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# *Challenges to the Cosmological Argument—Ways 1 & 2*

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## Student notes:

### 1 Three famous criticisms:

- (a) Hume attacking the link between causes and effects
- (b) The Fallacy of Infinite Regression
- (c) The Fallacy of Composition

### 2 Hume attacking the link between causes and effects

- (a) You cannot see the link between causes and effect but we assume it based on what we have observed to happen in our past experience
- (b) Habit makes us link cause and effect together
- (c) Hume challenges Aquinas, arguing that there is no justification for saying:

*that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always the same (Treatise on Human nature, 1739)*

- (d) Hume disagrees with Aquinas' claim that '*In the world of sense we find that there is an order of efficient cause*' (*Summa Theologica*)
- (e) What would Hume have to say about the following claims:

The sun will rise tomorrow

Every man has a mother

Staying on a sinking ship is foolish

Jumping off skyscrapers is stupid

- (e) Hume's point:

Hume is highlighting the assumption that nature is uniform and rational and this attacks the first part of Way 3.

However, we cannot logically demonstrate this

So, Aquinas cannot assume that every event has a cause; Aquinas assumes this

- (f) Hume questions why God must be the ultimate cause?

*'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, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world'*

What is Hume arguing for?

### 3 The Fallacy of Regression problem

- (a) Why do philosophers usually reject the idea that there are infinite regressions?
- (b) Explain in your own words the problem with using the idea of infinite regression to criticise the Cosmological argument

## 5 Is the Fallacy of Composition convincing

- (a) Hume argued that if we have explained the cause of each event in a series then it is unreasonable to ask what event caused the whole series.

e.g. suppose that 5 people come to my classroom. We can investigate why each of the people has come to my class room. Hume would then say it is unreasonable to make the following statement: 'I agree that we have explained why each person is here, but now I want know why the whole group is here'

- (b) Bertrand Russell gave the following example:

every individual human being has a mother but it is a fallacy to assume that the human species as a whole has a mother

*Obviously the human race hasn't a mother that's a different logical sphere* (Bertrand Russell, 1967, *Why I am not a Christian*).

## 6 Responding the Fallacy of Composition

- (a) G.E.M. Anscombe has responded to Hume's argument by pointing out that you could conclude that '*existence must have a cause*' without believing or knowing that '*such particular effects must have such particular causes*'. (G.E.M. Anscombe, 1974)
- (b) Anscombe gives the example of a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat, pointing out that you can imagine a rabbit '*coming into being without a cause*' but this tells us nothing about '*what is possible to suppose 'without contradiction or absurdity' as holding in reality*'. (G.E.M. Anscombe (1974))