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#629626 in Books David Hume 1990-07-03 1990-07-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.80 x .40 x 5.10l, .28 #File Name: 0140445366160 pages Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion | File size: 53.Mb

David Hume : Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Penguin Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Penguin Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps Hume's best work By Tarik D. LaCour In a recent interview, philosopher Simon Blackburn mentioned that if he could recommend one work of western philosophy to all non-philosophers, it would Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion by David Hume. According to Blackburn, it is a book

that is funny, short, and has a great deal of depth given how short the text is. After reading it from cover to cover, I would have to agree with Blackburn's assertion. In many ways the book is like a short detective novel, where you think one thing will happen, but you are always surprised. And Hume, while a bit dry at times, can make even the most stoic person break into laughter. Dialogues begin with Pamphilus, a student of one of the dialogue participants, writing a letter to a friend about a recent dialogue that he had observed. The principle characters in the dialogue are Cleanthes, who is Pamphilus' teacher, Philo, and Demea. Cleanthes is an empiricist, a philosopher who thinks that knowledge comes from sense experience. Philo is also an empiricist, and is the most skeptical of the three involved. Demea is a rationalist and a dogmatist to a certain extent; he exits the dialogue early after having had enough of Philo's skepticism. The question under discussion is whether or not God's existence can be demonstrated; the three philosophers agree that God exists (although Demea calls both Cleanthes and Philo atheists at various points in the text). Philo states that he wants to build his case upon philosophical skepticism, a school of thought dating back to Pyrrho of Elis. Cleanthes reminds him that this cannot be done, because human psychology will not allow a person to simply be a skeptic (a point that Hume himself makes in book one of *A Treatise of Human Nature*). However, Philo does his best throughout the dialogue to play the position of devil's advocate. Cleanthes is the first to give an argument for God's existence. He states that as you look around nature, that nature resembles a machine. Since machines do not come together on their own and are designed, it follows that nature was designed and the designer is God. Philo does not say that this argument is false, but he does point out that if this argument is taken seriously, it will not get you to the traditional monotheistic God. When looking at a machine or a building, we know that it was designed, but we do not suppose that there was only one person who did the job. Design is the result of multiple minds, so if the design argument is to go through then it would be more likely that there are multiple deities rather than one. Philo also points out that nature is not particularly well designed, so if it was designed by a God, there is no reason to believe that the God is almighty; it is more likely that the God of nature is an apprentice who is ashamed of his work. Demea breaks in at this point, saying that because nothing begins to exist without a cause, there must be a cause that is uncaused and that cause is God. Philo again does not dismiss the argument, but points out that we have no experience of this sort of a cause, and that there is no contradiction in things coming into existence uncaused, especially given that we do not know whether or not the universe began to exist; if it is eternal there may be no such thing as causality. Philo then brings up Epicurus' argument about the problem of evil, stating that if God were all-powerful and all-knowing that there should be no evil in the world because it is logically possible for God to create such a world. He points out that this is the major problem of theology, and that no theologian has been able to satisfactorily solve the problem. Demea does not really answer the question, but states that everyone knows in his heart that God exists. Philo does not disagree, but he reminds Demea that the kind of God people believe in varies on where they live, and that makes one skeptical about whether such a feeling has value. Demea leaves at this point, and the dialogue continues with Philo and Cleanthes. Philo bemoans the fact that none of the arguments for God's existence are as sound as he would like them to be, but it would be foolish to deny the existence of God and says that other matters will have to be taken on faith. Cleanthes tells him not to be so concerned with false religion that he cannot have a place in his mind and heart for true religion. The dialogue closes by Pamphilus stating that while he thinks Philo's principles are likely correct, Cleanthes makes the best arguments. Many philosophers have felt that Philo represents Hume's views on the matter of religion. While a good case can certainly be made for that, I would argue that there is a bit of Hume's thought in all three of the participants. As mentioned before, early in the Dialogues Philo states that he wants to build a case on philosophical skepticism. Cleanthes reminds him, as Hume does in the *Treatise*, that psychology is too strong for humans to be Pyrrhonian skeptics. Demea also shows a bit of Hume's thought when he points out that certain matters concerning God will simply have to be matters of faith, as Hume himself states in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Perhaps it may be best to say that Hume's thought in the Dialogues is represented by everyone and no one in particular. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* is arguably Hume's best work, and a classic in the philosophy of religion. Whether you are a theist, atheist, agnostic, or anywhere in between, you will enjoy Hume's book as he makes the case for all sides of the argument but in classic Hume fashion does not take an affirmative position on either way. You will not be disappointed in this book, that I can assure you.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
Interesting Read
By Sarlie I got this book for a class, and even though I didn't read all of it, the parts I did read were very interesting.
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading; confrontation is not a bad thing
By Brett D. McLaughlin To be a philosophical Sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian... With this nearly-closing sentence, David Hume clearly lays out his principle of skepticism in a time when atheism was enough to get you ostracized if not physically expelled from society. These words come from the mouth of Seneca, one of the numerous fictional characters in Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, a short work of philosophical fiction. The work follows the lengthy conversations of several philosophers and a student. The work is simply required reading for any Christian -- or secularist -- who is willing to go beyond credal and even blind belief in any god, let alone the Triune God of the Bible. Hume positions three key personas -- Philo, Cleanthes, and Demea -- in a verbal sparring match, winds them up, and lets them go. The principal discussion? Is there a God, is he active in the universe or Deistic, and can we know him. Philo most often represents

Hume's position, reasoning first to deism, second to skepticism, and finally suggesting a brand of atheism that even in fiction, rings of Hume's later, bolder works. So why read 100 pages of fictional philosophy if you know what you believe, Christian, theist, or deist? Because it's intellectually dishonest to not throw your beliefs into the fire of testing. Further, for most who believe against God, they can no more elucidate their arguments than they can define existentialism. But even more, for the Christian, why the cowardice to see your (our) God confronted? Why not a willingness to subject him to examination, much as Job did, and repent when we realize how much further and greater his depths are than when we first imagined. In fact, from the tongues of the skeptical Hume come this brilliance: To know God, says Seneca, is to worship him. Simple, yes, but profound. There is a suggestion here, from Hume's lips, that Christians and theists have it wrong. In an attempt to relate ourselves to God and his character, we have stretched morality and squeezed it into religion and even Christianity. Rather, as even Hume suggests through Seneca, we must worship God, not behavioristic ideals. This book will stretch and frustrate both Christian and atheist. In the process, though, is depth of understanding. A willingness to engage the opposite side only strengthens a belief, or reveals it to be a puny paper-thin thing. Why not engage, and see if, indeed, God is not willing to be worshiped, and in fact desirous of just that?

In the posthumously published *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume attacked many of the traditional arguments for the existence of God, expressing the belief that religion is founded on ignorance and irrational fears. Though calm and courteous in tone - at times even tactfully ambiguous - the conversations between Hume's vividly realized fictional figures form perhaps the most searching case ever mounted against orthodox Christian theological thinking and the 'deism' of the time, which pointed to the wonders of creation as conclusive evidence of God's Design. Hume's characters debate these issues with extraordinary passion, lucidity and humour, in one of the most compelling philosophical works ever written. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

About the Author David Hume (1711 - 1776) was a philosopher who wrote *A Treatise of Human Nature* and considered the nature of religion. JM Bell is Professor of Philosophy at the Manchester Metropolitan University and Head of the Department of Politics and Philosophy.