



A Defense of Hume on Miracles (Princeton Monographs in Philosophy)

Robert J. Fogelin

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Since its publication in the mid-eighteenth century, Hume's discussion of miracles has been the target of severe and often ill-tempered attacks. In this book, one of our leading historians of philosophy offers a systematic response to these attacks.

Arguing that these criticisms have--from the very start--rested on misreadings, Robert Fogelin begins by providing a narrative of the way Hume's argument actually unfolds. What Hume's critics (and even some of his defenders) have failed to see is that Hume's primary argument depends on fixing the appropriate standards of evaluating testimony presented on behalf of a miracle. Given the definition of a miracle, Hume quite reasonably argues that the standards for evaluating such testimony must be extremely high. Hume then argues that, as a matter of fact, no testimony on behalf of a religious miracle has even come close to meeting the appropriate standards for acceptance. Fogelin illustrates that Hume's critics have consistently misunderstood the structure of this argument--and have saddled Hume with perfectly awful arguments not found in the text. He responds first to some early critics of Hume's argument and then to two recent critics, David Johnson and John Earman. Fogelin's goal, however, is not to "bash the bashers," but rather to show that Hume's treatment of miracles has a coherence, depth, and power that makes it still the best work on the subject.

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