



The Natural History of Religion

David Hume

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The only point of theology, in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal, is, that there is invisible, intelligent power in the world: But whether this power be supreme or subordinate, whether confined to one being; or distributed among several, what attributes, qualities, connexions, or principles of action ought to be ascribed to those beings, concerning all these points, there is the widest difference in the popular systems of theology.

The Natural History of Religion Details

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Omid Milanifard says

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Mohamedridha Alaskari **????** **???** **???????** **says**

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Mohammad Mahdi Fallah says

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Ahmad Shakir says

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Ali says

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Manuel Fernandez Garcia says

Magnífica reflexión en torno a la religión; como es habitual en Hume desgrana todo el universo religioso y pone su lupa en la irracionalidad de algo tan humano como la superstición. Destaca asimismo el nulo beneficio que la religión aporta a la sociedad, ya que sus acólitos están más interesados en ejercer las virtudes monacales como el ascetismo, el ayuno, el aislamiento, etc. que en practicar una moralidad y la virtud.

Lectura amenísima dada la claridad de exposición y la brevedad del libro.

Jakub Ferencik says

David Hume was known to be a sensitive intellectual. He recommended to “be a philosopher, but amidst all your philosophy, be still a man.” He was known for being civil and happy, content with being a public intellectual for the better good.

He was also the personal advisor to a British Ambassador in Paris and was very good friends with the famous economist and politician, Adam Smith.

He was somewhat of a skeptic and, unlike Descartes (who questioned all emotions and chose to believe only in what is rational), argued that we often times believe only in that which is emotional - which is not entirely a bad thing - at least from his point of view.

Here are some of my favorite quotes from this work:

You can find more on David Hume on my blog: <https://medium.com/@jakubferencik/int...>

The primary religion of mankind arises chiefly from an anxious fear of future events; and what ideas will naturally be entertained of invisible, unknown powers, while men lie under dismal apprehensions of any kind, may easily be conceived (31).

Thus it may safely be affirmed, that popular religions are really, in the conception of their more vulgar votaries, a species of demonism; and the higher the deity is exalted in power and knowledge, the lower of course is he depressed in goodness and benevolence; whatever epithets of praise may be bestowed on him by his amazed adorers (32).

it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of a man's morals, from the fervor or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincere (34-5).

The comfortable views, exhibited by the belief of futurity, are ravishing and delightful. But how quickly vanish on the appearance of its terrors, which keep a more firm and durable possession of the human mind?

(37)

The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspense of judgment appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny, concerning this subject. But such is the frailty of human reason, and such the irresistible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could scarcely be upheld; did we not enlarge our view, and opposing one species of superstition to another, set them a quarrelling; while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape into the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy. (37)

Salam Ch says

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Ali Alhaeri says

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M.Muslim says

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Baraa Qudah says

[illegible]

Andrew Georgiadis says

The calm, obscure regions of philosophy

This pamphlet traces the logical origins of belief in supernatural beings, both poly and oligotheistic traditions, with particular emphasis on Christianity and Mohametanism (Islam). Hume is an avowed deist, accepting of the teleological argument (that nature's complexity implies a Creator). With the 17th century information available to him, he cannot much be blamed. But he traces the logical consequences and dangers of religious piety, and how human nature and our desire for explanation led to polytheism, in turn rising to monotheism. This led to the contemporary evils and absurdities of religion which, we all notice, still redound in our modern discourse.

10001010001 says

Don't get tricked by the book title! It seemed like a pamphlet about the evolution of religion, but it's totally not about that. This "Natural" "History" of "Religion" should be read as: the development ("history") of human nature and its attitude ("natural") on transcendental affairs ("religion").

I have read some other works by Hume. He is the kind that a naive reader would sip in carelessly, perhaps even with a contempt smile, and then cause trouble from within. *A Treatise on Human Nature* seemed to be cumbersome at times, but here is the waking bell: Hume discussed moral issues in the middle of discussing pride/humility and beauty/ugliness. I almost had the déjà vu of reading *the Genealogy of Morality* when I was reading it. Voilà, this is Hume: as sedate as his style might be, he is undoubtedly subversive. He continued this style in his discourse on the religious emotions, and I felt it worth pointing out that Hume has completely restricted himself to the discussion of human affairs. He is not talking about the soundness of theology, but the effect of unsound theology might have on people; he refrained from the topic of the characters of gods, but how the believers forced some personalities onto their deities; he said nothing of the essence of devotion per se, but the various excuses human called devotion in order to justify their deeds. His viewpoint is very Nietzschean-Freudian (well, maybe we should say that conversely Nietzsche and Freud are Humeists). What differentiates Hume with Nietzsche and Freud is that he is prudent on this matter -- at the price that he is less well known than those two berserkers in Humanities division. Perhaps that's why Rousseau approached him and then... well. Different types just won't get along.

Hossam says

Very informative and engaging. The ending paragraph had me smiling like I'd just heard a joke from an old man.
