



**Beryl Logan. *A Religion Without Talking: Religious Belief and Natural Belief in Hume's Philosophy of Religion***

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BERYL LOGAN. *A Religion Without Talking: Religious Belief and Natural Belief in Hume's Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993. xii +184.

This monograph focuses on the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* in an attempt (1) to determine whether Philo holds a belief in "an intelligent designer," (2) to assess the character of the belief, and (3) to determine whether it deserves to be classed among those instinctive beliefs (in causality, the external world, and the self) discussed by Hume which have come to be called "natural beliefs." Logan rejects the common approach of providing "defining characteristics" of such "natural beliefs," and seeks to provide a fresh perspective by addressing the process of the generation of such "natural beliefs," highlighting the role of tension and the status of a "fiction." This, the heart of the monograph, is prefaced by an exceedingly detailed exploration (in three chapters) of Hume's doctrine of belief and of the activities of the imagination in relation to ideas and beliefs.

The novelty of Logan's work lies in the argument that there is a positive statement of belief espoused by Philo in the *Dialogues*, but one hitherto mislocated in the proposition "that the cause or causes of the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence." Instead of being found in this proposition, which is the conclusion of a weak analogical argument, the belief in "an intelligent designer" is the response to the "irregular" argument presented by Philo several times in the *Dialogues*: namely, when he claims (Part X) that "the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms," and when he insists (Part XII) that "A purpose, an intention, or design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker...no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it." These claims remind us of Cleanthes's suggestion in Part III, that the idea of a designer strikes us, flows in on us, with the force of sensation. That too is an "irregular" argument (103), but it is important to Logan's proposal that Philo is not recapitulating Cleanthes's kind of irregular argument.

This requires defense of a distinction between two kinds of "irregular" argument, both of which fail to obey the rules of analogical argument, but one of which (namely, Cleanthes's) remains an *irregular analogical* argument (as shown in the residual appeal to analogy in the illustrations of the Articulate Voice and the Living Library [106-109]). Although Philo's argument relies on "means-to-ends relations and coherence of parts" (134; 172), Logan suggests that it is not an analogical argument at all, not even an irregular one, because

it "does not utilize the data in the world to infer analogically the intelligence of the designer" (113). Indeed, it is Philo's rejection of even irregular analogical arguments (121) which explains why he goes on at all after Part III (110): i.e., Philo goes on in order to draw out the religiously inadequate conclusion of any appeal to analogical comparisons, even irregular ones. He works his way towards the conclusion of the "remote analogy," but this, Logan suggests, is not the achievement of a limited analogy, supporting a limited religious belief, but rather a concession of ignorance. Insofar as it is analogically derived, the "remote analogy" proposition tells us nothing; that ignorance causes an uneasiness which we naturally seek to alleviate and this leads us to accept the kind of irregular argument to which Philo appeals (119). Like "natural beliefs" to which (though they cannot be justified by regular argument) we are led because of a tension between reason and imagination which needs to be relieved, the belief in a designer (which strikes us in the appearance of means/end relations) relieves a similar tension.

The thesis Logan defends is intriguing. Developing and extending a challenge already initiated by others (96), she asks not only whether belief in an intelligent designer is a "natural" belief, but also whether it is a "religious" belief. She challenges not only those who deny that Philo believes in an intelligent designer, but also those who see such a belief as "religious," as well as those who see a positive though attenuated "religious" belief affirmed by Philo in the "remote analogy." Chapters 4 through 6 make a significant contribution to the exegesis of the *Dialogues*.

Chapter 7 adds to this contribution, offering numerous insightful suggestions concerning the relation between the *Dialogues* and the *Natural History of Religion*, as well as the role of Part XII and the roles of Pamphilus and Hermippus. Logan rethinks what is at stake in Hume's rejection of different kinds of religious belief (165ff), arguing that Hume need only reject "traditional, organized religion," not the sort of belief Philo presents; I take her to be implying (rightly, I think) that the only objectionable content for Hume is that which has supra-moral or contra-moral implications. It is worth noting in this context that Logan vacillates on whether the response to Philo's "irregular" argument is "religious" (see 119 vs. 168, 171), but (in contrast to the ambiguous and undefined proposition of a "remote analogy") there seems little reason not to follow Philo's lead in calling it "true religion." Indeed, it seems that on Logan's own account, Philo (and Hume) could accept an articulated theism, as long as there is no attempt to derive it analogically—that is, no attempt to conclude that we can know what we mean when we talk that way and thus can derive moral behavioral requirements from it. With this proviso, the "fiction" that is accepted as the response to the irregular argument could be sufficiently articulated to merit the name "religious." Despite Logan's explicit intention, her study may actually support the view that Hume's proposal is not so much a "religion without talking" (since "true religion," on this

version, might have first-order address as well as meta-level non-dogmatic talk about an intelligent designer), but rather a “religion without knowing what we mean when we nevertheless talk that way.”

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