

## Two Factors in Criticizing Arguments Problems, #1, #2 Discussion

### *Assignment:*

1. **Ace:** Look, ordinary objects in the universe can't cause themselves to come into existence: people need parents to exist, chairs need carpenters, new drugs need chemists, dents require collisions, and so on. And every single ordinary thing does require *some* cause – it can't just come into existence out of nowhere. Also, this chain can't just trace back forever. So there had to be some original cause, outside of ordinary things, that started the whole chain of objects to exist – what we call “God”.

**Belinda:** That's not a good argument. Who say ordinary things can never just come into existence without a cause? For all we know, that might really happen. Also, maybe the chain of things really *does* go back forever.

The argument is being criticized for:

- ☐ having one or more false premises
- ☐ having a validity counterexample (being invalid)
- ☐ both (false premise, and invalid argument)

**Discussion:** To see which aspects of the argument are being criticized, it's very useful to put the argument into standard form.

1. Ordinary objects in the universe can't cause themselves to come into existence: people need parents to exist, chairs need carpenters, new drugs need chemists, dents require collisions, and so on.
2. Every single ordinary thing does require *some* cause – it can't just come into existence out of nowhere.
3. This chain can't just trace back forever.

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∴ There is some original cause, outside of ordinary things, that started the whole chain of objects to exist – what we call “God”

By claiming that it's possible for ordinary objects to come into existence without a cause, Belinda is suggesting that Premise 2 is false. And by claiming the chain of causes may actually go back forever, she is suggesting

that Premise 3 is false. So this argument is being criticized for **having one or more false premises**.

**Assignment:**

2. **Ivor:** Rex is a longhaired hippie who hasn't had a job in over a month. Now, we know that whoever broke into the church stole some gold decorations, which would get them several hundred dollars if fenced on the black market – enough money to keep a hippie in Twinkies® and drugs for weeks! Clearly, it was Rex who committed the burglary.

**Jack:** Just because Rex would stand to benefit from a burglary doesn't mean he actually did it. For instance, Ace could have profited from stealing the gold just as much as Rex. It could be that Ace paid for that fancy new GameBoy® of his by stealing and selling the church stuff, and Rex was an innocent bystander who just happens not to have had a job or haircut recently.

The argument is being criticized for:

- ☐ having one or more false premises
- ☐ having a validity counterexample (being invalid)
- ☐ both (false premise, and invalid argument)

**Discussion:** Ivor's argument in standard form is as follows.

1. Rex is a longhaired hippie who hasn't had a job in over a month.
2. Whoever broke into the church stole some gold decorations, which would get them several hundred dollars if fenced on the black market – enough money to keep a hippie in Twinkies® and drugs for weeks!

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∴ It was Rex who committed the burglary.

Here Jack is objecting that even if Ivor's premises are true, the conclusion doesn't follow. As evidence, Jack describes a possible way that could happen: where Ace committed the burglary, and Rex was an unbathed but innocent hippie. This is a validity counterexample: a possible situation where the premises of the argument are true, but the conclusion is false. So this argument is being criticized for **being invalid**.