

Natural Religion

Natural Religion is often understood as a religious doctrine that regards nature itself as divine. However, in the context of the Enlightenment, it refers to the idea that humans are equipped with a natural autonomy over their intellect and senses which enables them to investigate philosophical and religious questions. Many enlightenment thinkers who held these beliefs focused on the natural ability of humans to investigate their circumstances and environment.

While this belief was not universally shared among all during the enlightenment, even opponents of this view often relied on these very senses and perceptions to form their own beliefs. To establish the Enlightenment perspective of Natural Religion, I will use primary sources from proponents of Natural Religion such as David Hume and Gottfried Leibniz to establish the different logic used to support their arguments and ideas.

Conversely, I intend to examine the counterarguments from more technical thinkers of the time such as Immanuel Kant. By studying these different perspectives, my intention is to establish a continuum of sorts that will establish the general Enlightenment attitudes regarding Natural Religion. Both Kant and Hume will be the foundations for each end of the spectrum and will likely be the most heavily referenced sources.

Finally, I intend to consult the most recent scholarship on this to guide my use of the primary sources. These will also provide a clearer understanding of enlightenment ideas and beliefs. Contributions from other scholars allow me to contribute to existing conclusions and situate my work within the larger knowledge of the topic.

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