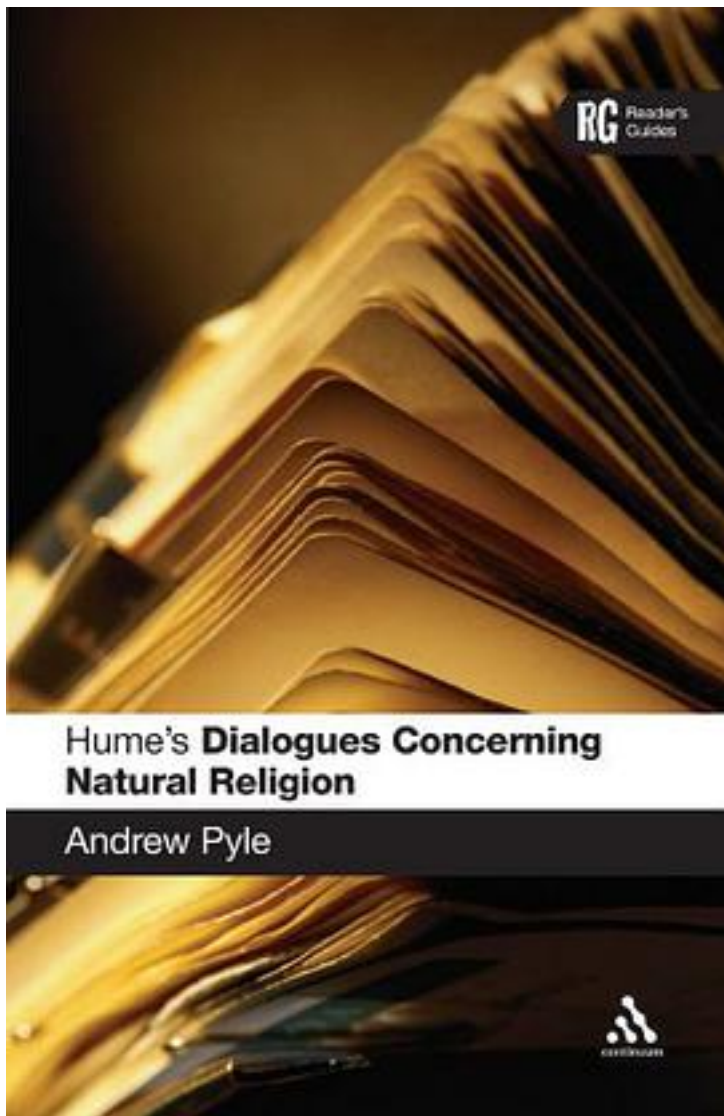


Hume's "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion"



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出版者:Continuum Intl Pub Group

出版时间:2006-11

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780826475688

Hume's Dialogues provide a classic exposition and critique of the famous 'Argument to Design', the attempt to prove the existence and properties of a designing intelligence or God from the phenomena of Nature, notably the functional contrivance of the parts of plants and animals. As such, it raises questions of central interest in both philosophy and theology. Philosophers will be concerned with the implications of strict empiricism for our claims to know anything of the existence and properties of God, and with it the associated threat of scepticism. Theologians will be concerned about the possibility of natural theology and the problematic relation between natural theology and the claims of revealed religions such as Christianity. This book will follow the layout of the Reader's Guide Series. In 'Context', Pyle will explain the philosophical and theological background against which the book was written, including what is meant by 'natural' religion. 'Overview of Themes' will introduce the reader to Enlightenment views on religion. 'Overview of Themes' will address the question of why Hume chose to write in dialogue form, sketch out the views of the three characters and introduce the questions they address. The 'Reading the Text' section will take the 12 parts of Dialogues in turn and guide the reader through the issues thrown up. Discussion points and questions will focus thinking and encourage the reader to engage with the primary text. 'Reception and Influence' will include discussion of Hume's influence on Kant and the debates about Darwinism.

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目录:

[Hume's "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" 下载链接1](#)

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