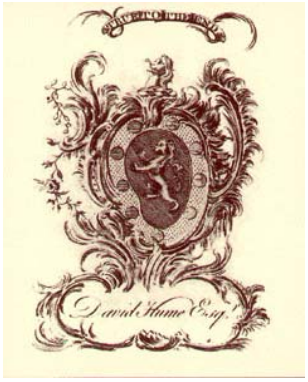

Demea's Departure
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James Dye

Although Demea's departure at the end of part 11 is one of the dramatic highlights of the *Dialogues*,[1] it has prompted little comment. That is a pity, since it is a striking departure from Hume's Ciceronian model in *De natura deorum*, and the motivation for the change is far from clear. What is clear is that to this point Philo and Demea have been informal allies. The conclusions of Philo's sceptical arguments have dovetailed nicely with Demea's negative theology—an alliance, as it were, between reason aware of its own failure and faith which accepts the invincible mysteriousness of the divine. Both distrust reason's competence to attain knowledge of God. After Demea's departure, Cleanthes and Philo seem to embark on a more conciliatory relationship for which the preceding parts have so ill-prepared the reader that Philo's "reversal" or "confession" in part 12 has become a standard exegetical problem in the literature. If Demea must go to facilitate the reconciliation of Philo and Cleanthes, what motivates his exit now?

The usual view takes the departure to be motivated by Demea's unhappiness with Philo's disquisition on evil. This is so vague as to be useless, especially since through most of part 10 Demea eagerly co-operates with Philo in describing life in terms which make the reality of evil all the more compelling. If the dialogue is psychologically coherent, the subsequent conversation must introduce something else to motivate Demea's departure. What is of such significance that Hume chooses to punctuate it with the dramatic flourish of Demea's exit? It does have much to do, I think, with something Philo says, but not about "the problem of evil" as that is usually construed. It has something to do with the problem of evil, but more with the implications of what Philo says than with his explicit claims. It will be necessary, however, to set these factors in their context; and for that purpose, let's start with part 9.

Part 9

Many have located the beginnings of a Demea-Philo rupture in part 9, not in Demea's perception of Philo, but in Philo's willingness to attack Demea. Specifically, Philo has commonly been taken to approve Cleanthes' criticisms of Demea's argument and to add his own to them. The temptation to interpret Philo as endorsing Cleanthes' criticisms is particularly strong because those criticisms seem to echo

characteristically Humean positions. However, in this context, as criticisms of Demea's argument, they are question-begging and, in fact, backfire on Cleanthes.[2] Moreover, Philo does not say that he accepts Cleanthes' arguments. (He is perhaps astonished that Cleanthes, in his eagerness to attack any view which smacks of "old-fashioned" a priorism, can forcefully espouse views which undercut his own position.)[3] His first remarks after Cleanthes' exceptionally spirited attack on Demea strongly resemble his remarks in part 2 following Demea's equally spirited initial objection (appealing to tradition and authority) to Cleanthes' argument.[4] Both responses are playfully ironic, and we should no more presume that Philo endorses Cleanthes' argumentation in part 9 than we should assume him to endorse Demea's in part 2.

Nor are Philo's own contributions to part 9 such as to give affront to Demea. He pointedly classifies the first of the two points he makes as "upon another topic" (D 191). Then he invokes as an example the fact that adding the digits of any product of 9 always yields either 9 or some lesser product of 9. The point of the example is that this fact, which initially seems marvellous and inexplicable, ceases to astonish one who understands mathematics sufficiently well to see that it is arithmetically necessary that the products of 9 have this property. Philo claims that it is probable that the similarly astonishing order of the universe may in like manner be determined by some intrinsic necessity in matter, which would seem equally unremarkable to us had we far more thorough knowledge of the nature of matter than we currently possess. The crux of Philo's argument is that if a remarkable regularity or order found in certain numbers is numerically necessary, it requires no further explanation; similarly, if a remarkable regularity or order in nature is necessary, it does not require a supernatural explanation. If this point is relevant, its target cannot be Demea's a priori proof, which is erected entirely on the idea that a non-terminating causal regress fails to satisfy the principle of sufficient reason. The Demea-Clarke argument does not explain, or even refer to, the intelligent order of the causal series; it argues for a first cause, not a designer. Now, Philo has all along accepted the existence of a first cause. Although Demea's argument adds that this first cause is necessary, Philo grants as much in making this very point. He demurs only about whether the necessity is to be classified as supernatural rather than natural. But even this should not rupture their alliance, since both have granted that the first cause is 'God' and that God is beyond human comprehension. If divine nature and the powers inherent in matter are equally indeterminate in human cognition, clearly neither is entitled to classify the first cause as 'God' or as 'Nature', should those be supposed to be distinct. *Only Cleanthes*

specifies that the order of things is determined through the intelligent choices of an external agent. I do not intend to suggest that Demea would more willingly embrace pantheism than Cleanthes' positive theism. My point is that his argument leaves the mechanics of divine causation unspecified; and hence, for all we know, its operation might, as Philo suggests, more resemble mathematical necessity than deliberate, intelligent production. Only Cleanthes' position, because it assigns the character of human-like purposiveness to the ultimate cause, is necessarily incompatible with what Philo says is "probable"—that the remarkable appearances of nature are internally necessitated rather than externally designed. Philo's first observation is an argument for the likelihood of the first cause not being an appropriate object of religious veneration, if such appropriateness be determined by *Cleanthean* criteria.

Even if Philo would not accept Demea's argument, he can hardly question the truth of a conclusion which asserts no more than what he has himself accepted as axiomatic. What he does object to is the idea that the *religious character* of one's attitude toward the ultimate cause can be determined by a priori reasoning. "But dropping all these abstractions ... and confining ourselves to more familiar topics" (D 191) are the words with which he prefaces his concluding remarks. His claim is that the cosmological argument has been convincing only to a small group of metaphysicians whose successes with mathematical reasoning have led them to think that quasi-mathematical demonstrations provide a royal road to truth about nature. Most people's religious beliefs can't be changed by a priori reasoning, even though they be intelligent and receptive to a religious world-view ("people ... of good sense and the best inclined to religion" [D 192]). Religious beliefs are not founded on abstract reasoning but arise from "other sources." Admittedly, "dropping all these abstractions" may refer only to Philo's previous appeal to an analogy between arithmetical order and cosmic order; but it seems more reasonable to take it to apply to the entire discussion, including Cleanthes' criticisms as well as Demea's proof. If "dropping *all* these abstractions" renounces the cosmological proof just because it is a priori, must not Cleanthes' criticisms of it, which are equally a priori, also be included within the abandoned domain? Philo's point would be that the entire discussion of part 9 has not been relevant to natural *religion.*

It might seem possible to see in this the germ of Philonic separation from Demea by construing his criticism as a rebuke of Demea for offering any rational argument for God at all. But it should be recalled that Demea does not offer the cosmological argument as his own, but rather as "the common one."[5] His motivation for preferring an a priori argument was made clear in part 2, when he first objected to Cleanthes'

use of probabilistic reasoning.[6] To argue that God *probably* exists explicitly undercuts the belief that tradition thought indubitable and traditional philosophical apologetic thought demonstrable. Demea's stance towards Cleanthes resembles, and is probably modeled after, Cotta's stance towards Balbus in Cicero's *De natura deorum*. Cotta (the Sceptic!) claims that arguments which fall short of proof "render doubtful a matter which in my opinion admits of no doubt at all."[7] This gratuitous concession to the critics of theism could be avoided either by not arguing at all (Demea's basic position) or, *if arguments must be given*, as Cleanthes insists on doing, by offering an a priori proof whose conclusion is certain. The proof Demea presents is hardly original (it is proximately Clarke's[8] and ultimately derives from Aristotle) and is explicitly called "the common one." So, we may reasonably suppose that Demea proposes it as a better option *only within the context of Cleanthes' insistence on reasoned justification for belief.* His own conviction—and Philo's[9]—is that the existence of a first cause is as indubitable as its essence is inscrutable. Consequently, Demea makes no attempt to defend the argument. Instead, picking up on Philo's second point, he opens part 10 by enthusiastically reverting to his basic reliance on pre-philosophical conviction, arguing that religion's "other sources" spring from feeling rather than reasoning. So, on close examination, part 9 does not establish a plausible alienation of Demea from Philo.[10]

On pain of inconsistency, Philo cannot even object to the form of Demea's argument, since he uses the same form to support his part 11 thesis that God cannot be perfectly good. Demea's argument is based on infinite regression. This, as Barnes reminds us,[11] was a pervasive argument form for dogmatists and sceptics alike. The Sceptics typically used it to demand a second criterion to justify some criterion proffered by one of the dogmatic schools, then a third criterion for the second, etc. The infinitude of this series of criteria was taken to show the impossibility of justifying whatever doctrine was at issue. However, Demea uses regression, as did Clarke and Aristotle before him, for a dogmatic metaphysical purpose—to establish that there must be an original condition operating on the series of causes. A first cause necessarily *exists* because fully determined events do occur, as they could not were their causal conditions incomplete (in-finite); it exists *necessarily* because it is unconditioned. Clarke's argument appeals to Demea because it, unlike Cleanthes' argument, does not taint divinity with the contingency implied by probabilistic reasoning or the imperfection implied by an analogy to human intelligence. Demea regards as religiously inadequate any argument which takes God's existence to be merely probable and as blasphemous any argument which attempts to place a human valuation on the original cause.

Part 10

That the alliance between Demea and Philo against Cleanthes' anthropomorphic conception of God is still on firm ground at the end of part 9 is borne out by part 10. Demea shows no sign of being offended by Philo's remarks; indeed, of the criticisms aimed at him in part 9, he responds *only* to Philo's remarks. That response, in the opening paragraph of part 10, is an enthusiastic endorsement of Philo's concluding observation as being substantially identical to his own opinion that religion never arises from abstract reasoning. One might suppose that Philo has converted Demea to this view; but there is nothing in the text to suggest that. It is Demea who first voices the Humean view that religion is compounded from our ignorance of the causes of events and our anxiety about our future destiny, which prompt us to attempt "by prayers, adoration, and sacrifice, to appease those unknown powers" (D 193, pt. 10).[12] Whereas Philo's characterization of the impetus to religion was entirely negative (that is, it isn't produced by a priori argument), Demea's is positive and forceful: man's religious impulse arises "from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning" (D 193). He and Philo then vie with one another in depicting the religious consciousness as erected on our feelings of "misery and wickedness" (D 193). Nearly the first half of part 10 is, as it were, a grand antiphonal lament over the wretched conditions of terrestrial life. The catalogue of horrors they conspire to produce may indeed be only a sober assessment of the facts for Philo and a "great and melancholy truth" (D 193) for Demea, but it is a vision they share without any substantial disagreement. True, at one point Demea starts to depict human life in somewhat more optimistic terms ("by combination in society, he can easily master lions, tygers, and bears" [D 195]), but redoubles his effort to outdo Philo in pessimism once the latter reminds him that the psychological terrors that humanity imposes on itself outweigh any physical security our ingenuity has provided against the attacks of wild beasts. Finally Cleanthes interrupts their woeful litany to remark that he does not feel oppressively anxious or miserable, and that he hopes that anguish is "not so common" (D 197) as they have depicted it. Although this comment follows a speech by Philo, it is Demea who excitedly rebuts Cleanthes' claim ("cried DEMEA" [D 197]) with examples of the confessed unhappiness of Charles V, Cicero, and Cato, whose lives, although manifestly more successful than those of most humankind, were still discontented. If Demea is to resent any of what Philo says in parts 10-11, it cannot be his contention that our world does not seem designed for human happiness. Demea's entire hope for happiness resides in his faith that there will be life after death.[13]

At this point Philo seizes the opportunity to restate "EPICURUS's old questions" (D 198)—the problem of evil. In doing so, he apparently changes his position, or at least, for the sake of formulating the Epicurean problem in terms acceptable to Cleanthes, accedes to Cleanthes' desire to use the vocabulary of design in speaking of the natural phenomena. For, rather than restating the problem in an orthodox Epicurean form, leading to the conclusion that the workings of nature operate blindly, by chance and by necessity, he seems to grant Cleanthes' basic claim that nature is purposive. "You ascribe, CLEANTHES, (and I believe justly) a purpose and intention to Nature" (D 198), says Philo.[14] This "and I believe justly" is quite a surprise; but the use to which the concession is put is hardly to Cleanthes' liking. He proceeds to argue that this intention seems not to extend so far as to aim at the gratification of creatures, showing itself only by "preservation alone of individuals and propagation of the species" (D 198).[15] In effect, Philo redraws the ancient distinction between 'life' and 'the good life' and maintains that, so far as we can tell, the processes of nature seem reliably to procure only the former end, not the latter. Nevertheless, he seems to be granting much that he, together with Demea, formerly contested—that nature shows evidence of design, even if not of being designed for our felicity. One might suppose that Hume is again ironically toying with his readers—that Philo, who at first speaks of "her [nature's] purpose" (D 198), is to be understood as granting only that certain kinds of natural beings are so constituted, by chance and necessity, not divine intention, as to strive regularly for certain ends. Certainly the kinds of "purpose" which he cites could be entirely internal to certain natural kinds. He claims that the discernible purposes of nature are just the "preservation alone of individuals and propagation of the species ... without any care or concern for ... happiness" (D 198). That nature includes ordered processes such as these would not be disputed by the most thoroughgoing atomist, who would only deny that their existence entitles one to infer that nature as a whole is a product of purposive intent. This may indeed be that at which Hume wishes Philo to hint; but given that the stance he has assigned Philo throughout the *Dialogues* is to affirm that God is the original cause of the universe, the explicit conclusion must be theological, not naturalistic.

To that end, Philo's characterization of natural processes goes beyond the denial of their providing sufficient evidence for beneficent purpose in nature to the affirmation that they afford sufficient evidence for *non-beneficent* purposes in nature. He wishes to counterpoise this evidence to that for Cleanthes' affirming divine "justice, benevolence, mercy, and rectitude, to be of the same nature with these virtues in human creatures" (D 198). Now, if Philo himself is willing to "piously

ascribe ... every species of perfection" (D 142) to God, presumably he would ascribe such attributes as justice, benevolence, etc. to God, although, as his criticism of Cleanthes' makes clear, not in the ordinary sense of these terms. If he is to use such predicates at all, or even if he is to claim that nature's *purposes* are not beneficent, he must grant, at least in some qualified sense, that nature has purposes. What he continues to deny is that these purposes are such as to warrant an inference to their being initiated by a deity who is benevolent, as we humans understand 'benevolent'.[16]

> How then does the divine benevolence display itself, in the sense of you Anthropomorphites? None but we Mystics, as you were pleased to call us, can account for this strange mixture of phenomena, by deriving it from attributes, infinitely perfect, but incomprehensible. (D 199)

If we recall that 'mystic' is the term Cleanthes introduced in part 4 (D 158) to classify Demea's theological commitment to the "absolute incomprehensibility of the Deity," it is clear that Philo is here reaffirming his solidarity with Demea's negative theology.

Part 11

Part 11 begins with Cleanthes' defending his inference to a designer by supposing the creator to be limited in power and hence forced to incorporate some natural evils into his work in order to avoid greater evils. Demea does not participate in the case that Philo makes against this suggestion by arguing that the best inference from the available evidence is rather that the first causes[17] of the universe are "entirely indifferent" to the operations of nature and that they have "neither goodness nor malice" (D 212). Demea says nothing at this point; and why should he?—he sees life's hardships and miseries as the sole motives impelling us to religion. The universe is a school for souls, wherein they are tested as to their fitness for nobler destinies in accordance with the creator's "benevolence and rectitude" (D 199, pt. 10). Our unhappy environment may yet express God's "benevolence" if it promotes some greater end in accordance with divine "rectitude."

Demea only becomes bothered when Philo constructs a parallel case for moral evil, invoking the very argument form Demea employed in part 9. Philo claims, using the same terms Demea employed earlier, that "we have no more reason to infer, that the rectitude of the supreme Being resembles the human rectitude than that his benevolence resembles the human" (D 212). Then he insists that moral evil requires causal explanation as much as natural evil. Demea cries "Hold! Hold!" just as Philo, still addressing his remarks to Cleanthes, argues that the

causal explanation of vice cannot stop with us wicked humans: "But as every effect must have a cause, and that cause another; you must either carry on the progression *in infinitum*, or rest on that original principle, who is the ultimate cause of all things" (D 212). Demea's complaint against Philo is quite specific:

> I joined in alliance with you, in order to prove the incomprehensible nature of the divine Being, and refute the principles of CLEANTHES, who would measure every thing by a human rule and standard. But I now find you running into all the topics of the greatest libertines and infidels; and betraying that holy cause. (D 212-13)

Cleanthes' gloss on this lament is in character with his attempt to patch up his empirical theism by denying evil—Demea has set himself up for Philo's bothersome inference by maintaining "the absolute incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature, the great and universal misery and still greater wickedness of men" (D 213). From Demea's perspective, this could only seem perverse, since Philo's apostasy from the doctrine of divine incomprehensibility is precisely what perturbs him. The basis of his dissatisfaction must lie elsewhere. Philo first had argued, most likely only on Cleanthes' anthropomorphic hypothesis, that God is *probably* morally indifferent. Hume's scenario is psychologically sound: there is no reason for Demea to be bothered by a probabilistic rebuttal of a probabilistic inference he never accepted. That changes when Philo argues that if, as Demea's part 9 argument maintained, the chain of causes terminates in an original cause, God is *necessarily* ("you must") the ultimate, and hence the sole, source of all moral evil.[18] Despite Philo's prefatory remark that the existence of any vice must "puzzle you Anthropomorphites" (D 212), this argument does not presuppose an anthropomorphic characterization of the cause and is a deductive proof. Demea's original complaint against Cleanthes, in addition to his anthropomorphism, was that by forsaking "abstract arguments" and "proofs *a priori* ... you give advantages to Atheists, which they never could obtain, by the mere dint of argument and reasoning" (D 143, pt. 2). His distress is that Philo is now showing that even the abstract characterization of God as 'ultimate cause', together with the axiom 'every effect must have a cause', suffices to generate the conclusion 'God is the cause of vice'. His outburst is Hume's way of pointing out the tension between such attributions and *any* causal argument for God's existence, the cosmological argument as well as the design argument. He has come to see that a priori proofs also convey advantages, if not to atheists, at least to "infidels."[19]

Although the negative theology that Demea espouses, as in the tradition, asserts that God is ineffable, it assumes that God's *goodness* is beyond all definition, that theology is, in a word, *pious*. Thus, in part 2, Demea declares both that God is "altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us" and also approvingly quotes Malebranche's claim that God "is a Being infinitely perfect," *objectively* characterizing God (D 141). Demea falls into the camp of those who believe that that which transcends all human understanding is beneficent and worthy of worship. Philo, in response to Demea's declaration, also acknowledges the existence of a first cause, but with a subtle difference. He understands *any* attribution of worth to the first cause to be subjective: "*we call* [the first cause] GOD; and *piously ascribe* to him every species of perfection," *subjectively* characterizing "the original cause of this universe" (D 142, pt. 2; emphasis added).[20] Immediately thereafter Philo explains that all positive evaluation of God derives from an attitude of worship, not from any genuine understanding of divine nature. The bulk of his argument in part 11 is designed to show that, given the manifest evils in the world, there is no legitimate inference from experienced fact to an appropriate object of worship. Piety is not a rationally justifiable attitude.[21] So much is a problem for Cleanthes. But his proof of God's responsibility for vice is a problem for Demea. Philo has shown that the same reasoning Demea endorsed as more religiously satisfactory than Cleanthes' a posteriori argument also poses a greater threat to religion (as he conceives it). Cleanthes' argument fails to establish the existence of a benevolent deity; Philo's revamped version of Demea's argument succeeds in establishing God's responsibility for moral evil.

Hume does not have Demea explain his consternation beyond associating Philo's reasoning with libertinism and infidelity. That Philo uses the argument form Demea introduced is doubtless a major factor. If Demea is supposed ever to have held the idea that a rational causal argument could *establish* religious belief (he presents the infinite regress argument as "the common argument" and is not clear about its religious import), he abandoned it at the beginning of part 10. To understand his reaction to Philo's line of reasoning here, we must suppose that he has held on to the idea that although causal reasoning is not foundational of religious belief, it is at least *compatible* with it. Further, Philo has used that argument to establish something, not about divine existence but about divine *nature*, which Demea allows to be an appropriate subject of philosophical inquiry. I presume that another factor is an inference from what has been shown—that the original cause's demonstrable responsibility for moral evil undermines any conception of divine rectitude which could have allowed present evils for the purpose of our moral improvement and eventual

happiness. The concept of *rectifying* present evils in a future state looses its meaning if the very evils to be overcome are themselves due to God, however incomprehensibly. A related ground for infidelity is that such a cause would not merit religious veneration, since to the extent that God is responsible for the vice from which we must be redeemed, God cannot be taken to be an appropriate object of religious worship. His accusation is that Philo is "betraying that holy cause" (D 213) of combating Cleanthes' anthropomorphism, but this protest betrays *his own* commitment to divine moral attributes incompatible with 'ultimate cause of vice', humanly conceived, however much they may exceed such "a human rule and standard" (D 212). In effect, Demea betrays himself as a closet anthropomorphite.[22]

Philo's closing argument, although ostensibly a defence of Demea against Cleanthean abuse, reinforces this identification by highlighting the similarity between Demea and Cleanthes, the proud anthropomorphite. Consider the scenario which transpires just prior to Demea's departure. Cleanthes accuses Demea of two-fold self-deception. First, he has failed to perceive that Philo's scepticism threatens any foundation for religion, not just anthropomorphic arguments. Demea has espoused a vulgar theology which leaves him easy prey for the sceptic's wiles. Second, the appeal of Demea and other "orthodox divines" to the inadequacy of reason to comprehend the divine and to the prevalence of wickedness and misery as motives for religious belief would be appropriate only in ages of "stupidity and ignorance." This is pretty insulting rhetoric; and one might reasonably suppose that it would fail to provoke Demea only if Demea really were so stupid and ignorant as to miss the obvious *ad hominem* implications of Cleanthes' self-justifying remarks. Yet, he does not respond. Instead, Philo comes to Demea's defence again, but in a way which adds a greater injury to Cleanthes' insult. He protests that Cleanthes is wrong to depict "these reverend gentlemen"—theologians who take a Demean stance—as ignorant. On the contrary, both earlier and present-day theologians are quite clever. They adroitly adapt their arguments to the predominant style of fixing beliefs, promoting the cause of established religion by whatever instruments are most effective with their audience. Philo does not deny the legitimacy of Cleanthes' classification of Demea's variety of theology. Instead, he argues that the principal differences between the Demean and Cleanthean approach are accidental and historical. Both are engaged in the same project, promoting religion by whatever means are most effective with the vulgar. Demea practices an archaic mode of religious sophistry, suited to a culture in which authoritarian indoctrination predominated. Cleanthes practices a more up-to-date version, suited

to a cultural climate in which beliefs must appear to be founded on reasons acceptable to an unbiased intellect.

Perhaps this analysis should be construed as that which Demea relished least in the "latter part of the discourse." Philo takes the whole business of religious apologetic to manifest "strong symptoms of priestcraft." Truth is not the issue for either the orthodox or the modernists; rather, as he said earlier, "whichever system best suits the purpose of these reverend gentlemen, in giving them an ascendant over mankind, they are sure to make it their favourite principle, and established tenet."[23] Demea's apologetic is as anthropomorphic as Cleanthes' in a crucial sense—its claims are tailored for best effect in promoting religious commitment rather than for establishing truth. Those "divines" who craft religious doctrine are guided more by what will persuade the masses than by sound philosophy.[24]

The text implies yet a deeper connection between Philo's views about the relationship of cognitive states to religious attitudes. Since it is only implied, I am not certain that Hume was explicitly conscious of it. That he was is an intriguing supposition but the evidence for that possibility is inconclusive. The implication is that religion diminishes proportionally with our increased knowledge of deity; and the explanation is as follows. In part 12 Philo claims that the religious attitude occurs only under certain psychological conditions, namely, feeling "melancholy, and dejected." When one is "in a chearful disposition, he is fit for business or company or entertainment of any kind; and he naturally applies himself to these, and thinks not of religion" (D 225). In part 10 Philo and Demea agree that the sole justification of religion is found in our awareness of our "misery and wickedness." Meditating on this is doubtless the sort of thing which makes one melancholy and dejected. The whole purpose of religion is to provide an antidote to this malaise. The concept of God subserves that purpose only by being, as later theologians were to put it, "wholly other"—a perfect being whose religious utility is, at least in part, to redeem us from this state of affliction. *However, whatever rational justification we can provide for belief in God undercuts this religious hope.* Rational justification for belief, whether in Cleanthes' design argument or in Demea's cosmological proof, relies on causal efficacy;[25] and sufficient, even infinite, causal power does not entail any particular moral or religious properties. However, it does entail ultimate responsibility[26] for the actual effects, since it is precisely the axiom that the existence of every *effect* depends on some cause (the principle of sufficient reason) that drives the inference to a first cause. God as first cause is not the piously sought redeemer but the ultimate source of things as they are, in all their oppressiveness.

Even if Demea has no glimmer of this, his departure is well-motivated, not by a general unhappiness over Philo's presentation of the problem of evil, but by certain specific developments. He takes his leave because

(1) the philosophy which he thought compatible with orthodoxy and even its ally against a philosophical theology which compromised religious certainty and God's perfection has lead to an equally unsatisfactory conception of divinity, and
(2) given that consequence, he is forced to consider that all reasoned defence of religious belief, whether of his sort or of Cleanthes' sort, may be self-serving rhetoric.

The *Dialogues*, as an inquiry into the nature of God, ends with part 11; and Demea's departure marks its conclusion with the silence appropriate to confrontation with an irresolvable dilemma. In part 12 Cleanthes and Philo seek some sort of terminological *rapprochement* and discuss the utility of religion, but proceed no further in elucidating divine nature.

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1. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. N. Kemp Smith (Indianapolis, 1947) (hereafter cited as "D").
2. See Dye, "A Word on Behalf of Demea," *Hume Studies* 15, no. 1 (April 1989): 120–40. Essentially, Cleanthes merely asserts alternative presuppositions under which Demea's argument would be unsound. He does not show that Demea's presuppositions are preposterous or that his argument is faulty under those assumptions. Cleanthes' criticisms backfire on him in that, if it is absurd to argue to a first cause of phenomena having proximate causes, then it must be equally absurd to argue for that ultimate cause of order Cleanthes believes to be behind the structure of nature. Cleanthes' attack on the necessity of God's existence is thus something of a red herring. If the causal series does not terminate with God, then Philo is right in demanding an additional causal account of God's mental states (D 160-62, pt. 4) which would undermine God's status as *ultimate* cause.
3. Although Kemp Smith recognizes Cleanthes' "inconsistency in propounding" these criticisms, he asserts that "Philo, as he well may, approves Cleanthes' reasonings" (D 116). Though Hume be ever so sympathetic to some of Cleanthes' *conclusions*, I doubt that

he intends to endorse Cleanthes' question-begging and inconsistent *reasonings*.

4. "After so great an authority, DEMEA, replied PHILO, as that which you have produced, and a thousand more, which you might produce, it would appear ridiculous in me to add my sentiment, or express my approbation of your doctrine" (D 142, pt. 2). "Though the reasonings, which you have urged, CLEANTHES, may well excuse me, said PHILO, from starting any farther difficulties; yet I cannot forbear insisting still upon another topic" (D 191, pt. 9).
5. In the first paragraph of part 2, Demea says, "the Being of a God, ... No man; no man, at least, of common sense, I am persuaded, ever entertained a serious doubt with regard to a truth, so certain and self-evident. The question is not concerning the BEING, but the NATURE of GOD. This, I affirm, from the infirmities of human understanding, to be altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us. The essence of that supreme mind, his attributes, the manner of his existence, the very nature of his duration; these and every particular, which regards so divine a Being, are mysterious to men" (D 141). The a priori proof proffered in part 9 does not contradict this stance, since it is put forth only under the condition, of which he disapproves, that theistic arguments are to be given.
6. "What! No demonstration of the Being of a God! No abstract arguments! No proofs *a priori*! Are these, which have hitherto been so much insisted on by philosophers, all fallacy, all sophism? Can we reach no further in this subject than experience and probability? I will not say, that this is betraying the cause of a Deity: But surely, by this affected candor, you give advantages to Atheists, which they never could obtain, by the mere dint of argument and reasoning" (D 143-44).
7. "Adfers haec omnia argumenta cur di sint, remque me sententia minime dubiam argumentando dubiam facis." Cicero, *De natura deorum* (trans. Rackham) 3.4.
8. In Clarke's Boyle Lectures of 1704, published as *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More Particularly in Answer to Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza, and Their Followers* (London, 1705).
9. In part 2 Philo says the existence of an original cause is "unquestionable and self-evident" (D 142).
10. To the extent that Demea does have some stake in the a priori argument, it can more reasonably be considered as intensifying the existing hostility between himself and Cleanthes, given that the latter scornfully characterizes the argument Demea endorses as superior to his "experimental argument" (D 165, pt. 5) as "*obviously* ill-grounded" reasoning containing "an *evident* absurdity" (D 189, emphasis added).

11. Jonathan Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge, 1990), chap. 2.
12. Cf. David Hume, *Natural History of Religion*, sec. 3, pp. 316-19.
13. "The present evil phenomena, ... are rectified in other regions, and in some future period of existence" (D 199, pt. 10).
14. It has been claimed that in parts 10-11 Philo forsakes his sceptical stance to argue for the hypothesis that the original cause is entirely indifferent to the good and ill consequences of events for sentient creatures (for example, by Stanley Tweyman in "Hume's Dialogues on Evil," *Hume Studies* 13, no. 1 [April 1987]: 74-85). It seems more likely that Philo has not changed his position at all and that the argument for divine moral indifference is but a *reductio* which draws this consequence from Cleanthes' assumptions rather than from premises Philo would accept. (So argues George Nathan in his commentary on Tweyman's paper, "Comments on Tweyman and Davis," *Hume Studies* 13, no. 1 [April 1987]: 98-103. Nathan's view gives us a more consistent Philo.) In either case, Philo does reason towards a conclusion clearly incompatible with the negative theology he and Demea have espoused.
15. In part 11 Philo reveals more of the belief that underlies this claim: "So well adjusted are the organs and capacities of all animals, and so well fitted to their preservation, that, as far as history or tradition reaches, there appears not to be any single species, which has yet been extinguished in the universe" (D 207). One wonders what basis Philo would have left to justify any agreement with Cleanthes, had Hume had the evidence of mass extinctions which has since come to light.
16. Nathan ([above, n. 13], 102) makes the very sound observation that an anthropomorphic construal of God's moral attributes is essential to Philo's argument in part 10.
17. The plural occurs because Philo has just been considering the Manichaean hypothesis. He switches back to the singular "supreme Being" in the next paragraph.
18. Philo's statement is either careless, or incomplete, or shows some misunderstanding of the Clarke-Demea argument. He treats "the progression *in infinitum*" of causes and termination in an "original principle" (D 212) as options. Demea contended that an infinite succession without an ultimate cause was not a genuine option at all, since even if the causal series be eternal and infinite, there must be a cause of the existence of just "this particular succession of causes existed from eternity, and not any other succession, or no succession at all" (D 188-89).

9. The sense in which one is to take this term is shown in that Hume originally wrote "sceptics." Of course Demea likes scepticism about philosophy, although not about religion.
20. Philo's reference to "attributes, infinitely perfect, but incomprehensible" (D 199) (quoted above, p. 473) is more problematic. The language could be construed as an objective reference, but it more plausibly refers only to concepts "we mystics" apply to God rather than to properties God can be known to have.
21. Thus, as John Davis has argued (*Hume Studies* 13, no. 1 [April 1987]: 90-97), from the *religious* point of view, Cleanthes is, unwittingly, more sceptical than Philo. Cleanthes' project of basing religious sentiment on our knowledge of God's goodness and even of the general happiness of mankind (D 200-201, pt. 10) makes it as uncertain as those most problematic propositions.
22. Much as Cleanthes, as John Davis points out (above, n. 21), unwittingly commits himself to scepticism more radical than Philo's, Demea strays further from the principle of divine incomprehensibility than Philo.
23. These quotations are from Philo's parallel analysis of scepticism in D 139-40, pt. 1, to which he explicitly refers, and which was also preceded by a Cleanthean harangue against orthodoxy. Why does Demea not take leave then? Presumably because he still has a defence to make and a counter-attack to launch. Besides, Hume couldn't end the debate in part 1.
24. Philo holds that theologians adapt to the style of the time, but does not hold that this adaptation necessarily leads to greater success. He must find the present style less successful for the promotion of religion, even now, than the previous style, for he has claimed that "the only method of bringing every one to a due sense of religion, is by just representations of the misery and wickedness of men" (D 193). So, although Philo regards both Cleanthes and Demea as proponents of vulgar theology, he thinks Demea's stance more effective, as religious rhetoric, than Cleanthes'.
25. Among theistic proofs, the ontological argument seems to be the sole exception in not relying on causality. It is also notably the argument that the *Dialogues* fail to discuss.
26. 'Responsibility' is here used only in a causal sense; any intentional or moral connotation would derive from piety.