in order to say that the design is purposive is this: we must find the cause of design and the item designed constantly conjoined. It is precisely the absence of this constant conjunction in the case of God and the design of the world which allows Philo to suggest a 'blind unguided force' as the origin of the design of the world. Therefore, we find ourselves returning to Philo's earlier objection in Part II: without seeing worlds formed under our eyes, it is impossible to comment on the cause of the design of the world - and this includes its rationality. Without the required constant conjunction it will never be possible to answer the question, "Why does the world exhibit this particular set of means to ends relations?" Without an answer to this, the problem of the general purpose served by its design cannot be answered, with the result that we cannot establish the rationality of the design of the effect nor of its cause. In Part VIII Philo is suggesting that so long as we are unable to establish that the design of the world and its cause of design are both rational (in the sense discussed earlier) it will be impossible to determine if the question, "What is the purpose of the design we find in the world?" is well-formed, since there may not be a purpose to the design.⁷

It can now be seen, therefore, that Nathan is mistaken in holding that only the externality of the cause is being attacked by Hume, and not its rationality (in Nathan's sense of this term). The particular insight which Philo has revealed is that the presence of means to ends relations and a coherence of parts does not establish or guarantee a general purpose, and, therefore, these features alone cannot be used to establish the rationality of the effect and of the cause.

I turn now to the second suggested interpretation of Philo's position in advocating that *it were better never to look beyond the present material world* in accounting for the design of the world. Pike interprets Philo as maintaining that we should eliminate the requirement for a causal account of the order in the world. By considering the present order as an ultimate fact, no explanation of it is required, and no regress is generated. The text, however, does not bear out Pike's interpretation.

First, the passage under consideration is amenable to more than one interpretation. When Philo says that *it were better never to look beyond the present material world* he adds that *by supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God*. Now, in saying this Philo may either mean that order pertains to the very nature of the world, in which case the search for causes is removed, or he may mean that we should suppose that the world has an internal principle of order. It is only if Philo intends the former that he can be regarded as holding that the present order is not one requiring a causal explanation. To determine which of these Philo is maintaining, I will now examine other passages in which Philo is concerned with the infinite regress generated by Cleanthes' argument. I should add that the two positions outlined above allow for a tertium quid, namely, Philo may believe that neither position is actually defensible, in which case he is not committed to either position.

At D162-163 Philo examines ways of stopping the regress in Cleanthes' position. His first attempt involves the suggestion that *the different ideas, which compose the reason of the supreme Being, fall into order, of themselves, and by their own nature.* (D162) In assessing this, Philo asserts a) that this is *really to talk without any precise meaning* (D162), and b) if it has meaning, he asks *why it is not as good sense to say, that the parts of the material world fall into order, of themselves, and by their own nature? Can the one opinion be intelligible, while the other is not so?* (D162) Now, if Philo were opting for the claim that the parts of the material fall into order by themselves through their own natures, then we could accept Pike's interpretation. For if the parts of the material world were self-ordering, there would be no distinction between what was ordered and what brought the order about: in this sense, the order in the world would be an ultimate fact. But this is not what Philo is maintaining. His aim in this passage is to argue that it is as plausible to hold to a self-ordering material world as it is to hold to a self-ordering divine reason, so that the one hypothesis has no advantage over the other. To adopt Pike's position requires believing that Philo holds that the notion of self-ordering phenomena can be given a precise meaning or be rendered intelligible, which he never acknowledges, and it requires believing that he holds that the hypothesis of a self-ordering material world is more defensible than that of a self-ordering divine reason, which he also does not acknowledge.

The second way in which Philo seeks to prevent the regress in Cleanthes' position is to examine the supposition that God's mind is a rational faculty, and that this is the cause of the order in the ideas in the divine mind: *... when it is asked, what cause produces order in the ideas of the supreme Being, can any other reason be assigned by you, anthropomorphites, than that it is a rational faculty, and that such is the nature of the Deity?* (D163) But Philo again asks why,

if this line is adopted with respect to the divine mind, a similar answer will not be equally satisfactory in accounting for the order of the world, without having recourse to any such intelligent Creator: ... *It is only to say, that such is the nature of material objects, and that they are all originally possessed of a faculty of order and proportion.* (D163) If Philo accepted this latter account, Pike's reading could be accepted. Philo, however, is quick to point out that *these are only more learned and elaborate ways of confessing our ignorance; nor has the one hypothesis any real advantage above the other, except in its greater conformity to vulgar prejudices.* (D163) Philo concludes Part IV by emphasizing that neither hypothesis - that of a self-designing divine reason nor a self-designing material world - is either more intelligible or more plausible than the other in accounting for the design of the world:

An ideal system, arranged of itself, without a precedent design, is not a whit more explicable than a material one, which attains its order in a like manner; nor is there any more difficulty in the latter supposition than in the former. (D164)

Nothing said by Philo in Part IV, therefore, supports Pike's position that to stop the regress Philo advocates assuming that order in the material world is an ultimate fact.

I mentioned earlier that Philo's comment 'that it is better never to look beyond the present material world in accounting for the design of the world, and that we should suppose it to contain the principle of its order within itself' is amenable to two interpretations: either the world should be regarded as though order pertains to its very nature, or else the world should be supposed to have an internal (as opposed to an external) principle of order. Since Philo refused to accept the former for the reasons discussed above, it might be thought that he is actually advocating acceptance of an internal principle of order for the world. This is the position which George Nathan argues Philo is

willing to accept. I will now show that Nathan is mistaken in his reading, and that Philo is not prepared to accept, or better defend, an internal principle of order for the world.

In defense of his reading, Nathan argues as follows:

¹Philo is defending the principle of an internal cause of order in the universe.
²Cleanthes is positing an external cause which is itself internally ordered. ³Both seek to avoid the infinite regress. To prevent the regress in which the order of the universe is explained by an external cause, etc. ad infinitum, it is necessary that there be an internal principle of order somewhere in the series. ⁴If the internal principle is necessary, then an external principle is impossible. ⁵Since the internal principle is necessary for explanation, it is also sufficient.
⁶Philo and Cleanthes agree that experience reveals an internal principle of order in the universe in plants, animals, and minds. Such things as watches and houses are observed to be the result of human minds which are themselves internally ordered. ⁷Therefore because this internal principle exists in the universe, the universe has within it a necessary and sufficient explanation for its order. ⁸As a result an external principle of order for the universe is impossible. ⁹Furthermore, if one external principle is impossible, an infinite series of such principles is equally impossible. (D412-413)

To facilitate my discussion of this passage from Nathan's paper, I will refer to the superscripts which I have inserted.

The first sentence in this quotation is, of course, what Nathan is trying to establish, and therefore, our decision regarding it must await an appraisal of Nathan's argument. Sentence 2, however, can now be shown to reflect inaccurately Cleanthes' position. Although Cleanthes does want to hold that the cause of the design of the world is external to the world, he does not commit himself to holding that it is internally ordered. There is but one passage in the Dialogues wherein Cleanthes makes any response to Philo's charge of an infinite regress, and within it he shows himself

to be without a proper answer:

Even in common life, if I assign a cause for any event; is it any objection, PHILO, that I cannot assign the cause of that cause, and answer every new question, which may incessantly be started? ... You start abstruse doubts, cavils, and objections: You ask me, what is the cause of this cause? I know not; I care not; that concerns not me. I have found a Deity; and here I stop my enquiry. Let those go farther, who are wiser or more enterprising. (D163)

Even though Nathan is mistaken about Cleanthes in this regard, he may still, of course, be correct in his interpretation that Philo is defending an internal cause of order in the universe.

In the group of sentences numbered 3, Nathan wrongly accounts for how the infinite regress can be stopped. From the fact that an internal principle of order is posited somewhere in the series, it does not follow that there is no infinite regress. For it can still be asked of this internal principle of order, what it is that brought it about, and so on. In other words, the 'location' of the ordering principle is not all there is to the problem of the infinite regress, nor is it a complete solution to the problem. There are but two ways to stop the infinite regress which Philo has charged: either the thing designed must be such that order pertains to its very nature, or there must be an internal principle of order somewhere in the series of causes (as Nathan holds) which, for some specifiable reason,⁸ does not itself require a causal explanation. If the former is true, i.e. if order pertains to the very nature of the world, then all external principles would be impossible, but, of course, so would all internal principles. To establish the necessity (and therefore sufficiency) of an internal principle of order for the world (Nathan's points 4 and 5), it must be shown that the nature of the world is such that order does not pertain to its very nature, and that the design of the world cannot be better explained by an external principle of order which is itself internally ordered and which does not itself

require a causal explanation. Or alternatively, it must be shown that the evidence in favour of the hypothesis of an internal principle of order meets a satisfactory level of acceptability. According to Nathan, Hume held that this latter position can be upheld (Nathan's step 7). The evidence is given in 6, namely, by experience we find an internal principle of order in plants, animals, and minds. However, it does not seem likely that Hume would employ such evidence, since it is subject to the very same criticism which Philo levied against Cleanthes in Part II, when Cleanthes sought to establish thought as the cause of the design of the world. In short, the problem still remains as to why we can accept what experience discloses about parts of the world to be applicable to the whole world. If Cleanthes had difficulty with this in his argument, it appears that Philo will have the same difficulty. If my point here is correct, then Nathan's steps 8 and 9, wherein it is concluded that Philo's evidence rules out all external causes of order for the world, cannot be accepted.

Thus far, I have stated how I believe that the regress can be stopped, and one way in which I do not believe that Philo would argue for an internal principle of order. However, it might be said that textually Nathan's position is accurate, even though we might disagree with Philo's arguments. I will now show that Philo does not adopt the position which Nathan puts forth in his behalf.

The one passage which is relevant to our present discussion appears toward the end of Part VI. Philo says:

And were I obliged to defend any particular system of this nature (which I never willingly should do), I esteem none more plausible than that which ascribes an eternal, inherent principle of order to the world; though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once solves all difficulties; and if the solution, by being so general, is not entirely complete and satisfactory, it is, at least, a theory, that we must, sooner or later, have recourse to, whatever system we embrace. How could things have been as they

are, were there not an original, inherent principle of order somewhere, in thought or in matter? And it is very indifferent to which of these we give the preference. Chance has no place, on any hypothesis, sceptical or religious. Every thing is surely governed by steady, inviolable laws. And were the inmost essence of things laid open to us, we should then discover a scene, of which, at present, we can have no idea. Instead of admiring the order of natural beings, we should clearly see, that it was absolutely impossible for them, in the smallest article, ever to admit of any other disposition. (D174-175)

Nathan quotes parts of this passage as evidence for his reading. However, it must be pointed out that there are certain peculiarities in Nathan's presentation of it. First, he omits the bracketed portion in the first sentence in which Philo declares that he would never willingly defend what he is about to say. Second, Nathan misquotes a portion of the first sentence, rendering *eternal inherent principle of order to the world* as *internal inherent principle of order to the world*. Third, Nathan stops quoting the passage after the third sentence, thereby omitting Philo's claim that it is indifferent whether we opt for an original inherent principle in thought or in matter, and also omitting Philo's comments as to what we would find *were the inmost essence of things laid open to us*.⁹ Now, if the passage is read as Nathan has quoted it, it seems as though Philo is advocating an internal principle of order to the world. But even if the passage is rendered as Nathan has done, there is nothing supporting his step 6; that is, nothing said by Philo in this passage indicates that he accepts the existence of internal principles of order in the world as evidence that the principle of order of the world is also an internal one. In any case, once the entire passage is examined, it can be seen that Philo is not himself committed to an internal principle of order to the world.

Philo is making the following points:

- (1) If he were to defend any theory, it would be that

38.

advocating an eternal inherent principle of order, but he would never willingly do it. This solution, by being so general, is not in a finished form nor wholly acceptable as it stands.

(2) An original inherent principle of order seems both necessary and sufficient for explaining the order in the world, but we cannot determine whether this inherent principle is in thought (i.e. in an external principle of order) or in matter (i.e. in an internal principle of order).

(3) He suggests that if we could penetrate the essences of things, we would find that they cannot have any order other than the order they do have.

Each of these three points deserves some comment. In the case of (1), the inclusion of the term 'eternal' is important, for it shows that Philo realizes that the infinite regress cannot be stopped merely by positing an internal principle of order. On the other hand, if the cause is eternal, then the infinite regress criticism ceases to be effective: now it makes no sense to ask for the cause of this cause.

The hypothesis of an 'eternal inherent principle of order' avoids the problem of how the world is to be characterized (a criticism which Philo brought against Cleanthes' Argument from Design), and it makes no reference whatever to what the ordering principle is. This explains Philo's assertion that the solution possesses too great a generality; this also explains why Philo denies completeness and full acceptability to this hypothesis. What Philo believes is that rather than a solution to the problem of the divine nature, he has, by asserting that the design of the world requires as its cause an eternal inherent principle of order, provided the 'form' which he regards the most plausible solution to possess.

If the world could be characterized as having a 'specific resemblance' to certain things found in the world, for example if it could be characterized as machine-like, it

would be possible to argue by analogy to the type or ordering principle it has, and this includes whether the ordering principle is internal or external. The claim of generality to the hypothesis in (1) coupled with Philo's claim in (2) that it is indifferent whether we opt for an internal or an external ordering principle establishes that he believes that such a characterization of the world is not possible.

Even though we cannot, according to Philo, determine whether the ordering cause of the world is in thought or matter, it appears as though some success has been obtained in the realization that no more plausible solution can be proposed to the problem of how the world achieved its design than that of an eternal inherent principle of order. Why, then, does Philo say that he would never willingly defend this position? In the passage under discussion he says that the theory of an eternal inherent principle of order is one we must sooner or later have recourse to *whatever system we embrace*. In other words, all systems of cosmogony are open to the criticism of an infinite regress, and, therefore, all must, in the end, posit an eternal inherent principle of order, for only in this way can the regress be stopped. But to argue in this way is to argue as Demea does in Part IX: to explain the contingent, Demea argues, a modal jump is required to a necessarily existent being; otherwise, you become involved in an infinite regress, in which case no existent can be satisfactorily accounted for. I submit that Philo recognizes that to stop the regress to which all systems of cosmogony lead, we must have recourse to Demea's a priori argument in Part IX. However, since Philo holds that this argument is ill-grounded,¹⁰ he is obviously unwilling to defend the claim of an eternal inherent principle of order to the world.

The third point raised by Philo in the passage under discussion, namely, that if we could penetrate the essences of things, we would find that they cannot have any order other than the order they do have, can also be explained by

turning to a passage in Part IX. Toward the end of this Part Philo asserts:

It is observed by arithmeticians, that the products of 9 compose always either 9 or some lesser product of 9; if you add together all the characters, of which any of the former products is composed ... To a superficial observer, so wonderful a regularity may be admired as the effect either of chance or design; but a skilful algebraist immediately concludes it to be the work of necessity, and demonstrates, that it must for ever result from the nature of these numbers. Is it not probable, I ask, that the whole oeconomy of the universe is conducted by a like necessity, though no human algebra can furnish a key which solves the difficulty? And instead of admiring the order of natural beings, may it not happen, that, could we penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies, we should clearly see why it was absolutely impossible, they could ever admit of any other disposition? (D191)

This passage makes it clear that Philo is not claiming that the order in the world is necessary. What he is saying is that although we cannot establish the claim that the order of things in the world is necessary, it is also not possible to disprove it. And since this claim cannot be disproved (given that we cannot penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies) we will always be ignorant of whether a principle of order is required to account for the order in the world: the inclusion of principles of order presupposes that the order in the world is contingent, and that, therefore, the order arises from something other than the very nature of what is ordered.

I argued earlier that Philo refuses to defend the hypothesis of an eternal inherent principle of order to the world because this would involve him with the type of argument Demea employs in Part IX, and he holds this argument to be defective. We can now see an additional reason for his unwillingness to defend an eternal inherent principle of order to the world, namely, he would have to establish that the order in the world is contingent, and this he believes he cannot do.

To sum up, if the order in the world is contingent, then the ordering cause must be regarded as necessary to stop the infinite regress charge. And if not contingent, then the order must be necessary. In either case, our ignorance will continue, since we can neither understand nor demonstrate necessity as it relates to existence.

An ironic element in the debate between Philo and Cleanthes is apparent. Philo has shown that Cleanthes' Argument from Design ultimately rests on the a priori proof presented by Demea in Part IX. Yet, it is Cleanthes who offers the bulk of the critique against this a priori proof. By so doing, he shows that the 'inconvenience' of his Argument from Design, as developed by Philo, is something he cannot remedy.

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1. All references to the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion are taken from the Library of Liberal Arts edition, edited by Norman Kemp Smith, Indianapolis, New York 1947.
2. George Nathan "Hume's Immanent God" in Hume: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by V. C. Chappell, pp.396-423, Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc. Garden City, New York, 1966. References to Nathan's article will have Ch. followed by the page number.
3. Hume: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, edited and with commentary by N. Pike, the Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., Indianapolis, New York, 1970.
4. Nathan's discussion of the topic of rationality appears in his paper p.405-408.
5. I do not intend this to be taken as establishing conclusively that Hume regards the belief in purposiveness in the design of the world to be a natural belief (although I believe that this claim can be substantiated through additional texts in the Dialogues). My point here is that there is no support for Nathan's claim in the passages he cites that the world and its cause of design are rationally ordered.

42.

6. At the conclusion of the section *Of Scepticism with regard to the Senses* in the Treatise Hume writes: *This sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chace it away, and sometimes may seem entirely free from it. 'Tis impossible upon any system to defend either our understanding or senses; and we but expose them farther when we endeavour to justify them in that manner. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always increases, the farther we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it. Carelessness and in-attention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason I rely entirely upon them; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and internal world...* (T218)
7. This position does, of course, accord with Hume's view regarding the lack of intelligibility of a natural belief. All natural beliefs - those generally accepted being the belief in causality, in a continuing self, and in body - are such that, despite their irresistibility and importance to us, they cannot be rendered intelligible. For example, the question "What is the necessary connection between a cause and an effect of that cause?" may also not be well-formed, since there may not be such connections between objects. In any case, the habit generated in the mind which leads to the belief in a necessary connection between objects cannot be used to explain the necessary connection between objects - only the belief in such connections.
8. This will be discussed shortly when we come to the passage in which Philo suggests how to stop the infinite regress charge.
9. Nathan records the passage in question as follows: *And were I obliged to defend any particular system of this nature ... I esteem none more plausible than that which ascribes an internal, inherent principle of order to the world; though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once solves all difficulties; and if the solution, by being so general, is not entirely complete and satisfactory, it is, at least, a theory, that we must sooner or later, have recourse to whatever system we embrace. How could things have been as they are, were there not an original, inherent principle of order somewhere in thought or in matter?*
10. We need not state his (and Cleanthes') criticisms here.