



David Hume

- **Section X** - *Of Miracles*
- **Section XI** - *Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State*

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- A miracle is a 'violation of the laws of nature' (10.12).

The Argument from Miracles

- P1) A miracle could only be caused by a Deity
- P2) Miracles *have* occurred
- C) There is a Deity

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- The Miraculous and the Marvelous.

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- 2 Human beings possess a **love of wonder**.
- 3 Most accounts of miracles, such as those in the **bible**, come from an age of **barbarity** and **ignorance**.

'I desire anyone to lay his hand upon his heart, and after serious consideration declare, whether he thinks that the falsehood of such a book, supported by such a testimony, would be **more extraordinary and miraculous** than all the miracles it relates; which is, however, necessary to make it be received, according to the measures of probability above established' (10.40).

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- 4 The **various** reports of different religions **cancel** each other out.

The Possibility of Miracles

- The contrary of every matter of fact is *possible*.
- What kind of evidence would it be reasonable to believe? 8 days of darkness in 1970?
- The testimonial evidence must be able to overpower our *proof* that the laws of nature are never violated.
- Actual miracle reports do not amount to a *probability* let alone a *proof*.

Two Final Passages

- 'I am better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the Christian religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is based on *Faith* and not reason' (10.40).

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- 'And whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience' (10.41).

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- **The Argument From Design.**

The Argument from Design

'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 all me, who have ever contemplated them' (Dialogues II, p.45)

Natural Religion

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The Method of Deriving Causes from Effects

- P1) We know that objects such as watches and water fountains are the product of human design and manufacture.
- P2) The universe as a whole bears an analogy to such objects.
- C) The cause of the universe must be an intelligent designer, i.e., God.

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 - 3) The analogy between the universe and the objects of human manufacture must be strong enough for the argument to be convincing.

Problem 1



Miracles

- 'When we infer any particular cause from an effect, we must proportion the one to the other, and can never be allowed to ascribe to the cause any qualities, but what are exactly sufficient to produce the effect' (136)
- The Scale Balance
- Descartes and the Causal Adequacy Principle

Problem 2

- 'If you saw, for instance, a half-finished building surrounded with heaps of brick and stone and mortar, and all the instruments of masonry; could you not infer from the effect, that it was a work of design and contrivance?'

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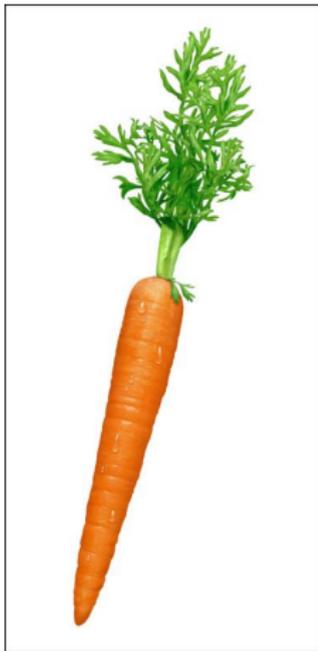
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- If Gods have intellects like human beings, then why not bodies?
- This world may have been 'only the first rude essay of some infant Deity, who afterwards abandoned it' or 'the production of old age and dotage in some supraannuated Deity; and ever since his death, has run on' (D 71).

Problem 3



- 'If the universe bears a greater likeness to animal bodies and to vegetables, than to the works of human art, it is more probable that its cause resembles the cause of the former than that of the latter, and its origin ought rather to be ascribed to generation or vegetation, than to reason or design. Your conclusion, even according to your own principles, is therefore lame and defective' (D 78).

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- 2 The **virtuous** life leads to **peace of mind**, **friendship** is the greatest **pleasure** and **moderation** leads to **tranquility**.

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- 3 The **future** state is a '**flight of the imagination**'.
- 4 Hume agrees to a certain extent, but makes one further point: The universe is a **single effect** and, therefore, we can have no **idea** whatsoever of the **cause**.

Hume on Religion

- 1 Sections X and XI form a unity - a double pronged attack on the arguments for the existence of God.
- 2 Section X shows that miracle reports should seem too incredible to be believed by any properly functioning mind.
- 3 The only reason someone might believe that miracles may nevertheless occur is a belief in a God who has the power to change the course of nature.
- 4 Section XI shows that the chief argument for the existence of a designer is fundamentally flawed.
- 5 We cannot derive a cause from an effect, if we have never had any experience of the cause.