

A CRITIQUE OF HUME'S ANALYSIS

OF THE DESIGN ARGUMENT

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By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The purpose of this thesis is to show that Hume's criticisms of the Design Argument weakened considerably the logical foundation of this argument. Not only was Hume concerned to expose the logical weakness of the argument, but also to show the futility involved in formulating rational "demonstrations" for the existence, nature and attributes of God. It is my contention that Hume's damaging criticisms of the design argument helped to point out the necessity of "Faith and Revelation" to the theological discipline. Many modern-day theologians have come to see this, and as such are concentrating their attention upon existentialism, faith and divine revelation, rather than upon rational theistic demonstrations.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	v
CHAPTER I: An Assessment of Philo's concessions in Part XII of the <u>Dialogues</u> .	1
CHAPTER II: The compatibility of these con- cessions with the views held by Philo in Parts I-XI of the <u>Dialogues</u>	25
CHAPTER III: The compatibility of Philo's views in the <u>Dialogues</u> with Hume's general philosophical principles.	48
CHAPTER VI: Conclusion	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92

INTRODUCTION

The design argument has always been the most popular and persuasive of the arguments for God's existence. It occurs, in one form or another, in philosophical literature all through the ages, since Plato's Timaeus to the present day. Its prominence (as a proof for God's existence) has dwindled almost to insignificance in the more progressive theological circles, although it is still echoed (albeit faintly) by theologians of conservative theological circles. It also has been of considerable interest to philosophers as an intellectual exercise.

The design argument is persuasive because it appeals to the emotive and psychological aspects of man's nature from which its distinctive religious character arises. The argument draws attention to the order and harmony and beauty of the world which bespeak the handiwork of an intelligent designer who must, in all likelihood, exist. Immanuel Kant (though he, like Hume, was not convinced by this argument) respected it because of its persuasiveness. He writes:

This proof always deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and the most accordant with the common reason of mankind. It enlivens the study of nature, just as it itself derives its existence and gains even new vigour from that source. It suggests ends and purposes, where our observation would not have detected them by itself, and extends our knowledge of nature by means of the guiding-concept of a special

unity, the principle of which is outside nature. This knowledge again reacts on its cause, namely, upon the idea which has led to it, and so strengthens the belief in a supreme Author (of nature) that the belief acquires the force of an irresistible conviction.¹

Because of this emotionally persuasive character, the design argument has always been popular and probably will continue to be popular. Its logical status and its status as a proof qua proof of God's existence, however, have been seriously questioned by many philosophers. The logical status of the argument has also been the subject of many philosophical papers, among which the most thoroughgoing and outstanding is David Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. So thorough was Hume's critique that many scholars have proclaimed it fatal to the argument as a proof of the existence of God.²

The purpose of this paper is to show that this claim is indeed sound and that because of this (and similar claims) serious minded, progressive theologians are forced to take another hard look at theology—the look that in all likelihood is and will be responsible for their return to Faith

¹Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Translated by Norman Kemp-Smith, p. 520.

²Among those who hold the view that the Dialogues have fatally weakened the design argument are: Sir Leslie Stephen, (see his History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. 1, p.p. 288-289.) R. H. Hurlbutt. (See Hume, Newton and the Design Argument, p.p. 168 and 210.)

and Revelation, the true and proper domains of theology. For, although it is true that Hume succeeded in refuting the design argument, I do not think that this was his sole purpose in writing the Dialogues. It seems to me that in pointing out the logical weakness of the argument, Hume was at the same time exposing the absurdity, futility, and most of all, the irrelevance of attempting to prove the existence of God.³ And, I daresay, this is not at all far-fetched. For in the twelfth dialogue we see Philo (who as I shall contend, is the representative of Hume) giving a rather "plain, philosophical assent" to the "remote analogy" between the cause of the universe and human intelligence--in a sense, the foundation (weak as it is) upon which the design argument is based. And

³Not only was Hume concerned to dismiss the design argument, but he also pointed out the logical weakness of the ontological and cosmological arguments. He did not consider the latter two arguments to be very important, or at least not as important as the former. With regard to the ontological and cosmological arguments advanced by Demea in Part IX of the Dialogues, Hume points out that propositions "in which we assert the existence of anything" cannot be demonstrated a priori. "For the truth of a proposition can be demonstrated a priori only by showing that its negation would be self-contradictory; but whatever we conceive to exist we could equally well conceive not to exist." (See R. Wollheim, ed, Hume on Religion, p.p. 21-22). Furthermore, given Hume's empirical position it is impossible for the mind to create any new ideas, for it is not able to rise beyond sensible experience. (See Sir Leslie Stephens, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. 1, p.p. 267-268).

earlier in that same dialogue, he characterized philosophical and theological disputes between dogmatists and sceptics on matters concerning theism, as being "merely verbal—a dispute of words."

By pointing out the futility and irrelevance of philosophic proofs for God's existence, Hume at the same time leaves the avenues of Faith and Revelation open to theologians as alternatives. This does not mean, of course, that he himself adhered to any form of faith and revelation. The fact of the matter is that he did not believe in any kind of revelation, but this does not mean that he did not recognize the merits of revelation as the basis upon which religion should rest.⁴ And, it is by no means impossible or contradictory for one to recognize the merits of a particular point of view, while, at the same time, not supporting that point of view.

In order to support the above claim I shall first of all attempt to show that Philo speaks for Hume in the Dialogues. On this view Philo's position in the twelfth dialogue becomes less obscure. Adopting this view also strengthens my claim that Philo did not give his full support to the design

⁴Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 5, Part II, p.p. 114-115.

argument. This latter view, in my opinion, is mistaken. For, Philo's position in the twelfth dialogue can be shown to be compatible with Hume's major philosophical principles and, thus, not a support of design theology. This will be the subject of the first Chapter. In the second and third chapters, I shall attempt to show that Philo's contentions in the twelfth dialogue are consistent and compatible with the first eleven dialogues, and also with Hume's general philosophical principles; his analysis of causality, his analysis of the nature of belief, his moral sense theory, and also his treatment of the design argument in Section XI of the Enquiry. By so doing, it is hoped that Hume's reasons for dismissing the design argument as irrelevant to theology (that is, as a proof for God's existence) would be brought to the fore. And finally, in the last chapter, I shall attempt to assess the relevance and importance of the Dialogues to the modern-day theological trend.

The domain of 'faith and revelation', which Hume's Dialogues point out, as the proper place for theology is the domain to which modern day theologians (especially Protestant theologians) have turned and are turning. There are other factors responsible for this present trend; for example, the two world wars and the threat of a third, the threat of nuclear power, the unrest in the world, and the apparent futility which seems to characterize human existence. These

and other similar factors—factors which are indicative of the course of man's destiny—are also responsible for the theologian's interest in the God who reveals himself: the God of personal encounter. But Hume's damaging and violent treatment of the design argument as a proof for God's existence is also greatly responsible for this trend in modern theology. And to this extent Hume's Dialogues were probably ahead of their age—and to this extent also they are still very relevant to theology and will in all likelihood continue to be relevant for a long time to come.

CHAPTER 1

One of the most perplexing problems about Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion concerns the identity of the interlocuters. How perplexing a problem this is and has been can easily be seen by the various theories put forth by Humean Scholars. Among those who agree that Pamphilus' crowning of Cleanthes as the champion of the discussion represents the view of Hume, thus identifying Cleanthes as Hume's mouthpiece are: C. W. Hendel¹, Pringle-Pattison², A. E. Taylor³, Laing⁴, and Dugald Stewart⁵. Prof. J. E. Jessop refers to the Dialogues as "Hume's ambiguous work"⁶ thus pointing out how difficult it is to identify the three speakers.

¹C. W. Hendel, Studies in the Philosophy of David Hume, p.p. 306-307.

²A. S. Pringle-Pattison, Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy, p. 15.

³A. E. Taylor, "Symposium: The Present-Day Relevance of Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supp. Vol. XIII, p. 204.

⁴B. M. Laing, David Hume, p. 139.

⁵Dugald Stewart, Collected Works, ed. Sir William Hamilton, Vol. I, p. 605.

⁶T. E. Jessop, "Symposium: The Present-Day Relevance of Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion", p. 206-207.

Indeed, John Laird has held that none of the speakers represents Hume's own position⁷ (an interpretation which I find very difficult to agree with). Prof. James Noxon seems to hold the view that none of the three speakers really represents Hume's own position because Hume's intention in writing the Dialogues was not simply either to defend or to attack the argument from design but was of a more intricate nature. He contends that Hume's intention was to show that "the only tenable position on the question discussed in the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion is agnosticism"⁸—that is, to show that the discussion of the Dialogues is virtually futile. "I am sure that Hume wrote the Dialogues precisely in order to reveal the futility of such theological argument and to show that the only sensible course is to abandon such topics for what he calls 'the examination of common life'. It is obviously not futile to show that a certain kind of argument is futile, and I daresay that Hume himself thought it was very useful"⁹. This interpretation by Prof. Noxon is, on the face of it, quite tenable but I do not think that it is inconsistent

⁷J. Laird, "Symposium: The Present-Day Relevance of Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion", p. 206-207.

⁸J. Noxon, "Hume's Agnosticism", in Hume, ed. V. C. Chappel, p.p. 376-377.

⁹Ibid., p.p. 378-379.

with the view that Hume is represented by one of the interlocuters, to wit, Philo.

In the twelfth Dialogue Philo characterizes "the dispute concerning theism" as being "merely verbal"¹⁰—a position which is very close to the one which Hume puts forward when speaking for himself in a footnote¹¹. Prof. Noxon contends that Hume's position is of a different order from that of Philo's. But this by itself is not sufficient to show that Philo does not represent Hume. It is true of course that while Philo, on the one hand, speaks of the verbal nature of theistic disputes in connection with the impossibility of settling the degree of similarity between the divine mind and the human as being of the same nature as that of trying to settle the controversy about the beauty of Cleopatra or the greatness of Hannibal or the kind of praise that is due to Livy or Thucydides, Hume, on the other hand, speaks of the inherent difficulties which tend to render the whole discussion virtually unsolvable. But I am not sure that this difference is enough to warrant the conclusion that Philo is not speaking for Hume. For the important point brought out by both Philo and Hume (speaking for himself) is that the dispute between the dogmatists

¹⁰David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. N. Kemp-Smith, p. 218. (All references are made to this edition of the Dialogues.)

¹¹Ibid., p. 219.

and the sceptics on matters concerning theism is merely verbal. This is the significance of Philo's contention in Chapter XII and it is crucial to the entire discussion in the Dialogues. So crucial is the significance of Philo's contention that Hume sees fit to add more emphasis to it by adding the footnote.¹² I do not think that this interpretation in any way contradicts Prof. Noxon's contention that Hume wanted to show that agnosticism is the "only tenable position on the question discussed in the Dialogues,"¹³ but I do think that it undermines his contention (or what seems to be a contention) that Philo is not the representative of Hume.

Another kind of argument brought forward by Prof. Noxon to show that Philo was not the representative of Hume has to do with the quality of scepticism advocated by these two protagonists. Both Philo and Hume were sceptics. No one would want to dispute such a bold fact but Prof. Noxon contends that "...Philo's skepticism was of a different type from Hume's and of a type Hume consistently repudiated and condemned: Philo's skepticism is excessive skepticism or Pyrrhonism, a position which it is impossible to maintain consistently:..."¹⁴ While this contention is true, I do not think that it is

¹²Ibid., p. 219.

¹³J. Noxon, "Hume's Agnosticism", Op. Cit., p.p. 376-377.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 380

crucial to the view that Philo is the representative of Hume. One important point that must be borne in mind is that a representative is not the same as or identical with the person represented. It is not unusual for a representative (even in the form of a dialogue) to hold a slightly different position from that held by the person being represented. It is my contention that something of this nature is the case with regard to Hume's Dialogues. E. C. Mossner claims that because of Hume's "timidity", "... complete suspense of judgment was impossible to maintain; so the Pyrrhonian sceptic of the study became the mitigated sceptic of the salon."¹⁵ Hume the thinker differed from Hume the man--and these two sides of his character had to be reconciled. Hume was aware of the very delicate nature of the subject he was touching upon when he decided to attack religion. Is it any wonder, then, that he was so anxious to secure the post-humous publication of his Dialogues--a work which he kept beside him for about twenty-five years unpublished? This, according to Mossner, reflects the more timid, unheeded aspect of Hume's character¹⁶--an aspect which must be taken into consideration if the "riddle" of the Dialogues is to be solved. Norman Kemp-Smith also made reference to the timid, cautious aspect of Hume's charac-

¹⁵E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume", Mind XLV, No. 179, p. 347.

¹⁶Dialogues, p. 73.

ter as "his general policy of stating his sceptical positions with the least possible emphasis compatible with definiteness...."¹⁷ Of course it can be claimed that a certain amount of inconsistency is involved on Hume's part if it is allowed that Philo, at times, holds a slightly different position from what would be expected if a strict consistency on Hume's part is expected. But Hume's ability to create Philo with freedom of character without at the same time defeating his main purpose (that is, to create Philo as his representative) shows, at the same time, his ability to stimulate dramatic interest. With regard to consistency, though, I think I have to agree with Richard Wollheim when he says,

It would, I think, be a mistake to look for any way of removing or resolving all the inconsistencies that appear in Hume's writings on religion, and of extracting from them a rigorous and unified doctrine. Thorough-going consistency was not something he aimed at, nor would such an aim have been in keeping with his philosophical temperament. Hume had an inquiring, restless mind, chronically sceptical in its disposition, which no sooner adopted one intellectual position than he tried to see the best in all the arguments that would refute it. It was a mind that was naturally attuned to the dialogue form, and it is significant that Hume made a far more genuinely dramatic use of the form than either of his two great predecessors in the genre, Plato and Berkeley, whose sympathies as between the various participants are immediately and unambi-

¹⁷E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume", Op. Cit., p. 346.

guously declared. The dialogue form, however, not merely reflected, it also reinforced the ambiguities in Hume's position: The need for suspense, for drama, led him to strengthen the various competing attitudes so that they should be well-matched opponents.¹⁸

Mention has already been made of the difficulty in identifying the three interlocuters of the Dialogues and of the many conjectures that have been made in this respect. More often than not Philo, the skeptic, has been identified as the representative of Hume but this interpretation is not without its complexities. I shall join with A. G. Flew¹⁹, and E. C. Mossner²⁰, in agreeing with Norman Kemp-Smith---'an authority to whom all those who write and think about Hume are deeply indebted'²¹---"that Philo from start to finish represents Hume."²² The identification of Philo as the representative of Hume is by no means conjecture. Apart from the conclusive identification established by Kemp-Smith cited above, a careful reading of Hume's other major works will help to substantiate the view that Philo is indeed the representative of Hume. (Something of this nature will be atten-

¹⁸R. Wollheim, ed., Hume on Religion, p.p. 17-18.

¹⁹A. G. N. Flew, See his article in A Critical History of Western Philosophy, edited by D. J. O'Connor, p. 268.

²⁰E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume", Op. Cit., p. 334.

²¹R. Wollheim, ed., Op. Cit., p. 19.

²²Dialogues, p. 59.

pted in the third chapter of this paper.)

A major problem immediately crops up when the view that Philo represents Hume is maintained. This problem has to do with Philo's complete reversal (or what seems to be a complete reversal) in the position which he adopts in the twelfth dialogue. Here Philo seems to have conceded everything which he argued against all along in the earlier dialogues. Such a complete reversal of standpoint certainly makes one doubt whether Philo really is the representative of Hume. But such doubts can be dispensed with if it can be shown that the concessions which Philo made in the twelfth dialogue are after all very slight, if not insignificant. This is in fact what N. Kemp-Smith did in the introduction to his edition of the Dialogues.

I shall assess the concessions of Philo in Part XII of the Dialogues later in this chapter, but, for the present, I think it is safe to say that what seems to be a complete turn about in Philo's position was part of Hume's desire to stimulate interest. In a letter, Hume makes it clear that he wanted to avoid "that vulgar error of putting nothing but nonsense in the mouth of the Adversary"²³, but wanted his characters to be among the most intelligent scholars of the day. If Cleanthes is meant to represent the views of Joseph

²³Letters of David Hume, edited by J. Y. T. Greig, I, 154, (Cited by E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume", Mind XLV, No. 169, p. 346.

Butler (and it seems highly probable that for Hume Cleanthes was Butler), then it would not be very difficult to see why Hume (Philo) would show respect to him. E. C. Mossner points out that Hume admired Butler greatly and showed him great respect. So great was his admiration for him that he was anxious to have the Bishop read his Treatise in its unpublished form. In a letter to Henry Home, Hume expressed his desire to be introduced to Butler, thus making it possible for him to have the Bishop's comments on the Treatise.

Your thoughts and mine agree with respect to Dr. Butler, and I would be glad to be introduced to him. I am at present castrating my work, that is, cutting off its nobler parts; that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible, before which, I could not pretend to put it into the Doctor's hands. This is a piece of cowardice, for which I blame myself, though I believe none of my friends will blame me. But I was resolved not to be an enthusiast in philosophy, while I was blaming other enthusiasms.²⁴

Thus when Philo, in the twelfth dialogue, says that "no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed upon his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being,"²⁵ this does not necessarily mean that he has joined hands with Cleanthes thus throwing out all that he had argued for earlier, but rather, I think it should be taken as a careful

²⁴Letters of David Hume, I., p. 25.

²⁵Dialogues, p. 214.

manoeuvre on Hume's part--a manoeuvre which shows his respect for his opponent's integrity, and at the same time provides a point of agreement for the sake of argument, thus making it possible to go on to discuss a more crucial point, namely, the moral effects of the Deity on human lives. Of course, this is only an assumption, but it is highly probable that it is a true assumption.

I have already pointed out that Hume was aware of the delicate nature of the subject he was treating. Is it any wonder, then, that he was cautious, timid, and prudent in his manner of criticisms? E. C. Mossner says,

[The] essential timidity seems of a variety far more deeply ingrained than just the prudential desire not to offend the proprieties or to violate the laws of established society, This is not the place to recite the penalties, legal and extra-legal, then attached to radical dissent. But one instance or two may be cited to indicate how the threat of such penalties forced a conformity upon all thinkers. The Young George Berkeley, it will be recalled, visualizing a career in the Church, had to warn himself in the privacy of his Commonplace Book "To rein in your satirical nature," "To use utmost caution not to give the least handle of offence to the Church or Churchmen." Hume also tried to rein in his satirical nature, but Hume's position was far more difficult, as he had pushed past nominalism into scepticism. Hume had seen his friend, The pious Francis Hutcheson, prosecuted in 1737 by the Glasgow Presbytery, and three years later was himself exceedingly worried concerning a "Point of Prudence", knowing full well

that "the consequences are very momentous."²⁶ Hume's cautious attitude could also very well explain why he described Philo's sceptical position as "careless"; why he wrote to William Strahan stating that the sceptic was "indeed refuted", and "that he was only amusing himself by his cavils"²⁷; why he said that anyone expressing any kind of doubt with regard to the "Supreme Intelligence" must have attained a certain "pitch of pertinacious obstinacy."²⁸ Certainly, it is not unusual for an author to be modest when making remarks about the person who is representing his own position in a dialogue. In Hume's case the well known cliché "discretion is the better part of valour," could probably explain the position he held and the somewhat strange remarks he made concerning that position.

I must anticipate an objection at this juncture. It could be pointed out that one does not have to be discreet in a work to be published posthumously. But this objection can hold only if it was Hume's intention from the beginning to secure posthumous publication for his Dialogues. But this we do not know. It is probable that the idea of posthumous publication could have been the result of serious op-

²⁶E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume" Op. Cit., p.p. 346-347.

²⁷Letters of David Hume, II., p. 323.

²⁸Dialogues, p. 215.

position from the most influential religious people. But, even if Hume were contemplating posthumous publication for his work from the beginning, he still could have seen the importance of discretion. For, if the Dialogues were to serve any purpose at all, they had to be published sometime. And considering the religious atmosphere of Hume's day and the contents of the Dialogues, a discreet attitude would seem to be the most reasonable one to adopt in order to secure publication, even posthumously.

If it is the case that Philo is "indeed refuted", then the foregoing interpretation would fall flat on its face, but this is precisely the point at issue here (that is, whether Philo was refuted or not) and it is my contention that Philo was not refuted, but that he succeeded in refuting Cleanthes. One point that might substantiate this position is the amount of space allotted to the three speakers: 12 per cent to Demea, 21 per cent to Cleanthes, and 67 per cent to Philo.²⁹ Philo is allotted twice as much space as the two opponents put together. The obvious retort is that importance is not necessarily measured by volubility but I am sure that this would not apply to Hume's Dialogues. No one (I think) would want to argue that any of the space allotted to Philo was wasted on trivialities.

²⁹This is based on a count by J. T. Y. Greig, in David Hume, p. 236. (Cited by E. C. Mossner, "The Enigma of Hume", Mind, XLV, No. 179, p. 346.

From what has been said so far, I shall conclude that Philo is the representative of Hume in the Dialogues.³⁰ There still remains, however, one major difficulty (which has been alluded to in passing) with regard to this conclusion which must receive immediate attention. This difficulty has to do with Philo's apparent abandonment (in the twelfth dialogue) of all for which he had earlier contended.

✓ After Demea's pusillanimous retreat, Philo and Cleanthes continued the already laboured discussion. Here Philo makes a strange turn and seems to be supporting what he was all along attacking, viz, Cleanthes' contention that the curious adaptation of means to end in the world and the artifice of nature lead us to infer the existence of the Divine Being. In the beginning of the twelfth dialogue, Philo says:

You, in particular, Cleanthes, with whom I live in unreserved intimacy; you are sensible, that, notwithstanding the freedom of my conversation, and my love of singular arguments, no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of nature. A purpose,

³⁰Following Mossner's interpretation, I shall identify Cleanthes with Joseph Butler, and Demea with Samuel Clarke. (See his article, "The Enigma of Hume", Mind, XLV, No. 179, p.p. 334-349.) For the purpose of this paper it is not necessary for me to show that Cleanthes is indeed Butler nor Demea, Samuel Clarke. It is only necessary that I identify Philo. For the identifications of Cleanthes and Demea, I shall take Mossner's interpretation as definitive.

an intention, or design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it. That nature does nothing in vain, is a maxim established in all the schools, merely from the contemplation of the works of nature, without any religious purpose; thus all the sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge the first intelligent Author; and their authority is often so much the greater, as they do not directly profess that intention. (Dialogues, p. 214.)

At first blush this represents Philo (Hume) as being a staunch supporter of design theology, but is this really the case? F. Copleston points out that this is not the case. For ".... it seems to me most improbable that he (Hume) regarded the argument from design as conclusive. For this would hardly have been compatible with his general philosophical principles."³¹ Hume's choice of words in the above passage also indicates that he is not a supporter of design theology. Philo is speaking about a God who is the object of "adoration" — a God, in other words, who is the object of faith.³² Kemp-Smith's point, that the God to whom Philo is referring is "not to be equated with 'God' as ordinarily understood in religion,"³³ is well taken. The God who is the object of

³¹F. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 5, Part II, p. 112.

³²Throughout this thesis I shall differentiate between a designer-god and the God who is the object of Faith and Revelation.

³³Dialogues, p. 120.

faith and adoration is certainly not the same as the god of natural religion—a fact of which Hume was very well aware. For, it seems to me that one could believe in God through faith and yet claim that he "manifests" himself in nature, without being a supporter of the design argument.

I do not think that Hume (Philo) was blatantly denying the existence of God, but rather, he was concerned to show that the design argument does not and cannot prove the existence of God, nor can it tell us much about the attributes of God, (that is, even if it is the case that God exists). Hume might have said that it is reasonable, though not necessary, to have belief in a God through faith, but to engage in theistic disputes and in formulating philosophical proofs for God's existence is to engage oneself in an exercise of futility. Indeed, Hume says something very close to this in section XI of the Enquiry, when (speaking through the mouth of an Epicurean friend) he refers to "the tradition of your forefathers, and the doctrine of your priests (in which I willingly acquiesce)."³⁴ The tradition alluded to here most probably has to do with "faith" in God. Thus Philo's confession of faith in a God who is the object of adoration is not really a confession in support of Cleanthes' design

³⁴ David Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Section XI, p. 135. (All references will be made to this edition of the Enquiry.)

theology after all. It should be emphasized that Philo did not say that the "contrivance and artifice in nature" prove the existence of the Divine Being but that this "contrivance and artifice" are inexplicable.

The most adamant atheist is at times struck with awe and wonder at the contrivance of nature. He, too, sees design in nature, but this does not change his beliefs. He finds other means of explaining what could be taken for design and contrivance. Thus in agreeing with Cleanthes that a feeling of design strikes everyone everywhere—even himself—Philo is claiming that this feeling is not really as obvious and as unambiguous as Cleanthes makes it out to be. After all, customs, traditions, and education have a lot to do with our interpretation of different phenomena in nature. In other words, the psychological compulsiveness of the design argument is, to a great extent, the result of previously acquired emotional prejudices in its favour. So thorough are the previous education and training, that all strong evidence to the contrary is often neglected by religious people. The pre-conceived notions which were acquired through training and nature greatly influence and determine one's opinions of the world. This is a point that Philo was anxious to bring out.

Is the world considered in general, as it appears to us in this life, different from what a man or such limited being would, beforehand expect from a very powerful, wise and benevolent Deity? It must be strange prejudice to assert the contrary.
(Dialogues p. 205.)

Thus it is not the case that the evidence of design in nature leads us to establish the existence of a good and powerful Being as Cleanthes would have us believe, but rather, such a conviction is based upon evidence which originates in psychological and emotional causes. Thus Philo is not a design theology convert after all—he's still holding his ground against Cleanthes.

Philo is quite willing to allow Cleanthes' claim "that the works of nature bear a great analogy to the production of art....and according to all the rules of good reasoning, we ought to infer, if we argue at all concerning them, that their causes have a proportional analogy. But as there are also considerable differences, we have reason to suppose a proportional difference in the causes." (Dialogues, p.p. 216-217). Philo is now in a position to make his crucial point, that in deciding the degree of resemblance the Deity bears to human minds, the discussion becomes a "mere verbal controversy—a dispute of words," which depends upon one's emotional and religious standpoints. The theist claims that the Deity or original intelligence is very different from the human mind or reason, while the atheist, on the other hand, claims that the original intelligence probably bears "some remote analogy" to human reason. Each one stands firm in his contention, unwilling to budge regardless of evidence, (that is, if any evidence is forthcoming).

In the final analysis, the outcome of the dispute is

of the same nature as the dispute concerning the degree of greatness in Hannibal or of the beauty of Cleopatra; and what is this but a verbal disagreement—a mere dispute of words? Thus far Philo has only admitted that some remote analogies are present between the works of nature and the works of man, but to this he adds that there is some remote analogy "among all the operations of nature"—the rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal and the structure of human thought—all these "bear some remote analogy to each other."³⁵ This admission or concession in no way vitiates the claims, earlier made by Philo, that evidence of this sort proves nothing about the cause or author of the world in terms of character, benevolence or other moral attributes. Indeed, this admission supports Philo's earlier contentions that the world is like an animal or a vegetable or that it was made by infant deities or inept workmen who might have botched and bungled many worlds. Moreover, the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and "omnibenevolence", are still to be accounted for. But more of this later.

After the above admission, Philo brings up the crucial subject of the moral attributes of the Deity. On this subject Cleanthes' position, except for some minor appeals, is defenseless. Philo says,

³⁵ Dialogues, p. 218.

...As the works of nature have a much greater analogy to the effects of our art and contrivance, than those of our benevolence and justice; we have reason to infer that the natural attributes of the Deity have a greater resemblance to those of man, than his morals have to human virtue. (Dialogues, p: 219.)

But Cleanthes is not willing to submit--he appeals to the pragmatic justification of belief in a loving God, who is a strong and necessary security to morality. In other words, Cleanthes is claiming that religious belief is the cause of so much good in the world; that religion is the cause of man's moral behaviour. Religion, he claims, is necessary for man to behave in a morally responsible manner. People are so persuaded by the doctrine of an all-loving, all-powerful and all-good God who will reward them in a future state that they are willing to behave morally. "Religion", says Cleanthes, "however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all." (Dialogues, p. 219.) Philo's rebuttal is quick and to the point,

How happens it then,....if vulgar superstition be so salutary to society, that all history abounds so much with accounts of its pernicious consequences on public affairs? Faction, civil wars, persecutions, subversions of government, oppression, slavery; these are the dismal consequences which always attend its prevalency over the minds of men. (Dialogues, p. 220.)

Cleanthes' only means of defense is to appeal for a distinction between "proper" religion on one hand, and the religion

that is practiced on the other. Cleanthes' point, it seems, is that the many evils which follow in the train of religious practices come about because men have distorted the proper and authentic religion. But it was claimed earlier by Cleanthes that religion is necessary to influence the conduct of people, thus making them behave morally. Obviously the religion which Cleanthes was referring to failed in its pragmatic functions, if the practiced religion of men was the cause of the many evils which Philo enumerated. Cleanthes' appeal for a distinction between proper and practiced religions does not support his position at all, but rather helps in its defeat by exposing the apparent contradiction pointed out above. Philo's point that religion is what is practiced in its name is a very good one. Not only does it point out the evils that have been (and are) associated with, or have been the result of religion, but it also defeats Cleanthes' claim that religious belief does so much good in the world by working upon the minds of men to make them behave morally. Man's natural inclination to honesty and benevolence is much more admirable and respectable than the moral behaviour which is the result of constant fear of punishment, or the promise of some reward.

In emphasizing the superior nature of man's natural inclinations to moral behaviour, Philo is also, at the same time, supporting Hume's moral sense theory as put forth in the Treatise of Human Nature. (This latter point will be

discussed in greater detail in Chapter three of this paper.) Suffice it to say that Philo's emphasis on man's natural inclination to moral behaviour is a "death blow" to Cleanthes' appeal to this pragmatic justification of religious persuasions. That is to say that Cleanthes' belief in eternal rewards and punishments as a basis for morality is not enough to justify adopting a religious attitude. For, man's natural inclination to morality is much simpler in that the psychological strain brought about by the constant thought of rewards and punishments in a future life is more of a superstition than it is a guide to moral behaviour. For, Hume points out that the behaviour of many religious people who affirm belief in a future life does not seem to support such a belief. This apparent inconsistency seems to suggest that those who speak of rewards and punishments in a future life "do not really believe what they affirm" (Treatise, p. 115.).

We are now in a position to assess Philo's concessions and his final position with regard to design theology and the tenets of natural religion. To say that Philo rejects the design argument in toto would be an error. It is true that he does accept some part of the design argument, but this acceptance is very limited. How very limited is his acceptance can easily be seen in the conclusion to which he finally comes:

The whole of natural theology, as some people seem to maintain, resolves itself into one simple, though somewhat ambiguous,

at least undefined proposition, that the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bears some remote analogy to human intelligence: If this proposition be not capable of extension, variation, or more particular explication; If it afford no inference that affects human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance: And if the analogy, imperfect as it is, can be carried no farther than to the human intelligence; and cannot be transferred, with any appearance of probability, to the other qualities of the mind: If this really be the case, what can the most inquisitive, contemplative, and religious man do more than give a plain, philosophical assent to the proposition, as often as it occurs; and believe that the arguments, on which it is established, exceed the objections which lie against it? Some astonishment indeed will naturally arise from the greatness of the object: Some melancholy from its obscurity: Some contempt of human reason, that it can give no solution more satisfactory with regard to so extraordinary and magnificent a question. But believe me, CLEANTHES, the most natural sentiment, which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion, is a longing desire and expectation, that Heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate, this profound ignorance by affording some more particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operation of the divine object of our Faith. (Dialogues, p. 227.)

It is not difficult to see that Philo's "plain, philosophical assent" does not support the views of traditional religion. He does not admit belief in any of the traditional attributes of God; the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, and unity. All that the "plain philosophical assent" is given to is that there is some "remote

analogy" to human intelligence in the "cause or causes of order in the universe." But then, everything in the universe bears some analogy to everything else—a point made above. The remoteness of the analogy is indicated in the examples of the rotting of turnips, or the generation of animals. All these, claims Philo, bear some remote analogy to human intelligence. This leads Philo to emphasize the importance of faith in matters of religion and recommends this lesson to Pamphilus, the pupil of Cleanthes. By recommending faith, it is not difficult to see how trivial Philo's "plain, philosophical assent" really is. Kemp-Smith points out that Philo "makes the conventionally prescribed avowal that the disabilities of reason only make revelation and faith the more needful"³⁶—a point which, in my opinion, is very well taken.

My task in this chapter has been twofold. On the one hand it was meant to show that Philo is the representative of Hume in the Dialogues, and on the other, to assess the concessions and admissions of Philo, thus establishing where he stood at the end of the discussion. I have shown that Philo, speaking for Hume in the Dialogues, has conceded very little indeed to Cleanthes in the twelfth dialogue. He has admitted that he accepts some part of the design argument, viz., "that the cause or causes of order in the universe bear some

³⁶Ibid., p. 123.

remote analogy to human intelligence." That is all that Philo has really conceded and the fact that Pamphilus sums up by saying "that Cleanthes has come nearest to the truth", with respect to the status of the design argument, does not really diminish the force of Philo's refutation of it. F. Copleston holds a similar view when he says,

It would appear that Cleanthes is the hero of the Dialogues for Pamphilus rather than for Hume; and though when the latter showed Elliot an incomplete version of the work he could quite well invite Elliot to contribute ideas which would strengthen Cleanthes' position, in order to maintain the dramatic interest of the dialogue, this does not alter the fact that the tendency of Part XII, the final section of the work, tends to strengthen Philo's position rather than that of Cleanthes, in spite of Pamphilus' concluding remarks.³⁷

It is not so very difficult for us to understand Pamphilus' allegiances to Cleanthes, his tutor, but we must be careful lest we misconstrue this as the final logical outcome of the whole controversy. A great deal more objectivity on the part of Pamphilus is needed to reveal such an outcome.

Now that we have assessed Philo's concessions in the twelfth dialogues, we can move on to the task of the next chapter, which is to determine whether or not these concessions are consistent with the contentions held earlier in the Dialogues.

³⁷F. Copleston, Op. Cit., p.p. 112-113.

CHAPTER II

In the last chapter it was established that Philo admitted that the "cause or causes" of the universe bears some rather "remote analogy" to human intelligence, thus accepting some meagre part of the design argument. This was all that Philo, speaking for Hume, was willing to grant and nothing more. It would be (in my opinion) a mistake to think that Philo joined hands with Cleanthes in the twelfth dialogue to support design theology, simply because he spoke in favour of some part of the design argument. After advancing some of the most devastating arguments (as we shall see) against the design argument and design theology, it is not at all likely that Philo or anybody else in a similar situation, would simply adopt the contrary view point. To assume that this is what Philo did is, I suggest, a misinterpretation. There is no need to defend Hume by saying that his writings are ambiguous. This may be true of some of his works, but I think it is fairly clear what he is doing in the twelfth part of the Dialogues, and it simply would not do to ignore this and read in other interpretations. But let us get down to the task at hand and try to show that Philo did indeed maintain a consistent position throughout the Dialogues. This I shall do by examining the major arguments.

The key factor in the design argument is its analogical form of inference, and as such would be the point most readily

attacked by any opponent. Hume (Philo) is no exception to this rule. Philo's critical mind is set into motion by Cleanthes' formulation of the design argument, early in the Dialogues:

Look round the world: Contemplate the whole and every part of it: You will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration of all men, who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds the productions of human contrivance; of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed. By this argument a posteriori and by this argument alone, we do prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence. (Dialogues, p. 143.)

Philo at once questions the strength of the analogy. The argument from design, as an argument from experience, is not scientific since it offers very little or no evidence for the cause or causes of the universe. In order to provide such evidence it must be possible for us to have experience of divine operations, but Philo makes it quite clear that "we have no such experience of divine attributes and opera-

tions"¹ in the same way that we have experience within the world. In order for Cleanthes' analogy to work, it is necessary that we have experience of both the effects and the causes. But this is precisely the difficulty which Philo points out in connection with the analogy. We can draw an analogy from building to builders; from watches to watch makers; because we have experienced these many times over.

That a stone will fall, that fire will burn, that the earth has solidity, we have observed a thousand and a thousand times; and when any new instance of this nature is presented, we draw without hesitation the accustomed inference.
(Dialogues, p. 144.)

But the universe is unique; it does not belong to a species as is the case with a watch or a house. There is an infinite difference between houses or watches and the universe. For, whereas we are familiar with such things as houses and watches, builders and watchmakers, and from experience we know that the one does not come into existence without the other, we are not familiar with the universe and its cause or causes in the same way. For all we know there might have been a god who designed the world, but the analogy by which Cleanthes wants us to conclude this is a weak, if not false analogy. (I am sure that this interpretation is not far afield from Philo's position.) To get the analogy to work

¹Dialogues, p. 143.

we will have to substitute what we know from experience for what is unknown, namely, God. But this is not in keeping with scientific induction—we do not have the experience which is needed to make a causal inference. The only way that the analogy can work, thus entitling us to make the inference, is if we are accustomed to seeing worlds made in the same way that we see watches and houses made, or if we know for a fact that the universe is similar to human art and contrivance. In questioning the strength and completeness of the analogy, Philo is, at the same time, well within the limits of his admission that there is some "remote analogy" between the cause of the universe and human intelligence.

Philo further exposes the weakness of Cleanthes causal inference by stating that we commonly infer one object from another when we find these two objects constantly conjoined:

When two species of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can infer, by custom, the existence of one wherever I see the existence of the other: And this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain.... To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite, that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance.

(Dialogues, p.p. 149-150.)

We can only make a causal inference from an observed X to an unobserved Y, if we have observed X^s and Y^s together on

many occasions in the past, or if this observed X is sufficiently similar to another object Z, whose cause we know by experience. We know (from experience) that watches and watchmakers are constantly conjoined, but we do not see gods making worlds in the same way. We are only familiar with one planet, earth (which is a small part of the universe) the origin of which is still somewhat of a mystery to scientists. It is quite clear, I think, that the only way that we can draw the analogy from this connection is if we have been accustomed to seeing worlds being made by gods, or if it can be shown that worlds belong to the same species of objects as machines. Philo's point here arises from Hume's analysis of causality and if the above interpretation of analogy is accepted then his charge, that the reasoning from experience (that is, from watches to watchmakers) is not analogous to the same sort of reasoning with regard to the order of nature, is quite correct.

R. G. Swinburne objects to Hume's above line of argumentation, charging him with an "inadequate appreciation of scientific method."

.... a more developed science than Hume knew has taught us that when observed A^S have a relation R to unobserved B^S , it is often perfectly reasonable to postulate that unobserved A^{*S} , similar to A^S have the same relation to unobserved and unobservable B^{*S} similar to B^S .²

²R. G. Swinburne, "The Argument From Design", Philosophy, Vol. XLIII, No. 164, (July 1968) p. 208.

It is true, of course, that analogical reasoning is a very valuable form of reasoning for the formation of hypotheses, but it is not considered by scientists as a method of proof or verification.³ In the case of the design argument, on the basis of the analogy, we can postulate a god who designed the world but we can never prove that this is so. We can say it is probable, but the probability would be extremely low.

But in addition to being somewhat of an anachronism, there is a more important rebuttal to Swinburne's objection, and this has to do with the similarity between works of art and the world. Indeed, this is the very point at issue, that is, whether the world is in fact similar to a watch. This is the point that Philo is questioning. We know that a watch has orderly and purposive relationships among its parts, but that the world has orderly and purposive relationships among its parts is not a fact known to us. And, as Philo pointed out in the twelfth dialogue, customs and upbringing are, to a large extent, responsible for our belief in the design and purpose in nature. It is by no means obvious that there is a similarity between human art and the world. If it were obvious, then Cleanthes' analogy would have been much stronger. But Philo's contention is that the analogy is not

³R. H. Hurlbutt, Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument, p.p. 150-151.

strong, but weak; that is, it is not a good analogy.

The exact similarity of the cases gives us a perfect assurance of a similar event; and a stronger evidence is never desired nor sought after. But wherever you depart, in the least, from the similarity of the cases, you diminish proportionately the evidence; and may at last bring it to a very weak analogy, which is confessedly liable to error and uncertainty. (Dialogues, p. 144.)

The similarity between the analogues which is necessary to form a proper analogy is the point at issue for Philo, thus Swinburne's objection is not very pertinent in that it seems to beg the question at issue, viz., the similarity between human art and the world. In an analogy of the form: $3:6=9:x$, we can infer $x=18$. The degree of similarity between 3 and 9 does not arise. But the question does arise in the case of a non-mathematical analogy as, for example, Cleanthes' analogy. Is the world sufficiently similar to a watch so that we can infer the existence of a being comparable to a watchmaker as its creator? Is the world sufficiently similar to a house so that we can infer a Divine Architect? Or is it like a work of art, so that there must be a Supreme Artist? If it cannot be shown that the world is similar to watches or houses or at least of the same species as these, then it is not reasonable to postulate a watchmaker-builder-type God as its maker. Philo makes this point abundantly clear with regard to the movement of the earth. Cleanthes asks Philo if there are other earths which we have seen to move, from which we can prove that our earth moves. Philo does not hesitate

with his reply.

Yes!we have other earths. Is not the moon another earth, which we see to turn round its centre? Is not Venus another earth, where we observe the same phenomenon? Are not the revolutions of the sun also a confirmation, from analogy, of the same theory? All the planets, are they not earths, which revolve about the sun?.... These analogies and resemblances, with others, which I have not mentioned, are sole proofs of the Copernican System: And to you it belongs to consider, whether you have any analogies of the same kind to support your theory. (Dialogues, p. 150.)

We can say that the earth moves because other planets which are analogous to the earth have been seen to move. Here we have a perfect analogy, in that "Galileo, beginning with the moon, proved its similarity in every particular to the earth;----and that the similarity of their nature enabled us to extend the same arguments and phenomena from one to the other." (Dialogues, p. 151.) The earth and the moon are members of the same species of planets and we can form a hypothesis about the former from the observation of the latter. But, Cleanthes' analogy lacks this very important ingredient of similarity between the world and human art and as such it is not possible to reach conclusions concerning the former. R. G. Swinburne again objects to this view claiming that "cosmologists are reaching very well-tested conclusion about the universe as a whole, as are physical anthropologists about the origins of our human race, even though it is the only human race of which we have knowledge and perhaps the

only human race there is."⁴

It is true that cosmologists and anthropologists are reaching conclusions about the universe as a whole and about the origins of the human race, but I am not at all sure that this is what Philo had in mind when he raised his objection. It seems to me that the important point Philo was stressing is not that we do not and cannot reach conclusions about a unique object, but the manner by which we reach our conclusions. If a unique object is placed before us, we can say certain things about it—we can come to conclusions about its size, shape, solidity, etc., by thoroughly examining it. Cosmologists are daily reaching further and further into space and learning more about the universe; anthropologists and archeologists are finding out more and more about the human race by studying the archeological findings they discover everyday. From their various researches these scientists can reach conclusions about the universe and the human race, based upon hypotheses which are being confirmed and disconfirmed all the time.

But the same kinds of conclusions cannot be reached if we use Cleanthes' analogical method of inference. Cleanthes, as we have seen, makes a causal inference on the basis of an analogy which is in fact weak. In order to make

⁴R. G. Swinburne, "The Argument From Design",
Op. Cit., p. 208.

the causal inference of the kind Cleanthes makes, it must be shown that the analogues are sufficiently similar to allow such an inference—but this is not true of the universe. Cleanthes' claim that the universe is analogous to a machine does not help the situation in any way. (This is precisely the point at issue). For, we know that machines are designed and built by men because we have been accustomed to this—we have never seen or heard of a machine that was not made by a mechanic. Thus, whenever we see a machine we immediately make the inference to a mechanic who made the machine because machines belong to the species of human art. But in the case of the universe this inference cannot be made with any kind of certainty. If it is a fact that the universe is indeed similar to a machine, then, and only then, can we draw the analogy to a mechanic-type god who made it.

But let us dwell a little longer on Cleanthes' machine-like universe. Suppose the world were a machine designed by an intelligent god. Cleanthes' analogy still would not work, for Philo could have argued thus. From experience, we know that the productions of human contrivances are purposive; a watch is made to tell the time of day; a house is built to protect us from the inclemencies of the weather; a car is made for transportation. Indeed, wherever we look we see that most of what is made by man is made with some end in view. But, what, we may ask, is the purpose of

the universe? If Cleanthes' analogy is to work at all we must know why the universe was made. In other words, is the universe similar to human contrivance with regard to purpose? But this is something we do not know, and there is no way to find out, that is, from the designer. But let us, for the sake of argument, assume that the universe does exhibit purposive design. What does this entail? The opposite of purposiveness is arbitrariness. And if we delete purpose, we at the same time delete design, for 'purposive design' is redundant. But there is no way for us to know whether the universe is purposive or not; we can only assume that it is or it is not. If we join with the mechanists⁵ in adopting the latter point of view, all we can conclude from this is that the universe is either arbitrary or the product of chance; "that all events are due to the interaction of matter and motion acting by blind necessity in accordance with those invariable sequences to which we have given the name laws,"⁶ or something we know not what.

Again, even if it be granted that there are purposes in the universe and that the universe itself has a purpose, we cannot conclude that this implies that there is a Being who designed it. We do, of course, have evidence in our own

⁵Philosophers and scientists who maintain that in the relevant and important aspect of machines and organisms, organisms are machines, are called mechanists.

⁶See Hugh Elliot, Modern Science and Materialism, p. 140.

experience to indicate that most purposes do imply design and a designer, but do we have any right to regard human purposiveness as typical of all purposes that we might believe to exist everywhere in the universe? To generalize about all purposiveness that we might believe to exist in the universe as a whole from what we know of human purposiveness, is to commit the fallacy of hasty generalization.⁷ We only have knowledge of a small part of this vast universe (and even that knowledge is considered sketchy by many). Surely, we cannot conclude that the rest of the universe is exactly the same as this one part. Such a conclusion would be an atrocity of logic.

We can again assume further that the universe is purposive. But what of the end of this purpose? To say that God made the universe to achieve end X, is, at the same time to deny him omnipotence and omniscience. For, if God is omnipotent and omniscient, why does he have to achieve end X by some means? He should be able to achieve his end by a simple act of will. A religious person could say that God has a secondary purpose, say B, in view, and could achieve only this by making the universe (primary purpose A). But that is to say that God could not achieve B without A, and

⁷By the "fallacy of hasty generalization" I mean a generalization of the form: All A^s are B^s, where we have only had some particular instance where an A is B. An effort should be made to determine that this instance is representative of all A^s. If not, then the "fallacy of hasty generalization" has been committed.

this limits his power and wisdom even more. From the above considerations we can safely say that even if the design argument is a good one (which is the question at issue), it could only prove the existence of a god who is sadly deficient in the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience. Philo's arguments based on the reductio ad absurdum principle bring out this same point.

It has been Philo's contention since the beginning of the discussion in the Dialogues that the analogy presented by Cleanthes is weak, that is, that it is not a good example of an analogy which suggests a scientific hypothesis. But Cleanthes, in order to maintain his analogy, claims that the divine mind is a mind "like the human", and later adds, "the liker the better."⁸ But even if it is granted that the analogy does establish an intelligent-designer-god, who made the world, this is not the only conclusion to be drawn. ✓ For a number of other conclusions can also be established—conclusions which would prove very embarrassing to religious people——Philo's series of reductio ad absurdum arguments reveal such conclusions.

A world is like an animal, hence is caused by generation; the world is like a vegetable, hence is caused by the

⁸Dialogues, p. 166.

seed of a plant. Philo goes on to say that the world is like a machine or a house, and many artisans get together to build a house or a machine, hence the world was made by many gods. The world also could have been made by an infant god or even a deformed god, for there are many instances of imperfection and disorder in the world.

This world, for aught he knows is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant Deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance;....it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated Deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures, from the first impulse and active force, which it received from him.... (Dialogues, p. 169)

In using the analogy of human agent, we should go all the way and postulate a god who is like men in all respects. Philo asks Cleanthes why he does not "become a perfect anthropomorphite", and why does he not "assert the Deity or Deities to be corporeal, and to have eyes, a nose, mouth, ears, etc.?" (Dialogues, p. 168.) What Philo is pointing out is that even if we accept Cleanthes' analogy in the design argument, we still would not be in a position to make predictions concerning the nature and attributes of god—these being the central issues in the Dialogues.

In connection with the similarity of the world to human contrivance, it has to be shown that the world does display purpose or design and whether this necessarily implies an intelligent designer. It is Cleanthes' contention that

everything in the world displays some kind of purpose and design. He claims that "the anatomy of an animal affords many stronger instances of design than the perusal of Livy or Tacitus,"⁹ and later spells this out in greater detail.

Consider, anatomize the eye: survey its structure and contrivance; and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of a sensation. The most obvious conclusion surely is in favour of design; ---Who can behold the male and female of each species, the correspondence of their parts and instincts, their passions and whole course of life before and after generation, but must be sensible, that the propagation of the species is intended by nature?---Whatever cavils may be urged; an orderly world, as well as a coherent, articulate speech, will still be received as an incontestable proof of design and intention. (Dialogues, p.p. 154-155.)

That nature displays design and purpose no one really doubts. Philo (in the twelfth dialogue) admitted this. When we look around the world things do seem to be intelligently designed because they fit the way the mind works. There is a great deal of mutual adaptation to things. One need only consider the example of how bats guide their flight in darkness to be impressed with how the different parts of a single organism are integrated with all others; and an elementary course in biology would be sufficient to impress upon us the mutual

⁹Ibid, p. 154.

adaptation of different organisms to each other.

It is also a common belief that everything in nature is designed for the purpose of man (The Creation—story in Genesis states that man should have dominion over the earth and subdue it—this is likely the origin of the belief.) But Philo contends that "---order, arrangements, or adjustment of final causes is not of itself proof of design; but only so far as it has been experienced to proceed from that principle." Indeed, it is quite possible that "matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself...";¹⁰ a point which can be substantiated by Darwin's theory of evolution. According to the theory of evolution, it is possible to argue that the mind and its functions developed in a long evolutionary course along with the bodies in such a way that they are fitted to the conditions of the environment. The mind's slow adaptation to things, (according to this theory) it seems, results in a sort of intelligibility of things. Darwin's theory further points out that the varying nature of animals and plants results in a struggle for survival among the organisms, and only those which can adjust to each other or whose variations allow for their adjustment, will survive and multiply—those that cannot adapt are eliminated. And after generations of this process,

¹⁰Ibid., p. 146.

the result is an environment in which flowers and bees are perfectly adapted to each others' needs; plants and animals living together in balanced harmony with each other.¹¹

The point that everything in nature is designed for the benefit of man can also be explained away if we look at man himself as a product of evolution. It can be argued that man survived because he adapted best to the environment in which he found himself, and later he began to use his intelligence to adapt other things to himself. It is true that this argument does not rule out the hypothesis of design in nature, but it does offer a good counter-hypothesis. Thus what appears to us to be purposive in living organisms, for example, the exquisite mutual adaptation of parts of an organism to one another, is a mechanical result of the elimination of those organisms or organs that are not adaptable physiologically. What we see are only the results, and from this we go on to conclude that the organisms were designed for the purpose of making such adjustments. The teleological view of things—the belief that nature is purposive or designed for a purpose—is probably a subjective illusion. This is essentially the point made by Philo in the twelfth dialogue. (See chapter one above.)

Furthermore, the struggle for survival suggested by

¹¹J. Huxley, Evolution: The Modern Synthesis, p. 576.

the evolutionary theory deals another "death blow" to the hypothesis of design. If the design theory is true, we would expect that the different numbers of mutations would prove to be an asset to their possessor, but in the struggle for survival these mutations are often deleterious to their possessor.¹² Another point that must be taken into consideration when speaking of purpose and design in the world, that is, nature's marvelous organization, is the great deal of evidence of lack of organization. The organisms that survive are the relatively few that can adapt to the environment. But what of the elimination of the many that cannot adapt themselves and fit in? There is progress but there is also degeneration. The existence of mosquitoes and germs, poisonous snakes, poverty and pain and suffering, do not seem prima facie to indicate that the world was designed to be man's home. A world that can be subjugated by humans for evil purposes; a world that is so organized that atom bombs and napalm bombs could work; a world in which men engage in oppressions, slavery, and persecutions, does not seem to be designed for man's benefit.

The presence of evil in the world thus posed a serious problem for Cleanthes' design argument. Philo is willing to grant the reasonableness of purpose in nature, but how

¹²Ibid., p. 465.

is this to be reconciled with the racking pains, which "arise from gouts, gravels, megrims, toothaches, rheumatisms"; and abound everywhere?

You ascribe Cleanthes (and I believe justly) a purpose and intention to nature. But what, I beseech you, is the object of that curious artifice and machinery, which she displayed in all animals? The preservation alone of individuals and propagation of the species. It seems enough for her purpose, if such a rank be barely upheld in the universe, without any care or concern for the happiness of the members that compose it.
(Dialogues, p. 198.)

Cleanthes is aware that Philo is using our experience of nature as a basis for asserting God's benevolence, and also sees the seriousness of this attack.¹³ He therefore challenges Philo to prove that mankind is unhappy or corrupted. For, if this can be done then "there is an end at once of all religion. For to what purpose establish the natural attributes of the Deity, while the moral are still doubtful and uncertain." (Dialogues, p. 199.) At this point, Demea intervenes to put forth his "porch view" of religion, which Cleanthes rejects because it is impossible to "establish its reality."¹⁴ Cleanthes now asserts that, "the

¹³W. H. Capitan, "Part X of Hume's Dialogues", anthologized in Hume, A Collection of Critical Essays, éd. by V. C. Chappell, p. 390.

¹⁴See Dialogues, p.p. 199-200.

only method of supporting divine benevolence (and it is what I willingly embrace) is to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man---." He contends that "---Health is more common than sickness; pleasure than pain; happiness than misery. And for one vexation we meet with, we attain, upon computation, a hundred enjoyments". (Dialogues, p. 200.)

Philo quickly shows the absurdity of this position by pointing out that it is not possible to compute all the pains and pleasures in the world. But, even if this could be done the problem still is not solved. For, the question is not the amount of pain and misery there are in the world, but the fact that there are pain and misery at all.

Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity . (Dialogues, p. 201.)

Philo's attack is crucial to the idea of a god who is infinitely wise, good, and perfect. Cleanthes tries to escape the conclusions by attempting to preserve the human analogy, and by arguing that the author of nature is "finitely perfect".¹⁵ Philo goes into great detail to show that this can

¹⁵Ibid., p. 203.

prove nothing more than that evil and divine benevolence are compatible,¹⁶ (a point which he was willing to grant for the sake of argument in Part X), "but can never be foundations for any inference"¹⁷; that is to say, there is no way that the attributes of God can be proved by inference from observable phenomena. Philo says,

Look round the universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them for their own happiness" How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children. (Dialogues, p. 211.)

Thus the presence of evil in the world, while it does not prove that God does not exist nor that he (if he exists) is not loving and benevolent, does, however, make it impossible to infer anything about his moral character. We can learn about the moral character of God (that is, about his infinite

¹⁶ Nelson Pike contends that Hume wanted to disprove God's existence by showing that evil and benevolence are incompatible. See his article, "Hume on Evil" in God and Evil, ed. by Nelson Pike, p.p. 85-102.

¹⁷ Dialogues, p. 205.

goodness, wisdom, and power and benevolence) only through "the eyes of faith"¹⁸ This, we would recall was also Philo's contention in the twelfth dialogue.¹⁹

Throughout this chapter I have tried to assess the major contentions of Philo in the first eleven chapters of the Dialogues, in order to show that they are consistent with the concessions and admissions made in the twelfth dialogue. In the latter dialogue Philo, as we have seen, was willing to admit that the "cause or causes" of the world bear some "remote analogy" to human intelligence. This admission, I say, was supported throughout the first eleven chapters of the Dialogues. For, by exposing the weakness of Cleanthes' analogy, by questioning the attributes of God in the face of evil in the world, and by devoting a great deal of space to reductio ad absurdum arguments, Philo was in fact showing the remoteness of the analogy.

From the above evidence then, I conclude that Philo (Hume) maintained, throughout the Dialogues, a consistent line of attack against the design argument and design theology—an attack, which rendered the argument logically bankrupt. Our problem now is this: Are the concessions made by Philo in the twelfth dialogue and his contentions throughout the

¹⁸Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁹Ibid., p.p. 219 and 227.

Dialogues as a whole, compatible with or supported by the views of Hume as put forth in his major works? This is now our topic for consideration.

CHAPTER III

In chapters I and II, I have contended that Philo is the representative of Hume in the Dialogues, and that he maintained a coherent and systematic line of attack against the design argument. In chapter I, I also alluded to the point that the position maintained by Philo in the twelfth dialogue and the Dialogues as a whole is compatible with Hume's more general philosophical principles (see page 6 above). We are now in a position to elaborate on this view, that is, to see to what extent this claim can be substantiated. The philosophical principles most relevant to this enterprise are: Hume's analysis of causality, and his treatment of the design argument in Section XI of the Enquiry; his analysis of the nature of belief; and his moral sense theory. My chief and only concern in undertaking this task is to examine these principles to see to what extent Philo's concessions in the twelfth dialogue and his main contentions throughout the Dialogues are compatible with them. If I am successful in this endeavour, this would not only support the hypothesis that Philo is the representative of Hume, but it will also strengthen my main contention in this paper, that is, that Hume's refutation of the design argument in the Dialogues is logically fatal, and because it is logically fatal to the argument it expels theology and religion from the domains

of logic and reason, into which they had carelessly wandered, thus forcing them into their rightful domains, that is, the domains of Faith and Revelation.

We have seen that Philo, in the twelfth dialogue, was willing to admit that there is some "remote analogy" between the "cause or causes" of order in the world and human intelligence, and all through the Dialogues he supported this contention by pointing out the weakness of the analogy. Cleanthes, in stating the design argument, claims that it is a posteriori and as such is based on experience. But Philo is at pains to see how such an argument could be thought of as cogent. For in order to make a causal inference it is necessary that we have experience of several instances of conjunction between two objects. But in the case of the world we do not have any experience whatsoever and Philo's main attack revolves around this point. That is to say that analogical inference is also dependent upon experience and observation in the sense that the analogous effects and causes must be similar to those of which we have had or have experience. (See Enquiry, p. 148.)

Early in the Dialogues, Philo reiterates his main empirical principle, that is, that "our ideas reach no farther than our experience" and since "we have no experience of divine attributes in operation"¹, it is not at all possible

¹Dialogues, p. 143.

to form any ideas concerning the deity as the cause of the world. To do this we must have experience of the origin of worlds. We have no difficulty when we speak about the cause of a building or a machine "because this is precisely that species of effects which we have experienced to proceed from that species of causes".² In his analysis of causality, Hume points out that the idea of causation is not derived from objects that we normally call 'causes' but "the idea--- of causation must be derived from some relation among objects; and that relation we must...endeavour to discover."³

Hume mentions three relations which are essential elements of causal relation, viz., contiguity, temporal succession, and necessary connection. The first two are important but Hume does not think that they are absolutely essential in the same sense in which the latter is important. For the ideas of the relations of contiguity and temporal succession are derivable from experience and as such not as problematic as necessary connection, the idea of which is not derivable from experience. We can say that the relations of contiguity and temporal succession are necessary but not suf-

²Ibid., p. 144.

³David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, (Oxford, 1888), p. 75. (All references are made to this edition of the Treatise)

ficient elements of causal relation. Hume says:

Shall we then rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a compleat idea of causation? By no means. An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being consider'd as its cause. There is a NECESSARY CONNECTION to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mentioned. (Treatise, p. 77.)

Thus in order to make an analysis of causal inference, we have first to account for the idea of necessary connection, that is, to say from what impression or impressions the idea is derived. This is the crucial point of the whole issue, and it is by no means uncomplicated. It is true that we say "everything which has a beginning should also have a cause" and "particular causes must have such particular effects", but the important thing is the reason why we conclude this and "what is the nature of that inference we draw from the one to the other, and of the belief we repose in it."⁴ It would not do to say that these principles are either intuitively certain or demonstrable, for Hume shows that this is not the case. For with regard to the latter position, we can conceive of an object as non-existent in one moment and as existent in another, and still not have the idea of cause. With regard to the former position Hume simply leaves it up to those who

⁴Ibid., p. 78.

maintain it to show that it is really the case. Hume is now in a position to support Philo's contention that "it is..... by experience only that we can infer the existence of one object from another." (Treatise, p. 87.)

One of Philo's major objections to the design argument is that it is not, strictly speaking, an argument from experience because no one has had experience of the origins of worlds in the same way as we have experience of the origin of watches and houses. Philo says:

When two species of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can infer, by custom, the existence of one wherever I see the existence of the other; and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. (Dialogues, p. 149.)

When we turn to Hume's analysis of causality in the Treatise we find a similar sort of argument. We have frequent experience of the constant conjunction of two objects, for example, flame and the sensation of heat (to use Hume's example) and from memory we know that these two have always appeared in the order of contiguity and temporal succession. Because of this frequent experience of the conjunction of these two objects we can, "without any further ceremony call the one cause and the other effect and infer the existence

of the one from that of the other."⁵ Philo's constant reference to the uniqueness of the universe—the fact that it is the only one of its kind—as the source of weakness in Cleanthes' inference, is perfectly in keeping with Hume's idea of constant conjunction. This is one of Philo's main criticisms of the design argument in the Dialogues. We have never had experience of worlds being made by gods. Indeed, there it is questionable whether it would be possible ever to have experience of the latter since God is defined as nonmaterial and spiritual. Even if a god were producing a world it is not easy to see how we could have experience of this, given that we can only have experience of physical events, that is, those objects and events which are subject to perception and sensation. (But, we can leave this objection aside for now and concentrate upon the world.)

I am contending that Philo's emphasis on the uniqueness of the world and its lack of similarity to human art are central to his criticism of the design argument, and these in turn are based upon Hume's idea of constant conjunction, the basis upon which causal inference is made. The fact that there is only one world whose origin we have never experienced weakens considerably Cleanthes' claim that the design argument is an argument from experience, which in turn weakens the

⁵Ibid., p. 87.

analogy between a machine and the world. For had there been more than one world, it would have been easier for us to determine whether worlds fall within the species of human art and contrivance. We know from experience that machines are designed by mechanics but we do not know that the world is so designed. Indeed, this is the very point at issue in the design argument. And since we have no experience of a designer designing a world we are at liberty to formulate various theories about its origin. One such theory is Philo's claim that "matter may contain the source or spring of order originally, within itself, as well as mind does."⁶ We can claim that there are signs of design and purpose within the world (for example, the adjustment of the parts) but we do not know for a fact that these are designs or purposes in the same way as we know of the design and purpose of a watch. We cannot claim that the feeling of design and purpose we have when we look around the world comes about because we have seen a designer—god at work. . . . This is a weak point in Cleanthes' analogy. The feeling of design we get in looking around the world is emotional and psychological. (We shall come to this later on in this chapter.)

After pointing out the weakness of the analogy Philo goes on to outline a series of arguments using the reductio

⁶Dialogues, p. 146.

ad absurdum rule (questioning the attributes of God), all of which are a result of the lack of similarity between human art and the world. Since almost all the main objections raised by Philo against the design argument emanate from or depend upon the uniqueness of the world, and the lack of similarity between the world and human art and contrivance, the importance of constant conjunction in making causal inference is at once brought to the fore. For, as we have seen, it is Hume's contention that basically it is only as a result of experience and observation that we can infer one object from another.

... When one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other, and of employing that reasoning, which can alone assure us of any matter of fact or existence. We then call the one object, cause; the other, effect.
(Enquiry, pp. 74-75.)

Thus habit or custom is very important to Hume's analysis of causality -- a habit which results from repeated instances of conjunction between two objects. It is the observation of this repetition or conjunction that produces the impression in the mind from which the idea of necessary connection is derived. And the idea of necessary connection is essential to causal inference.

For after we have observ'd the resemblance in a sufficient number of instances, we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant, ... Necessity, then, is the effect of this

observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another. (Treatise, p. 165.)

Following this analysis of causality, one of the major objections to the design argument that is immediately apparent is that of the absence of constant conjunction, because we are dealing with an object that is unique; the only one of its kind. And as I have argued above, this is one of the main objections to the argument which Hume puts into the mouth of Philo. For, in the Dialogues (as we have seen) Philo claims that only experience of constant conjunction between two objects can lead us to infer one from the other. But in the case of the design argument this essential element is not forthcoming. Philo asks Cleanthes:

Have worlds ever been formed under your eye, and have you had leisure to observe the whole progress of the phenomenon, from the first appearance of order to its final consummation? If you have, then cite your experience and deliver your theory.... (Dialogues, p. 151.)

But this is the very experience which Cleanthes cannot produce simply because it is not there to be produced. Furthermore, with the absence of experience of constant conjunction, Philo claims that it is possible that this ordered world could have been the result of an accident among the chance arrangements of eternal matter. For in the course of eternity matter can arrange itself in many different ways. It just so

happens that we live in a period of order, but we should not make the mistake to attribute this to a designer-god. A similar sort of argument crops up in the Treatise in connection with causal inference. Here Hume claims that if constant conjunction is lacking, then it is the same as chance.

'Tis the constant conjunction of objects along with the determination of the mind, which constitutes a physical necessity: And the removal of these is the same thing with chance. (Treatise, p. 171.)

So far we have seen that Philo maintained a line of attack against the design argument which follows directly from Hume's analysis of causal inference. The objections which Philo raised are precisely the type of objections that must be raised, given Hume's treatment of causality, and the fact that Philo raised these objections in the Dialogues seems to me to be much more than mere coincidence. Of course, it is possible to ignore (perhaps without justice) the evidence given above and claim that it is only a matter of coincidence that Philo's objections are so very similar to those that must come, given Hume's treatment of causal inference. But what of Hume's treatment of the design argument and natural theology as a whole in Section XI of the Enquiry? Surely, this cannot be brushed aside easily. For here Hume, speaking through the mouth of his friend "Epicurus", and at times for himself, points out that in making a causal inference, the cause must be proportioned to the effect. Nothing can be attributed to the cause but what is present in the effect.

And later in the discussion Hume (speaking for himself) brings up the point of the uniqueness of the world and further supports Philo. Immediately after Epicurus has finished his 'harangue' (as Hume calls it), Hume, speaking for himself, reiterates his basic empirical position, that is, that experience is the only standard of our judgment.⁷ And from experience we argue from a building to a builder, from a machine to a mechanic, from a painting to a painter. From all these effects we infer that they are works of design and contrivance. When we see an unfinished building, we go on to infer an intelligent designer as its cause, and we can return again from the inferred cause to infer further that new additions would be made to the effect; for example, that the building would soon be finished and show further signs of design and contrivance. Why then, we may ask, does Hume refuse to allow the same sort of reasoning with regard to the order of nature? The answer to this question is quite obvious. The reason why he accepts the inference from a building to a builder and from a machine to a mechanic and rejects the same sort of inference with regard to the order of nature is because of "the infinite difference of the subjects."⁸ In other words, the uniqueness of the world which accounts for the lack of

⁷ Enquiry, p. 142.

⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

constant conjunction, and the fact that it is not a member of the species of objects of which we have experience, make it impossible for us to make a causal inference. Philo, we would remember, asked Cleanthes to cite whatever experience he had of gods making worlds or universes, to match the experience he has of builders making houses. But this he cannot do, for as C. S. Pierce one remarked, "universes are not as plentiful as blackberries."⁹ In the case of human productions we have no such difficulty for we are familiar with these productions. Whenever we see cars, buildings, paintings, ships, machines, weapons, we immediately infer from them that they are works of design because both the criteria of constant conjunction and similarity are satisfied, whereas in the case of worlds, neither is satisfied. We can reason thus because, "man is a being whom we know by experience, whose motives and designs we are acquainted with, and whose projects and inclinations have certain connection and coherence, according to the laws which nature has established for the government of such a creature." (Enquiry, p.p. 143-144.) But we are not familiar with the Deity and his work in the same way—a point which is so crucial and central to the whole issue that it is not really possible to over-emphasize it. For,

The Deity is known to us only by his

⁹Cited by A. Flew in A. G. N. Flew, Hume's Philosophy of Belief, p. 232.

productions, and is a single being in the universe not comprehended under any species or genus, from whose experienced attributes or qualities we can, by analogy, infer any attribute or quality in him. (Enquiry, p. 144.)

In the Dialogues Philo questions the attributes of the Deity by advancing a series of reductio ad absurdum arguments, and also by enumerating the evils and imperfections in the world.¹⁰ In other words, he is at pains to see how these attributes (omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence) arise in the cause of the world when we know of no such attributes in the effect, given that we are arguing from effects to causes. In the Enquiry the same sort of objection is advanced by Hume's Epicurean friend (who I shall assume is speaking for Hume). In this work he is concerned to point out that, when we infer a particular cause from a known effect, it is not legitimate to ascribe qualities to the cause "but what are exactly sufficient to produce the effect."¹¹ In keeping with this line of reasoning, the Deity who is supposed to be the cause of the universe cannot be anything but finite. This is a serious blow indeed to the cherished idea of God as being infinite and almighty. (Notice, how subtly Hume points out the absurdity of attempting to prove God's existence or even to reason about his nature and attributes.)

¹⁰See Dialogues, Parts V, VI, VII, XI.

¹¹Enquiry, p. 136.

From our experience of human contrivance in the world, we know nothing of infinity except through imagination and conjecture. Life as we know it is finite; the things we know in the world by experience are finite. From these we can conclude that the cause must also be finite. This is one of the points which Philo is concerned with in the Dialogues, and which Hume is emphasizing in this section of the Enquiry. To ascribe any further qualities to the inferred entity (other than those seen in the effect) is to indulge in conjecture and "arbitrarily suppose the existence of qualities and energies, without reason or authority."¹² We cannot prove anything further about the inferred entity, "except (where) we call in the assistance of exaggeration and flattery to supply the defects of argument and reasoning."¹³ This objection which Hume puts into the mouth of Epicurus is very close to some of those made by Philo. Epicurus contends that in an argument from effects to causes, the cause should be proportioned to the effect—a point which could very well be attributed to Philo.

If the cause be known only by the effect,
we never ought to ascribe to it any
qualities, beyond what are precisely
requisite to produce the effect: Nor can
we, by any rules of just reasoning,
return back from the cause, and infer

¹²Ibid., p. 136.

¹³Ibid., p. 136.

other effects from it, beyond those by which alone it is known to us. (Enquiry, p. 136.)

The point made here is by no means a superficial one; it is aimed directly at the deists' description of god as being all-powerful and all-wise. But these attributes are not exhibited in the world, and as such should not be ascribed to the inferred cause. This is not to say that the cause does not possess those extra qualities or attributes. For all we know it may possess many more than are displayed in the effect, but we do not and cannot know that this is the case. Any attempt to speak of attributes other than those which are displayed in the effect is mere conjecture and should be recognized as such. Not only are pronouncements concerning the putative cause of the world conjectural, but as far as Hume is concerned the whole issue is futile,

I much doubt whether it be possible for a cause to be known only by its effect--- or to be of so singular and particular a nature as to have no parallel and no similarity with any other cause or object, that has ever fallen under our observation. (Enquiry, p. 148.)

This as we have seen, is essentially the main point made by Philo towards the end of the discussion in the Dialogues, and we can hardly ignore the force of it. For it shows that any attempt to make a causal inference from the world to an intelligent-designer-god ends in disaster---for logical cogency is lacking. This throws religion and theology back upon other sources such as intuition, mysticism,

faith and revelation, and emotion produced by man's psychological and social conditions. Religion, for Hume, is not founded upon reason. Man's emotional and psychological make-up has a lot to do with the origin of religion. In the Natural History of Religion, Hume asserts that belief in an omnipotent creator is not a product of reason, for if you ask any man why he believes in a god,

He will tell you of the sudden and unexpected death of such a one: The fall and bruise of such another: The excessive drought of this season: The cold and rains of another: These he ascribes to the immediate operation of providence...¹⁴

In Part XII of the Dialogues we have seen that Philo conceded the psychological and emotional effect of the design argument. He was willing to grant that the design argument has some force, not in a logical sense, but as a psychological force brought about by social conditions, customs and education.¹⁵ But this by no means committed Philo to support design theology. Earlier in the Dialogues Cleanthes cited human anatomy to support his contention of design and purpose, but as we have seen this could be accounted for (at least in part) by Darwin's theory of evolution. But Cleanthes' point is more sophisticated and important than it

¹⁴David Hume, The Natural History of Religion, in Hume on Religion, ed. R. Wollheim, p.p. 55-56.

¹⁵See Norman Kemp-Smith's exposition of Part XII, Dialogues, p. 120.

seems at first. In addition to citing human anatomy as a specimen of design, he is at the same time uttering one of Hume's most important principles, to wit, natural belief.

Cleanthes says:

The declared profession of every reasonable sceptic is only to reject abstruse, remote and refined arguments; to adhere to common sense and the plain instincts of nature; and to assent wherever any reason strike him with so full a force, that he cannot, without the greatest violence, prevent it. Now the arguments for natural religion are plainly of this kind;----Consider, anatomize the eye;----and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of a sensation. (Dialogues, p. 154.)

The fact that Philo does not readily support this contention has caused concern among some Humean critics as to the identification of Philo as the representative of Hume.¹⁶ For if Philo is the representative of Hume it is not easy to see why he does not seem to accept this principle when proposed by Cleanthes.¹⁷ On the face of it Hume seems to be in-

¹⁶See for example, J. Noxon, "Hume's Agnosticism", in Hume. A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. V. C. Chappell, p.p. 366-367.

¹⁷It is not until the twelfth dialogue that Philo recognizes the importance of "feeling" when contemplating the works of nature. He admits that there are signs of contrivance and artifice in nature but these he says are inexplicable (See Dialogues, p. 214.) Furthermore, the influence of early education and traditional religious beliefs could also account for such feelings. (See p. 12 above)

volved in a basic inconsistency, if not contradiction, the solution to which lies concealed in the nature of Cleanthes' belief in an intelligent-designer-god. That is to say, if it can be shown that belief in an intelligent Deity does not fall into the same category as the natural beliefs which Hume accepts, for example, the reality of the external world, then Hume would be free of the charge of inconsistency. J. E. Jessop seems to agree with this latter contention when he says that "both the Treatise and the Enquiry are unsympathetic to the extension of 'natural beliefs' to matters of religion."¹⁸

According to Hume there are certain beliefs which are essential to human life: belief in the uniformity of nature, belief in the continued and independent existence of bodies, and the belief that everything which begins to be has a cause. These beliefs dominate and ought to dominate if human life as we know it is to be possible. As we have seen, Hume pointed out that principles like the uniformity of nature and necessary connection are neither intuitively certain nor demonstrable. According to Hume, we have, on the one hand, synthetic propositions which are based on experience, and on the other, analytic propositions which are demonstrable. But by experience we can know nothing about the future, nor

¹⁸T. E. Jessop, "Symposium: The Present-Day Relevance of Hume's Dialogues", in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supp. Vol., XVIII (1939) p. 220. For a similar view see J. Laird in the same work, p.p. 209 and 213.

can we prove by the means of reason anything about the future. We can have beliefs and expectations about the future but we cannot justify these by proofs. Yet these beliefs are very important to human life which, without them, would be impossible. But belief in an intelligent-designer-god is not essential to human life in the same way that belief in the continued and independent existence of the external world is essential to human life. We could very well do without the former but we cannot do without and cannot eradicate the latter, even though we do not have any rational justification for it. We can take it for granted though, that "whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and internal world." (Treatise, p. 218.) So essential is belief in the external world that to express doubt concerning it is to involve oneself in a sort of contradiction. Or as Prof. Noxon puts it, one "would seem to be in the untenable position of the skeptic who publicly denies (it) for want of rational proof, but continues privately to believe in it."¹⁹

Hume's analysis of the origin of these "natural beliefs" also seems to rule out Cleanthes' belief in an intelligent-designer. For on Hume's view belief "does nothing but vary the manner in which we conceive any object, it can only bestow on our ideas an additional force and vivacity.

¹⁹J. Noxon, "Hume's Agnosticism", Op. Cit., p. 366.

An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defined, a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression" (Treatise, p. 96.) On the face of it, Cleanthes' belief in an intelligent contriver seems to fit in with this definition. For his feeling which comes in "with a force like that of a sensation" does seem compatible with the liveliness and vivacity which Hume mentions. But, Hume goes on to add that in the passage from the impression to the idea "we are not determined by reason, but by custom, or a principle of association." (Treatise, p. 97.) And the custom which is a result of the principle of constant conjunction and association is lacking (as we saw earlier) in the case of Cleanthes' inference to a contriver. It is thus highly probable that this deficiency brings it closer to "fancy" than to belief. Hume was careful to emphasize the importance of distinguishing between beliefs and fancy.

An idea assented to feels different from a fictitious idea, that the fancy alone presents to us: And this different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior force, or vivacity, or firmness, or steadiness. (Treatise, p. 629.)

Although force and vivacity are important to belief, they are not absolutely essential, for there are many beliefs about which we do not feel strongly. For example, we believe that the earth is round and not flat, and that the earth rotates on its axis once every twenty-four hours, but we do not have strong feelings about these beliefs. How,

then, do we come to have belief in such propositions? The answer lies in the attributes of "firmness" and "steadiness". We have always been told that the proposition, "the earth is round", is true, and nothing has happened to make us doubt the truth of this proposition. All observations of the earth are compatible with this proposition. Consequently, we have a firm and steady belief in this proposition although we have no strong feelings about it.

When we turn to Cleanthes' belief in an intelligent-designer we do not have the same firmness and steadiness. And although many people have been brought to believe in such a god, there is evidence in the world which is contrary to this belief. Evil, suffering, pain, and imperfection in the world, are all incompatible with such a belief. Thus in spite of the fact that belief in an intelligent-designer-god has been generated by education, this does not make it a rational belief.²⁰ Hume is willing to grant that education can generate beliefs but such beliefs are not all rational beliefs, and I am sure that Hume would not have advocated irrational beliefs. Furthermore, he makes it clear that education does not generate "natural" beliefs.

²⁰ By rational belief, I mean "natural belief" (in Hume's sense) and by irrational belief I mean fancy or superstition. Although Hume did not differentiate between rational and irrational beliefs, I am sure that such a differentiation (had he made it) would have made his distinction between "belief" and "fancy or superstition" much easier to understand.

-----education is an artificial and not a natural cause, and as its maxims are frequently contrary to reason, and even to themselves in different times and places, it is never upon that account recogniz'd by philosophers; tho' in reality it be built almost on the same foundation of custom and repetition as our reasoning from causes and effects. (Treatise, p. 117.)

Thus those beliefs that have been generated by education, and which are found to be inconsistent and incompatible with beliefs that are founded upon experience, should be discarded for they are more like fancies than beliefs. At one time almost everyone believed that the earth was flat, but Columbus' voyage to the "New World" in 1492 was evidence to the contrary. Since the appearance of this and other evidence, reasonable people have discarded the belief in a flat earth. But Cleanthes' belief in an intelligent-designer is incompatible with many of our everyday experiences (imperfection, lack of organization, etc.). Thus the idea of an intelligent-designer is more of fancy and illusion than it is a belief (in the sense in which Hume means it) in an intelligent-designer-god. Moreover, this belief (as was pointed out above) is not essential to human life.²¹ Many people have no such belief and yet they lead comfortable and normal lives. But

²¹ Notice, that I am carefully differentiating between a designer-god and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This differentiation is crucial to my whole thesis.

the natural beliefs about which Hume speaks are essential and necessary for the normal continuation of human lives.

It could be claimed, however, that belief in an intelligent deity is necessary for man to behave in a morally responsible manner, and this is in fact what Cleanthes turned to as a last resort. But there are many people who affirm belief in a god who is intelligent and wise and yet have no way of knowing what the highest moral standards are. There is such a wide variance in man's moral standards that it is practically impossible to know which, if any, of these numerous standards is the correct one, and Cleanthes' design argument does not and cannot cast the least light upon the whole matter. This is in effect what Philo means when he says that "we have reason to infer that the natural attributes of the Deity have a greater resemblance to those of men, than his moral attributes have to human virtues." (Dialogues, p. 219) And, even if Cleanthes' design argument proves the existence of a God, it still is not clear what moral precepts could follow from this fact. Not only is it difficult to see what moral precepts could be deduced from the fact of God's existence, but any such attempt is logically impossible—for the validity of such deductions is highly suspect. That is to say, that it is logically impossible to deduce normative precepts from factual assertions—a point made clear by Hume:

I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every

system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and established the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no propositions that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. ----For (it) seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. (Treatise, p. 469.)

Thus Philo's unwillingness to accept Cleanthes' recourse to the moral justification for belief in a God is perfectly compatible with the view expressed by Hume in the above passage. Cleanthes' design argument does not and cannot provide any means of distinguishing between good and evil, and as a result men can never be sure, on this basis, which is the correct way to act and behave. The fact that Philo alludes to this point is not at all surprising, for in the Treatise, Hume spends a great deal of time showing that moral distinction "depends only on the will and appetite--." (Treatise, p. 468.) Not only does Hume dismiss belief in a God as the basis of moral behaviour, but he also contends that reason by itself can never move anyone to moral action nor can it oppose an action of the will. "Reason", he says, "is and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." (Treatise, p. 415.) For Hume, morality is based on some feeling of blame or praise—a feeling which lies in us, and

not outside of us in some object. In other words, morality is founded upon what Hume calls "moral sense" or "sentiment", which is part of our nature.

We may only affirm on this head, that if ever there was anything, which cou'd be call'd natural in this sense, the sentiments of morality certainly may; since there never was any nation of the world, nor any single person in any nation, who was utterly depriv'd of them,----- These sentiments are so rooted in our constitution and temper, that without entirely confounding the human mind by disease or madness, 'tis impossible to extirpate and destroy them. (Treatise, p. 474.)

Thus for Hume morality is a result of our human nature and attempts to inculcate it through pious religious instruction result in evils and destruction. For there are many superstitions connected with religion—superstitions which prove harmful to society as a whole. In The Natural History of Religion, Hume points out the harmful and destructive effects of religious influence on morality.

The greatest crimes have been found, in many instances, compatible with superstitious piety and devotion; Hence, it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of man's morals, from the fervour of strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincere.²²

Not only crimes and destruction follow from religious piety,

²²David Hume, The Natural History of Religion, Op. Cit., p.p. 55-56.

but also many personal evils, for instance, mental disorders brought about by the fear instilled in people.²³ In the Dialogues, Philo supports this view by pointing out that the influence of religion on human conduct results in destruction, intrigues, war, and slavery.²⁴ Cleanthes' claim that belief in God or adherence to religion would bring reward in a future life does not change matters at all. For there is no way of verifying the truth or falsity of such a claim. Only when we get to this mysterious future life (granted of course that it is even sensible to speak about such a life) will we ever know of such rewards.

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that Philo's position in Part XII of the Dialogues and his main contentions throughout the Dialogues are compatible with Hume's main philosophical principles. This I have done by examining Hume's analysis of causality, his treatment of the design argument in Section XI of the Enquiry, his analysis of the nature of belief, and his moral sense theory, thus pointing out that these principles bear a great similarity to Philo's claims in the Dialogues. We are now in a position to conclude, finally, that Philo's sentiments in the Dialogues represent Hume's final position on disputes about God's

²³Ibid., p. 95.

²⁴See Dialogues, p.p. 220-228.

existence and theism, that is, that they are futile, useless, and irrelevant.

Now that we have established that Hume, speaking through the mouth of Philo, has weakened the logical foundations of the design argument, thus exposing the futility of such arguments, it remains now for us to assess the significance of all this for modern-day theology. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Throughout this paper, I have contended that Hume maintained a serious and consistent line of attack against the design argument and design theology as a whole. I say serious because Hume directed his attack against the logical and rational foundations of the argument (at least the seventeenth and eighteenth century versions of it).¹ Of course, this does not mean that the argument is forgotten or without emotional and psychological force. For, although Hume attacked the argument in its analogical-scientific form, he did not dismiss the psychological and sociological effectiveness of it. For, as we have seen, Hume did not believe that religion rested upon rational foundations, but was based upon man's emotional and psychological needs, longings and fears. Man's fear of the unknown, his fear of death, his longing for security and assurance have driven him to religion; to search for a god who would help him to live in the face of his weakness. Hume recognized this as the basis from which religion arose.

".... the first ideas of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the events of life, and from the incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind..... The anxious concern

¹See R. H. Hurlbutt, Op. Cit., p. 169.

for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst of revenge, the appetite for food and other necessities...."²

The psychological and sociological bases of the design argument are quite forceful and compelling, and because of this it is possible that the design argument which adds to belief in an intelligent creator, would probably continue to be popular, in spite of Hume's Dialogues. And needless to say the design argument has had (and probably still has) many supporters, even, after the appearance of the Dialogues. The design argument has found support in the works of William Paley³, in the Bridgewater Treatises⁴, F. R. Tennant⁵, R. G. Swinburne⁶, and other philosophers and theologians. I shall not attempt to show that all these versions of the design argument are victims of Hume's criticism, for such an enterprise, though very important, is beyond the scope of the present paper.⁷ I shall turn my attention, rather, to a

²See David Hume, A Natural History of Religion, in R. Wollheim, ed, Hume on Religion, p.p. 38-39. (See also p. 85, Section XIII)

³William Paley, Natural Theology, p. 5. (Cited by R. H. Hurlbutt, Op. Cit., p. 172.)

⁴R. H. Hurlbutt, Op. Cit., p. 173.

⁵F. R. Tennant, "Cosmic Teleology", in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick, p.p. 120-136.

⁶R. G. Swinburne, See his article "The Argument From Design", Philosophy, Vol. XLIII, No. 164 (1968) p.p. 199-212.

⁷For a reasonable explanation of this, see R. H. Hurlbutt, Op. Cit., p.p. 169-188. I shall follow his interpretation on this matter.

more pertinent subject which has to do with the role of the design argument and design theology in contemporary religious circles.

We have contended that at the hands of Hume, the design argument met its logical death, although it continues to live in its psychological and emotional aspects. One would expect theologians and religious people to do everything possible to bring about some sort of resurrection of this argument, but, strange as it may seem, this is not the case. There have been attempts, as we have seen, but these are relatively few and their followers are rather sparse indeed. The logical death brought about by Hume's criticisms of the design argument is not the cause of much mourning among contemporary religious people. But on the contrary, many theologians seem rather joyful and also seem to support Hume, by insisting on the emotional and non-rational nature of religion.⁸ Instead of trying to refute Hume, thus establishing a solid proof for God's existence together with all his attributes, some theologians are proclaiming the "Death of God".⁹ For many theologians, the modern world has "come of age", and there is no longer any need for man to depend helplessly upon God for

⁸See R. H. Hurlbutt, Op. Cit., p. 190.

⁹"Death of God" Theologians include, William Hamilton, "The Death of God Theologies Today"; See J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, Radical Theology and the Death of God; John A. T. Robinson, Honest to God.

protection and security.¹⁰ In other words, theologians are beginning to doubt the existence of a God "out there"¹¹, —a god whose existence can be proved or disproved—and are opting for a God who is the object of faith and personal revelation. Thus the God, who is the mechanic, or designer or architect of the world, the God who has been used by theologians and scientists to account for unexplainable phenomena in the world, is dead—and there are not many who are mourning this death.

Thus Hume's rather violent refutation of the design argument and design theology, and his characterization of disputes about theism as verbal, seem more of a service than a disservice to the contemporary religious outlook. For it helps the theologian in his attempts to reject the traditional conception of God and also the traditional arguments for God's existence. This rejection is due, in part, to the rise of science, as Paul Tillich points out:

Both the theological and the scientific critics of the belief that religion is an aspect of human spirit define religion as man's relation to divine beings, whose existence the theological critics assert and the scientific critics deny. But it is just this idea of religion which

¹⁰John A. T. Robinson, Honest to God, p. 78.

¹¹By "out there", I mean a God who can be reached only at the end of a long process of inference—a God who is like a stranger.

makes any understanding of religion impossible---- A God about whose existence or nonexistence you can argue is a thing beside others within the universe of existing things.... It is regrettable that scientists believe that they have refuted religion when they rightly have shown that there is no evidence whatsoever for the assumption that such a being exists. Actually, they have not only not refuted religion, but they have done it a considerable service. They have forced it to reconsider and to restate the meaning of the tremendous word God.¹²

Thus modern theologians are rejecting the tradition of natural theology with its rationalistic overtones and are turning to a theology that is anti-rationalistic and anti-naturalistic. This rejection of natural theology makes it possible for the theologians to return to the Biblical tradition—a tradition exemplified by faith and personal revelation.

This does not mean that Hume gave support to scriptural authority. In Section X of the Enquiry, Hume outlined a series of objections to scriptural authority, especially the literal interpretation of them. Hume was aware that the Holy Scriptures were founded on the testimony of the apostles—those apostles who claimed to be eyewitnesses to the occurrence of miracles and other incidents which convinced them of the Power of God. But Hume was very suspicious of these miracle-

¹²Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 4^f.

stories which form the basis of scriptural authority because they could not and did not fit in to everyday experiences, and most of all because they came to us through human testimony which is often not reliable. Hume says:

We entertain a suspicion concerning any matter of fact, when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations. (Enquiry p.p. 112-113)

According to Hume, miracles are violations of the laws of nature—a fact which goes against their credibility in the scriptures, especially if they are taken literally.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. (Enquiry p. 114.)

Thus from experience we know that a dead person does not come to life again, and we are very suspicious of anyone who speaks of dead people coming to life. In the same way we ought to be suspicious of people who read the Holy Scriptures literally and believe the extraordinary and miraculous stories found in them. Hume draws attention to the fabulous accounts found in the Pentateuch, which he claims are the "production of a mere human writer and historian". (Enquiry, p. 130.)

Hume is correct in saying that the miracles and exag-

generated accounts found in the scriptures are the products of human writers, but this does not render them valueless to the theologian. Most theologians are aware that the stories and incidents found in the Scriptures are exaggerated, inconsistent, and even contradictory, and as such should not be taken literally but should be interpreted. Most of the incidents, stories, and miracles, in the scriptures occurred long before they were recorded. The writers depended greatly on human testimony which, in many instances, was not from eyewitnesses. The task of the theologian is to interpret the stories of the scriptures to find out as clearly as possible what the writer wanted to convey to his readers. To this extent Biblical interpretation has become a central issue in modern-day theology. To believe the miracle-stories literally is to believe in a powerful-magician-God; the kind of God which many theologians believe is "dead".

The problems which Hume points out concerning scriptural authority based upon miracles and human testimony, come about, it seems to me, because of a literal reading of the scriptures. Theologians have come to see the problems which crop up when a miracle-story is taken literally. The miracle of Christ's death and Resurrection, which is central to the Christian religion, is still the subject of great debate. Although many people still believe it literally, many modern-day theologians are concerned with its meaning and not whether it happened exactly as the gospel writers wrote it. Most

theologians are not concerned with whether or not it happened in the exact manner described by the writers, but are concerned to ask why he described it in such a manner. In other words, what did the gospel writer mean when he asserted that God raised Christ from the dead? This is where careful interpretation is important. Many people (theologians included) still believe in a physical resurrection, but there are many others who hold no such belief. Whether the Resurrection of Christ was physical or not, is not important. What is important is that something happened that day which changed the lives of many people, and called the Church into existence. It does not really matter whether Christ's resurrection was an historical fact or not. What matters is the meaning of this Resurrection.

Thus the difficulties and problems, pointed out by Hume, concerning scriptural authority are not ignored by theologians. Most contemporary theologians are aware (as Hume was) of the fact that the Pentateuch was written by (what Hume calls) "a barbarous and ignorant people and written in an age when they were still more barbarous,"¹³ and contains fabulous and incredible accounts. But what is important to the theologian is the meaning which lies behind all this barbarism and incredibility. The theologian is concerned with similar

¹³Enquiry, p. 130.

problems with which Hume was concerned, hence the stress on Biblical interpretation; faith and divine revelation which, according to Hume, are the "best and most solid foundation"¹⁴ of theology. And as we have seen, both in the twelfth part of the Dialogues and Section XI of the Enquiry, Hume (it seems to me) recognizes the reasonableness of such a position.¹⁵ This does not mean that modern theologians are following Hume in this respect, but it does mean that the Dialogues are relevant to the modern day, in at least this one respect. And this, it seems to me, is probably enough to bring out the importance of Hume's Dialogues for this modern age, in spite of A. E. Taylor's and J. E. Jessop's views to the contrary.¹⁶

The emphasis placed on the anti-rationalistic aspect of modern theology also exemplifies the theologians' concept of God, not in the sense of an "absentee landlord" who comes once in a while to check up on his tenants, but in the sense of personal encounter—an "I-Thou" relationship. The design argument and other arguments for God's existence, (especially the cosmological argument) make out God to be some sort of

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

¹⁵ See Dialogues p.p. 214^f and p. 227; See also Enquiry, p. 135. This is also the view held by Kemp-Smith. He says, "Philo, in closing, makes the conventionally prescribed avowal that the disabilities of reason only make revelation and faith the more needful", (Dialogues, p. 123.)

¹⁶ See "Symposium: The Present-Day Relevance of Hume's Dialogues", p.p. 179 and 218, respectively.

Superman in the sky, powerful designer, intelligent mechanic, wise artisan and benevolent artificer,—a god, that is, who should be admired and congratulated, rather than a God who is worthy of worship and adoration. In other words, the God who is the object of philosophical enquiry; the God who is the result of an inference, is not the God that modern-day theologians are interested in. The death of such a God is welcomed, for it brings to life the God of the Bible—the God who manifested himself in the person of Jesus, the Christ. Is it any wonder then, that theologians are going back to Biblical authoritarianism?

In going back to the Biblical authority, the theologian does not accept the teachings found there in a literal sense, but he is concerned to interpret them to find out in what way they are relevant to modern life. The aim of the theologian is to present these teachings as relevant issues to life in this part of the twentieth century—a time when man is seriously questioning the meaning and significance of life. To this extent the theologians are turning to "Existentialism", which, in addition to its non-rationalistic character, has close affinity to the understanding of the being of man implicit in the thought of the biblical writers. One such theologian is Rudolph Bultmann. R. H. Hurlbutt says,

Rudolph Bultmann dips into the well of existentialism for his philosophical inspiration, and concludes that theology has in the past been too closely tied to the particular myths of the Old and

New Testaments.... Christianity, according to Bultmann's lights, must be "demythologized", and interpreted in terms of the anxieties, guilts, and fears of modern life, all of which are expressions of absurdity and irrationality. There is little if any evidence of natural theology here.¹⁷

The modern-day theologian is not concerned with philosophical-rationalistic proofs for God's existence and attributes, but he is concerned with the relationship of man to God whose existence is an article of faith. In other words, the theologian takes the "leap of faith" without which it is impossible to have any knowledge or understanding of God. Theologians are turning to existentialism because there is a close affinity between its themes and those expressed by the Biblical writers: Such themes as choice and freedom; man's individual responsibility before God or in the absence of God; man's consciousness of guilt, fear and anxiety; the necessity of making decisions; and the nature of man's temporal existence and its termination by death.

In fine, many contemporary theologians neglect all philosophical proofs for God's existence including philosophical demonstrations of his attributes and concentrate upon man's existence and his relationship to the God of the Bible, whose existence is never questioned. For it is man's existence that is at stake, not God's. Man's existence is at stake, I say, because man lives in a world which seems to

¹⁷R. H. Hurlbutt, Op. Cit., p. 194.

be on the brink of chaos and disaster. Man's existence is threatened by the presence of alienation, loneliness, confusion, war, automation, hatred, prejudice, persecution, disease, starvation, lack of communication among people, and what is even worse, apparent futility, meaninglessness and hopelessness. It is no wonder then, that theologians are concentrating their efforts upon the human condition rather than upon philosophical proofs and demonstrations concerning the attributes and existence of God. In this respect the influence of the Biblical tradition is brought out. For, nowhere in the Bible does anyone attempt to prove the existence of God. John Bailie says:

----For the New Testament, as for the Old, God is one who is directly known in His approach to the human soul. He is not an inference but a Presence. He is a presence at once urgent and gracious. By all whom He seeks He is known as a Claimant; by all whom He finds, and who in Christ find Him, He is known as a Giver. The knowledge of God of which the New Testament speaks is a knowledge for which the best argument were but a sorry substitute and to which it were but a superfluous addition.¹⁸

For the Biblical writers God was and is and forever will be; He is the "Alpha and the Omega"—the beginning and the end. They had no doubts about God's existence, and you only attempt

¹⁸John Bailie, "The Irrelevance of Proofs from a Biblical Point of View", in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick, pp. 209-210.

to prove that about which you are doubtful. In a word, preoccupation with philosophical discussions pertaining to the nature and attributes of God is irrelevant to the task of the modern-day theologians in the same way as they would have been to the Biblical writers. And Hume's Dialogues, (it seems to me) bear witness that he too was aware of this fact.

The contemporary theologians' rejection of the "Superman"--idea of God—the idea of a God who keeps people safely in his "Heavenly Bosom" thus making life easy for them—also reflects the irrelevance of rational proofs for God's existence. For the theologian, acquaintance with God comes through constant "confrontation"—a constant confrontation between man and God. Acquaintance with God comes through constant struggle and commitment. The Christian does not want a "Superman-God" to make life easy for him; to take away all his burdens and cares. For him Christianity is a struggle—a struggle in which he must participate if life is to have any meaning at all. Thus he turns away from the god of philosophical enquiry to the God who is revealed in the suffering Christ—the Christ who suffered on the Cross and dies, but who is "resurrected". John Hick says:

In Christianity God is known as "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 [II Cor. 11:31] God is the Being about whom Jesus taught; the Being in relation to whom Jesus lived, and into a relationship with whom he brought his disciples; The Being whose agape toward men was

seen on earth in the life of Jesus. In short, God is the transcendent Creator who has revealed himself in Christ.¹⁹

The Christian sees that the only way to be acquainted with God is to engage in the struggle with Jesus the Christ whose resurrection has brought hope for the future—a hope which perseveres in the struggle with justice and freedom, and peace in the face of suffering and death without falling victim to utopian illusions.²⁰ The sort of encounter between man and God which is exemplified in this view of Christianity, rules out as inadequate and irrelevant, the logical and rational techniques so characteristic of the traditional theistic proofs.

Furthermore, the philosophic proofs for God's existence do not seem to make a difference one way or the other to the religious believers. Proofs for God's existence are defended and refuted all the time, but the non-religious and the religious people are virtually unaffected. They go on as if nothing has happened. Philosophical proofs for God's existence and philosophical discussions about the attributes of God are useful and necessary if they are meant to clarify important philosophical issues such as determining the limit

¹⁹John Hick, "Religious Statements as Factually Significant" in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick, p. 271.

²⁰Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope, p.p. 17^f.

of human knowledge. But if they are used by philosophers as arguments for and against religion and theology, then they become more like intellectual games which philosophers play to amuse themselves. Philosophic proofs are exercises in logic and as such seem to be of benefit only to those who participate in them. Søren Kierkegaard once remarked that any attempt to prove or demonstrate the existence of God is "an excellent subject for a comedy of the higher lunacy."²¹ Attempting to prove the existence of God is a waste of time because no one seems to be affected. When a proof is well defended, unbelievers do not become believers because of it, and when a proof is refuted believers fail to become unbelievers because of it. In other words, philosophic proofs for God's existence seem to make no difference to anyone, one way or the other. And what fails to make a difference, it seems to me, is of little or no value to anyone.

This is what I think Hume meant when he characterized philosophical and theological disputes about matters concerning theism as being "merely verbal". And if this is indeed what Hume meant, then I think it is a mistake to say (as Taylor did) that the permanent importance of the Dialogues is over-

²¹ Søren Kierkegaard, "A Religious Objection to Theistic Proofs", in The Existence of God, ed. John Hick, p. 214.

estimated.²² Hume's Dialogues will always be important in religion and theology. For, in pointing out the absurdity, futility and irrelevance of philosophic-rationalistic proofs for God's existence, they will also serve as a warning and a guide to theologians to keep theology within its proper domain, that is, the domain of faith²³ and revelation. This, as we have seen, is the trend in modern-day theology and any theologian who reads the Dialogues with any kind of seriousness would see their value and importance to this enterprise. To this extent Hume's Dialogues are up to date, relevant, and useful. To what extent Hume anticipated this value of his

²²A. E. Taylor says, "----repeated study of Hume's Dialogues leaves me convinced that their permanent worth is commonly over-estimated". (See: "Symposium: The Present-Day Relevance of Hume's Dialogues", Op. Cit., p. 178.

²³By faith I do not mean "blind" faith or Fideism, but a faith which seeks to understand. Unlike the Fideist, who believes without really caring what he believes, belief (in the sense I mean it) consists in seeking to understand what is believed. For if the believer does not understand the utterances (he makes when he speaks through faith), then he cannot reject or accept them, for he would not really understand what it is he is rejecting or accepting. These utterances should be intelligible at least to some men. That is to say if, we do not understand what we mean by "God loves us" or "There is a God", then to say we accept these statements on faith is like saying we accept "Blog" on faith or "There is a 'Blog'" on faith.

Thus when I speak of faith, I mean a faith which seeks to understand what is believed--a faith which is somehow aided by reason; or as Paul Tillich puts it, "faith is the state of being ultimately concerned". (Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 1^f.)

work is not of great importance to us. What is important is that he recognized the irrelevance of theistic proofs and theistic disputes and saw fit to share this tremendous insight with the world.

This does not mean, of course, that religious people will cease to contemplate the wonderful works of nature—the beauty and grandeur that are displayed in it. People will never cease to be amazed at the marvelous adaptation of organisms; the beauty of a sunset; the fragrance of a rose; the supply of food which nature provides; the intelligence and ingenuity of man. And those who believe that God reveals himself through events in history will also wonder at the destruction and evil in the world. In other words, the contemplation of the whole of nature will always leave religious people in a state of awe and wonder. They will always want to know the meaning and significance of it all. Thus the religious person today does not use the order, beauty and grandeur of nature to prove God's existence, but rather, these serve to strengthen his faith in God; the God whose existence is never questioned; not a deus ex machina, but a God who reveals himself in and through historical events and to whom man responds through faith; the God who is the object of reverence and adoration; the God, that is, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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