

AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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## **ABSTRACT**

AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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In this thesis I argue that David Hume developed a philosophy of religion as an empiricist and a naturalist philosopher and defended his philosophy against the rationalist tradition. He applied the principle of naturalism to religion and ethics. He believed that the limits of life and knowledge are the limits of our nature and experience. His defense mainly aims to refute rationalizing religious dogmas. Hume questioned any attempt to prove the existence of God through religious dogmas which ignore human ratio and psychology. He rejected institutionalized religion, religious dogmas, and supernatural explanations of religion. Hume has been controversial among religious circles for his views. My thesis aims to demonstrate that the widely held view about Hume that he was an atheist and an enemy of religion is inaccurate. Although rationalist thinkers like William Rose, Richard Price, and Joseph Priestly believed that Hume tried to establish atheism by attacking the concept of God, denying the immortality of

the soul, and ruining ethics as a zealot against religion, my conclusion is that he wanted to free man from rational and theological dogmas by replacing them with true knowledge about himself and nature.

Key Words: Religion, philosophy, Enlightenment, Hume, Christianity

## ÖZ

### HUME'UN DİN FELSEFESİNİ ANLAMAYA YÖNELİK BİR DENEME

Özdemir, Halise

Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

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Bu çalışma David Hume'un bir empirist ve naturalist olarak dini değerlendirmesini ve onun rasyonalist felsefecilere karşı savunmasını konu almaktadır. Hume hayatın ve bilginin sınırlarını insan doğası ve tecrübesi olarak görmüş ve naturalist bakış açısıyla dini ve ahlakı yeniden yorumlamıştır. İnsan psikolojisini ve aklını görmezden geldiği ve Tanrı'yı dini dogmalarla ispat etmeye çalıştığı için Hume, kurumsallaşmış din anlayışını eleştirmiş, bu nedenle de ateist ve din karşıtı olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu tez, Hume'la ilgili bu yaygın anlayışın doğru olmadığını tartışmaktadır. William Rose, Richard Price ve Joseph Priestly gibi pek çok rasyonalist düşünür

Hume'u ateist anlayışı başlatmak, Tanrı kavramına saldırmak, insan ruhunun ölümsüzlüğünü inkar etmek ve ahlaki yapıyı yok etmekle suçlamaktadırlar. Tez aynı zamanda Hume'un insanı dini ve rasyonel dogmalardan kurtarmayı, insan ve doğa ile ilgili doğru bilgiye ulaşmayı amaçladığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din, felsefe, Aydınlanma, Hume, Hıristiyanlık

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Outline

Philosophy and religion are two endeavors to seek truth. Revelation and reason are two main sources in this quest. Hume thinks that true knowledge about man and nature is the way to free him from fanaticism and oppression. In his philosophy every enlightened man can find God by contemplation on nature. What one needs is not revelatory knowledge or miracles about the true religion and morality.<sup>1</sup> The principle of questioning is the core of Hume's philosophy. He believes that there is an essential part of each human being who asks all the difficult questions. He asserted that the empirical method in understanding man was essential for the new way of thinking. According to Hume human nature and experience are the basis of all knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1890, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Stace 1960, p. 177.

In this thesis I will investigate the true nature of Hume's philosophy of religion. I will also examine whether his critiques are justified.

In the chapter entitled "Hume's Background" I focus on Hume's social, intellectual, and religious background to understand his philosophical, social, and religious environment and the reasons for his naturalism and empiricism.

I will address his predecessors: John Locke, Samuel Clarke, Francis Hutcheson, Joseph Butler, and Thomas Hobbes, who influenced his epistemology and philosophy of religion. During the Enlightenment period philosophers questioned morality and wondered if there could be new approaches for moral foundations. Hume raised questions against the dogmatic Christian rationalism. His suggestion was to turn inward to find God and morality and see natural order as the best evidence for this. He believed that religion and morality are in the depths of human nature.<sup>1</sup>

In the chapter "Religion and Philosophy" I argue the problems of philosophy of religion. I discuss the aims and objectives of philosophy and religion. I mention the similarities and differences between these two disciplines. I talk about theology and the need for philosophy of religion.

First I talk about George F. Thomas' ideas on philosophy and religion. He explains the similarities and differences between philosophy and

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<sup>1</sup> Capaldi 1989, p. 1.

religion.<sup>1</sup> He argues that religion and its relation to philosophy during the Age of Reason occupied the minds of philosophers and theologians.

In chapter three I address John Locke, Samuel Clarke, Francis Hutcheson, Joseph Butler, and Thomas Hobbes, who affected Hume's epistemology for his philosophy of religion. His philosophy of knowledge is essential to understand his discussion of religion and morality.

In the chapter entitled "Hume's Philosophy of Religion" I discuss that there is a strong relation between Hume's epistemology and philosophy of religion. It is commonly accepted that the foundations of religion are supernatural and metaphysical which are beyond human capacity and knowledge. But Hume as a naturalist philosopher criticizes this general attitude. He says that all we know lies within the limits of our experience. Our contents of mind like sensations, ideas, memories and imagination help us to understand the reality of life and religion. Supernatural explanations cannot illuminate the reality.

Passions are the most important elements in Hume's epistemology. I discuss that anthropology and psychology for Hume are the most important sciences. He reduced theology and epistemology into human psychology.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas 1946, pp. 565- 67.

In the section “Hume’s Critique of Christian Theology” I analyze Christian theology because Hume’s philosophy of religion is a reaction to it. He says “The Church is my aversion”.<sup>1</sup>

In “The Relation between Natural and Supernatural in History” I state that there has been a change in the relationship between *natural and supernatural* in philosophy over the ages. And Hume is an important figure who contributes to this change.

In “Naturalistic Philosophy and God”, I address the attacks on Hume by William Warburton, Isaiah Berlin, David Berman, David Norton, Joseph Milner, Chevalier Ramsay, Terence Penelhum, William Wishart, Joseph Priestley, and William Jones. The fact that it is popular to call him an atheist is, I argue, not justified. I conclude that Hume was misunderstood. We cannot demonstrate that Hume was an atheist because we have no evidence to demonstrate that Hume denies God’s existence.

In the final chapter entitled “True Religion” I tried to explain that Hume did not deny God or religion. Instead I analyzed Hume’s “true” religion through discussion of freedom of will, miracles and revelation, religion and morality.

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1976, p. 26.

## 1.2 Methodological Assumptions

In this thesis I frequently use works of Hume to clarify his arguments on religion. I will refer to passages from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, *The Natural History of Religion*, *Philosophical Works of David Hume*, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, *New Letters of David Hume*, and *The History of England*.

Hume's experimental method and its relation to ethics are most fully represented in his first book *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40). In Book I, "Of the Understanding" he talks about the origin of our ideas. In Book II, "Of the Passions" Hume explains emotions. Finally in Book III "Of Morals" he talks about moral ideas, justice, obligations, and benevolence. In *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) Hume works again on the main points of *Treatise* regarding free will, miracles, and the argument from design. Hume thinks that *Enquiries* is the best of his philosophical works. Other than *Treatise* and *Enquiries* there are also insights about the nature of religion and morality in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* where Cleanthes, Philo and Demea discuss proofs of the existence of God, in *The Natural History of Religion* where Hume explains the causes of religious belief in terms of psychological and sociological factors, and in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1741-2) which includes "Of The Middle Station of Life," "That Politics may be Reduced to a Science," "Of the Origin of Government," "Of The Civil Liberty," "Of Commerce," "Populousness of Ancient Nations," and "On Suicide".

Throughout his books Hume criticized the traditional explanations about the existence of God, God's nature and His divine authority. He also criticized the connection between morality and religion and the rationality of belief in miracles. He talked about true religion which he grounds in human psychology. Hume aimed at separating philosophy from religion and allowing philosophy to pursue its own ends.

One of the primary purposes of conducting this investigation is to try to offer a plausible picture of David Hume's natural philosophy of religion against misleading representations. The argument presented in the next five chapters shows that there is a reasonable philosophy of naturalism found in the philosophy of Hume that can be defended against serious contemporary challenges. The assumption of this thesis is that naturalism and rationalism were to question dogmas to free man from them, and to base all types of human knowledge on natural and rational causes. To examine the reasons for Hume's naturalism I next look at Hume's social, philosophical, and ecclesiastical environment.

## CHAPTER 2

### HUME'S BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Hume's Religious, Social, and Intellectual Background

Without knowing Hume's personal attitude toward religion and his religious background it may be difficult to understand his criticism.

Religion in Scotland during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was described as "a popularized version of Calvin's teaching, retaining its darker features, and representing even these in a distorted and exaggerated form."<sup>1</sup>

Poverty and the hopelessness of the time affected the Church and "its Calvinist teaching, always grimly austere, became even more bleak and gloomy, and that its many old-time superstitions and fanaticisms should have gained a new lease on life."<sup>2</sup>

Hume rejected all Calvinist doctrines at a young age and his disgust towards it affected his understanding of religion in general, but he kept using it

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1948, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.3.

as an example in his writings. Hume was only one of the young people who reacted against popular religion. He kept on his studies on religion as an intellectual till the end of his life. Hume rejected Calvinism because he thought that it was an unpleasant religion.<sup>1</sup> He regarded this religion as superstitious, fanatical, and intolerant. He claimed that the doctrines of Calvinism<sup>2</sup> such as the sense of sin led to self-abasement which is contrary to the nature and happiness of man. According to Hume popular religion and the duties it brings weakens intellectual and moral lives.<sup>3</sup>

When we look at Hume's life it is easy to see the effects of religion and culture on his philosophy of religion. His mother's religiosity and his Calvinist society were great influences on his understanding of religion. He accepts that when he was a pious young boy, he believed in Calvinistic teachings such as "original sin, the total depravity of human nature, predestination, and election".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Calvinism advocated a kind of natural theology in which our belief in God is rooted in our innate instinct. Scripture is the source by which the faithful can attain certitude without ecclesiastical interpretation. Church and state have different tasks and should be constructed independently of each other. Church is not a supernatural instrument for salvation. It should be reformed and corrected by each of the faithful according to the scriptures. A resistance to the rulers rather than passive submission is also advocated. Calvin's thinking exerted great influence in the Renaissance and Reformation era throughout Western Europe." Nicholas Bunnin and Liyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 96. "Calvinism, stressing the absolute sovereignty of God's will, held that only those whom God specifically elects are saved, that this election is irresistible, and that individuals can do nothing to effect this salvation." [www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=101235270](http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=101235270))

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1948, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Mossner 1954, p. 34.

Hume is a Scottish philosopher just like Adam Smith and Thomas Reid, who can be counted as the most important figures in Scottish Enlightenment. He is also known as a major figure of British empiricism after John Locke and George Berkeley. Pierre Bayle, Isaac Newton, Samuel Clark, Francis Hutcheson, and Joseph Butler are the other main characters who influenced his philosophy. Thomas Reid called him a skeptic but Norman Kemp Smith and Galen Strawson claimed that he was a naturalist.<sup>1</sup>

Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are known as “the golden period of English theology” because of the connection between reason and Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> At this time theology was taught as the main part of necessary truth. As an opposition to this Christian rationalism Hobbes appears as a famous skeptic and a threat to religion and morality.<sup>3</sup> Therefore Christian religion was defended by many attacks on Hobbes’ philosophy which can be summarized as skepticism, materialism and naturalism.<sup>4</sup> Henry More and Ralph Cudworth wrote directly against Hobbes (Henry More, *Antidote Against Atheism* (1953), Ralph Cudworth, *The True intellectual System of the Universe* (1978))

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<sup>1</sup> From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Hume](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hume), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen 1902, pp. 1, 2, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Hobbes 1968, esp. Ch. 11, 12, 31, 32 and a brief summary of Raphael 1977, Ch. 7 and 8.

<sup>4</sup> Mintz 1962, p. VII.

And Boyle Lectures were established to support the Christian religion against atheists.<sup>1</sup>

Although John Locke was not a Boyle lecturer, he was a defender of Christian rationalism<sup>2</sup> because he tried to demonstrate the existence of God in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.<sup>3</sup> Samuel Clark as a defender of Christian Religion is the most influential figure in Boyle Lectures. He said in his *Discourse*:

He who believes the Being and natural Attributes of God must of necessity... confess his moral Attributes also. Next: He, who owns and has just notions of the moral Attributes of God, cannot avoid acknowledging the Obligations of Morality and Natural Religion. In like manner; he who owns the Obligations of Morality and Natural Religion, must needs, to support these Obligations and make them effectual in practice, to believe a future state of Rewards and Punishment. And finally; he who believes both the Obligations of natural Religion, and the certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; has no manner of reason left, why he should reject the Christian Revelation....<sup>4</sup>

Clark's answer to Hobbes and Spinoza who were regarded as great atheists was that "the certainty of the Being of God, and to deduce I order the necessary attributes of his Nature, so far as by our finite reason we are enabled to apprehend them."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob 1976, pp. 162-63.

<sup>2</sup> Redwood 1976, pp. 100-103.

<sup>3</sup> Locke 1979, pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Clark 2003, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Introduction.

When Hume left Scotland to write *Treatise* in France, his best friends were actively debating Samuel Clark's views. Hume was deeply interested in this debate too and told James Boswell that he "never had entertained any belief in religion since he began to read Locke and Clarke."<sup>1</sup> Hume found it necessary to attack John Locke's and Samuel Clark's demonstrations concerning morality and the existence of God, in other words their Christian rationalism.

David Hume was born in 1711 to a moderate family in Scotland near Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> His family was Calvinist and he was raised in the same way. When he was a child, he attended the Church whose minister was his own uncle. His mother was a religious woman and she educated him. Thus he considered religion as a serious matter throughout his life.<sup>3</sup>

He started to study in the Edinburgh University in 1723, when he was only twelve. While he was studying in the Edinburgh University, his main interest was literature. Because of that, after graduation he spent eight more years studying literature. He studied law at the same time in order to please his family. But he stopped studying law in 1729 and devoted himself to philosophy and history.<sup>4</sup> Beginning in 1739 Hume actively sought an academic position. In

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1948, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Stumpf 1983, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> Mossner 1980, pp.33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.53-55.

1745 he applied to Edingburg University's ethics and philosophy department. He was known as an atheist and because of this reputation the faculty did not accept him.<sup>1</sup> Six years later his application to Glasgow University to be the chair of the logic department was denied because of the same reason.<sup>2</sup>

Later Hume returned to Scotland and received an invitation from General St Clair to be the secretary on a military service. He had many war experiences there during this time by acting as secretary to General St. Clair till 1749. In 1752 Hume began working in an extensive library in Edinburgh.<sup>3</sup> He began writing *The History of England* there and used the sources of the library even after his resignation.<sup>4</sup> In 1758-59 he went to London and then spent two years in Paris, where he was quite famous and worked for British Embassy.<sup>5</sup> In 1766 he spent some time with Rousseau but after a few months their friendship cooled and Hume went back to Scotland. There he worked for eleven months for General Conway as Secretary of State. From 1771 to the end of his life, he lived with his sister in Edinburgh.<sup>6</sup> Hume's first book *A Treatise of Human Nature* is composed of three books. The first *Treatise* is about the origin of ideas and limits of the intellect. The second book is about emotions, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 149, 158-60.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 247-50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-92.

<sup>6</sup> Jenkins 1992, p. 6.

third book touches the heart of morality by saying that morality can be known by our sentiments, not by the reason.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later he started to write *Enquiries* to fulfill what he wrote in *Treatise*. The first *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* was published in 1738 to cover *Treatise I*. The second book, which was published in 1751, is called *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* and covers *Treatise III*. Another significant writing of Hume is *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, where he criticizes Christianity. Because of his critiques on Christianity Hume decided this book be published after his death.<sup>2</sup>

His publications are *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), *Essays, Moral and Political* (1748), *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), and *Political Discourses*. Hume focused on human nature and believed that experience and observation are the most reliable foundations to understand it. He claimed that without experience it would be useless to try to understand anything.<sup>3</sup> Religion was one of the most important and critical subjects for Hume. Not to cause hostility or to be contrary to religion he decided to remove the passages on miracles from *Treatise*. He left only a few statements about God and religion in his book. But as a result of these few pages he did not receive the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1975, pp. 4.11, 7.10.

professorship of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University in 1745. In order to defend *Treatise* Hume published *A Letter from a Gentleman* in 1745. After that in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* in 1748, he clarified *Treatise* more and added new passages.

Problems related to skepticism, theology, design argument, miracles, free will and responsibility are examined in *Enquiry*. In *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* Hume developed ideas about social morality and a utilitarian idea.

He maintained that the relation between morality and religion can be known in history. That is why he wrote *The History of England* in 1754-62 where he observed organized and popular religion throughout history.

Although Hume claims that “a noble privilege is it of human reason to attain the knowledge of the Supreme Being ...”<sup>1</sup> he was still known as an atheist and E.C. Mossner in his book *The Life of David Hume* claimed that Hume’s reputation was true and doubtless bad.

In Scotland he was considered a great infidel, and there was an attempt to expel him from the Church of Scotland. Hume’s friends advised him to be careful, so his most extensive work *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* was not published until three years after he died.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1976, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Mossner 1980, p. 319.

## 2.2 Predecessors of Hume

In order to understand the elements which shape Hume's philosophy of religion and morality we should turn to his predecessors to have deeper ideas about the foundations and reasons of his philosophy.

Moralists in Scotland and England founded morality in human nature. They believed that religion and morality are connected to each other because moral sense is a gift of God and this proves the existence of God.<sup>1</sup>

Anthony Ashley Cooper claimed that only a person who believes in God can attain virtue.<sup>2</sup> Cooper's ideas were used to attack Hume by James Beattie in *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*,<sup>3</sup> by Adam Smith in *The theory of moral sentiments*<sup>4</sup> and by Pierre Bayle.<sup>5</sup>

Since Hume asserted that the foundation of morality is our sentiments, and religion and ethics are separate subjects, he was attacked by his contemporaries. He believed that Christian theology damages ethics. At the same time he was convinced that no religious hypothesis can be demonstrated by reason. Among his contemporaries it was clear that he was an atheist and an infidel and his philosophy was very dangerous to religion, morality and people.

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<sup>1</sup> Rivers 2000, ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper 2001, 1714, pp. 70-l.

<sup>3</sup> Beattie 1983, 407n.

<sup>4</sup> Smith 1966, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> Bayle 1708, pp. 349-51.

Theologians and scholars like William Warburton, Richard Hurd, John Brown, Thomas Balguy, Hugh Hamilton, John Hey, Robert Morehead, Joseph Morehead, Joseph Milner, and rationalists thinkers like William Rose, Richard Price, and Joseph Priestly responded to Hume.

Religion and morality were one of the most important subjects of philosophy during the Middle Ages. Philosophers after this age went on dealing with these subjects by criticizing the previous philosophers.

In 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Europe was influenced by new ideas in philosophy of religion. These new philosophical approaches in morality and religion caused new questions.

Could there be new approaches for moral foundations?

If so what can be the basis for these moral realms?

Is the basis of morality reason or the feelings?

Some philosophers thought that it is the feelings. But their claim raised another question.

Can there be a consensus on morality if it is based on feelings? <sup>1</sup>

John Locke and Samuel Clarke claimed that the answer is reason.<sup>2</sup> Philosophers who believe that morality is based on reason face the dilemma between reason and passion in modern philosophy. Hutcheson and Hume completely disagreed on a reason-based morality because they believed that

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<sup>1</sup> Capaldi 1989, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

this would lead to a very negative understanding of human nature. Hume and Hutcheson were against the idea that reason is superior to passion. Under the umbrella of this discussion Hume claimed that there is no problem between passion and reason because reason is the servant of our passions. According to Hume there is a moral development with the help of both social rules and sympathy.<sup>1</sup>

Early predecessors of Hume are John Locke, Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson, Bernard Mandeville, Lord Shaftesbury and Thomas Hobbes. Thomas Hobbes wrote *The Element of Law* (1640) and *De Cive* (1642). Hobbes did not accept the idea that there is a moral realm. Because of that his writings are not considered as moral philosophy.<sup>2</sup> He denied the common understanding of a reason-based morality system and claimed that passions compose the human nature. He claimed that “the thoughts are to the desires, as scouts and spies, to range abroad and find the way to the things desired”<sup>3</sup>

According to Hobbes passions and feelings are the only causes of social constructions.<sup>4</sup> Hobbes’ main concern in explaining all these social ideas come out of the selfishness of the human being. Selfishness is the reason to protect ourselves and for self-preservation. Hobbes rejects a certain reason-based

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Hobbes 1968, Ch. VI.

<sup>4</sup> Hobbes 1994, pp. 1. 14. 6.

moral philosophy because Hobbes embraced selfishness of human beings as the background of everything.<sup>1</sup> Hume does not accept this philosophy as a whole, but it is obvious that his ideas were influenced by Hobbes' ideas.

John Locke thought that passions are primary and reason is a servant to them. Locke accepted that there is a moral domain in humans, being and morality can only be related to human beings because only human beings have an ability to rationalize. He believed that morality is demonstrated by reason.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to John Locke, Hume does not accept that moral philosophy is demonstrable because in that case there would be a consensus on moral issues.<sup>3</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671-1713) is one of the philosophers who has great influence on David Hume with his books, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*.<sup>4</sup> Cooper was influenced by Locke but at the same time he asserted that there is a moral sense which decides the good and the bad, the true and the false.<sup>5</sup> He claims that we have internal and independent feelings about morality.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stumpf 1983, pp. 223-24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 262-63.

<sup>3</sup> Capaldi 1989, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Cooper 2001, pp. 251-54, 258-66.

<sup>6</sup> Capaldi 1989, p. 12.

Bernard Mandeville criticized Cooper because he believed that there is no moral domain.<sup>1</sup> Similar to Hobbes he emphasized selfishness and social growth. He also claimed that selfishness and growth and desires are tools for development in society.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Butler maintained that there is a relation between religion and morality, but this does not prove that morality comes from religion.<sup>3</sup> He did not accept Clarke's ideas about a metaphysical understanding of morality and maintained that the origin of morality is in the depths of human beings. Man has the ability to contemplate on his nature; in other words, he is aware of his inner world and this ability is closely relevant to his moral world.<sup>4</sup>

Hume and his contemporaries raised questions against the dogmatic Christian rationalism which was enjoying its golden period during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Hobbes was a good representative of the skeptic movement against Christian rationalism, therefore the defenders of Christian theology claimed that he was the greatest atheist.<sup>6</sup> Hobbes's

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<sup>1</sup> Mandeville 1923, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Ch. VIII.

<sup>3</sup> Capaldi 1989, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.13-14.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen 1902, pp. 1,2,6.

<sup>6</sup> Mintz 1962, vii.

secularism and scientific naturalism in understanding man threatened religion and morality.<sup>1</sup> The Boyle Lectures followed Hobbes which were to defend Christianity against atheists. The lectures were carefully chosen by the trustees, and they marshaled their arguments in defense of natural and revealed religion with the conviction that their efforts were critically important to the maintenance of the Church's moral leadership and political influence.

David Hume was one of the most influential philosophers with his critiques on both morality and religion in the historical process. It is easy to see that he was influenced by his predecessors. His suggestion in this discussion was to turn inward to find God and morality, and he saw natural order as the best evidence for this. He was convinced that the realm of religion and morality can only be discovered within the depths of human nature.<sup>2</sup>

We can say that the main question of modern moral philosophy was with the content of morality.

How do we determine right and wrong?

What is the source of our motivation to do the right thing?

Hume believed that our moral determinations arise from human nature and from our life, and not from an external source. Such ideas about morality provided freedom in action.

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<sup>1</sup> Raphael 1977, ch. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob 1976, pp. 162-3.

## CHAPTER 3

### RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

#### 3.1 Historical Survey

Although Hume has many writings explaining his philosophy of religion, it is still an unknown area where more clarifications are needed. It is obvious that there is no consensus on what he really meant by religion. In order to defend Hume's philosophy of religion, it is instructive to approach this by way of examination of philosophy and religion because it is beneficial to establish the logical connection between philosophy of religion and the related disciplines. In what follows, I consider the aims and objectives of philosophy and religion. I mention the similarities and differences between these two disciplines, and I discuss the historical development of the relation between them. Finally, I discuss theology a little bit and talk about the need for philosophy of religion.

Religion has always been the subject of philosophy. They both search for the foundation of knowledge. Religion sees revelation as the ultimate source and criteria of truth but for philosophy the ultimate source and criteria of truth is reason.

What is the basis of our knowledge? What is the basis of morality?

These are the ongoing discussions in philosophy.

Religion needs philosophy to support and preserve itself. They have common features. For example both of them concentrate on the whole reality, not on the particulars. Although philosophy and religion have different ways to reach this reality, they both seek this in a union. The union of faith and reason in religion is necessary, just like the union of theory and practice in philosophy. <sup>1</sup>

Both philosophy and religion claim that man has a capacity to reach a higher intellectual and spiritual level in his life by taking care of his soul and mind. They both claim that fulfilling spiritual life is the most important thing in life. <sup>2</sup>

Besides these commonalities, there are some differences between philosophy and religion such as the question of faith. Philosophy tries to demonstrate the truth of belief, therefore the philosopher always has doubt. But in the religious outlook, reason is not enough to explain everything. The philosopher is always suspicious if the theory is not demonstrated, but religion does not pay attention to demonstrations. Religion must accept an authority, but philosophy does not trust the authorities. Faith stops searching because reason is not capable enough to demonstrate the infinite, and infinite never shows itself to the finite. The aim of philosophy is to have true knowledge and

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas 1946, pp. 565-566.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.567.

true systems but the aim of religion is to fulfill our spiritual desires by devotion to God.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the differences, philosophy and religion have always been in relation to each other. In the beginning philosophy of religion was understood as a way to rationalize theology and demonstrate the existence of God. Philosophy of religion is not teaching about religion, but it is the study of the religious actions, conceptions and experiences to analyze and systemize them. Any person who starts to think about religion and searches for logical solutions is faced with problems and turns to philosophy. Philosophy of religion contemplates religion and starts when people have difficulties with religion. Philosophy helps religion to rationalize the belief systems and tries to find truth in it. Different schools of philosophy such as idealists, realists, agnostics dealt with religion and religious problems and tried to rationalize religion in their own way.<sup>2</sup>

F. C. French mentions three methods that have been used to philosophize about religion in his article. The first method is the ancient Greek method, which excludes all the illogical concepts from religion. So God was not regarded as a physical entity; miracles and supernatural things were not mentioned; the idea of personal God was demolished; and a transcendental view of religion was accepted. In addition to these, morality was separate from

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 567-571.

<sup>2</sup> F.C. French, *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 11, No. 5 (Sep., 1902), p. 464.

religion and considered as part of nature.<sup>1</sup> Removing wrong propositions to build a rational ground for religion is one part of the philosophical contemplation. A second way was practiced in the Medieval Age when philosophers tried to rationalize the religious dogmas by using logic. Philosophy and religion were considered one, and philosophers tried to prove the religious statements. For example, Thomas Aquinas believed that the existence of God can be known by reason, so he tried to prove the existence of God by reason.<sup>2</sup>

The third way of philosophizing about religion is in the modern age when philosophy looks at religion as a living organism. Religion is considered a psychological and sociological way of explaining yourself. It is not evaluated according to its truth value but according to its evolution throughout history. Philosophy, history, and psychology were all used to understand religion. An understanding of religion which changes and develops throughout time was accepted. Religion is considered an evolutionary idea in the modern age, while it was an ultimate truth for the ancient time and the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Hume claimed that the differences in the relationship between religion and philosophy in the ancient and modern worlds created differences for ethics. He maintained that in the ancient world natural abilities and moral virtues were not

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 464-465.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 467- 469.

distinguished but in the modern world moralists separated them.<sup>1</sup> Hume said that in the ancient world religion had very little impact on people, ethics and philosophy, but in the modern world it is just the opposite. According to Hume the ties between theology and philosophy, religion and ethics, damages morality.<sup>2</sup> Christianity damages morality and people because of the authority of the churchman and the separation of church and people.<sup>3</sup>

Theologians claim that philosophy uses critical search but it is not enough to find the truth. They believe that the basic principles of truth could be accepted by everybody because they are intuitive. Reason does not accept any religious term without questioning but faith does not use reason to criticize the principles of religion. Religion is about God and the relation of human being to it.<sup>4</sup>

I think that religion and its relation to philosophy during the age of reason is a distinct agenda which needs to be known to understand Hume's critique of established and popular religion. Philosophy of religion in modern philosophy is in opposition to the Middle Ages, when churches were corrupted and

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1978, p. 609; Hume 1925, pp. 321-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume to Gilbert Elliot, 10 Mar. 1751*, in *The letters of David Hume* (ed. J. Y. T. Greig, Oxford 1932), p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1889, pp. 61-3; Hume, 1976, pp. 80-1.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, "The Relation of Philosophy and Religion", *The Philosophical Review*, pp. 564-571.

churchmen were intolerant and cruel. The matters of faith were above reason, and free thinking was forbidden and oppressed because of ignorance.<sup>1</sup>

Enlightenment is known as the beginning of philosophy of religion when reason is used to explain religious doctrines against all religious dogmas. It is known as a movement to overcome all pressure of church over people.<sup>2</sup> It is an attempt to free man from “dogmatic faith and its sectarian and barbarous consequences”. The enlightenment philosophers like Hume in this period denied the Christian beliefs of supernatural explanations, immortality of man, Christian sacraments, and the idea of original sin.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards 1967, p. 520.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Bunnin and Liyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Edwards 1967, Vol. 4, p. 521.

## CHAPTER 4

### HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

#### 4.1 Hume's Religious Epistemology

Philosophy searches for the reality, and we can reach reality by attaining true knowledge.

What is the source of knowledge?

How can we reach true knowledge?

Is the source of knowledge experience, reason or revelation?

Experience, reason and revelation are three approaches to the source of knowledge, and they have created three different types of people, world views and civilizations. Empiricists argue that the knowledge of the seen and unseen, the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, the immanent and the transcendent, the internal and the external is attained by the experience of nature. In other words, knowledge is the product of our experience. Rationalists believe that knowledge comes from our thinking of what is outside as the objective reality. A religious person claims that we can know true knowledge only by revelation.

True knowledge is revelation, and it comes from God. The source of knowledge is faith. God is the object and subject of true knowledge. For the religious person God is the one who makes us know, the one who is known, and the knowledge itself. The religious person maintains that we need revelation. That is why prophets are sent who reveal right and wrong, morality and true knowledge.

I believe that these three sources of knowledge are not separated from each other completely. They always affect each other because they need one another. In rationalism experience is the secondary source. In empiricism reason is the secondary source. In revelatory truth both reason and experience are used as secondary sources.

What is the source of knowledge for Hume?

In order to understand Hume's criticism and his general attitude toward religion we should consider his theory of knowledge first. His philosophy cannot be understood without discussing his epistemology which is the foundation of his philosophy. That is why I intend to analyze Hume's philosophy of religion with a discussion of his theory of knowledge. If we can describe what knowledge consists of and how it is obtained according to Hume, we can know the limits of knowledge and the reasons for intellectual certainty for Hume.

His idea of the natural and the supernatural is logically apt to start with his system of knowledge. That is why we should look for answers to these questions:

What is knowledge based on for Hume?

What are the sources of evidence for Hume?

Is it based on divine evidence (as we call scriptures and miracles)?

Is it based on human knowledge?

Hume has different explanations for religion and morality because he has a different way of explaining human knowledge. I believe that his epistemology is the true guide for us in explaining his philosophy of religion since his epistemology has direct effect on his philosophy of religion. As we will see later, human nature and experience are at the center of his epistemology and also his philosophy of religion. Hume criticizes rationalism which shapes many religious beliefs and traditions. I would like to talk about the difference between these different outlooks so that we can grasp what Hume rejects. The dispute between rationalism and empiricism takes place within epistemology. The empiricist outlook claims knowledge comes from the objects; knowledge depends on data and this knowledge is captured by mind. John Locke, George Berkeley, Hume, Bacon and Mill are well known empiricists. Another account of knowledge is the rationalist theory which asserts that knowledge is a mental activity, and it can be found in rational concepts and universals.<sup>1</sup> Some of the rationalist philosophers are Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz.

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<sup>1</sup> Galloway 1923, pp. 273-77.

Hume explains epistemology as the study of perceptions.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at a time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.<sup>1</sup>

Perceptions are given to us by senses and experience. "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call impressions and ideas."<sup>2</sup> Hence Hume concludes that the self is

... nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.... The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.<sup>3</sup>

Hume's main assertion is that the origin of knowledge is based on human experience. He claims that the sensations of the human being should be counted as the origin of knowledge. Not only sensations, but also the derivations of these sensations, which are known as ideas, imaginations and memory, are counted as the sources of knowledge. Sensation is the primary source for all other sources of knowledge in Hume's epistemology. This experience-based knowledge system is contrary to the rationalist viewpoint where the source of truth about the human being and the universe is accepted

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252-53.

as the reason. In rationalism it is thought that human experience is not enough to explain reality.

Hume believed that only a human-based, sense-based knowledge system can explain about life, religion and morality because we can never know anything beyond our experience. He criticized the traditional explanations for the sources of knowledge because he was deeply influenced by John Locke, known as the father of empiricism in Britain.<sup>1</sup>

It is generally thought that we are limited to a space physically, but our mind is unbounded and can be freed from nature and reality with the help of imagination. In contrast to this common idea Hume asserted that our mind is bounded to the limits of our experiences and senses.

Hume starts his epistemology by introducing the contents of the mind. He claimed that impressions and ideas are the foundations of all states in the mind. He maintained that ideas need impressions. That is why the foundation of thought is an impression, and an idea is explained only as a copy of an impression in this knowledge system. He maintained that the difference between an impression and an idea is only the degree of their vividness.<sup>2</sup> In other words, impressions and ideas are differentiated by their degrees of force and vivacity. Hume claims that the original perception is an impression, as when we hear, see, feel, love, or will. These impressions are all lively and clear

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<sup>1</sup> Stumpf 1983, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1888, p. 1.

when we have them, but when we think about these impressions, we have ideas of them, and those ideas are less lively than the original impressions.<sup>1</sup>

Not only impressions, but also the copies of these impressions such as ideas and memories are accepted as the sources of knowledge. In other words, all the products of our sensations are seen as the sources of knowledge in Hume's epistemology. Impressions and ideas which are two different kinds of perceptions are divided into two. "This division is into simple and complex."<sup>2</sup> The simple ideas do not have any distinction or separation, but the complex ideas, on the contrary, have many parts, such as the color, taste and odor of something. The only difference between simple ideas and simple impressions are explained as the degree in their force and vivacity.<sup>3</sup>

Memories are introduced as repeated impressions. They differ both from their originals and other ideas by force and vivacity. A memory "is somewhat intermediate between an impression and an idea."<sup>4</sup>

Hume asserts that the imagination is another important faculty where impressions are repeated in ideas. Simple imaginations are explained as the copies of impressions, but those copies which entirely lost their vivacity of memories are ideas. Hume claims that the function of memory is to change and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

replay events in their original order and structure, but imagination can create new complex ideas by re-arranging different parts of these events.<sup>1</sup>

Sensations, ideas, imagination, memories and passions are all the solid foundations for all kinds of knowledge in Hume's epistemology. Not only them, but also their derivations or variations are counted as the faculties of knowledge. As we will see later, Hume explains all concepts within human limits.

It is commonly accepted that religion is a concept where the foundations are supernatural, metaphysical or beyond human capacity and knowledge. Hume criticizes this general religious attitude towards religion and declares that all we know and all we can grasp is within the limits of our experience accordingly our understanding. The contents of our mind like sensations, ideas, memories and imagination help us to understand the reality in life and religion but all other supernatural, divine or revelatory explanations do not illuminate the reality about religion because they are not correlated or related to common human experiences.

Rationalist philosophers claim that reality is beyond human experience because our experiences are limited to time and place and that is why we can grasp only one part of reality. Reason is the main tool to learn more about

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 8, 10.

reality. Reason with contemplation can go beyond our experience. It can help us to know more about the unknown matters such as God and revelation.

I believe that knowledge comes with experience and contemplating on that experience. First we need experience; reasoning comes later because without a subject provided by the experience we cannot start thinking on it. We cannot talk about a subject which we have never heard or seen. We can create imaginary things with the help of our previous experiences, but even for imagination we need an empirical basis. I don't believe that there are innate ideas but I believe that there are innate characteristic qualities which help us to choose and which shape our needs, likes and dislikes. I think even a priori knowledge needs an experimental foundation.

Passions are one of the most important elements in Hume's epistemology because he believed that passions are the original constitution of the mind.<sup>1</sup> Hume explains everything with human psychology in accordance with passions. For Hume anthropology and psychology are the most important sciences. He reduced theology and epistemology into human psychology.

He claimed that all ideas are derived from sensations. The sensations which generate corresponding ideas lead to the passions such as desire, aversion, hope or fear.<sup>2</sup> According to Hume, passions are at the core of human nature and human psychology. In his inquiry into passions Hume comes

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

to the self-other relation.<sup>1</sup> There Hume asserts that the concept of self without other is nonsense. In this respect Hume differs from rationalism where self is the most important thing. Hume believes that passions illuminate the matters of human being and the world that surrounds him. They actualize and realize the human being. But reason is only a reflection which is always less lively and less real than passions.

The purpose and the origin of rationalism, I feel, is to create an independent, autonomous self. In contrast to rationalism Hume believes that self is shaped by the relationship between the self and other. The self and other relationship has a dynamic structure, and this relation is always in an emotional field. Hume asserts that self cannot be separated from other because self, independent of other, is nothing. Without the relationship between self and other we cannot talk about passions, emotional relations and sympathy, which are the basis of ethics. Hume believes that an isolated self is meaningless since self always deals with others, self and other constitute the dynamic of the passions and it is primary to all our feelings.<sup>2</sup> Hume maintains that the self-other structure creates the passions such as pride, humility, love and hatred.<sup>3</sup>

Passions were known as the cause of temptation for a long time. It is believed that feelings and passions mislead people, but only reason could help

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 319-22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 320-24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 441- 48.

people to find the right way. I agree with Hume in the way he trusts human nature, feelings and passions. He does not see them as negative things but as positive motivations.

In contrast to Hume I think that our actions are not always motivated by our passions. We sometimes do things that we must do but don't want to do.

Indirect or fundamental passions are the basis of human nature in Hume's philosophy. Pain and pleasure are very important phenomena. They do not rest on an isolated self but on a relationship which correlates one self to the others. The other is the cause of a different self because self is constituted in the relationship.

Any change in the other affects the self. In indirect passions it is thought that human nature is always open to the other, and the other is one side of this emotional relation. Hume claims that the self and other are very close to each other.<sup>1</sup>

Although Hume accepts that reason has a considerable influence on ethical decisions, he claims that it is not enough for moral decisions. Thus he introduces sympathy as the most important element for forming morality.<sup>2</sup>

Sympathy is the basis of friendship which is the communication of passions. It makes friends one body, makes their life common by being a

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 318-22, 365.

<sup>2</sup> Stumpf 1983, p. 277.

bridge to transform their experiences and passions.<sup>1</sup> Sympathy allows us to go into another's inner state. It can arise without seeing the sufferer, but only by thinking of him. Hume states that:

... the minds of man are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees.<sup>2</sup>

Sympathy is a capacity to guess what others are experiencing when we see or think of them. It is not something we do intentionally; it is involuntary. It is a system where perceptions can communicate. We don't feel pride from directly observing our own character but by perceiving other's feelings towards our character. Hume says that "if a person consider'd himself in the same light, in which he appears to his admirer, he wou'd first receive a separate pleasure, and afterwards a pride or self-satisfaction..."<sup>3</sup>

Hume's conception of sympathy is contrary to traditional ethics which holds morality as a divine, obligatory, and judgmental thing where right and wrong, good and bad are very clear. For him, ethics comes out of sympathy according to the feeling of approbation. The roots of it are in human nature and common to men. Explaining morality with sympathy and other human terms helps us to understand others and to be tolerant to them.

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, p. 521.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

But can there be an agreement on right and wrong in this moral system?

How can we teach children morality without certain rules?

#### **4.2 Hume's Critique of Christian Theology**

David Hume is one of the most influential philosophers in the field of philosophy of religion. He criticized the proofs concerning God's nature and divine control, the connection between morality and religion, and the rationality of believing in miracles.

It is commonly known that there are mainly two types of religious belief called natural and revealed religion. The natural religion claims that the knowledge of God can only be drawn from nature by reason.<sup>1</sup> Revealed religion asserts that the knowledge of God is given in revelation, in miracles and in God's intervention with earthly affairs.

The philosophers of the Middle Ages developed many arguments to prove the existence of God and demonstrate the nature of Him. There are three main types of proofs. One of them is the argument from design which claims that the existence of God can be inferred from the natural order. The second one is called the cosmological argument, which asserts that there must be an unmoved mover, an origin to start all this motion. The third is called the

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<sup>1</sup> Micov 1916, p. 207.

ontological argument, which maintains that God, who is the greatest being, must exist since it is contradictory to claim otherwise.<sup>1,2</sup>

Hume's first attack on natural and revealed religion is in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in sections "Of Miracles" and "Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State" where religion was explained by merely human nature. In contrast to revealed religion, Hume claimed that the original religion of mankind is polytheism, not monotheism. Monotheism is only a later development in the societies.<sup>3</sup> Another criticism of him about revealed religion is related to miracles which he thought were *violations of laws of nature*.<sup>4</sup>

In *The Natural History of Religion* Hume talks about religion in two ways: one of them is whether it is reasonable or not, and the second one is about the religious foundations in our nature.<sup>5</sup> In *The Natural History of Religion* human nature is examined as the origin of religion.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey 1997, pp. 169-70.

<sup>2</sup> There are four important early works on these arguments which are John Ray's *The Wisdom of God's Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691), Richard Bentley's *A Confutation of Atheism from the Origin and Fame of the World* (1692), William Derham's *Physico-Theology* (1713), and Derham's *Astro-Theology* (1715).

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1976, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1975, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Hume 1976, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Penelhum 2000, p. 211.

After Thomas Aquinas the discussion between natural and revealed religion started in Christian discussion platforms.<sup>1</sup> Christian theologians asserted that not only natural theology but also revelations teach us about God. According to these Christian apologists men cannot understand everything and need guidance for some of the divine terms such as 'Jesus' and 'trinity', and the need revelations to grasp them.<sup>2</sup> These Christian apologists assert that natural theology helps us to understand that there is a designer or a creator, but it does not help us to understand further such things as religious truths, divine truths or moral laws. Because of that we need revelations and miracles. In contrast to these apologists there were deists who claimed that our reason is capable enough to grasp what God wants us to do. That is why we don't need revelations, revelatory truths or miracles to understand the truth.<sup>3</sup> Matthew Tindal, who is one of the most famous deists, claimed that:

As far as divine wisdom exceeds human, so far as the divine law must excel human laws in clearness and perspicuity; as well as other perfection. Whatever is confused and perplexed, can never come from the clear fountain of all knowledge; nor that which is obscure from the father of inexhaustible light; and as far as you suppose God's laws are not plain to any part of mankind, so far you derogate from the perfection of those laws, and the wisdom and the goodness of the divine legislator.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> *Tindal* 1978, p. 105.

Tindal, who has an enormous influence in Christian Theology, maintains that God's laws must be clear to our reason and there is no need for revelations or miracles. He claimed that human beings are capable enough to understand the natural truth and the divine truth because reason is sufficient to grasp everything. He strengthened rationalism and natural theology. Hume can be considered as a follower of Tindal because he emphasized the importance and the power of human nature and human consciousness. He did not believe in supernatural religious explanations and claimed that no supernatural event can be a foundation to any religion or belief system.<sup>1</sup>

Christian theology affected philosophical tendencies throughout history, especially the Enlightenment philosophy. Christianity and Enlightenment can hardly be considered separate, because most of the Enlightenment philosophers refer to Christianity in their philosophy of religion just like Hume did.

I would like to discuss the basic tenets of Christianity briefly because learning about Christianity will help us to understand Hume's religious background and how his ideas were shaped by the religion and the historical period in which he lived.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodgson and King 1985, pp. 94-97.

After Jesus Christ was crucified, the movement his disciples started was named Christianity.<sup>1</sup> His crucifixion is a very important event in Christianity, because it is believed that Jesus was sent for forgiveness of humanity's sins. He was a savior. "For God so loved the world that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."<sup>2</sup> Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God and he died for the sins of humanity.<sup>3</sup> In Christianity God has three persons in one body; God the Father, Jesus the Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Christianity became the official religion of Rome in the fourth century. It was the time of a dramatic change in Christianity, and it became the empire's religion.<sup>5</sup> The Renaissance started in the fifteenth century and reformation followed it. During the Reformation Western Unity of religion was divided into two because there was corruption in the Church, and a reform was needed. Protestantism, which means Protesters to the Catholic Church, came into existence. Catholicism and Protestantism are two different interpretations of the Bible, Christian tradition and theology. Catholicism, which has been the main body and authority of Christianity, was denied by Protestants.

Protestant Reformers questioned the validity of much of the tradition; the term Protestants was naturally opposed to

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<sup>1</sup> Cory and Landry 2000, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> John Bible, 3: 16.

<sup>3</sup> Borg 2003, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Hasting 1963, p. 1015.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 864.

Catholicism. As Protestantism itself developed a historical tradition of belief and practice centered on preaching and interpretation of the Bible, Catholicism came to be a loose designation for a style of religious life, one marked by stress on the sacraments liturgy, visible continuity, in the apostolic succession of the episcopate, and a hierarchical ecclesiastical structure.<sup>1</sup>

Luther started Protestantism and rejected papal authority. This division in western society awakened individualism, freedom and equality of all believers.

Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther are the three important thinkers and theologians in Christian history who influenced Enlightenment philosophy deeply.

Saint Augustine was born in 354. He tried to find God with the help of his own intellect. Augustine believed that truth is what supports the world, but no one can show the truth. Beauty, truth, and justice are nonmaterial reality; they exist but we have never seen them. Truth exists but it is not material. God is truly real but he is nonmaterial. Platonic philosophy brings him to Christianity. The Bible assumes that God is personal, but in Plato God is not personal. Augustine was a rational thinker so he had to think all these through and find God with the combination of these philosophical and theological aspects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Havey 1997, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Hodgson and King 1985, pp.118- 123.

Martin Luther, who was born in 1483, is the founder of Protestantism and a very important figure in Christian history. He denied the papal authority. He claimed that actions are important but salvation is not dependent on them.<sup>1</sup> Luther believed that body and spiritual self, inner and outer are different. Faith has to do with spirit and actions have to do with the body. And there is a distinction between these two. Your actions show what kind of faith you have. He maintained that commandments lead us into failure, failure leads us into humility and helplessness, and this leads us to Christ. Therefore Luther established Protestantism which asserts that heart is accepted as completely black and only Jesus can heal our souls.<sup>2</sup>

The Church has been a very powerful authority especially in the Middle Ages, which is also called the Dark Ages.<sup>3</sup> Before Enlightenment the Church was considered as divine, and it was impossible to question it. Reason and faith were distinguished and reason had lost its role in religion during the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> The idea behind it was that reason was not capable of grasping the truth. Only revelation could help us to understand the truth.

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<sup>1</sup> Stumpf 1983, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 202-3.

<sup>3</sup> Cory and Landry 2000, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Stumpf 1983, p.200.

Christian understanding was that the world is made up of light and darkness, and evil and good, and evil captured the light and the good in this world.<sup>1</sup> And the salvation comes only through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

In Christianity it was believed that human beings are born evil, which explains the doctrine of original sin. All desires were also considered bad. Man was in darkness because of the idea of original sin. Jesus was the light; the Church was the light. Other than that everything was considered to be in darkness. Only the Church and Jesus could save a human soul.<sup>3</sup>

When Enlightenment started it was the time of learning and discoveries. There was rapid scientific progress. The idea of reason alone was embraced, which emphasized that reason is adequate to gain all knowledge and to solve all problems. Scientific discoveries made reason seem very powerful. During the Enlightenment religion was accepted only if it was rational because the popular religions in general were full of superstitions. Enlightenment brought a rational understanding of religion and freedom of religion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hasting 1963, p. 585.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 879.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 916-21.

<sup>4</sup> Stumpf 1983, p. 280.

During the Reformation period different types of denominations emerged in Christianity called Protestant reform movements<sup>1</sup> against the Church's dogmas, and unity was destroyed in Christianity.

All these historical changes in theology affected the societies and especially philosophy. In the Middle Ages philosophy was serving theology, but in the Enlightenment, philosophy started to serve truth and knowledge itself. Philosophers criticized theological and religious knowledge and started searching the nature and experimental truth. Hume is one of these enlightenment philosophers who criticized Christianity.

Enlightenment philosophers believed that rituals and ceremonies in the church served supernatural aims but not the life and spirit of men. Miracles were the basis of Christianity, and those miracles were not grasped by reason. According to the Enlightenment philosophers, everything was for church and had to serve church. The Church was the only reality, and individuals were servants of its supernatural belief system. Reason was left outside the Church because faith was essential. Rituals, miracles, personal God supported an exclusivist understanding. With Enlightenment this divine authority lost power because individualism, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of thought emerged. Rationalization of religion started.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cory and Lanry 2000, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Cassirer 1951, pp. 134-136.

Natural and supernatural are two important concepts in the philosophy of religion. Natural refers to what we are born with; namely, our natural talents and our given abilities. Supernatural is what exceeds our talents and abilities or what is beyond us. God can raise us to this level so that we can know beyond our natural abilities. These two approaches shaped different kinds of philosophies. There are some philosophers like Thomas Aquinas who support the power of supernatural effects on true knowledge, and there are thinkers like Tindal who claim that true knowledge can only be gained by reason and natural factors and we do not need revelatory knowledge.

Aquinas and Tindal are Middle Age philosophers and theologians. Aquinas supported revealed religion and thought that human reason creates many good and beneficial ideas, but it is not enough to find the truth. Reason always fails because reason needs supernatural guidance. Human reason is good but it is not enough. In contrast to Aquinas, Tindal supports natural religion and asserts that all we need is reason, and we do not need supernatural things. He believed that there is a natural law and a common morality that every individual has inherited. Reason is enough to find the truth because it is the revelation itself. Tindal claimed that there is no old or new revelation. There is only one revelation, one message from God and it comes from reason. With the help of education each one of the people can find the truth or the same principles.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stumpf 1983, pp. 172-73.

Enlightenment's philosophers thought that people were corrupted by society. Tindal as an Enlightenment philosopher and theologian thought that there is no original sin but people are all corrupted by society and by institutional religion. He thought that people learn to be evil in society, and education is the only remedy for the evil. Tindal emphasized that revelations and miracles are beyond human reason, and religion can be grasped totally by reason itself. There is no need for supernatural explanations. Reason is the revelation and morality comes out of it. He believed that people are created good because God is good and Jesus is a moral teacher but not the son of God.<sup>1</sup>

Hume lived in the same century with Tindal. When we look at what Hume and Tindal said it is easy to see that they have commonalities in explaining the religion. According to Hume man should not worship a supernaturalistic religion but should realize the goodness and the value of nature and he should serve man and develop himself. Hume said that "The Church is my aversion"<sup>2</sup> and "Without the dependence of the clergy on the civil magistrates... it is vain to think that any free government will ever have security or stability"<sup>3</sup> He believed that "The proper Office of Religion is to reform Men's

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<sup>1</sup> Cory and Landry 2000, pp. 94-7.  
*The Religion of David Hume*, p. 662.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1976, p. 26.

lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all moral duties and to secure obedience to the laws and civil magistrate".<sup>1</sup> Hume was against the supernatural in religion and refers to Christianity.

And the same principles of priestly government continuing, after Christianity became the established religion, they have engendered a spirit of persecution, which has ever since been the poison of human society, and the source of the most inveterate factions in every government.<sup>2</sup>

Hume further says about Christianity:

So that, upon the whole, we may conclude that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: 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.<sup>3</sup>

To Hume Christianity with superstitions was an obstacle for reasonable man to learn the truth.<sup>4</sup>

Hume is one of the philosophers of the Enlightenment. He believes that education creates qualified, enlightened people and there are very few of them; the rest of humanity is vulgar.

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1890, pp. 485-6, 490.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1856, p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1890, p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> Mossner 1890, p. 651.

The vulgar that is indeed all mankind, a few excepted, being ignorant and uninstructed. ...<sup>1</sup> The skin, pores, muscles, and nerves of a day-laborer are different from those of a man of quality: So are his sentiments, actions and manners. Because the different stations of life influence the whole fabric, external and internal....<sup>2</sup>

From these quotations we understand that Hume sees a big difference between an ignorant and an enlightened person. He describes the enlightened person as a

... creature whose thoughts are not limited by any narrow bounds, either of place or time; who carries his researches into the most distant regions of this globe, and beyond this globe to the planets and heavenly bodies; looks backward to consider the origin at least, the history of human race; casts his eye forward to see the influence of his actions upon posterity, and the judgments which will be formed of his character a thousand years hence; a creature who traces causes and effects to a great length and intricacy; extracts general principles from particular appearances; improves upon his discoveries; corrects his mistakes; and makes his very errors profitable.<sup>3</sup>

They can criticize all the dogmas because they are free from all religious dogmas. He believes that man's freeing himself from the oppression of religion is the way he reaches out to the true knowledge about himself and nature. He thought that every enlightened man can find God by contemplation and looking at nature. What he needs is not revelatory knowledge or miracles to learn about the true religion and morality. Hume believes that enlightened

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1890, p. 334.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

people contribute to humanity; they are the leaders, the measure of everything and the noblest man.

Can we praise God without serving man?

Can we love and serve man without serving God?

These are the important questions for both the Middle Ages and the modern age. Medieval theology highlighted the love of God. The main idea was to love God. It was taught that only God's love would make us love human beings. Therefore religion gained importance, the Church became dominant and revelatory truth was accepted as the only truth. Everything had to serve God because the love of God was above everything.

In the modern ages the dignity of man is stressed. It is taught that without loving human beings, we cannot love God. The love of man is accepted as the most important value. That is why everything is for man and has to serve him. One of them neglected man; the other neglected God. There must be a balance, moderation, harmony, middle way and justice.

In the Middle Ages man was not free because religion was ruling society. David Hume and other enlightenment philosophers criticized established religion, externalized authorities, and dogmas, and they introduced a human based philosophy.

They saved man from the oppression of established religion. Man was liberated from dogmas and the oppression of religion individualism, but nationalism, racism, selfishness, imperialism, colonialism, loneliness, two world

wars, cold wars, and finally terror appeared. Enlightenment philosophy created free individuals. It also created selfish individuals. Now the questions of modern age are:

How can we save people from this selfishness?

Saving man from dogmas, externalized authorities or oppression by freeing him from them is important, but how can we free man from selfishness?

If we make man the ultimate, God, the criteria, the measure for everything with all his limitations and imperfections, how can we create tolerance, equality, freedom and salvation?

#### **4.3 The Relation between Natural and Supernatural in History**

Hume's attempt to explain religion in his philosophical perspective is different from common theistic explanations. His theism is considered as religiously empty because he did not accept a God with miracles and revelations or any other supernatural element in religion.

According to Hume, life and philosophy are connected and cannot be separated. "Philosophical decisions are nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected"<sup>1</sup> His philosophy is about the matters concerning life; that is why one of the most interesting topics for Hume is religion.

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1975, p. 162.

Religion has always been in the center of all societies and cultures because it is one of the most important elements in shaping the minds of people. Hume offers a natural religious and moral system because he believed that human beings are part of nature and none of us is capable of rising above our nature. He supported a naturalistic philosophy of religion and morality because they create humbler people and remind us what is possible and what is not. Hume believed that the rationalist tradition and the religious tradition were the sources of all dogmas. All the dogmas, baseless religious information, unreasonable moral systems, and arrogant and stubborn people, emerge in such systems.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand Hume we should consider his philosophy in the historical context and we should observe the relation between religion and philosophy history. In the Middle Ages the relation between nature and supernature was an important problem among the philosophers. Philosophers in that age tried to rationalize the religious doctrines with the help of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Even Aristotle and Plato dealt with the same issue by trying to set a relation between daily life and God or ultimate truth.<sup>3</sup> Arabian thinkers embraced Aristotle later, and Thomas Aquinas tried to reconcile Aristotle and Christian Theology by reinterpreting Aristotle. But rationalizing the theology of

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<sup>1</sup> Stumpf 1983, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the revealed religions was not philosophy's original task.<sup>1</sup> Although Classical Philosophy was only the servant of truth, in the Middle Ages the Christian theology used philosophy for its own sake. Not only philosophy but also morality, politics and societies were under the control of Church.<sup>2</sup> Reformation brought the idea that religion and philosophy are two separate things. Descartes, who is known as the father of modern philosophy, supported this idea.<sup>3</sup> During the Renaissance between the 15th and 16th centuries Classic Philosophy arose, and nature became the subject of philosophy again. Religion as the most important subject in the Medieval Age was accepted as a matter of faith by the reformers like Scotus and Ockham.<sup>4</sup>

The relation between natural and supernatural was an important problem in the Middle Ages. Religion and morality were under the monopoly of the Christian tradition and philosophy.<sup>5</sup> People were controlled by strict and strong religious ideas and dogmas.<sup>6</sup> Enlightenment brought new ideas, so freedom of thought and expression led to new philosophies. In contrast to the Middle Ages, when philosophers' main concern was theology and proving the religious

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.198.

viewpoints, in the Enlightenment era the concern shifted to the search for the reality itself independent of any dogmas including religion.

S.J. Barnett claims that Enlightenment is a clash between reason and religion.<sup>1</sup> Voltaire says that he is against supernatural teachings and the Church.<sup>2</sup> French thinkers asserted that religion is an enemy of mental development. It created people who were cowardly toward oppressors. The only way to free man from all the dogmas is to deny religion.<sup>3</sup>

It is commonly believed that the Enlightenment movement which started after the Renaissance and the Reform is a movement against the Middle Ages, when religion was dominant and the society was mainly controlled by the Church. Enlightenment has a natural, pragmatic, anthropological and individualistic approach towards religion.

David Hume is one of the founders of the Enlightenment age since he introduced a naturalistic, pragmatic and anthropological approach to religion and morality. Hume introduced a humanistic approach to religion and ethics where the human being was at the center. Also new philosophies such as individualism and utilitarianism were introduced by his philosophy.

Hume as an important figure in this historical process stressed the importance of individual experience for understanding religion, morality and

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett 2003, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Cassier 1951, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

knowledge because he wanted to free philosophy from all the rationalist or theological dogmas.

#### **4.4 Naturalistic Philosophy and God**

Different interpretations of Hume raised some polemics. One of the main questions about him is whether he was an atheist or not.

Hume questioned religion and its dogmas about God, miracles, revelation and morality openly. He wanted to understand the origin of religion, the existence of God, the reason behind miracles and the conception of evil and revelation. His aim was to free man from the domination of popular established religions which have so much power on individuals and society. He tried to show the negative aspects of established, popular religions and tried to revise the conceptions of religion, miracles, God and revelation. Because of his religious skepticism he was known as an atheist. Below are some examples.

William Warburton criticized Hume on his philosophy of religion. He said:

The design of the first essay is the very same with all Lord Bolingbroke's to establish naturalism, a species of atheism, instead of religion: and he employs one of Bolingbroke's arguments for it....He is establishing atheism; and in one single line of a long essay professes to believe Christianity<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *A Selection from Unpublished Papers of the Right Reverend William Warburton*, ed. Francis Kilvert (London, 1841) pp. 309-10.

Isaiah Berlin of Oxford asserts that in 1776 “he died, as he had lived, an atheist .”<sup>1</sup> David Berman argues that Hume’s message to D’Holbach “amounted to a repudiation of the word atheism and an affirmation of something close to atheism”.<sup>2</sup> David Norton argues that Hume is an atheist and attacks the concept of God, the immortality of the soul and religious ethics.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Milner claims that Hume’s aim is to “reduce polytheism, Spinozism, Christianity, and all sorts of views of the divinity to the same level of evidence, or rather of no evidence; and on the ruin of all, to establish his horrible universal skepticism.”<sup>4</sup> Chevalier Ramsay says that “Hume seems to me one of those philosophers that think to spin out systems, out of their own brain, without regard to religious antiquity or tradition sacred or profane”. Terence Penelhum in his book *Themes in Hume* claims that Hume is a “deliberate secularizer” and wants to convince people that any rational men would not follow a religious belief system.<sup>5</sup> William Wishart accused Hume for having “Principles leading to downright Atheism, by denying the Doctrine of Cause and Effects”.<sup>6</sup> Joseph Priestley comments that “Mr. Hume and Mr. Gibbon, and the generality of

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<sup>1</sup> Berlin 1956, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Berman 1983, p. 385.

<sup>3</sup> Flew 1986, pp. 210-213.

<sup>4</sup> Milner 1781, pp. 199-221.

<sup>5</sup> Penelhum 2000, p. 204.

<sup>6</sup> Hume 1778.

unbelievers in England, always wrote under the mask of Christianity, and attacked it not directly, but only in an artful, insidious manner.”<sup>1</sup> William Jones maintained that Hume’s life was “to invent a sort of philosophy that should affect the overthrow of Christianity.”<sup>2</sup>

The examples above show us that even the professionals may get things wrong. Although there are many descriptions about Hume which claim that he is an atheist and denies religion and morality, we should look at his own words. Here are some quotations from his books.

The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind....<sup>3</sup>

The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion . . .

Were men led into the apprehension of invisible, intelligent power by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conception but of one single being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected system . . . . All things of the universe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjusted to every thing. One design prevails throughout the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A continuation of letters, in The theological and miscellaneous works*, vol. 21, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Jones 1795, pp. 123-133.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1888, p. 633n.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1976, pp. 21, 26.

Although it is popular to interpret Hume as an atheist, it is not true. We cannot show that Hume was an atheist because we have no evidence to prove that Hume denies God's existence. There are other kinds of interpretations about Hume such as O'Higgins' and Norman Kemp Smith's. According to O'Higgins, Hume accepts the design argument but denies that God concerns man while governing the world in "Hume and the Deists: a Contrast in Religious Approaches".<sup>1</sup> Norman Kemp Smith argues that religion for Hume is an intellectual agreement; it should not have any influence on human acts.<sup>2</sup>

Hume believed that the order of nature provides the argument about the existence of an intelligent and powerful designer. Similar design arguments can be found in Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Aquinas, and Berkeley. ( Plato: *Timaeus* 47, Xenophon: *Memorabilia*, 1 IV 4-8; Cicero; *De Natura Deorum*, II XXXIV-XXXV; Aquinas; *Summa Theologica*, 1 Quest, 11 Art. 3; Berkeley: *Alciphron* IV) And Einstein says that "religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."<sup>3</sup> While emphasizing the order in nature Hume says that:

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1971, vol. 23, pp. 479-501.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1948, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Einstein 1949, p. 28.

Were men led into the apprehension of invisible, intelligent power by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conception but of one single being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected system<sup>1</sup>

I think that Hume's intention was not to convince people to believe in the non-existence or the existence of God. Rather, Hume wants to invite people to think about their belief. He emphasizes that we don't know very much about the nature of God. The design argument can establish the existence of God, but it does not establish the traditional religions or whether this designer is omnipotent, all-powerful, all-loving or benevolent. According to Hume, revelatory religious beliefs cannot be sources for a rational man because true religion for Hume is philosophical.

Most of the attacks on Hume originate from *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. In *Dialogues* Hume introduces three speakers as the presenters of different approaches to explain the conception of religion and God. Actually Hume introduces these different approaches to help us to understand the origin of religion with the help of different perspectives. Demea is the common religious man who believes in God. Cleanthes represents the empiricist theologian and Philo is the skeptic person who questions every religious dogma. Some authors claim that Philo speaks on behalf of Hume. Others maintain that Philo cannot represent Hume because he does not accept God but Hume believes in a natural order and also in God. They claim that

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<sup>1</sup>Hume 1976, p. 26.

Cleanthes must be Hume. Some others say that three all of the characters have something they are carrying from Hume's philosophy of religion. James Noxon argues that none of the characters speaks for Hume, and Hume aimed in this dialogue to show people the limits of human understanding.<sup>1</sup>

In order to clarify this problem I would like to summarize what is going on in *Dialogues* between Philo, Cleanthes and Demea.

Cleanthes claims that man has only the knowledge of his experiences. He has never experienced God or His attributes. Because of that Cleanthes thinks that transcendental God is the product of men. He agrees that there is an order in nature. But man cannot explain this system with his limited experiences.<sup>2</sup> Cleanthes argues that none of the doctrines either pro or against religious thinking are to be favored more than the others because actually they are all equal. He believes that none of the theological arguments are very strong because, although it is claimed that the existence of God is necessary, we can conceive both existence and nonexistence of him.

According to Demea, God should not be considered similar to man with his passion, ideas and sensations because feelings, ideas, senses and passions are all in change. But the description of God is the one which has no change.<sup>3</sup> Demea says that every creature has a reason for its existence.

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1976), Vol. 14, pp. 469-473.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1948, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Nothing can be the cause of its own existence. There must be an ultimate cause for this succession. In the beginning of this chain there must be an existence that does not need anyone else for its existence. And that must be God.<sup>1</sup> Demea claims that people feel the truth of religion in their hearts. Mind has not much effect on this determination. He claims that the bad experiences in human life such as unhappiness, illnesses, and fear convince people for a common religious language.<sup>2</sup>

Philo wants to learn how we know with our limited experience and reason that there is a perfect God. People with their limited experience and consciousness cannot see whether there are big mistakes in the structure of this universe or not.

In nature there is violence and injustice, just like the human relations where people can be evil towards each other. There are many reasons to be unhappy in life such as crimes, illnesses, disasters, cruelties and no goods of life can be enough to make man happy. After seeing that man is a real enemy for the other and after seeing his cruel, bad, immoral side, can we still claim that the men's attributes are similar to God's? Can we still explain God in worldly terms or human qualities? It is assumed that men are limited beings and are the production of an unlimited, all knowing, omnipotent God. Since man's experience and knowledge is limited, his explanations would also be

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 216-19.

limited. Philo claims that although there are many clues for the existence of this supreme power, they can never be enough to say that God exists because we will never be able to know the whole truth.<sup>1</sup>

We all try to describe God. But God is mysterious to us and no one knows God's properties or qualities exactly. Because of that any description would be inadequate to describe God. I think we can never understand God well because his attributes are different from ours. We have limited knowledge. We cannot overcome our ignorance because we are limited to our limited thoughts. We can always see one part of the reality.

There has always been an attempt to identify Hume's ideas with the characters in *Dialogues*. But I think in *Dialogues* Hume tries to illustrate the ongoing discussion about religion and God in the philosophical and theological arenas. He used three different characters to represent three different approaches. When we look at the overall discussion, we see that Hume's ideas are not isolated from the arguments there but still none of the speakers represents Hume's ideas completely.

#### **4.5 True Religion**

Hume's philosophy of religion is very much affected by his negative attitude toward established religions, their churchmen, rituals and the ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 222-24.

about a personal God. Although Hume believed in God and never denied his existence, his understanding was not similar to the traditional way which claims that we can know God and his attributes by reason and revelations. In contrast to this traditional understanding of God, Hume believed that we can neither know God and his attributes nor describe him. He argued that God is the author of this universal plan, creator of this order but we are not knowledgeable enough to know him or describe him. Hume denies all attempts to prove the existence of God but he believes in God.

Wherever I see order, I infer from experience that there hath been Design and Contrivance ... the same principle obliges me to infer an infinitely perfect Architect from the infinite Art and Contrivance which is displayed in the whole fabric of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion.<sup>2</sup>

Hume believes that we find God through reason by realizing the order in nature but reason has no role to find God's attributes.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Hume thinks that miracles have no rational basis and because of that those religions which are based on miracles are not acceptable by reason but only through faith.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1778, pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1976, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1888, pp. 159-60, 248-249, 633.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1975, pp. 127-131.

Another assumption Hume makes is that morality and religion are two different things because morality is based on natural influences.<sup>1</sup> But he also believed that religion strengthens morality in many ways. For example the idea of the hereafter affects people deeply and leads to feelings of humility and tolerance towards others.<sup>2</sup>

The common idea of most religions is submission to God and its messages, and the pious person is one who follows all the rules in the religion without being a skeptic. It is thought that men should not question the revelations or miracles but should accept all of them as the direct signs from God. Faith in God requires not to question but to accept. But Hume offers questioning of all the dogmas related to religion and morality because he believed that the origin of religion and morality is inside of us and we do not need dogmas. Instead, he poses questions to find out and understand the roots of religion and morality.

Hume's philosophy of religion is considered empty since he did not accept a God which shows His power by interfering in history at certain points.<sup>3</sup> Hume thought that religion is a kind of philosophy.<sup>4</sup> He maintains that there are true and false philosophies and related to these true and false philosophies

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 410-11.

<sup>3</sup> Gaskin 1988, p 34.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1975, p. 146.

there are also true and false forms of religions.<sup>1</sup> To him true philosophy accepts the realities in common life, analyzes and reforms them.<sup>2</sup>

He believed that questioning is the best servant and friend of true philosophy because prejudices, custom and tradition of common life can only be eliminated with the help of it.<sup>3</sup> His questioning is mainly about morality and religion. Hume tries to focus on philosophy, which should help us to understand what the facts are and to show us our prejudices and to clarify the assumptions. It should not tell us about ultimate truth or how to lead our lives.

Hume claims that false philosophy is not only irrational and nonsense but also harmful. It cannot make a distinction between good and bad, right and wrong. He says, “the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy are only ridiculous.”<sup>4</sup> What Hume wanted to say in this quotation is not to introduce religion as a threat but to warn against false religion, which may cause problems and inflict damages on people. Both religion and philosophy prefer causality in their understandings and explanations of the unknown. Fear, hope and anxiety have always been within the human mind because of these unknown causes of life.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gaskin 1988, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1975, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1888, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>5</sup> Gaskin 1988, p. 41.

Hume describes polytheism as the first attempt of human being to understand the unknown futures of life. Later theism emerged out of polytheism not because of rational reasons but because of fear from the unknown ultimate power and the superstitions.<sup>1</sup>

Polytheism is considered to be the oldest religion of human beings. Looking at Polytheism as a first type of religion proves that the events of life were taken to be the first ideas of religion. In those ancient times hope and fear were taken into consideration more than the order of nature. Different natural events were thought to be governing by different powers, so they believed that every God had a different function.

The unknown causes of life, death or illnesses cause fear or hope. People neither know the causes of each event nor are wise enough to foresee the future. Our expectations, imaginations and passions form our ideas. Man has always been on an intellectual journey from imperfect to perfect. This intellectual journey takes him to theism. To reflect on the universe and the order of nature makes people think about the roots of being and religion. When man starts to think about the origin of the first creature, or the unseen order of the universe, he does not find answers. Hence he thinks that to believe in a creator God as a first step will keep him away from all the speculative approaches. "The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational

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<sup>1</sup>Hume 1976, p. 43.

enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine theism and religion.”<sup>1</sup> Hume openly expresses that this universe can only be the creation of an ultimate power.

Hume openly states that the universe implies a creator, but this conception of creator is a belief which can neither be proved nor denied. Although no man can deny the reality of religion, he claims that it is the unknown and unknowable area.

I think every human being has a need for religious belief. It is inevitable because this need is human nature itself. To accept or not to accept a religion is up to the rational processes of man because reason takes man on a journey where he confronts many questions about his belief. This is a natural process and a journey in human mind. The rational basis for belief is attempted to be known. When the idea of a divine being is discovered, it is attempted to be understood in terms of natural objects. The nature of man and his passions lead man to the concept of an ultimate power or a divine being. When people think about nature, the ideas about religion emerge. Man does not know his future so he has fears and hopes. He wants to know which natural rules and which power governs his life and future. These ambitions, fears, and hopes compose the religious belief of man. Human beings have a tendency to find reliable explanations for the events of life. They think that the most reliable

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1976, p. 21.

source is their own experience. Although Hume was aware that man does not like questioning because of the inestimable consequences, he reminds us not to forget asking questions in any situation. "Popular Theists" think that the ultimate power, the creator of the universe or God exists because of men's inescapable fears of unknown causes.<sup>1</sup> They think that God intervenes with the individual's life and gives miracles. In contrast to traditional theists, some of the philosophical theists have different reasons to believe in God such as appreciation and admiration of the perfection of the universe. To them, God does not act throughout history, but He is the first cause of every event and the perfect intelligence which created the laws of nature.<sup>2</sup>

He thinks that philosophical theism helps scientific thought a lot because the laws of nature are all the simplest methods by which nature operates.

Nature acts by the simplest methods, and chooses the most proper means to any end; and astronomers often, without thinking of it, lay this foundation of piety and religion. The same thing is observable in other parts of philosophy: And thus all the sciences almost lead their authority is often so much the greater, as they do not directly profess that intention.<sup>3</sup>

Western civilization has had a wrong philosophy full of superstitions for Hume. He claims that religion is a mental endeavor. Polytheism was the first step of

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<sup>1</sup> Gaskin 1988, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1976, pp. 42, 75.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1948, pp. 214, 215.

this kind of endeavor and theism is the second but the most advanced one is “philosophical theism.”<sup>1</sup>

In *The Natural History of Religion* Hume tried to explain the paradoxes in beliefs and religious actions. Hume thought that traditional theism, which is embraced by the wrong philosophy, can be very dangerous.<sup>2</sup> According to Hume, true religion can only be built on a true philosophy. A true theist and a true philosopher have the same kind of understandings because they both believe that causality is crucial for their backgrounds. In addition to that, any person who has a causal reasoning will eventually find the true religion.<sup>3</sup>

The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order and obedience; and as its operation is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in danger of being overlooked...When it distinguished itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper sphere, and has become false only a cover to faction and ambition.<sup>4</sup>

Hume claims that to reach for a true philosophy and true religion man and his common life should not be separated. Understanding man and his experience is and ought to be in the center of everything. Neither philosophy nor religion should be departed or alienated from the man himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaskin 1988, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.60-61.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1948, p. 220.

Hume holds that the culture of all humanity can be counted as a “religious ritual”. He claims that there are false and true “rituals”. True ones are related to common life, people themselves and their experiences, but the wrong ones are all related to an understanding which has no relation to people, or a life which was constituted totally away from common life, or natural objects which are transformed into supernatural objects. In other words, false rituals do not serve for the life of men.<sup>1</sup>

In a true religion human life is and ought to be the most important and holy thing. Religion and life should help each other. Rituals should be considered as a part of common life; they shouldn't be for a divine purpose but they should serve life. Hume holds that in true religion men should always be conscious of their rituals and beliefs, and all these religious practices should have a positive effect on human life or human psychology. False religions and their rituals only serve the divine principle which is not related to common life. He maintains that superstitions can not help to find reality. In contrast to true religion's rituals, false rituals are obligatory, oppressive and inflexible. Man and his religion are not complementary; in other words, faith and common life do not support one another.

In *The Natural History of Religion* Hume asserts that religion does not disappear because of philosophical perspectives. The basis of religion is

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, p. 524.

original and always essential to human nature. Its “root strikes deeper into the mind, and springs from the essential and universal properties of human nature”.<sup>1</sup>

Human beings suffer from an unknowable future and unexpected natural events. Pain and disappointment are the origin of the struggle of men in seeking the invisible power.

No wonder, then, that mankind being placed in such an absolute ignorance of causes, and being at the same time so anxious concerning their future fortunes, should immediately acknowledge a dependence on invisible powers, possess of sentiment and intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

According to Hume the religious devotion and the attempt to understand the nature of God are both to make God’s divinity specific and real.

And thus, however strong men’s propensity to believe invisible, intelligent power in nature, their propensity is equally strong to rest their attention on sensible, visible objects; and in order to reconcile these opposite inclinations, they are led to unite the invisible power with some visible object...<sup>3</sup>

And as an invisible spiritual intelligence is an object too refined for vulgar apprehension, men naturally affix it to some sensible representation; such as either the more conspicuous parts of nature, or the statues, images, and pictures, which a more refined age forms of its divinities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1976, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

Man wants to image God because this makes man feel proud. The way man pictures his God shapes his nature of religion and morality, and it is either beneficial or harmful to society.

Hume thought that religious symbols such as idols, habits, images, and canonicals are all foolish and have no purpose in religion, and he questioned man for making God concrete.<sup>1</sup> Hume was strictly against images in religion. He thought that when worshipping people conceptualize the deity to an extent and attempt to explain God with images, shapes or pictures, it pushes man into idolatry. Hume always felt that that kind of worship is nonsense and useless.

Thus all wise men have excluded the Use of Images and Pictures in Prayer; though they certainly enliven Devotion; because 'tis found by Experience, that with the vulgar these visible Representations draw too much towards them, and become the only Objects of Devotion.<sup>2</sup>

Hume believed that religious ceremonies are nonsense rituals. They have no contribution to the purpose, to the origin of religion or to the human soul. Hume claimed that worshipping with the help of pictures and forms can only be called idolatry but nothing else. The quotation below is an example for Hume to illustrate the absurdity of the rituals or religious ceremonies.

As he approached the communion-table, he made many low reverences: and coming up to that part of the table where the bread and wine lay, he bowed seven times. After the reading of many prayers, he approached the sacramental elements, and gently lifted up the corner of the napkin in which the bread

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, pp. 515-16, 523-25.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1985, p. 52.

was placed. When he beheld the bread, he suddenly let fall the napkin, flew back a step or two, bowed there several times towards the bread; then he drew nigh again, opened the napkin and bowed as before. Next he laid his hand on the cup, which had a cover upon it, and was filled with wine. He let go the cup, fell back, and bowed thrice towards it. He approached again; and lifted up the cover, peeped into the cup. Seeing the wine, he let fall the cover, started back, and bowed as before. Then he received the sacrament, and gave it to others. And many prayers being said, the solemnity of the consecration ended. The walls and floor and roof of the fabric were then supposed to be sufficiently holy.<sup>1</sup>

Hume claims that when worshipping is related to the rational grasp of the divine, it is the most valuable religious and spiritual activity. But when worshipping is with the help of visual objects, religious enthusiasm and fanaticism occur because man forgets that he is worshipping a spiritual being through these idols. He starts to worship the idols themselves and he visualizes God, so tolerance disappears. This damages society and threatens both the sacred values and the divine values.<sup>2</sup>

Although he says that "Religion is ... the great spring of men's actions and determinations."<sup>3</sup> he believes that piety may lead to fanaticism and extremism. Because of that he thought the ways to this fanaticism should be prohibited. He pays attention to the fanaticism in religion because he believes that it would make people immoral.

... in civilized societies, the sentiments of shame, duty, honor, have considered authority, and serve to counterbalance and

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1856, ch. LII.

<sup>2</sup> Siebert 1984, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1976, ch. LXI.

direct the motives derived from private advantage: but, by the predominance of enthusiasm among the parliamentary forces, these salutary principles lost their credit, and were regarded as mere human inventions yea moral institutions, fitter for the saint, resigned over to superior guidance, was at full liberty to gratify all his appetites, disguised under the appearance of pious zeal. And besides the strange corruptions engendered by this spirit, it eluded and loosened all the ties of morality....<sup>1</sup>

He claims that extremism in piety and religious devotion to visual objects with enthusiasm is very dangerous. He exemplifies this with some Protestants and Catholics who are extremes and try to suppress and dominate the other people. He maintains that there is not tolerance or moderation in these religions and the spirit of man is like a slave. Hume believes that extreme religions are nonsense and hazardous, but the tolerant and temperate religions let the spirits be free.<sup>2</sup> What Hume opposes in religion is its moral part because piety is always with men and affects his character.

Whatever weakens or disorders the internal frame promotes the interests of superstitions. And nothing is more destructive to them than a manly sick virtue, which either preserves us from disastrous, melancholy accidents, or teaches us to bear them.<sup>3</sup>

Hume was aware that faith is something necessary and inevitable in human nature. At the same time, in attempting to understand the unknown and the known, there is a tendency in human nature to have a stronger belief about the unknown. Because of that reason, deity and religious teachings tried to be

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1976, Ch. LIX.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1956, p. 309 A different Edition of *The Natural History of Religion* ed.; H.E. Root (London, 1956), pp. 145-8.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1976, p. 91.

understood by visual objects; God and other religious issues tried to be known by idols. But when God is grasped as a corporeal thing, it becomes very strong and unshakable and creates extreme people. When the unknown is explained with the known, the unknown becomes stronger and stronger and people try to strengthen God with the help of idols and pictures. All-powerful, perfect, infinite and invisible God turns to be a finite and transient visible being.

... from an omnipotent and spiritual deity to a limited and corporeal one, and from a corporeal and limited to a statue or visible representation. The same endeavor at elevation still pushes them upwards, from the statue or material.<sup>1</sup>

David Hume was known as an atheist in his lifetime although he had never denied the existence of God, as his books have proven so far. His philosophy of religion scared many theologians and churchman but at the same time, many philosophers were deeply affected by his philosophy in their understanding of religion.

Hume's reflections on religion have had an enormous influence and have formed for many who have come after him the essential terms of reference within which philosophical reflection about religion is to be carried on.<sup>2</sup>

His main concern in religious matters was its relation with reason. Because of his concern he was very much interested in evidence and testimony in the matters of knowledge and belief. That is why he says "A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Philips 1969, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1975, p. 110.

Hume talks about the most sensitive topics in religion such as miracles. Especially Christianity, which has miracles in its foundation, is not comfortable with Hume's ideas about religion at all. Hume talks about miracles in different places such as "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature..."<sup>1</sup> or "a miracle may be accurately defined, *a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.*"<sup>2</sup>

Hume does not say that miracles do not occur, but he claims that there has never been a miracle because there is no evidence for it. A rational person should not believe something without evidence. "A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence."<sup>3</sup>

Miracles are the extraordinary events which do not conform to our understanding. Although some people claim that they witnessed a miracle, Hume criticizes this approach by saying "whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, would really have happened."<sup>4</sup>

It is reasonable to believe that a miracle has not happened because miracles are supernatural events which are beyond our understanding and experience. That is why Hume calls them violations of the laws of nature.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.115.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

There is no reliable witnessing for any of them.

“There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event; otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle...”<sup>1</sup> In addition to this “no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle....”<sup>2</sup>

Hume believed that no testimony is enough to prove the existence of miracles because all human beings are biased, and they are eager to see that there are miracles. Talking about the miracles Hume suggests several arguments. First, he argues that there must be several witnesses, and these witnesses should be reliable people. Second, we must be sure that these witnesses would not deceive us. Third, the people who testify to these miracles should be responsible for what they were claiming. Finally checking the truth of the assumption about the miracle should be possible.<sup>3</sup>

When people look at nature and witness the order in the universe, they think that there must be a reason behind all these and there must be a creator. Hume claims that “I shall not examine the justness of this argument. I shall allow it to be as solid as my antagonists and accusers can desire.”<sup>4</sup>

Hume does not deny the existence of God and affirms that His attributes are hidden and cannot be experienced or discovered by human beings.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 115-116.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

Such a religious hypothesis can never be proved. “That the divinity may *possibly* be endowed with attributes, which we have never seen exerted; may be governed by principles of action, which we cannot discover to be satisfied: all this will freely be allowed.”<sup>1</sup>

Hume describes the design argument as an “argument drawn from effects and causes.”<sup>2</sup> According to Hume, reason is the only way to reach an end for the entire religious hypothesis. He maintains that the arguments which try to prove the existence of God cannot be proved by reason. The existence of God can only be known by nature.

The Deity is known to us only by his productions, and is a single being in the universe not comprehended under any species or genus, from whose experienced attributes and qualities, we can, by analogy, infer any attribute or quality in him.<sup>3</sup>

Hume claimed that proving the existence of God is impossible by reason because what we know by reason is causal religion. We try to explain nature with cause and effect relation but all we know is one thing following another but actually we have no idea about the cause itself and can never explain this causal relation. Hume says “I much doubt whether it be possible ....”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

#### 4.5.1 Freedom of Will

There are different approaches to freedom and causality. Some people think that human actions are determined by external causes, but they are sometimes free and the author of free actions is our nature. In other words, these free actions come from inside. Some others claim that human actions are free, and a person has the power to do what he wants to do. The third group supports the idea that all human actions are predetermined. Hume's discussion of freedom is seen in two places. The first is in *Treatise*, in sections I and II which is called *Of Liberty and Necessity* and in Part III of Book II, which is called *Of the Will and Direct Passions*. The next section is called *Of the Influencing Motives of the Will*. It contains Hume's famous saying that reason is and ought only to be, the slave of the passions. A discussion of freedom discussion can be seen also in *Enquiries* which is called *Of Liberty and Necessity*.

We should consider his philosophy as a whole because we cannot discuss any single point without knowing what he says in other places. Hume, throughout his philosophy, maintains that we are part of nature and cannot grasp what is beyond nature. His approach is known as the naturalistic one. What we gain by this naturalistic outlook is to be humble and to know what is possible and what is not. Hume believed that in contrast to rationalist and religious doctrines, naturalism is freed from dogmas, errors, isolations, and exclusivist approaches.

Hume's main argument is that human nature is ruled by our passions. Reason has also a role but it is secondary. He distinguishes liberty into two. First one is called *liberty of spontaneity* which means "a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will; that is, if we choose to remain at rest we may; if we choose to move we also may."<sup>1</sup> The second is the one which is called in *Treatise* the *liberty of indifference* which means "a negation of necessities and causes". In other words when we do something, we may chose not to do it too.

According to Hume freedom is not to have the opportunity to do anything else than we do and necessity is a concept in our minds but has no physical reality.<sup>2</sup> That is why there are no necessary actions but all we do is natural and innate. In order to understand Hume's contribution to the problem of free will, we should understand his ideas on cause and effect and how that relates to freedom. Hume's epistemology is the foundation for his conclusions concerning cause and effect. He maintains that philosophy is "a cautious observation of human life ... men's behavior in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures."<sup>3</sup>

Hume as an empiricist tries to understand what we know. He divides knowledge into sensations and passions to understand human nature. According to Hume, the source of all thoughts is experience. He claims that all

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1975, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1888, Part III.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

ideas are linked by resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Therefore ideas are interlinked. But this leads to a criticism about Hume. Because he claims that associations cannot be known and cannot be experienced, they are only metaphysical descriptions. He mentions some universal principles, which have an equal influence on all mankind.<sup>1</sup> Thus we can say that Hume accepts the cause and effect relation as a metaphysical point. His ideas on the cause and effect relation underpin his understanding of free will. "All reasoning concerning matters of fact seem to be founded on the relation of *Cause and Effect*."<sup>2</sup> He claims that necessary connection cannot be proved because it is derived from reflection, not from sensation, but we can believe that there is a necessary connection.<sup>3</sup>

The criticism about Hume on cause and effect relation is simple.

If there is no necessary connection, then how can we predict the future?

He claims that people feel that they need to see the connection of external objects but do not feel necessity when they make decisions. In other words, action of mind is free and it is not a property of any cause.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1975, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

According to Hume, liberty is the absence of our conception that there should be a link between motives and actions.<sup>1</sup> He argues that there is no necessity when we act because our actions depend on our will, and our will depends on nothing. Hume claims that “by liberty we mean a power of acting, or not acting according to the determinations of the will”<sup>2</sup> He argues that our character shapes our freedom. In other words, our will chooses the thing which is confirmed by our character.

Free will is necessary for morality. But if we are totally free morality would make no sense to us. Therefore determinism is also needed for morality.

#### **4.5.2 Miracles and Revelation**

Before and after the Enlightenment there have been philosophers and theologians who claimed that Christian revelation ought to be accepted by every rational man. John Locke is one of these philosophers who said that “Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it. This is the power object of faith: but whether it is a divine revelation or no, reason must judge.”<sup>3</sup> Samuel Clarke is another philosopher who asserted that “The proof of the Divine Authority of the Christian Revelation, is confirmed and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Locke 1979, pp. IV, XVIII, 10.

ascertained, by the Exact Completion both of all these prophesies that went before concerning things that were to happen after.”<sup>1</sup> Related to the miracles Clarke claimed that:

The Christian Revelation is positively and directly proved to be actually and immediately sent to us from God, by the many infallible signs and miracles, which the author of it worked publicly as the evidence of his Divine Commission.<sup>2</sup>

Although Christian understanding of miracles and revelation are old conceptions, some people claim that any rational man would accept both miracles and revelations as mediator between man and the creator.

Now what convictions there can be to any sober mind concerning divine authority in any person without such a power of miracles going along with him, when he is to deliver some new doctrine to the world to be believed? I confess I cannot understand.<sup>3</sup>

John Locke followed the same path by his *Discourse of Miracles*.<sup>4</sup> Starting with Stillingfleet, it is maintained that every rational person would accept the revelations or miracles related to Christianity. Tolend and Lesire supported Stillingfleet’s ideas. Tolend supported the thinkers who served Christian faith and “what served to confirm the Author of those that wrought it,

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1906, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>3</sup> Stillingfleet, *Origins Sacrae* (London, 1663), p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Locke, *Works*, 10 Volumes (London, 1812), Vol. IX, pp. 256-65.

to procure attention to the Doctrine of the Gospel.....”<sup>1</sup> Leslie maintained that “his [Jesus] miracles do vouch the truth of what he delivered”<sup>2</sup>

It is the general idea that miracles could only be given by God and God would not give the ability to show miracles to anybody who could misrepresent him. Because of that, a person who shows miracles proves that he has a special relationship with God as a prophet. In Christianity it is taught that Jesus has a special authority to deliver revelation. It is believed that Jesus is the authority itself. He fulfilled his own person. He is the revelation itself and delivered prophecies. These arguments were challenged in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One of challenges was raised by Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677) who argues that “if anyone asserted that God acts in contravention to the laws of nature, he, ipso facto, would be compelled to assert that God acted against his own nature- an evident absurdity.”<sup>3</sup> A similar attack appears in philosophical essays of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751) where he argued that miracles “are incredible, because contrary to all experience, and to the established course of Nature....”<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Woolson in his *Discourses on the Miracles of our Savior* in 1727 claimed that the miracles of Jesus imply absurdities, improbabilities and

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<sup>1</sup> Toland 1696.

<sup>2</sup> Ridolfi 1920, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Spinoza 1951, sec. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1890, pp. 99-102.

incredibility. They must be understood in an allegorical or mystical sense. He also dealt with resurrection, to show the absurdities and impossibilities. Woolston's emphasis was on miracles, which are the foundation of the Christian revelation. Because of his attacks on Christianity, Pearce refuted his claims. Pearce argued that miracles should be defended.

Here then a Rational man will take his stand and being once convinced that Jesus did truly rise from the Dead ... he will easily admit all the Miracles wrought by Jesus, When Alive, to have been True and real ones: For the Divine Power (we may be sure) would [not have raised up a charlatan]: And if he wrought Undoubted Miracles, will not this conclusion necessarily follow, That he came from God, Teaching the Divine Will, Because he made use of his miracles as so many Proofs of his having a Commission from Heaven?<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Sherlock argued that the testimony of the disciples of Jesus proves the resurrection.<sup>2</sup> Hume appears while these discussions were going on and says:

... circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority. A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality: he may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause: or even where this delusion has not place, vanity, excited by so strong a temptation, operates on him more powerfully than on the rest of mankind....<sup>3</sup>

Hume claims that if the spirit of religion joins itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these, may be an

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<sup>1</sup> *The Miracles of Jesus Vindicated* (London, 1729), Part I, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Sherlock 1729.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1975, pp.117.

enthusiast. He may know his nature to be false, and yet carry on with it, with good intentions in the world for the sake of raising so holy a cause.

Hume describes miracle as “a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity”<sup>1</sup>

There must therefore be a uniform experience against every miraculous event; otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior. The plain consequence is, ...That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish...<sup>2</sup>

Hume does not try to demonstrate that miracles are logically impossible. His basic thesis is that “The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality.”<sup>3</sup> Ninian Smart opposes Hume’s argument on miracles.

Hume’s general argument fails. We cannot rule out a priori, i.e. without recourse to observe the way the world is, the possibility of miracles; and therefore we cannot frame a rule about believing in them which would rule out the legitimacy of what we see if we were to see miracles.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-123.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-123.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 25- 40.

<sup>4</sup> Smart 1969, p.35.

C.D. Broad answers Hume's remark about enthusiastic self-deception and talked about indirect evidence for the resurrection.

The direct testimony for this event appears to me to be very feeble... But the indirect evidence is much stranger. We have testimony to the effect the disciples were exceedingly depressed at the time of the crucifixion; that they had extremely little faith in the future; and that, after a certain time, this depression disappeared, and they believed that they had evidence that their Master had risen from the dead"<sup>1</sup>

In the 18th century there were many attempts to show that the Christian Revelation was so worthy of reliance that no rational man would reject it.

It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience, which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but abstract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other with that assurance which arises from the remainder. But according to the principles have explained, this subtraction, with regard to all popular religions, amounts to an entire annihilation; and therefore we may establish it as a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion.<sup>2</sup>

The chief argument of Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* in section ten is that miracles are the violations of the natural law, and the miracles have not been directly observed. According to Hume these miracles should not be accepted by any wise man because they are second hand reports and they violate the natural laws.<sup>3</sup> The belief about

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<sup>1</sup> Hume's *Theory of the Credibility of Miracles* (P.A.S., 1916-17).

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1975, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

prophecies and miracles rely on different kinds of sources and this is accepted even by Christians. Ralph Cudworth agreed that

Scripture Prophecies, Of Christ in the Old Testament; and from him in the New, are of equal if not greater force to us in this present Age for the confirmation of our faith, than the miracles themselves recorded in Scripture, we having now certain knowledge ourselves, of many of these events.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to that Samuel Clarke pointed to the idea that Jesus cannot affect people in the way he influenced his contemporaries “It is true, the Miracles of Christ, and particularly of his resurrection, which was the greatest of all, is not such an ocular demonstration to after generations”<sup>2</sup>

I would like to mention Johnson and Boswell, two theologians in eighteenth century who discussed Hume’s arguments on miracles and prophecies. Samuel Johnson told Boswell that Hume is simply right but Christian revelation is not proved only by miracles but also prophecies. Boswell’s reply to Johnson was: “Sir, you come near Hume’s argument against miracles that it is more probable certain witnesses should lie, or be mistaken, than that they should happen.”<sup>3</sup>

Hume’s arguments on miracles lead to some questions. Such as;

Are natural laws inviolable?

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<sup>1</sup> Cudworth 1674, p. 715.

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, Sermon CXXVII, *Works* (4 vols.; New York, 1978, II), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell 1926, pp. III, 188.

How do we explain the evidence?

Hume defines miracles as the violations of natural law and at the same time he claims that he was not against the reality of miracles. There is a dilemma here. If miracles are the natural laws, then he should accept that there can never be miracles. If he was not against the reality of miracles, he should not say that they are violations of natural law.

In Hume's philosophy questioning is essential and any man who questions nature accepts that there is an order in nature and there must be an architect who created this order. Hume talks about a genuine theism where God is transcendental. He believes that human beings are limited and can never understand the real nature of God. When people try to describe God, problems arise because God is beyond and transcendental. He states that miracles or visualizing God makes the unlimited truth limited and limiting truth creates fanaticism and intolerance.

#### **4.5.3 Religion and Morality**

Hume introduced human nature as the origin of religion in *The Natural History of Religion*<sup>1</sup>, and he excluded the divine or noble role in creation. He welcomed passions for the origin of human beings and maintained that theological explanations for human nature are wrong. He asserted that believing in a creator, a divine being, is one part of human origin. He asserted

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1956, p. 309.

that in the early times religions were polytheistic, but when men became more sophisticated, polytheism turned to monotheism “The mind rises gradually, from inferior to superior: By abstracting from what is imperfect, it forms an idea of Gods, later all ideas related to perfection attributed to one divine being.... ”<sup>1</sup> In early times perfections were represented by different Gods.

And thus however strong men’s propensity to believe invisible, intelligent power in nature, their propensity is equally strong to rest their attention on sensible, visible objects and in order to reconcile their opposite inclinations; they are led to unite the invisible power with some visible objects.<sup>2</sup>

Man explains unseen with seen because he cannot understand the unseen or divine being without his experiences. What Hume thinks about God and the natural order can be easily understood by reading what he wrote in Treatise:

... imperfection attends our ideas of the Deity; but this can have no effect either on religion or morals. The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind, which is a mind whose will is constantly attended with the obedience of every creature and being. Nothing is more requisite to give a foundation to all the articles of religion, nor is it necessary we should form a distinct idea of the force and energy of the Supreme Being.<sup>3</sup>

Hume states that there is obedience to the will of God and this is a natural law.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1888, p. 14.

*Dialogues* is a platform where Hume tries to show all the polemical thoughts about religion and different aspects about the existence of God. Philo, who is known as a skeptic, tried to show that human reason is limited in matters of religion.<sup>1</sup> Cleanthes' interpretation of God and natural order is different than Philo's:

Look around 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 men, who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, through our all nature, resembles exactly through 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; through 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.<sup>2</sup>

Philo claims that in the physical world object cannot organize itself but human beings put everything into an order. Mind cannot supply a cause without experience.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to Cleanthes, Philo claims that our mind is not capable of taking us to an opinion of nature or does not help us to find the real answers

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1948, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

about nature.<sup>1</sup> Cleanthes supposed that when two events follow each other always, by custom when one event is seen, the second event is expected. This is experience.<sup>2</sup> But we have no experience of the origin of the universe, and no ultimate power in the universe.<sup>3</sup> Cleanthes also says that when we hear a voice, we think that the voice belongs to something. Similar to it, when we look at nature and creatures, we understand that there must be a creator for all of them, and the origin of nature must have intelligence.<sup>4</sup> Cleanthes supports that unseen and unknown can be grasped by what is already known. Divine can only be understood by worldly experiences. Cleanthes believed that knowledge and reasoning are the outcomes of our life experience. In contrast to Cleanthes, Philo claims that we have no experience of the divine. That is why we cannot prove the existence of God either with logic or with dialectic.<sup>5</sup> Demea asserted that our sensory experiences are not trustworthy so they should not be used to explain the Divine.<sup>6</sup> According to Demea, we have no idea about God and its attributes, so whatever we say would not be explanatory to define God. The way we use to define nature cannot be used to explain the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 142-43.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

supernatural, which we have no experience before. "... the infirmities of our nature do not permit us to reach any ideas, which in the least correspond to the ineffable sublimity of the divine attributes."<sup>1</sup>

Hume asserted that there is no relation between ethics and religion and, at the same time, there is no logical effect of religion on the practical side of morality. Hume wanted to understand human nature but his actual concern was morality. In the introduction of *Treatise* he said his aim was to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects.<sup>2</sup> Hume wanted to destroy the foolish foundations of morality which abuses the sympathy system related to all humanity.<sup>3</sup> He thought that ethics which comes out of common needs and rules of life is totally objective. "Nothing can preserve untainted the genuine principles of morals in our judgment of human conduct, but the absolute necessity of these principles to the existence of society."<sup>4</sup> "Morality ... consists not in *any matter of fact*, which can be discovered by the understanding."<sup>5</sup> Hume's argument takes place between two crucial concepts, reason and passion. Reason is the intellectual faculty, the faculty of understanding. Passion is a faculty where our desires and volitions play a very

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1888.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 316-317, 618.

<sup>4</sup> Hume 1976, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Hume 1888, p. 468.

important role. There is a sharp distinction between passion and reason. According to Hume “reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to the volition.”<sup>1</sup> Morality is not factual and cannot be guided by reason because, he asserts, morality is not conclusion of reason and reason alone cannot create any action. Considering Hume’s argument about morality, we can conclude that truth should be considered as an aim of knowledge but not morality.

Hume maintains that truth requires a reasonable person. “What is intelligible, what is evident, what is probable, what is true, procures only the cool assent of understanding; and gratifying a speculative curiosity, puts an end to our researches.”<sup>2</sup> Reason “... have no hold of affections or set in motion the active powers of man?”<sup>3</sup> He says that a person needs passions to start acting.

The end of moral speculation is to teach us our duty; and by proper representations of the deformity of vice and beauty of virtue, beget correspondent habits, and engage us to avoid the one, and embrace the other. But is this ever to be expected from inferences and conclusions of the understanding, which of themselves have no hold of the affection nor set in motion the active powers of man? They discover truths: but where the truths which they discover are indifferent, and beget no desire or aversion, they can have no influence on conduct and behavior.

Extinguish all the warm feelings and prepossessions in favor of virtue, and all disgust and aversion to vice: render men totally indifferent towards these distinctions; and morality is no longer a practical study, nor has any tendency to regulate our lives and actions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1975, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

That is why truth alone does not give a reason for acting. Still the person who accepts morality also accepts the reason for acting. "Morals therefore have an influence on the actions and affections... Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions."<sup>1</sup>

As a conclusion we can say that, according to Hume, there are no moral facts and morality is not about the faculty of truth. Hence we cannot talk about moral facts or truths. "... morality consists not in any *matter of fact*, which can be discover'd by the understanding."<sup>2</sup>

Hume's critics argued that his moral theory was too broad and he should distinguish between moral virtues such as charity, wisdom, benevolence and natural abilities such as good manners, dialogue and wit. They felt that grouping moral virtues and natural abilities together is wrong because they are different in some respects. For example, you can choose moral virtues but not natural abilities. Intellectual virtues do not necessarily aim at a good conclusion, but moral virtues do. When you fail to obtain moral virtues, you are blamed for that, but it is not so for natural abilities.

Hume argues that to understand whether the person is moral or not, we look at his actions. If his actions produce sympathetic moral feeling in us, we think that he is moral. Hume believes that it is impossible to distinguish moral

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 468.

virtues from natural abilities because both of them bring forth the same feelings in us.<sup>1</sup> According to Hume, although natural abilities are not accepted as voluntary qualities, they may produce sympathy in others because there are many involuntary qualities such as fortitude, which are accepted as virtues. Hume thinks that we decide what is virtuous and what is not according to the consequences that they produce. So any mental quality agreeable to us or to others should be considered as a virtue. In other words, useful and agreeable qualities which produce moral pleasure should be counted as moral virtues.

Hume claims that when theologians exclude natural abilities and employ theological doctrines in ethics, they distort morality<sup>2</sup> because he thinks that there is no difference between moral virtues and intellectual abilities.

Francis Hutcheson claimed that benevolence is the foundation for morality, and Hume's virtues do not come from benevolence so they are intellectual abilities.

James Balfour attacks Hume's moral theory in *A delineation of the nature and obligation of morality*. (1753) Balfour claimed that Hume gave the way to attribute to people the possession of many virtues. For every kind of pleasure, even of the lowest kind, may put in his claim for virtue. It even

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<sup>1</sup> Hume 1888, pp.606-614.

<sup>2</sup> Hume 1975, p.322.

extends itself to inanimate things; so that the beauty of a flower and the useful qualities of a plant may assume the name of a moral virtue.

Balfour states that the only way to classify natural abilities as virtues is to put together all natural abilities under one good end. Balfour believes that true morality should involve good intentions, but natural abilities do not always reflect good intentions. Similar to James Balfour, John Leland maintained that a man may have many virtues that Hume has in his list, but he can still be an evil person. He may have wit, eloquence, a polite behavior, a fine taste in arts, great bodily strength and resolution, and yet be a really bad man. And when these things are separated from good dispositions of the heart, from probity, benevolence, fidelity, integrity, gratitude, instead of rendering a man useful to the community, they qualify him for doing a great deal of mischief.<sup>1</sup> Balfour criticized Hume's morality from a historical perspective where ethics sees each virtue as a servant for a higher moral principle.

James Beattie maintains that we blame people when they do not develop moral virtues, but we do not criticize them for not developing natural abilities.<sup>2</sup> Hume's critics tried to demonstrate that Hume's moral theory has no moral value since it was not serving the ultimate truth. Hume is mostly criticized for supporting a utilitarian ethics because he tried to centralize human

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<sup>1</sup> John Leland, *A view of the principal deistical writers of the last and present century* (Vol. II, London, B. Dodd, 1755). (Letter 21 in Volume I of the 1757 edition)

<sup>2</sup> Beattie 1983, pp. 421-448.

nature and feelings in his moral theory. I argue that Hume's aim was to eliminate rational and religious doctrines from ethics. He did not want religion or any other authority to dominate man. Because when religious and rational doctrines rule morality, their dogmas, which are created by some authorities, could oppress people and become the ultimate power to decide what is right and what is wrong. Therefore Hume wanted to free man from moral or religious dogmas and find the roots of ethics in their own nature.

Since Hume is widely known as an atheist I would like to discuss what is religion. When we agree on a definition of religion we will be able to understand why he was condemned as an atheist.

Religion has always provided answers for the deepest questions of man. To find a common definition of religion is very difficult because every attempt to explain it has its own limitations. The basic definition of religion should be convenient to explain any kind of religion, not only the popular religions.

Some people claim that the roots of religion are natural and beyond human control. Some claim that religion is something between divinity and human beings and related to rituals, ethics and faith. Some people maintain that religion is the way to find meaning, truth and goals in life. Others say that religion is the tie which binds people with certain beliefs and practices.

In the general definition of religion, belief and religion are considered to be the same. For example, James Martineau claimed that religion is a belief in

a divine God who has ethical relations with people and also rules the universe<sup>1</sup> and Immanuel Kant claimed that religion is the belief in a divine being.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these in *Conside Oxford Dictionary* religion is defined as a “human recognition of a superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or Gods entitled to obedience and worship”.

Ira W. Howerth claims that all these definitions which identify belief with religion favor Christianity because Christianity has the conceptions of resurrection, salvation and miracles in it. He assumes that religion cannot be identical with belief because this definition narrows the definition of religion and excludes many religions.<sup>3</sup>

If religion is to worship God then many societies should be considered without a religion. If religion is defined as a belief in immortality, we are faced with the same problem because there are people who do not believe in the hereafter.<sup>4</sup>

Howerth claims that religion is not a revelation that is revealed to a certain person but it is in our nature, it is innate. So the roots of religion are common in the depths of human nature.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Morris Jastrow, *Study of Religion* Vol. I (London, Scott; New York, Scribner's Sons, 1909) p. I.

<sup>2</sup> *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* S. 271, cited by Ward in *Dynamic Sociology*,” Vol. 2, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> Howerth 1903, p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

A believer would describe the purpose of religion like being united with God to have a meaningful and good life. Religion is related to our inner world. It is the concern of the individual, but at the same time religion is about society and social activities. It is a feeling of belonging to a power. A religious person would also say that religion is a personal thing, hence everything related to God is either for our own inner world or for our deeds. In addition to this, religion expresses the role of man in relation to God's will on moral obligations. In other words, it is a moral obligation. Worshipping God influences man's inner world and heart deeply.

There are various kinds of religions and religious understandings. Some believers think that the values which are divine are religion itself. Some people believe that religion is the best way to live a good life. Others think that only religion could help us to reach our goals. Some use religion as the true knowledge which is very important for humanity. Some others become religious because of the problems that they cannot solve in life. We can say that there is no consensus on the definition of religion. Just like the various definitions of religion, there are many definitions of God. None of these definitions is complete. Every group of people has its own difficulties, desires, experiences in life; therefore, there are a lot of God definitions. We can say that cultures, religions, philosophers, theologians have their own understanding of God.

Can there be a common understanding of God?

If there is no consensus on the definition of God, how can people speak about it?

Various definitions show us that there is no common definition of God and different people have different understanding of God, so calling people as atheist is one sided and incorrect. Therefore my question is, does an atheist mean a man without religion or does it mean one who does not believe in a personal god but an impersonal god?

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

Those who labeled Hume with being an anti religious sceptic who tried to ruin religion were not objective in their judgement. Such critics of Hume were either defenders of superstitious supernaturalism who ceased to allow the use of reason in religion or those who were happy to attack religion in any form. The position of both circles of Hume's opposition does not seem to be well founded. The fact that he approached religion with a questioning mind does not by itself prove that he was either opposed to religion or that he tried to undermine it. On the contrary, he maintained a consistent philosophical position toward religion which required that the very act of questioning is the nature of human being.

Hume questioned religious and moral dogmas. What Hume wanted to do was not to demolish the social order, create atheistic people, deny the importance of religion and morality or reject the existence of God. Hume was

neither against religion or morality nor denied the existence of God. He was against fanaticism and intolerance, believing that intolerance and fanaticism comes from blind faith and blind faith comes from dogmas. Hume was against blind faith. For him any attempt to prove the existence of God by visualizing or rationalizing was wrong. He believed that being certain about dogmas creates fanatics who oppress others and force them to change. These fanatics believe that they have found the truth, and the truth is only with them.

Hume criticized dogmas in popular religions. He was against superstitions and meaningless rituals. According to him, religion and morality should nourish us spiritually; therefore, he was against unreasonable rituals and ceremonies which have no effect on our soul.

The way I have chosen to confront the critiques on Hume begins with his epistemology, which is based on man's ideas, feelings and experiences. In Hume's philosophy the human being is at the center of everything. He thought that there is no other thing more reliable than our own experience and feelings. For Hume the limits of knowledge are the limits of our nature and experience. Therefore I wanted to know what Hume would say on religion.

Philosophy is the study of human thought about man, nature, ethics, and God. Medieval philosophy was different from classical philosophy in that it was preoccupied with the doctrines of Christian theology. Western culture was dominated by the Church. The love of wisdom in the classical period was replaced in the Middle Ages by the love of God. In the classical period

philosophy was the servant of truth but in the Middle Ages it became the servant of God. The Renaissance brought a revival of classical philosophy, and philosophy was freed from religious occupation. The Reformation accepted religion as a matter of faith, and philosophy was separated from theology and religion. This change in philosophy affected societies in politics, morality and especially in religious understanding.

Hume as an Enlightenment philosopher is a key to these developments. He introduced a new epistemology and applied it to religion. He based his ideas on the natural laws, free thinking and love of wisdom. I think he resumed the method of the classical philosophy and freed philosophy from the dogmas.

He is widely known as an atheist. In fact, he did not reject God, but he turned to a natural way of explaining the issues of faith, revelation, and morality.

David Hume is a cornerstone in the history of philosophy. His contributions affected the modern mindset, which stressed individualism and utilitarianism. I think his philosophy should be rediscovered to see the relationship between religion, morality and the modern ideas.

Hume is a distinguished philosopher. But not many people know about his influence. His first book, *A Treatise of Human Nature* is not a very well known book either. Kant, who closely arrived after Hume, said that Hume awakened him from his dogmatic slumbers. Hume's critique of established Christianity brought him the labels of anti-religious. But I believe such labels are

not precisely accurate. He emphasized, on the contrary, genuine theism and genuine morality. I think his book on the philosophy of religion must be a classic.

Hume sharply criticized the clergy. He is known as an atheist, agnostic, skeptic or zealot against religion. But none of them are adequate accurate.

There have been serious attacks on Hume which miss his point. He did not intend to persuade anyone to give up religious belief. This was not his point. What he wanted was genuine faith of tolerance.

In the matter of religion he was against superstitions and fanaticism because he thought they are dangerous. He opposed deriving moral and social values from religious premises. He said that religious emotions and sensations are subjective. Social and moral values cannot be based on religious premises. He does not claim that all religious belief leads to fanaticism. He believed that religious belief does not necessarily lead to delusion. He does not discriminate between different religions in terms of rational hierarchy. He does not say that one is more rational than the other. He says that "whole is a riddle, an enigma, and an inexplicable mystery".

How should men live in a mature civil society?

How can people live together?

As a naturalist Hume wanted to start with these questions. He claimed that there is an essential part of a human being which asks all these difficult questions. He started with skepticism and stated that morality is not to be

based on reason alone. He was quite shocking in what he said. He claimed that neither religion nor reason is the basis of morality. For him empirical methods in understanding man were essential for the new way of thinking he was introducing.

For Hume science of understanding replaced religious ideology. Evidence and understanding were the basis for him of all knowledge. Certain passions lie at the rock bottom of Hume's philosophy. He believed that the human feeling pleasure or pain constitutes the primary constitution of common human nature.

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