

A History of Philosophy

47 Hume Do We Know What's Real

By Dr. Arthur Holmes of Wheaton College

We want this afternoon to turn from David Hume's theory of ideas to the application of his theory of knowledge and belief. So I'm entitling this, Do We Know What's Real? Why believe? To get the knowledge and the belief into it. And as you can see, there is a whole series of topics that he addresses in this connection.

But in order to make sure we are clear on his theory about knowledge, you can hardly call it a theory of knowledge, since he doesn't claim we have it, but a theory about knowledge. Come back to the line of thought that he sets forth in section four of the inquiry. You can outline it in terms of five questions.

In fact, he enumerates these five questions in the second part of it. What is the nature of reasoning about matters of fact? And keep in mind that he is distinguishing matters of fact from relations of ideas, relations of ideas, which are analytic judgments with the logical form of A equals A, therefore things like definitions, tautologies, mathematics. But he's asking now about reasoning concerning matters of fact, factual statements.

It'll be true and false, true or false about something. And because he's an empiricist, obviously, this will be empirical knowledge. And his answer is that reasoning about matters of fact is in terms of cause-effect relations.

And that becomes pretty evident once you come back to the representational theory of knowledge, which says that we are conscious of ideas and impressions, impressions and ideas, those together comprise perceptions, which represent to us realities of various sorts, extramental realities. And knowledge of matters of fact will be the sort that involves ideas predicated on the other, either by virtue of their logical relationships or by virtue of their factual relationships. So he's asking how we know about factual relationships, matters of fact.

And his answer to that is that cause-effect relations are involved because if we're going to know anything about things beyond present experience, present experience being the present content of the consciousness, present perceptions, if we're going to know anything beyond present experience, external realities, it must be by arguing from the experience as the effect to external things as the cause, cause-effect relations. That's the way Descartes argued the existence of God, Meditation 3. That's the way John Locke argued not only the existence of God but of material bodies, matter. That's the way Berkeley argued the existence of God, the cause of passive ideas.

So how do we know matters of fact beyond present experience? By cause-effect relations. All right, so the second question then, what's the foundation of reasoning about cause and effect? And for an empiricist, the answer has to be experience. And you begin to see what's going to be happening.

Because in our experience, we do not have any immediate awareness of causal connections, of the force exerted by the cause in producing an effect. We're only aware of uniformities. There's an antecedent that's followed by a consequent with some sort of regularity that he calls constant conjunctions.

So two things can be associated in our thinking, in our experience, but we don't know of any causal connection between them. We only know the uniformity, the conjunction. So then we gain that from experience, but then you get a further rider.

What's the foundation of reasoning from experience? Well, obviously, to reason beyond experience, it's cause-effect. You've got a circular argument. And the outcome is skepticism about matters of fact beyond present experience.

Perfectly simple, you see. Grant him his representational theory of knowledge, that the immediate object of our awareness is just ideas, mental states. Grant him that.

And it sounds like his skepticism follows, which is why next week we'll be looking at Scottish realism, which rejects that theory of ideas, rejects the representational view, and maintains we have a direct awareness of material bodies, of causal force, and so forth. But his skepticism follows very naturally. And the fourth question, accordingly, is, how then do we acquire beliefs? Because it's obvious that we don't acquire beliefs by giving assent to a weight of positive evidence, as John Locke had said.

You proportion your beliefs to the evidence. But if there's no causal evidence as such, how do we acquire our beliefs? You see. And his answer, in simplest form, is to say it's a psychological habit that's induced by repeated occurrences.

You see. We're so accustomed to, in the morning, it getting light, that we say, sure, we can make predictions about it getting light. And it'll be a little earlier tomorrow morning than it was this morning.

I was rather delighted to observe last night. Once in a while, I come out of other reflections and observe. And I was very delighted to observe that about 5.30 last night it was still almost light.

We're getting there. You see, and we can make predictions. But this is more a psychological habit.

We are so conditioned by the regularities of experience that we expect. You see. And that habit, that customary frame of mind, is what he calls belief.

But that leads to a fifth question. If we come up with such beliefs, if they're not caused by something external, you see, but if it's just a psychological habit, well, aren't there other things that we come up with, imaginatively? Fictions that our minds fabricate? How do we know that these are not fictions? Things that we spontaneously come to believe. And his answer there goes back to the distinction he drew in relation to the theory of ideas.

That all ideas are brought into being as a result of impressions. And he maintains that the impression associated with a belief is very different from the impression associated with a fiction. You see, belief itself is an impression.

What I'm aware of when I say I believe is a forceful and steady impression. That's his way of putting it. Oh, he says, sometimes forceful and vivacious.

But particularly talking of belief, he says forcefully and steadily. It doesn't come and go. It's forceful and steady, persistent.

And it's the force of the impression which distinguishes belief from how vivid for the moment may be your impression of my fairy giraffe with butterfly wings sitting on the sill in my office. You know, that doesn't have the force of your belief that I'm sitting on the seat in the office. That is to say, you can be realistic about the fairy giraffe carving that's there, but not about the reality of it being a fairy giraffe.

So there's that distinction between belief and fiction that's important. You can think of this in terms of Plato's divided line, if you like. Where Plato had talked of knowledge as distinct from belief.

Knowledge by dialectic, knowledge by reasoning, let's call it demonstrative, because that's the way Locke calls it, demonstrative knowledge. Dialectic leads to intuitive knowledge. You see? Now, what you have is down here, perceptual beliefs.

Perceptual beliefs. And what Plato speaks of as illusion, what now Hume is talking of as fiction. In effect, what Hume is telling us is that we have no intuitive knowledge of matters of fact.

You see? We have no demonstrative knowledge of matters of fact, but only of Plato's logical relationships. In other words, we have no knowledge of matters of fact beyond present experience. So he eliminates, as it were, the top half of Plato's divided line in his skepticism.

And his only concern now is to make the distinction between the two levels in the lower half of the divided line, namely, legitimate belief and fiction. So we've come a long way since Plato. All right, now that's the line of thought, and be sure that you grasp this emphasis on belief.

We talk of probabilities, and he has that little section on probability. And if you read it carefully, he's saying, in effect, that probability increases belief. How come? Because what probability amounts to is repeated occasions that reinforce the mental habit.

They strengthen the steadiness and forcefulness of the impression. So he's not talking of statistical probability in that section, but simply of psychological probability, expectation. And he goes at this very, very steadily.

And there is one passage on 307 that I think is... He says this, and this seems to reach beyond what Hume conceived as a skeptic in a significant way. There is, at the very bottom of 307, there is a kind of pre-established harmony. That's interesting, that's Leibniz's term.

There's a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas. And though the powers and forces by which the former nature is governed be wholly unknown to us, yet our thoughts and conceptions still, we find, go on in the same train with the other work of nature. Custom is that principle by which this correspondence has been effected.

Yeah, we simply adjust by virtue of repeated behavioral reinforcement. The correspondence has been effected. So necessary to the subsistence of our species and the regulation of our conduct in every circumstance and occurrence of human life.

Custom is then the great guide of life. Now, Joseph Butler, the same general period, end of the 18th century, we'll be talking a little about him next week. Joseph Butler was wrestling likewise with this kind of issue.

And he said, and it became sort of a classic dictum in English thought from that time on, probability is the guide of life. Probability is the guide of life. Now, you see, Hume isn't satisfied with that.

He's not satisfied with that. Yeah, probability helps, but it just reinforces mental habit, you see. It seems that Butler was trying to say that we make choices and decisions about what to affirm and what to deny, and we can be guided in those choices and decisions by the probabilities that we calculate.

Not Hume. Not Hume. You don't calculate probabilities, you feel them.

You see. It's the feeling that is the guide of life. And he comes back to that on issue after issue, issue after issue.

You may have noticed, if you've gotten to the end of the inquiry, that he calls his skepticism a mitigated skepticism, not absolute. But mitigated. It's mitigated because we do have knowledge of relations of ideas.

And so the skepticism is limited to matters of fact. Not to all knowledge. Just knowledge of matters of fact.

It's applicable, then, to what is not capable of demonstrative knowledge. And what you cannot demonstrate is facts that are contingent. That is to say, if it's not necessary, logically necessary, but contingent, well, how can you demonstrate that it follows with logical necessity? The best you have are empirical generalizations, which enable you to anticipate.

And you have to say, enable you to anticipate, because all you know is the uniformities of experience up to this point. You can't affirm the uniformity of nature endlessly into the future with any logical certainty. So Hume's skepticism and his theory of belief, and this becomes the basis for whether we can know anything about reality.

Yeah? I have a question about mathematics and other logical, I guess I can't say knowledge. Is it knowledge? Yeah, it is knowledge of its relations of ideas. There are two kinds.

So that is the only knowledge that we have. The rest, basically, is belief. That's right, yeah.

Yeah, you see, mathematics begins with axioms and definitions rather than empirical generalizations. We do have to believe the axioms. Well, not if they're axioms.

If they're postulates, yes, but not if they're axioms. And he was working in a day when Euclidean geometry was believed to have axiomatic first principles. We don't have non-Euclidean geometries yet.

You see? Now, when that arises, this has to change somewhat. Yeah? Why isn't mathematics matters of fact? Because mathematics deals with immaterial entities. But it's still a fact.

No, it's dealing with ideas. The idea of two, the idea of three, logically together give you the idea of five. Mathematics, according to Hume, is not about real things.

It's about the logical relationships between number concepts, geometrical concepts, and so forth. No, no, you're saying that it has to do with ideas. You don't know whether the real world is like that, as a matter of fact.

Not in his sense of real, no. Real has to do with what has extra mental reality. Maybe I should add this footnote that you begin to see that there are different views of the status of mathematics and of mathematical entities.

You see, Hume is maintaining that mathematics is a purely logical discipline concerned only with logical form and logical relationships. Its entities are simply ideas. Nothing more.

He's a nominalist in the sense that our mathematical ideas, labeled with names, words, do not refer to abstract ideas in the conceptualist sense, nor to real universals in the platonic sense, but just to collections of similar particulars, that general ideas, that's all. When we get to Kant, we'll see that Kant thinks that mathematics has to do with a realm of abstract ideas. Kant is more of a conceptualist, you'll see.

And, of course, you're going to get those who are realists in mathematics as well. And when we get to Whitehead, we'll find that Whitehead is one of those. In other words, you find the three major theories about universals applied in the philosophy of mathematics.

Realism, conceptualism, nominalism. And all three of them are represented in the philosophy of mathematics today. Any math majors? We'll run into that a bit in foundations, I think.

Foundations of math? Not yet. Okay. Okay, now let's turn our attention, shall we, to the discussion of what there is that we know.

And the first case is that of material bodies, things in the external, physical world. And this, like the belief in substance, is not something that can be proven. We don't have any cause-effect knowledge.

It's something which is simply taken for granted. We assume it. It's a matter of belief.

Now, the human self seems to believe in the existence of material substances, material bodies. Simply because the experience is so steady, get that impression? Forceful and steady. So consistent, coherent in our experience that belief is readily elicited.

Causal power, I probably don't need to say much more. You'll notice in his chapter on necessity that he points out that we have no knowledge of any causal connection in

the mind-body relationship. No knowledge of it in the relationship between God as creator and this earth, this creation, nature.

He is, however, inclined to believe that there is causal force. But this is simply a concession to mental habit. We rarely assume that it's there in the material world.

He talks a little bit about the occasionalist view that God is the only causal power. And so cause is everything. And regards that as a belief that's, well, pretty wild.

That is to say, there is no habitual experience that induces such a belief. He doesn't find it particularly forceful. So a more common-sense belief in causal power is appropriate.

But inasmuch as he refuses to accept the reality of mind as substance, he doesn't have mental causation to talk about. And so he is not too inclined to take the power of mind over body positively, even though we habitually talk that way. Liberty and necessity, free will, come into focus.

And there are two lines of thought that he has here. One that comes through most clearly in the inquiry is the simpler. Necessary connections, causal necessity, we don't know.

All we know is constant conjunction. So the person who is a necessitarian and says that all human choices and actions are causally determined, the necessitarian, is in reality only talking about constant conjunctions. That's all he can logically affirm: regularity.

There may be some constant conjunction between will and action, between what you decide and what you do, but you don't know any causal connection. So the necessitarian really is not affirming necessity but only regularity. Now, by the same token, the libertarian who asserts freedom of the will, the libertarian is trying to deny that there is causal necessity.

Well, that's fine because nobody can really assert it. But the libertarian is perfectly happy to say that there is regularity and constant conjunction between acts of will and what you do. So what's the quarrel between the two? Well, the only dispute, you see, is whether you call causation necessity or uniformity.

It's a semantic debate about the meaning of the word causation. Well, I don't think that's ever terminated the debate. And I suppose Hume would say that because people are induced to believe things by certain habits.

Now, in the treaties, he comes to the question of free will in a little bit of a different way. If you want to look this up, it's in book three, part one. The term will refer

simply to an impression that I feel when I give rise to some new physical movement or some new mental perception.

In other words, when I decide I'm going to walk around Tahirah, I'm aware of a certain impression, you see, in the chain of conscious events. An impression that moving around is the thing I'm going to do. But it's merely an impression, a feeling.

A feeling that's involved in the stream of conscious events. And similarly, when I stop to think of, say, what my wife might decide to make for dinner tonight, and I'm initiating a chain of thought, well, there is again a feeling, an impression of I'm going to start thinking about this. You see? So there is nothing more to will than a kind of impression of starting something going in the mind or in overt action.

Now, there's uniformity enough between that impression of what we call will and the resultant change or action to make us think that it really causes something to happen. And because we're not aware of antecedent causes of that impression, we think that the act of will is free. Because we're not aware of any uniform causes.

Of course, it may be that I get a certain feeling in the pit of my stomach in the late afternoon, which comes in constant conjunction with starting to think about what's for dinner. You see? But causal connection? No, I'm not aware of any, and so I think it's free. There are in the way humans behave, constant conjunctions between motive and action.

Characteristic general ways in which adolescents behave. And the same with human beings generally. There's a predictability about the characteristic behaviors, actions, and ways of thinking at different age levels, he says.

And I'm curious because he wrote that when he was still in his twenties. He was pretty observant. You see, he didn't have books on developmental psychology to refer to.

But the uniformities he finds everywhere. We only think that the will is free because we experience no antecedent force. All we actually experience is a spontaneous kind of impression.

We don't experience indifference between alternatives that we weigh and then decide. No, what we experience normally is a spontaneous initiative. And that uniformity of things is what normally incites belief in necessity.

In any case, the uniformities of human behavior can appropriately be extended to this aspect of human behavior. So there is much more reason to believe in determinism than there is to believe in indeterminism. And he turns out to be a soft determinist.

All we know is constant conjunctions. Though it seems natural, and natural is the word he likes, in the course of nature. It seems a natural outcome of those constant conjunctions that we believe in necessity.

So that's his other thing. In book three of the treatise, he deals at great length with emotions and passions. And his point is that the will is guided, governed apparently, but guided by passion, emotion.

Not by reason. Now, traditional views of free will have said, yes, the will can be guided by reason. You remember Descartes, if we refrain from affirming until we know enough.

So, freedom of the will is tied to the assertion that the will is free enough to be guided by reason. Now, Hume rejects that, quite plainly. Reason does not provide moral direction.

Reason does not direct the will. It's the passions that direct the will. It's the passions that direct the will.

So when we get to his ethics, this discussion of freedom of the will becomes crucial in how he's going to develop his moral theory. Okay, any comment there? We talked about the mind last time. You remember in illustrating what he's doing.

Mind, it turns out, is nothing but a succession of ideas. Nothing but a bundle of perceptions, appearing and disappearing. It's on a theatre stage, you recall.

We have no knowledge of any other basis for personal identity. And that obviously is going to affect his thinking about immortality. The traditional view of immortality in his day, thanks to Descartes, was that if the mind, the soul, is an immaterial substance, an entity that is independent and functions independently of the body, then it's capable of existing independently of the body.

So immortality is logically possible. Not so Hume, because he doesn't think that way about the mind. He has an essay that was published in 1770, though apparently it was written earlier.

An essay on the immortality of the soul, in which he takes this up. He says at the outset that by the mere light of reason, it's difficult to prove the immortality of the soul. The arguments are commonly derived either from metaphysical topics or moral topics, or from the physical nature of things.

And then he goes on to discuss the arguments. But he says in reality, it is the gospel and the gospel alone that has brought life and immortality to light. And of course,

the Hume scholars think that may be tongue-in-cheek, inasmuch as his own religious belief is something he never aired, ventilated, even on his deathbed.

At the end of the essay, he says, nothing could set in fuller light the infinite obligation which mankind has to divine revelation, since we find that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth, the immortality of the soul. Well, what does he say about the arguments? Well, the metaphysical argument is from the concept of substance. And you know what he thinks about the concept of substance.

There's no logical basis for it. There is nothing in impressions and simple ideas that can give rise to the concept of something I know not what. So it's a confused idea.

And so there can be no a priori reasoning related to that concept. No causal arguments related to the concept. The moral argument for immortality, namely that goodness, moral goodness in this life, will of necessity be rewarded in a life hereafter, implies the goodness of God, attributes of God, which are empirically unknown.

We have no matters-of-fact knowledge about God's attributes by empirical means. And so there is no logical possibility of a moral argument for the existence of God, by purely philosophical means. And the argument from the physical world is usually an argument by analogy, namely that as the body goes to sleep and wakes up, so eventually we all fall asleep to awake later.

Well, his point is obvious that in the physical world of nature, if you want an analogy, nothing is perpetual; everything is perishable. So the idea of an undying immortality is contrary to any analogy. So, says he, death in the end is unavoidable, but the human species couldn't be preserved if nature hadn't inspired within us an aversion towards death.

And it's that impression, that aversion that we feel towards death, which induces belief in immortality. Wishful thinking. Well, that's Hume on immortality.

Now, keep in mind that he's not denying the existence of material bodies. Skepticism says we don't know. He believes there are material bodies.

He's not denying the existence of causal connections. Skepticism says we don't know. He himself seems to believe there are causal connections.

He isn't denying freedom of the will. He's simply saying that all that we have empirically conspires to induce belief in causal necessity. He's not denying the existence of the mind.

He just doesn't see any way to know it and doesn't see any psychological process by which we could believe it. He's not denying immortality. He sees a psychological basis for belief in immortality.

But we can't prove it rationally. Notice that all these beliefs are based on impressions, you see, on a psychology of belief rather than on the logic of evidence and argument. Okay, let me pause there.

Comment? Sounds like the same refrain virtually on each one, doesn't it? Okay. All right, look at miracles. This is one of the very well-known topics for Hume.

It was a live issue in his day with the rise of deism, of course denying miracles. It was made an issue particularly by virtue of the mechanistic science with its emphasis on a rigid kind of causal mechanism throughout the whole of creation, which a miracle would in some way interfere with. And what Hume does has really become the point of reference for discussion of miracles ever since in philosophy of religion, in apologetics, and all the rest.

Classic point of reference. His definition of a miracle is significant. A miracle is a violation of natural law.

A miracle is a violation of natural law. And that sounds like a perfectly understandable, perfectly legitimate definition granted the science of the day so that you can see the kind of reasoning that might be involved. If you understand natural law in terms of mechanistic science, that vast causal machine of the cosmos in which everything is determined by uniformly operating forces that can be mathematically followed, then to speak of a miracle as a violation of natural law begins to make sense.

But what do you mean by natural law? By a law of nature, do you mean the operation of causal necessities? Or do you mean simply the experience of uniformities? That's the issue. Now, some people who try to respond to Hume assume the first. Assume that when Hume is talking of a violation of natural law, he's talking of a violation of causal necessity.

And so the question is whether there are any chinks involved in the causal machinery to allow an external causal force to come in, to intrude, to suspend existing forces. I don't think that's what Hume is talking about. Because that's not his view of natural law.

I'm inclined to think that he's speaking of miracle as a violation of natural law in the sense of a violation of the uniformity. And that, I think, is how the argument in this section goes. Now, of course, uniformities tend to induce belief in necessity.

And he's inclined to believe in necessity. So he'll have a predisposition against miracles. But he cannot say that a miracle is logically impossible.

The problem is not whether a miracle is logically possible in a world of uniformities. The question is whether it's believable. You see? So the view of natural law as a matter of causal necessity argues really the impossibility of a miracle.

Whereas the question of uniformities poses the unbelievability of a miracle. It's a tremendously important distinction. Those who try to respond to the first interpretation, that it's impossible, have, of course, to argue that natural law is not inviolable.

And they can do that either by asserting the greater power of God or by disagreeing with the view of natural law as being a rigid, impenetrable system of causal forces. You see? So that you get other views of natural law developing later on, much more to the effect that natural laws are simply empirical generalizations, humanly formulated, so on and so forth. Conventional ways of describing natural uniformities.

So that some of the responses to the first really try to push him down to the second. And I guess I'm inclined to think there's no need to push him there because he's there already. Now what does he say, though? Taking the second thing, what does he say? Well, his concern is with the believability of miracles.

For the simple reason that no evidence can be sufficiently steady and forceful to produce belief in, to produce the habit that is belief. You see, custom and habit is only induced by repeated uniformities again and again. But if a miracle is an exception, it doesn't come with uniformity.

So how can the exception induce belief? The problem is the believability. And to make his point, he talks about the way in which witnesses who report a miracle tend to offer contradictory evidence. So that even their testimony about a single miracle or a rash of miracles does not have the steadiness, the forcefulness that is needed to produce belief.

So, unbelievable. Says Hume, it would take a miracle to create belief in miracles. That is to say, something of force and vivacity which you otherwise don't get.

To produce belief, there are things that can happen that are not normally believable. It would take a miracle to produce belief in miracles. Well, it's an interesting passage.

This one classic kind of response to this that's a little bit amusing goes back to 1819. An English writer by the name of Richard Waitley published an essay called Some Historical Doubts Concerning Napoleon Bonaparte. Now, I said 1819 when Bonaparte

was a prisoner on the island of, was it Elba or St. Helens then? Well, it was one of the two.

Elba, I think it was. When he was a prisoner. Imperatively verifiable.

Waitley argues this way. All sorts of the most extraordinary exploits are attributed to this man, Napoleon. That he marched his army to the very gates of Moscow with unsurpassed victories all along the way, etc., etc., etc.

Now, is this believable? Never heard the likes of it before or since. What about the witnesses? The testimony? Well, it comes from soldiers who have drifted back and found their way back, who obviously have a vested interest in being believed. They're untrained observers.

They come back from this far corner of the earth, superstitious, obviously, and they expect us to believe. What is there to induce belief? Now, obviously, what Waitley is doing is building a scenario that is not only oriented towards Napoleon but towards the miracles of Jesus. You see.

And the point of the piece of satire is simply that there is something wrong with Hume's canons of historical evidence. Because nobody doubts that Napoleon or Bonaparte existed and did all that. You see.

It is an unsurpassed thing. Never happened before, likely never will again. So there must be something wrong with the canons of belief, the criteria for how belief is induced.

So Waitley left it at that. What he's really doing is questioning Hume's epistemology. Is empirical evidence, including second-hand evidence from other observers, as limited in regard to belief as Hume suggests? Okay, let's see.

Any question, comment there? All right. Existence of God. Existence of God.

In addition to the section in the inquiry on divine providence, he has two other works of great significance on belief in God. One is his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. I put these titles on the board last time.

His Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. And the other is his Natural History of Religion. The first, the Dialogues, deals with the logic, that is to say, with attempts at demonstrative knowledge of the existence of God.

The second deals not with the logic, but with the psychology. Demia and Philo. Those three.

Cleanthes argues empirically. Wants to argue from empirical evidence, cosmological, and teleological arguments, to a matter-of-fact conclusion. Demia is something of a Platonist, with a priori arguments from the relation of ideas, the good God, who still thinks that God is really ineffable, beyond experience, beyond thought, something of a mystic.

So it's really the mystical presence of God that's his final line. The third is Philo, who is skeptical of both. And claims that in any case, belief in God makes no practical difference.

If all you've got is belief in some sort of first cause or perfect being, apart from something more than simply belief in God, it's quite independent of morality. It makes no ethical difference. In the process, he points out that the empirical arguments, cosmological, and teleological, seem to depend on analogies.

And so they try to say that the cause must be like the effect, analogous to the effect. Well, Hume makes a lot of fun of that, since there's so much vegetative existence on this earth, does that mean God is going to be like a cosmic cabbage? But in any case, the most you would get is some sort of anthropomorphic deity. By analogy to the highest kind of existence on the earth.

And as far as Demia is concerned, the argument is simply that relations of ideas get us nowhere on matters of fact. Which you would expect. It's difficult to know just where Hume comes out in that.

Obviously, some of his skepticism comes out in Philo. It is his view that simply believing that the proposition God exists is true, makes no moral difference to people, in the light of what he said about cause and effect on the human will. That's certainly the case.

Ideas don't cause anything. It's impressions that produce results. But on the other hand, there are places in his writings where he seems to be closer to Cleanthes.

As if he finds some weight to the force of that sort of thing on belief. Now, he has another little work about the same time called *The Sceptic*, in which he says that natural religion alone cannot long activate the mind. We have to find a method of affecting the imagination.

There must be something historical as well as philosophical about the divinity. You know, that sounds as if he's saying that natural religion without some historical act of God is not going to elicit belief. Which is, of course, what some Calvinists say anyway.

That belief in God without the coming of Christ isn't logically possible. I'm not convinced they're right, but that's what they say. And he was raised in a Scottish Presbyterian background.

In *The Natural History of Religion*, on the other hand, he argues that there is a gradual historical development of belief from an early polytheism. That belief, because of the constancy of various things, leads to a monotheism that arises when there is contemplation of nature and its organized unity. The trouble is that monotheism becomes an idea without the compelling power of the polytheistic deities around you all the time.

And so, he's not quite sure beyond saying that there is a psychological process at work in the history of religions. And his work there may have encouraged the development of the study of the history of religions and the evolution of religion. Let's pick it up next time and see what you want to do.

Thank you.