



A Word on Behalf of Demea

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A WORD ON BEHALF OF DEMA

Little attention has been given to the a priori argument for God's existence espoused by Demea in Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. This circumstance is neither surprising nor unjustified. Given Hume's well-known theological sympathies, certainly no one would be tempted to regard Demea as Hume's spokesman.¹ Demea's argument plays so small a role in the Dialogues as to suggest that Hume does not take it at all seriously. He may present it only to establish that he is aware of alternative arguments for God's existence, but thinks them even less successful than the design argument and hence undeserving of extensive critique.

Yet, if a philosopher criticizes an argument he deems unworthy of respect, he should still provide sound, not spurious, reasons for rejecting it. This is exactly what D.C. Stove has argued that Hume fails to do in Part IX of the Dialogues, assuming, as is generally done, that the speeches of Cleanthes and Philo present reasoning that Hume would personally endorse.² Stove argues that most of the criticisms of Demea's argument are "extremely defective, and that they even include an inconsistency" (Stove, p. 300). This contention has been challenged by Donald Stahl, who has published a succinct point by point rebuttal of Stove's contentions.³ The Stove-Stahl controversy only deals with the reasoning presented in paragraphs 5, 6, 7, and 10 of Part IX because those are the contentions Stove attacks. He has "nothing to say against" the criticisms presented in paragraphs 8 and 9, which he assumes will be generally agreed to be

less important than the others (Stove, p. 308). He totally ignores the argument of paragraph 11.

However, I am not convinced that the criticisms of these paragraphs are less important and I do have something to say against them. Consequently, instead of intervening directly on either side of the dispute between Professors Stove and Stahl, I shall attend principally to the argumentation of paragraphs 8, 9, and 11. I shall (1) summarize Demea's argument, (2) argue for the significance of the criticisms of paragraphs 8-9, (3) examine those criticisms, and (4) assess the role of Philo's concluding remarks in paragraphs 10-11.

1. Demea's Argument

Early on Hume has Demea speak so obviously inconsistently as to make the reader wonder whether this character is supposed to think at all about the implications of the claims he espouses. At the beginning of Part II, he proclaims that God's existence is surely not at issue, since no one of common sense ... ever entertained a serious doubt with regard to a truth so certain and self-evident."⁴ The nature of God is the only proper object of theological inquiry, and that is "altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us" (D 141)! Given such a radically apophatic position (Hume calls it "mystical"), it is hardly surprising that the sceptical Philo readily concurs, once he specifies that he takes 'God' to mean just "the original cause of this universe (whatever it be)" (D 142). But Demea immediately buttresses his alleged self-evident truth by appealing to the authority of Father Malebranche and the whole tradition of Christian theology, apparently oblivious to the impropriety of

supporting an indubitable truth by citing authorities (D 141-142). Further, scarcely more than a page later, after Cleanthes has sketched out the design argument, this same Demea is horrified that Cleanthes gives no abstract arguments or a priori proofs and calls for a "demonstration of the being of a God" (D 143).

When, in Part IX, Demea himself undertakes to provide the "simple and sublime argument a priori" (D 188) he expected from Cleanthes, he characterizes the argument as "the common one," which suggests he is more engaged in paraphrasing authority than in thoughtfully arguing. The argument, in fact, as has been generally recognized, closely follows one given by Samuel Clarke in the Boyle Lectures of 1704.⁵ Demea begins by assuming that "whatever exists must have a cause or reason of its existence," (D 188) since nothing can cause itself to exist. He then states a dilemma: in tracing the causal ancestry of present existences, either one traverses an infinite series of causes without an ultimate cause or else one ends with an ultimate cause which exists necessarily. Next he claims that he can prove that the first horn of this dilemma is absurd. But the subsequent reasoning does not attack the idea that the causal succession is infinite, as the statement of the dilemma leads one to expect. Quoting the text,

In the infinite chain or succession of causes and effects, each single effect is determined to exist by the power and efficacy of that cause which immediately preceded; but the whole eternal chain or succession, taken together, is not determined or caused by any thing: And yet it is evident that it requires a cause or reason, as much as any particular object, which begins to exist in time. The question is still

reasonable, why this particular succession of causes existed from eternity, and not any other succession, or no succession at all. If there be no necessarily existent Being, any supposition, which can be formed, is equally possible; nor is there any more absurdity in nothing's having existed from eternity, than there is in that succession of causes, which constitutes the universe. What was it, then, which determined something to exist rather than nothing, and bestowed being on a particular possibility, exclusive of the rest? External causes, there are supposed to be none. Chance is a word without a meaning. Was it nothing? But that can never produce any thing. We must, therefore, have recourse to a necessarily existent Being, who carries the REASON of his existence in himself; and who cannot be supposed not to exist without an express contradiction. There is consequently such a Being, that is, there is a Deity. (D 188-189)

Demea does not arrive at the Deity by tracing the chain of causes from present existence to a temporally first cause. Instead of terminating the causal series, he adopts the standpoint of one who believes in an infinite causal succession and argues that there must be a reason for the existence of the whole series. Clarke makes much the same move, but is more explicit about his motives. Although he believes that the causal series actually did begin to exist some finite time ago, he declines to argue "from the supposed Impossibility of Infinite Succession" because he thinks there are no sound arguments against the possibility of the infinite. That the world is temporally finite can be known only by revelation (Clarke, pp. 24, 71-74). Given how Demea initially phrases his dilemma, and given the good Christian character with which Hume endows him, surely we must suppose that

Demea, too, would have been perfectly happy to give a proof whose conclusion closely conformed to the orthodox doctrine of creation, had it been possible to do so. This supposition will be recalled shortly.

2. The Importance of Paragraphs 8-9

It will be useful to orient ourselves by surveying all the criticisms Demea's interlocutors propose. Cleanthes' objections are found in paragraphs 5-9 and Philo adds his in paragraphs 10-11. They are:

- Para. 5 The non-existence of anything is conceivable and therefore not demonstrable.
- Para. 6 'Necessary existence' is a meaningless or contradictory expression.
- Para. 7 The material universe may be the necessarily existent being.
- Para. 8 The causal relation implies both temporal priority and coming-to-be and therefore cannot pertain to something eternal.
- Para. 9 The sum of the causal accounts of the parts of a collection of entities is the causal account of the whole collection because the whole is an arbitrary mental construct, not another entity.
- Para. 10 That the digits composing any product of 9 always add up to some lesser product of 9 at first seems to evidence either design or a remarkable stroke of chance, but it can be shown to be entirely due to numerical necessity. Similarly, things may be disposed as they are simply because that arrangement is necessitated by the nature of matter.

Para. 11 A priori arguments convince only a select few habituated to abstract reasoning and are thus ineffectual foundations for religion.

This summary makes it easy to apprehend a pattern in these objections. Paragraph 5 is a general argument against all a priori demonstrations of "matters of fact," which Cleanthes, ironically, proclaims as "entirely decisive" reasoning upon which he is "willing to rest the whole controversy," although he immediately proceeds to give four particular arguments against Demea's a priori proof. These latter criticisms are of two sorts. Those proposed in paragraphs 6 and 7 attack the concept of a necessarily existent deity, first on intensional, then on extensional grounds.⁶ Those of paragraphs 8 and 9 attack Demea's use of causal reasoning to move from any particular existence to an ultimate explanation. Philo's remarks, contained in paragraphs 10 and 11, are of an entirely different order.

This pattern suggests that the argument of paragraph 5 may be especially significant, as its being first in the set of objections and Cleanthes' claims for it also intimate. It does not, however, support Stove's contention that paragraphs 6 and 7 are more important than paragraphs 8 and 9. A case can be made for the converse. Demea's a priori proof is not a version of the ontological argument, which begins with the concept of a necessarily existent being and proceeds to deduce the actual existence of that being. Demea's argument instead concludes with a necessarily existent being because it seems that such a being is required to provide a complete causal explanation of particular existences. This difference

is crucial for assessing the relative significance of objections to the argument.

The history of knowledge is replete with inferences to the existence (or non-existence) of entities, from Democritean and Platonic atoms to black holes, whose antecedent probability was vanishingly low but whose existence (or non-existence) seemed requisite for a complete account of the phenomena. Aristotle thought that the concept of an atom (an indivisible magnitude -- whether a Platonic plane or a Democritean solid) was incoherent; and it is not clear that we have yet definitively settled its status. What is clear is that his arguments did not deter subsequent atomists, such as Epicurus. In the Treatise, Hume himself argues for the existence of colored points, the concept of which seems at least as absurd as, perhaps far more absurd than, the concept of necessary existence.⁷ He requires the points to make his account of visual experience complete. What these cases show is that an idea which is prima facie incoherent may be accepted nevertheless if it is requisite for completing an explanatory account. It is therefore important that Cleanthes' arguments in paragraphs 8 and 9 succeed lest his previous a priori strictures on 'necessary existence' be overridden by the exigencies of explanatory completeness.

3. Criticism of Paragraphs 8-9

Do they succeed? Cleanthes' first complaint about Demea's inference to a "general cause or first author" is that nothing which exists eternally can have a cause, since the concept of cause "implies a priority in time and a beginning of existence" (D 190). He provides no further defense of this dictum.

Were Demea less a disciple and more a philosopher, he could reply to this criticism in two ways.

First, he could point out that his argument does not require that the causal series be eternal; and, as I have suggested above, it is likely that he would be happier if he could show that it was not. Demea allows the chain of causes to be eternal only for purposes of a reductio argument, i.e. because he believes that its very unendingness entails that the entire series have "a cause or reason, as much as any particular object, which begins to exist in time" (D 188). Demea's reductio is directed at the inadequacy of a non-terminating causal account, not at any impossibility of there being an infinite series of intermediate causes and effects. Here he faithfully echoes Clarke, who makes a similar declaration, "because Duration in this Case makes no Difference" (Clarke, p. 26). However, where Demea rather awkwardly jumps from talk of causes for particular entities to talk of a cause of the whole succession, Clarke is more forthcoming about why the whole requires a cause. He assumes that whatever exists does so either necessarily or by virtue of some cause. He stresses that "no One Being in this Infinite Succession is supposed to be Self-existent or Necessary ... but every one Dependent on the foregoing." Clarke's point is that the whole series requires some "Original Independent Cause" precisely because "where no Part is necessary, 'tis manifest the whole cannot be necessary" (Clarke, p. 25).⁸ But if not necessary, it must be caused; and the only way to avoid a viciously infinite regress is to terminate explanation in an uncaused cause. The essential element in Clarke's, and Demea's, notion of 'cause' is not temporal priority but that determinate

"power and efficacy" (D 188) which produces any effect. If the causal series happens to be temporally unending, so that any cause depends on an antecedent cause, then there could be no determinate causal efficacy anywhere in the series unless the whole were determined by some atemporal condition.⁹

In effect, Demea and Cleanthes confront us with different intuitions about what is more important in causal explanation. They apparently agree that causes typically both temporally precede and produce their effects. But whereas Demea is willing to sacrifice temporal precedence for a complete account of production, Cleanthes is willing to truncate explanation to retain temporal precedence of cause to effect. Their disagreement echoes an ancient dispute about the appropriateness of seeking a cause for that which is eternal. Aristotle complains that Empedocles failed to provide a reason for the eternal cosmic alternation between attractive and repulsive forces and that Democritus claimed that showing that something always happens suffices to explain it. That is a mistake, he contends, because "it is always true that the angles of a triangle equal two right angles, but there is another cause (or 'reason', αἴτιον) for this eternal fact" (Physics @ .1 252a26 - 252b5). Aristotle's point is that although this theorem is eternally true it still requires explanation, because its truth depends on its deducibility from self-evidently true axioms. If using a mathematical case seems a bit sneaky, a physical one can be substituted (although finding possibly eternal physical states of affairs is not easy). Suppose all matter is eternally in motion. It doesn't follow that there is no cause for that eternal fact. Democritus says there is not,

but Aristotle assures us that there is, indeed, must be. Demea's point is similar: the causal series may have always existed, but since it didn't have to exist, there must be some reason why it does. An eternal effect of course requires an eternal cause.¹⁰

If causation is essentially power and efficacy, temporal precedence is not requisite. It is not even plausibly requisite unless causation is essentially regular succession. Although that is certainly Hume's view, it is not argued for in the Dialogues, although it may be insinuated in Philo's criticism of Cleanthes' empirical arguments. Temporal precedence of cause to effect is not a datum of experience but a feature of one's theory of causation. That is sufficiently well shown by the fact that Aristotle argues that causes must be simultaneous with their effects (Post. Ana. B.12), countless philosophers have supposed that they may be simultaneous with their effects, and a few have even supposed that effects may precede causes. Cleanthes does not provide any argument for causes never being simultaneous with their effects, nor does Hume elsewhere provide a sound argument for it.¹¹

Demea could also avail himself of an et tu quoique response, which circumstance may have amused the ironic Hume. Cleanthes, too, argues to an "Author" (D 143, 155, 163) or "original cause" (D 153) of the world, albeit on the basis of apparent design rather than ontological insufficiency. His present objection is that there can be no "general cause or first author" of an infinite causal sequence. So his own argument is secure from his own criticism only to the degree that the universe can be shown to be temporally finite. Indeed, Cleanthes attempts to esta-

blish precisely that in Part VI; but the best argument he can produce is that if the world were eternal, cherry trees, vines, sheep, swine, dogs, and grain would have arrived in various parts of the globe earlier than they in fact did (D 173). Clarke's frank admission that he knows of no sound refutation of temporal infinity seems immensely dignified beside this pitiful argument. Cleanthes' second complaint about Demea's use of causal inference, in paragraph 9, has both an ontic and an epistemic aspect. On the ontic side, it is that the whole chain of beings is only a product of "an arbitrary act of the mind" and does not independently exist in nature. The epistemic side is that there is no explanatory utility in inquiry into the cause of a whole if the causes of its component parts are known. The epistemic aspect is elicited by an example:

Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable, should you afterwards ask me, what was the cause of the whole twenty. This is sufficiently explained in explaining the cause of the parts. (D 190-191)

Would the sort of separate causal accounting envisaged by Cleanthes be adequate, or even possible? His claim may seem to work for twenty grains of sand on the beach; but does it work for twenty particles of shell in the body of a mollusk on that same beach? Do shells and shell particles exist in nature or is there only calcium carbonate? Suppose the twenty particles are bits of graphite constituting the tip of the pencil I use to line out an infelicitous expression in this manuscript. An account which traced either 'pencil lead particles' or 'line particles' from their present disposition to their first formation

would leave out a great deal, notably everything to do with pencils and lines. Have we explained the line on the page when we have collected the causal genealogies of each of the graphite particles of which it is composed? The idea seems patently absurd, as does the notion that those particles are united into a whole by an "arbitrary act of the mind," unless we are to suppose that neither animals nor their artifacts are found in "the nature of things." Although that degree of scepticism may be found in the Treatise, neither Cleanthes nor the sceptical Philo proposes it in the Dialogues for the very good reason that its truth would be as damaging to their views and to common sense as to Demea's argument. Even in the inorganic realm, what is to count as a non-arbitrary "particle of matter"? A chunk? A molecule? But these are wholes. Cleanthes' criticism evidently relies on the truth of atomism, whether of bodies or colored points, which also is not argued for in the Dialogues. But it is not clear that even that would salvage his argument. Let us take as our atoms a hundred ballots in a ballot box. We might ask why this ballot is in the box, to which the answer might be "because John Smith placed it there." This question could be repeated for every ballot in the box. But surely it is also appropriate to ask why all these ballots, or any ballot, is in the box, to which the answer is "because there is a special referendum today." This explanation is not contained in the explanations of how each ballot got there, indeed those explanations provoke, rather than answer, the question as to why all these individuals are performing similar acts. On the other hand, a satisfactory answer to the question about the whole collection also

explains why John Smith et alia placed their ballots there.

Besides, Cleanthes' example is only tangentially relevant to Demea's argument. Demea is talking about a "chain or succession" of causes and effects in which each member causally depends on its predecessors, but Cleanthes instances a 'collection' of material particles. He substitutes a primarily spatial whole in which the connection of the parts is arbitrary for a primarily temporal one whose parts are linked together by a single causal history. This move lends his claim what little plausibility it may have, because sometimes it is 'unreasonable' to ask for an explanation of a whole whose spatially contiguous parts have already been explained. But it is not unreasonable to ask for some further explanation of a causally connected series of particulars. That is just what we do when we search for the explanation of an entire series of chemical or physical reactions or, in historical explanation, for a series of human actions. There doubtless is some arbitrariness both in the level of generality and in the temporal point at which we stop, since those depend on what question we have posed. Why should the question as to the reason for the whole universe, assuming the whole to be causally interconnected, be declared out of bounds? If the world is bound together with causal glue, the arbitrary act of the mind lies in the inquirer's prying this whole apart into apparently independent parts rather than in constructing it from those parts. Demea concludes there are no independent parts, and Cleanthes gives no argument to prove him mistaken. In presuming causal atomism, he is at least equally guilty of the arbitrariness of which he accuses Demea.

Cleanthes is also oblivious to some of the consequences of his criticism. As previously noted, Cleanthes himself argues, not that God is the direct cause of the world, but that he is its ultimate cause. Consider his use of the propagating books example in Part III. The particular causes of each volume are its animate or vegetative progenitors, yet Cleanthes wishes to infer the existence of an "original cause" or author (D 153).¹² But were the universe "sufficiently explained" by particular causal accounts, there could not be an original cause. The ironic Hume seems to be toying with his characters again. We may imagine that Cleanthes would try to evade this consequence by claiming that whereas explaining purposeful order requires tracing causes until one arrives at an intelligence, explaining sheer genesis need not go beyond the first efficacious existent. But Demea is saying precisely that if every finite existent is conditioned, then no one of them is efficacious.¹³

I have said that the criticisms proposed by Philo are of a different order. In fact, the first one, presented in paragraph 10, does not attack Demea's proof at all! Philo contends that just as the remarkable properties of all integers having a factor of 9 are not due either to design or chance but to mathematical necessity, most probably "the whole oeconomy of the universe is conducted by a like necessity" (D 191). Here I shall momentarily forswear my resolve not to intervene directly in the dispute between Professors Stove and Stahl. Stove contends that Philo here takes the material world to exist necessarily, contradicting Cleanthes' arguments, in paragraphs 5 and 6, respectively, that 'necessary

existence' is either impossible or meaningless (Stove, pp. 306-7). Stahl correctly notes that Philo does not attribute necessity to the existence of the world but only to its "order," "disposition," or "oeconomy" (Stahl, p. 507). He does not draw the obvious conclusion that Philo's remarks therefore have no bearing whatsoever on the cosmological argument, although they weigh heavily against Cleanthes' design argument. If the order of the world is necessary, it neither requires nor permits the hypothesis of an external cosmic designer.

Kemp Smith tells us that Philo "approves Cleanthes' reasonings" (D 116). Maybe; but that is far from transparently evident. There are a number of clues which suggest that Philo is only feigning agreement as entrée only to renewing his attack on Cleanthes' arguments. Philo's opening remarks in paragraph 10 are quite equivocal:

Though the reasonings, which you have urged, CLEANTHES, may well excuse me, said PHILO, from starting any farther difficulties; yet I cannot forbear insisting still upon another topic. (D 191)

Then he proceeds to offer an argument whose real target, as we have just seen, must be Cleanthes, not Demea. Paragraph 11 begins with "But dropping all these abstractions, continued PHILO; and confining ourselves to more familiar topics..." (D 191), which also could indicate something less than full confidence in the preceding arguments. True, some of Cleanthes' criticisms echo familiar Humean positions, notably the proclamation in paragraph 5 of what Stove calls Hume's "favorite maxim," the principle that matters of fact are indemonstrable (Stove, p. 303). But does Cleanthes successfully use the maxim to

refute Demea? Stove reasonably contends that it is irrelevant against Demea, who regards God's existence as a necessary truth rather than a matter of fact. Stahl defends Cleanthes by observing that "Hume's and Demea's conceptual frameworks are so disparate that any comparison of views is likely to involve begging questions," coupled with the taunt that Demea begged the first question by defining God as existent (Stahl, p. 506).¹⁴ Is this not a roundabout admission that Demea is not refuted, as declaring oneself the winner and leaving the battlefield is one way to lose?

Whether or not Hume is signaling that some of these arguments are faulty, it is noncontroversial that he distrusts any a priori argument, or "abstract reasoning," which is not "concerning quantity or number."¹⁵ Now, all the arguments of Part IX, prior to the final paragraph, seem to be non-quantitative a priori arguments: Demea's argument, Cleanthes' criticisms of it, and Philo's oblique contribution in the penultimate paragraph. The first of Cleanthes' criticisms, that of paragraph 5, stands apart from the others in being metaontological, i.e., it is just the enunciation of Hume's "favorite maxim," that matters of fact or existence cannot be demonstrated. If this really is "entirely decisive" as Cleanthes says, then the subsequent arguments are gratuitous. One is reminded of the adage that philosophers only give many arguments when they are unconvinced by any one of them.

In the closing paragraph, Philo reverts to this metaontological level to proffer his only observation on Demea's proof. His point is deceptively simple, namely that a priori theistic arguments typically appeal only to those whose success with mathe-

mathematical discovery has led them to expect similar success in applying those same deductive methods to metaphysics and theology.¹⁶ Most people, however inclined to religious belief they may be, are not convinced by such arguments. Philo apparently intends that this majority represent the conclusion that would be reached by a relatively uncorrupted intellect -- one more concerned with practical experience than with abstractions. Thus his remark is, in effect, a psychological explanation of how a few, corrupted by mathematics, are led to violate Hume's favorite maxim. His observation about ordinary folk being suspicious of a priori theological arguments seems accurate (as anyone who has introduced the ontological argument to undergraduates is well aware), even if open to the retort that the most trustworthy judge of any subject should be the expert in that field, not the masses. But if the results of philosophical theology are as negative as Philo believes them to be, and its very practice a misbeguided hybris about the powers of the intellect erected on a category mistake, there are no genuine experts in that field. That these metaphysically inclined reasoners are few and unable to influence many persons suggests an explanation of why Hume does not lavish attention on Demea's argument comparable to that he gives to Cleanthes'.

It is interesting that this is the one clearly empirical claim in the whole set of objections (despite its being called a "certain proof" in the final sentence (D 192)). It also is the only criticism that even Demea is depicted as accepting, confessing at the start of Part X that one seeks God "from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning" (D 193). It echoes the

doctrine of The Natural History of Religion, which traces the quest for the divine to anxious "hopes and fears" rather than any "speculative curiosity."¹⁷ It may well have been the one Hume found most convincing.

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1. Although he does sometimes seem to speak for Hume through the beliefs he shares with Philo and through part of his criticism of Cleanthes' argument in Part III. There is also a sense in which all of the characters speak for Hume, not just because he wrote all their speeches, but because each represents some tendency to belief formation found in us all.
2. D.C. Stove, "Part IX of Hume's Dialogues," Philosophical Quarterly 28 (1978), pp. 300-309.
3. Donald E. Stahl, "Hume's Dialogue IX Defended," Philosophical Quarterly 34 (1984), pp. 505-507.
4. David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. Norman Kemp Smith (London, 1947), p. 141. Hereafter cited as 'D', followed by the relevant page number(s).
5. Published as A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More Particularly in Answer to Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza, and Their Followers (London, 1705). J.C.A. Gaskin suggests that there might have been some influence from Leibniz (Hume's Philosophy of Religion [London, 1978], p. 177, n. 2). Mossner writes that Demea "may be taken historically" as Clarke and Cleanthes as Bishop Butler (The Life of David Hume [Oxford, 1980], p. 319). I am uncertain what being "taken historically" means, but unqualified identification of the doctrines of Hume's characters with historical personages seems extreme. For example, Demea sometimes cites, and more often reflects, the views of Malebranche. See John Wright's comment in The Sceptical Realism of David Hume (Minneapolis, 1983), n. 68, pp.185-186.

6. Together they form an inconsistent set, since if a necessarily existent being is impossible, the material world could hardly instantiate it.
7. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (London, 1888), Bk. I, Part II, Sect. III-V, pp. 33-65. Hereafter cited as 'T', followed by the relevant page number(s).
8. He is far from clearly right in this. Formally, the argument commits the fallacy of composition. We cannot infer that a 'whole', say, mankind, is perishable because all men are perishable. Metaphysically, it would seem crucial whether the parts were finite or infinite, and whether the whole is merely the collection of the parts or has characteristics of its own. If the whole is only a finite collection of parts each of which is perishable, then it would seem the whole must be perishable as well. But Clarke (and Demea) allows that the succession may be infinite, which would seem to permit, or even require, that the succession be analogous to Aristotle's view of time, according to which the whole (in one sense at least) is necessary (see the following note). Fortunately, the issue of the ontological status of the actual infinite need not be settled to deal with Cleanthes' criticism, since he provides no such considerations in defense of his claim. They would have been even more relevant to his suggestion in paragraph 7 that the world itself might be necessary.
9. If power and efficacy are omitted, and only temporal succession is involved, the argument seems very weak indeed. Consider Aristotle's view of time. For Aristotle, every part of time must perish but the whole of time is necessary precisely because each part must have an antecedent and a successor. But this analogy points up the ambiguity of 'the whole', since the entire collection of temporal sequences is never actualized. When Aristotle argues for an unmoved mover, his case depends on cause and effect being simultaneous. It is this simultaneous sequence of "power and efficacy" which is taken to imply a first efficient cause. Even the introduction of temporal succession into the concept of causation may fatally weaken the argument, since the question of the cause of the present whole may be answered in terms of the

total of everything immediately past, and so on, ad infinitum.

10. In Part VIII, Philo revives a version of the Epicurean cosmology as an alternative to Cleanthes' teleological theory. In the course of expounding that view, he responds to Demea's suggestion that motion implies a first mover by claiming that it is just as likely, a priori, that it is inherent in matter (D 182-183). Some variation on this argument would seem a better response to the argument of Part IX than anything actually used there (there would be a similarity to the argument of paragraph 7, on which see note 13 below). Perhaps it is not used because Philo can't claim that such an hypothesis rules out a first cause, even though it suggests that the first cause might be matter itself. If being the cause of motion and all the forms brought about thereby qualifies it to be "cause of this universe," then, by Philo's definition of God in Part II, matter would be God.
11. Hume does give an argument at T 76, but it is not sound. Even though he subsequently adopts a position which is in spirit Humean, Robert Fogelin shows this argument for the temporal precedence of cause to effect to be quite defective ("Kant and Hume on Simultaneity of Causes and Effects," Kant-Studien 67 (1976), pp. 51-59).
12. In Part III Cleanthes makes clear that he is seeking a single intelligent cause of apparently purposive phenomena, despite having proximately causal explanations of them; see J. Dye, "Superhuman Speech and Biological Books," HPQ 5:3 (1988), pp. 263-264. If this is permissible for explanations of teleological order but not for explanations of existence, Cleanthes neglects to provide any justification for this disparity between the two cases.
13. Cleanthes' criticism in paragraph 7, that were something to exist necessarily (which he thinks false or meaningless) that something might be the material world itself, would be harder for Demea to answer. Surely the contingency of parts need not imply the contingency of the whole, as Demea assumes, any more than the movement of the parts of a clock implies the movement of the clock. But since Cleanthes rejects the idea of necessary existence, and in paragraph 9 rejects the world

(the whole), he must assert the paragraph 7 criticism only counterfactually. Which is too bad, since it is the best of the lot.

14. This is false. Demea does not define God at all and seems to think that is beyond our limited abilities. He gives a cosmological, not an ontological, argument. The attribute of necessary existence is determined by the exigencies of explaining the existence of the causal series, not from definition.
15. David Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd Ed. (Oxford, 1975), Sect. XII, Part III, pp. 163-165.
16. Here it is difficult to suppress the idea that Hume must be thinking of Leibniz as well as Clarke.
17. David Hume, The Natural History of Religion, II.