The existence of God was an arguable topic for many years. However, philosophers who will argue on that topic in this paper, who are Demea, Philo, and Cleanthes, will say that God’s existence is undoubted. This essay will include talks from Hume’s Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, and will lead us to the argument that the nature of God can’t be known to humanity.

To begin with, Demea according to Malbranche argues that since God is All Being, the Being infinite and universal, and also because we can’t know anything more perfect than human mind, we can’t know the nature of God (p.933, Part II, Hume). Additionally, he adds that according to many authorities, we can’t doubt about the existence of God. For that, Philo responds by saying that there is nothing which exist without a cause, and thus, the existence of God is unquestionable (p.934, Part II, Hume). He also adds that we God is much more perfect than us, and we don’t have any resemblance with him because we are less perfect.

Further, Cleanthes connects to the dialogue and argue that everything we know comes from experience. He argues that God is similar to us, but have much greater productions because there are human creations, which reflect human nature, and there are God’s creations that reflect his nature, though that are much greater for us to understand (p.934, Part II, Hume). Demea replies to that by saying that there are no a priori proofs in Cleanthes’ argument. Moreover, Philo adds that referring only to the past experience similar to the case creates weak arguments. For example, by knowing of the circulation of blood in animals (as an experience), some may say that there is circulation of the sap in vegetables. However, that was not true as investigations have shown later. Similar to that, house that was built by an architecture does not perfectly resemble the universe because that would be a guess, a conjecture, a presumption (p.935, Part II, Hume). Cleanthes reply that saying that as the stair we built for human use in mounting, similarly, human legs are also contrived for walking and mounting, is not perfect analogy.

Then, Philo says that without referring to our experience, but only to our ideas and thoughts, humanity could not determine what the universe is like. And experience alone can point out to him the true cause of any phenomenon (p.935, Part II, Hume).

Furthermore, Cleanthes argues that from similar effects we infer to similar causes. Effects reflected in creations of God (universe) and in machines created by human are resembling. Thus, the causes are similar too says Cleanthes. Philo replies to that by saying that philosophers are different from plain folks, by referring to the exactly similar cases and not just hurried on by the smallest similitude. For example, by having a human hair it is unrealistic to understand human nature. Moreover, every little change in the effects may result in totally different cause (p.936, Part II, Hume). We don’t have enough evidence related to the effects to argue about such cause about the nature of God. Very small part of nature is not a rule for the whole universe. As it was said before, knowledge comes from experience. But we don’t have enough experience to understand the God’s nature. We haven’t seen how the universe have been created from the beginning, how the other worlds have been created. Therefore, not much evidence exist to claim that we may know the nature of God (p. 938, Part II, Hume).

In Part X, Demea says that sense of religion is caused by just representations of misery and wickedness of man. In addition, miseries in life, unhappiness of man are common and universal thins that everyone experience. This part mainly is about saying that humans are miserable, like the whole earth is cursed and polluted, and even new-born child is hurt at the time of his first entrance to the world (p.956, Part X, Hume). There are strong who are lead by necessity of hunger, and weak who are in fear and anxiety to be caught by stronger ones. The stronger one prey upon the weaker. But humans have a combination of the society, and thus they are stronger than strongest animals. However, people have their own enemies they are afraid of. Things like injustice, treachery, contumely, violence, war, fraud and like may would soon dissolve the society, unless humanity was not afraid of something greater (p.957, Part X, Hume).

Moreover, Demea share his pessimistic thought by saying there are not much things that make people happy, however, there are lots of things that make them unhappy and miserable. People are not satisfied with life, and afraid of death (p.958, Part X, Hume). Not the hope, but the fear and terror hold us to keep on living. Lots of famous people like Charles V, Cicero were saying that they were unhappy even if it was believed that they do so. Nobody wants to live their last 10 years again, but they say that next 10 years will be better than that.

Philo says that God’s power and wisdom are infinite. However, people are unhappy. Probably the God does not want us to be happy. On the other side, there is a change that God is not able to help us. But all this contradicts the fact that God is infinitely powerful. (p.958, Part X, Hume).

Cleanthes says that for one vexation which we meet with, we attain a hundred enjoyments. However, every pain we experience is much stronger and more violent that every pleasure. Then Philo replies that if everything is perfect, and there are more pleasures than pains, then why do we have infinite power and wisdom? All the misery in the world exist not by chance but for reason. It is not the will of the Deity because he is perfectly benevolent. It is not contrary to his intention because he is almighty. Therefore, we can’t know the nature of God (p.960, Part X, Hume).

Therefore, the connection between two texts is that it is undoubted and self-evident that God exists, although we can’t know the nature of God, is he Good or Evil.

In conclusion, it is useless to doubt about what are the attributes of God, why people are unhappy and God does not solve it. However, it is true that God exists.

Reference:

1. Cahn, S. M. (2012). Classics of Western Philosophy (8th ed.). Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.