



The Natural History of Religion

David Hume

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In this essay, Hume pioneers a naturalist account of the causes, effects, and historical development of religious belief. Hume locates the origins of religion in emotion, particularly fear and the desire to control the future. He further argues that monotheism arises from competition between religions, as believers seek to distinguish their deities as superior to all rivals. The monotheist drive to dominate other beliefs, and to burnish the primitive, emotional core of religion under a veneer of theology, Hume concludes that this yields intolerance, intellectual dishonesty, and unnatural moral doctrines.

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