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A Different Take on the *Natural History of Religion*

Abstract:

The present paper reveals a nuance in Hume’s discussion on “vulgar” forms of monotheism in the *Natural History of Religion*, those grounded in the notion of a rationally and morally perfect God. I argue that Hume delineates between the dogmatic and non-dogmatic forms of vulgar monotheism in that book and treats them differently. While he offers a rigorous critique of dogmatic monotheism, aiming to banish it from social life, Hume seems to treat its non-dogmatic counterpart as having a capacity to promote useful and agreeable moral values – the concern for humanity, and moral goodness and virtue, such as justice and benevolence. Hume is not thereby validating the truth of monotheism. Nor is he endorsing a form of monotheism or religious morality. Hume merely points out that even vulgar monotheism, if practiced in a manner that adheres to what he in the *Natural History of Religion* describes as the logical consequences and practical implications of one’s commitment to the notion of a perfect God, need not be morally abhorrent and might even offer support to common morality.

Keywords:

David Hume, critique of monotheism, religious dogmatism, religious ethics