PHIL 3600 - Philosophy of Religion
Spring 2017
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<center>Handout: The Fine-Tuning Argument</center>

I. **The Fine-Tuning Argument**

Background claim: The universe is apparently fine-tuned for life in the following sense. The laws of physics and the initial conditions are "just right" for life (that is, only a very narrow range of all the ways the laws and initial conditions could have been support life, and our universe falls within that very narrow range).

Two hypotheses are *competing* =df. It is not possible that both are true.

<center>**The main principle:**</center>

Suppose you have evidence E and two competing hypothesis for E. Let's call our hypotheses H1 and H2.

Suppose that the probability of E given H2 is higher than the probability of E given H1.

Then E provides evidence for H2 over H1.

How strong is this evidence? Proportionate to the amount for which the probability of E given H2 is greater than the probability of E given H1.

P1.   The Main Principle.
P2.   The conditional probability of fine-tuning given random chance is extremely low.
P3.   The conditional probability of fine-tuning given the existence of God is high.

Conclusion: The fine-tuning of the universe provides evidence for the existence of God over random chance.

What the argument does not show. It doesn't show there is a God. It doesn't show that our total evidence supports the existence of God. It (at most) just shows that there is some evidence for the existence of God rather than random chance.

One concern about this argument is that it only considers two hypotheses. (Even so the argument might be sound – but still very limited in what it shows.)

The main principle, version 2:

A set of hypotheses is competing =df. At most one member of that set is true.

Suppose you have evidence E and a set of competing hypothesis for E. Call this set "S". Let H be a member of S.

Suppose that the probability of E given H is higher than the probability of E given any other member of S.

Then E provides evidence for H over the remaining members of S.

The Multiple Universes Hypothesis

"Maybe our universe is just one of very many universes, each differing randomly in its physical laws and initial conditions. (These may all presently co-exist, or might occur in sequence.) On this hypothesis, it is to be expected that some of these universes will be fine-tuned for life. The vast majority that aren't fine-tuned don't have anyone there to observe that fact. Of course we would be in one of the ones that is fine-tuned — that shouldn't surprise us."

A Reply: " … invoking some sort of many-universes generator as an explanation of the fine-tuning only kicks the issue of design up one level, to the question of who designed the many-universes generator" (Collins, "God, Design, and Fine-Tuning," §IV).

> *Rejoinder*: "That we need to appeal to an intelligent designer to explain the 'many-universe generator' (if there even is one) is much less clear than that the fine-tuning data needs to be explained."

Observation: strictly, the multi-universe hypothesis and theism are not competing. We'd need to build atheism into the multi-universe hypothesis (or that God creates only one universe) to get competition

A more serious concern: The coin-flip case. A run of 100 heads doesn't obviously give you a reason to think that there are million other people flipping coins. How is the multiverse hypothesis any better?