

which they are employed to establish ; but not as logical processes. Let us look at them in succession, and mark, as rapidly as possible, the weakness inherent in them as logical processes. This would indeed, had I nothing ulterior in view, be an ungrateful task ; but the brief criticism I am to give is intended to lead up to, and terminate in, a statement of what seems to me the proper way of treating the subject.

I notice, first, the *argumentum a contingentia mundi*, which, from the bare datum of nature as a reality, infers a self-existent necessary Being. If any thing exists (I give the syllogism in the words of Kant), a necessary Being must exist. Now I at least exist. Consequently there exists a necessary Being. The only difficulty here lies in the Major Premiss, which itself needs proof. The proof given for it is, in substance, as follows : On the hypothesis that something exists, it must, if contingent, have had a cause ; if that cause be contingent, it also must have had a cause ; and so on, till the series of contingent causes runs out, when we arrive at a great First cause, self-existent and necessary.—But (the sceptic will say) *must* the series of contingent causes run out ? Why may it not go on ad infinitum ? Impossible (you exclaim). Yes, but the question is, why impossible ? For my own part, I am satisfied that such a thing is impossible, but simply because I believe that the universe was created. I know of no law of the mind rendering it imperative on me to deny the possibility of an infinite series of causes, except in view of the truth considered as already established, that, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Instead therefore of inferring the existence of a Supreme Creator from the impossibility of an infinite series of contingent causes, I would rather be disposed to look upon the latter doctrine as a corollary from the former. At all events, any person who can be supposed to need proof of the Divine existence, may be equally supposed to need proof of the assertion that a chain of contingent causes can have only a finite number of links. As an instance in point : the late Professor Baden Powell, one of the authors of the well known "Essays and Reviews," indicates, in his contribution to that work, his opinion, that the universe has existed during all past time under necessary laws of physical causation, beyond which he suggests, rather than expressly affirms, that there is no God. Now, suppose that you undertake to give a logical refutation of this form of Atheism ; and that, in the course of your reasoning, you lay down as self-evident the principle that there cannot be an infinite series of contingent causes ; what is this but to assert, without proof, and as self-evident, the impossibility of the very thing which your opponent holds, and which it is the object of your argument to disprove ? In this way, of course, you succeed in refuting the Atheist ; but you do so simply by averring that he is in the wrong.

But suppose the syllogism quoted from Kant to be admitted : what then ? A necessary Being exists. This is only a small part of the doctrine of Christian Theism. *Pantheists* believe that an absolutely necessary being exists ; and they call this Being too by the sacred name of God—though their God is not ours—not the Author of the universe, nor even distinct from the universe, but merely the complement of actual existence. The whole line of reasoning followed in the *argumentum a contingentia mundi* is compatible with the idea