

# David Hume 5

## Hume's Philosophy of Religion

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*To His Sacred Majesty, GEORGE III. The Most Excellent*  
*This PLAN of the New Streets and Squares, intended for His ancient CAPITAL, of*  
*Which his People enjoy, under his mild and auspicious Government, IS, with the utmost Humility,*



*Patron of every POLITE and LIBERAL*  
*NORTH-BRITAIN; One of the happy Consequences of the Peace, Humanity, and*  
*Invented By* *Mrs. Haydon's* *Most devoted, honest and faithful*  
*JAMES CRAIG.*

# Introduction



## 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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- 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

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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).



# Two Points to Consider

## Miracles



- How can Hume claim that 1) Miracles *are possible* and that 2) No one has ever had a justified belief that a miracle has occurred?
- Imagine that after you left this lecture hall suddenly you witnessed the sun dance around about the sky in a Zig-Zag pattern. Would you a) Believe your senses were fooling you; b) Believe a miracle had occurred; c) Decide that the laws of nature must be reconsidered.

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- The Argument From Design.

## The Argument from Design

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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.
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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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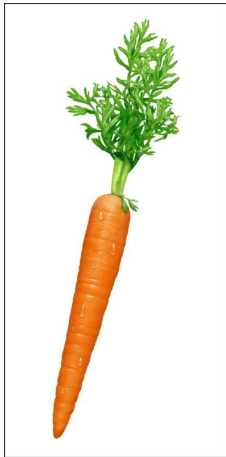
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- If Gods have intellects like human beings, then why not bodies?
- This world may have been 'only the first rude essay of some infant Deity, who afterwards abandoned it' or 'the production of old age and dotage in some supraannuated Deity; and ever 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**.
- 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.