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Introduction

Peter Millican

Hume's *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (standardly referred to as the first *Enquiry*) has long been recognized as one of the best available 'classics' for introducing students to the study of philosophy; indeed in this role probably only Descartes's *Meditations* enjoys a comparable popularity. The *Enquiry* is therefore well known, but tends to be considered rather lightweight—a useful stepping-stone for those approaching epistemology for the first time, or those wishing to sample Hume's philosophy in a relatively undemanding way, but a work destined to be put on one side once the reader has graduated to the more serious business of his earlier *Treatise of Human Nature*. No doubt for the same reason, the *Enquiry* tends to be viewed as an unsystematic work, a sequence of essays on loosely related topics chosen to interest and provoke the general reader, but lacking the impressive structure, the theoretical depth, or the analytical rigour of the *Treatise*. For both more advanced students and professional philosophers, therefore, the *Enquiry* has served mainly as a convenient source of material on Humean topics, and as a back-up reference for scholars on issues where the *Treatise* is unclear. Very rarely has it been considered seriously as a major work of philosophy in its own right.¹

Against this background, this volume's general aims (which are highly interrelated, and in no particular order) can be summarized as follows:

1. To establish the significance of the *Enquiry*, as a work of philosophy in its own right.
2. To provide a general overview of the *Enquiry*, especially for those (whether students or professional philosophers) approaching it for the first time.
3. To explain recent developments in Hume scholarship that are relevant to the *Enquiry*.
4. To elucidate, analyse, and assess the philosophy of the *Enquiry* (both what Hume said and what—arguably—he *should have said*).

¹ Antony Flew's book *Hume's Philosophy of Belief* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961) is a conspicuous exception, but Flew's treatment, though a major contribution at the time, is now very dated and does not attribute Hume with a consistent or plausible overall position.

5. To clarify the interpretation of controversial parts of the *Enquiry* (whether by appeal to scholarly, philosophical, biographical, or literary considerations).
6. To draw attention to differences between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, and to suggest what may lie behind these changes.

Some of these aims (notably the first and second) explicitly inform only a few of the essays in the collection; others (for example the fifth) are in evidence almost throughout. To help the reader who has particular aims in mind, I shall allude to them below as the occasion arises, in the course of giving a brief description of each of the various papers that constitute the collection.

*THE CONTEXT, AIMS, AND STRUCTURE OF
HUME'S FIRST ENQUIRY (MILLICAN)*

The first aim of this volume is to establish the genuine significance of the *Enquiry*, as a relatively unified and systematic presentation of Hume's epistemology, and arguably as a more faithful representation of his considered opinions than the *Treatise*. So in my own initial essay (which is unashamedly partisan on the issue) I suggest that Hume was neither insincere nor misguided in asking his printer in 1775 to prefix, to the volume containing the *Enquiries* (together with *A Dissertation on the Passions* and *The Natural History of Religion*), his notorious 'Advertisement':

Most of the principles, and reasonings, contained in this volume, were published in a work in three volumes, called *A Treatise of Human Nature*: A work which the Author had projected before he left College, and which he wrote and published not long after. But not finding it successful, he was sensible of his error in going to the press too early, and he cast the whole anew in the following pieces, where some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression, are, he hopes, corrected. . . . Henceforth, the Author desires, that the following Pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles. (E 2)

My paper stresses the *Enquiry's* unity, and claims to detect within it a clear and coherent overall purpose, but also more controversially a significant move away from the philosophy of the *Treatise* (especially from its associationism) and an underlying systematic development of specific inductive principles. If I am right in this last claim, then the sequence of topics that Hume discusses has been chosen not only with a view to his overall purpose (namely, vindicating empirical science against 'superstition' and rationalist metaphysics), but also to provide a framework for the introduction of particular principles of scientific inference covering such things as hidden causes, reasoning from analogy, and probability. On this interpretation, therefore, the *Enquiry* presents a unified manifesto for inductive science, and its scepticism, so far from being in conflict

with that aim (as so often supposed), importantly paves the way for legitimate ‘science and enquiry’ by demonstrating the impotence and even incoherence of any supposed alternative (such as theistic metaphysics, or rationalistic insight into the nature of the material world).

The second aim of this volume, related to the first, is to provide a general overview of the *Enquiry*, especially for those (whether students or professional philosophers) who are approaching it as a serious subject of study for the first time. For these readers in particular, even if they are left entirely unconvinced by my more controversial claims, I hope that my discussion of Hume’s intentions, and of his profound disagreements with rationalists such as Descartes, will help to provide a context for better appreciating the *Enquiry*’s central themes. These themes are then outlined in the final part of the paper, which discusses in turn each section of the work, drawing comparisons with Hume’s *Abstract* of the *Treatise* published in 1740 (and which is also included in the collection at pp. 399–411). The *Abstract* provides both a fascinating historical document, illuminating Hume’s own view of his performance in the *Treatise*, and also perhaps the best short introduction to his philosophy, whether that be studied through the *Treatise* itself or through the *Enquiry*.

TWO SPECIES OF PHILOSOPHY: THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST ENQUIRY (STEWART)

The third aim of this volume is to provide readers with an appreciation of some of the major developments and debates that have taken place in Hume scholarship over the last two decades or so, which have profoundly transformed our view of central aspects of his philosophy. Sandy Stewart has been a prominent contributor to historical studies of Hume for many years, and in his essay (Chapter 2) turns his attention to the circumstances surrounding the *Enquiry*’s composition. The ‘two species’ of his title refers to Hume’s distinction, in Section I, between ‘easy’ and ‘abstruse’ philosophy, the one preaching virtue ‘in an easy and obvious manner . . . to please the imagination, and engage the affections’ (E 5), and the other regarding ‘human nature as a subject of speculation’, examining it ‘with a narrow scrutiny . . . in order to find those principles, which regulate our understanding, excite our sentiments, and make us approve or blame’ (E 6). Stewart finds in Hume’s discussion clear allusions to the events of 1745, when he was turned down for the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University through the combined opposition of the clergy and the influential moralist Francis Hutcheson. The *Treatise* (published in 1739–40) had been accused by Hutcheson of ‘lacking warmth in the cause of virtue’, and by the clergy of being sceptical and atheistic. Section I can thus be seen as Hume’s reply to Hutcheson—no doubt the ‘easy’ philosophy has its merits, but Hume’s

‘abstruse’ attempt at accurate, dispassionate enquiry also has value and should not be condemned on the inappropriate ground of failing to preach virtue. For its purpose is quite different, just as the role of an anatomist is fundamentally different from that of a painter.

According to Stewart, the scars of Hume’s anger and disappointment over the Edinburgh chair are to be found not only in Section I, but also in particular at the beginning of Section V and throughout Section XI. In reviewing the overall construction of the *Enquiry* (and thus providing a significant contribution to this collection’s second aim, of providing such an overview), Stewart also identifies many other historical references and various lingering traces of the work’s original form as a collection of ‘Philosophical Essays.’ Taken together, therefore, these first two papers in the collection present strongly contrasting views of the *Enquiry*, while at the same time being more complementary than conflicting. My own paper stresses Hume’s underlying unity of philosophical purpose (with relatively little biographical reference), while Stewart brings out numerous historical details that help to explain why the *Enquiry* took the particular form that it did (in the context of a less systematic conception of Hume’s distinctive philosophical aims here). Readers who approach the *Enquiry* with these themes and historical details in mind will find it to be a vastly richer and more fascinating work than might be suspected by those who have taught or studied it purely as an introductory text.

EMPIRICISM ABOUT MEANINGS (BENNETT)

The fourth aim of this volume is to discuss and assess the philosophy of the *Enquiry*, and this is unequivocally the focus of Jonathan Bennett’s essay (Chapter 3) which deals with Hume’s arguments in Section II (subsequent papers will in turn work fairly systematically through the principal issues arising in the remainder of the *Enquiry*). Bennett’s paper is very much older than the others in the collection, being a slightly modified version of a chapter from his book *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes*, published in 1971. Much work of that vintage now tends to be criticized in scholarly circles as historically insensitive (no doubt often with justification), but it is salutary to be reminded that understanding Hume’s attempts to solve some deep and enduring problems may require serious philosophical grappling with the problems themselves at least as much as it requires historical knowledge. Perhaps the clearest example in the *Enquiry* is the problem of *meaning*, which for Hume is inextricably bound up with the nature of our ‘ideas’, since he takes the meaning of a word to be determined by the idea that it represents (e.g. *E* 21–2). ‘Ideas’ are also the material of our thoughts (e.g. *E* 18), and are to be understood in the standard empiricist fashion as quasi-sensory images (indeed for Hume, as direct copies

of sensory or internal impressions). This ‘theory of ideas’, which Hume inherits fairly uncritically from Locke, thus leads him into a misguided identification of *thinking* and *meaning* with *having images*, so that his entire discussion of the issue is infected by a fundamental category mistake.² Despite this, Bennett suggests, Hume’s philosophical acuity sometimes leads him towards insights that reveal the theory’s limitations, but because he is so fully in its grip that he cannot reject it or transcend its vocabulary, he instead stretches it in directions quite contrary to its spirit.³ When this happens, we can expect to find gaps or incoherences appearing in his theory, but these sorts of difficulty may not be best illuminated by primarily historical or scholarly study, for such study may only unearth more instances (in either Hume’s work or that of his contemporaries) of the same underlying errors. If so, light is more likely to be shed by *philosophical* investigation of the issues, which can aim to identify the impact of those errors and to reveal the insights towards which Hume himself might have been groping. Bennett claims that Hume’s treatment of the issue of meaning is a case in point. And given the clear inadequacy of his theory of ideas for dealing with the issue, and the difficulties which arise for him as a result, this claim deserves serious consideration.

Fortunately the defects of the theory of ideas have relatively little impact in the *Enquiry*, which omits most of the dubious applications that occupy so much of the *Treatise* (e.g. concerning our ideas of space and time) and explicitly brackets others (e.g. the treatment of belief in *Enquiry* V. ii). The one important remaining aspect of the theory, central to Hume’s discussion of meaning, is what is commonly known as his *Copy Principle*, that ‘all our ideas or more feeble perceptions [i.e. thoughts] are copies of our impressions or more lively ones [i.e. sensations or feelings]’ (*E* 19). This principle, which Hume presents as a refinement of Locke’s denial of innate ideas (*E* 22 n.), is destined to be invoked just once in the *Enquiry*, when in Section VII (*E* 62 ff.) it initiates his search for

² Stock objections to the theory of ideas include the following: (a) Much of our thinking is not even accompanied by mental images (consider the thought that ‘prudence is a virtue’). (b) Even when our thinking is accompanied by imagery, it is not constituted by that imagery, as shown by the fact that one and the same image can accompany many different thoughts. (c) *Understanding* cannot be a matter of mental imagery, for it involves communication with others, and mental imagery would not be communicable. (d) Mental actions (e.g. seeing that some tree is tall, thinking or believing that it is tall, wondering whether it is tall) are to be distinguished not in terms of their objects, but in terms of the mind’s *activity* and *attitudes*; the mind is not just a passive spectator of ‘perceptions’ on a mental stage. The third of these objections plays a major role in Bennett’s essay, and the last in Broackes’s, which also usefully spells out objections in the spirit of (a) and (b), and discusses at some length the particular difficulties in Hume’s theory arising from its attempt to account for the different mental attitudes in terms of variation along a single dimension of ‘force and vivacity’ (see below pp. 191–5).

³ A clear example of this is Hume’s treatment of general terms in *Treatise* I. i. 7, which sees their meaning as determined not only by the particular idea which accompanies them on each occasion, but also by an ‘attendant custom, reviv’d by the general or abstract term’ which brings to mind other associated ideas when reasoning using the term (*T* 21).

the impression of *necessary connexion*, in order to reveal that concept's meaning. Such use of the Copy Principle, as a tool for examining and clarifying the meaning of words in terms of their 'empirical cashability', implies a form of 'meaning-empiricism' which is far more persuasive than the uncharacteristically poor arguments of Section II by which Hume attempts to establish the Copy Principle itself. Bennett suggests, therefore, that this may be one of those cases in which Hume is best seen as groping towards a genuine philosophical insight *despite* the inappropriate idiom of the theory of ideas in which he develops and expresses it. This insight concerns the impossibility of a term's having meaning unless it can in some way be connected with experience, and its true justification has nothing to do with mental imagery, but derives from the need for public criteria to ground understanding of linguistic communication. Bennett's reconstruction of Hume's theory of meaning on this basis may indeed superficially be highly anachronistic, but if he is right, it articulates a genuine Humean insight, and one which can potentially relieve his philosophy in the *Enquiry* of its most significant dependence on an indefensible theory of ideas.

HUME'S SCEPTICAL DOUBTS CONCERNING INDUCTION (MILLICAN)

The fifth aim of this volume is to clarify the interpretation of Hume's own thoughts as expressed in the *Enquiry*, by reference to appropriate scholarly and philosophical considerations. This implies a combination of both historical and philosophical perspectives, which indeed is shown in most of the papers in the collection, albeit in very different proportions according to their subject-matter (from Stewart's at one extreme, to Bennett's at the other). No significant interpretative issues arise in the short Section III of the *Enquiry*, and nor does it contain anything of great philosophical interest.⁴ So the next essay in the collection moves straight on to Section IV, and to Hume's most famous argument, for the conclusion that factual inference to the unobserved, now generally called *induction*, 'is not founded on reason'. The interpretation of this conclusion is highly controversial, and has profound implications for the understanding of Hume's philosophy as a whole. The principal aim of my paper (Chapter 4) is therefore interpretative, but much of it is devoted to teasing out the logical structure of Hume's reasoning, which strongly constrains the range of plausible

⁴ However, the principles of association will merit discussion in the context of Hume's theory of belief, as in the papers by Martin Bell and Justin Broackes (see below, pp. 176–80, 190–1). Looking ahead to the other two sections of the *Enquiry* which do not have essays devoted specifically to them, Section VI (on probability) is discussed in the two papers on miracles, by Don Garrett and David Owen (Chs. 11 and 12), while Section IX (on the reason of animals) is touched on both by Garrett and by my own paper in Chapter 4.

readings. In particular, I claim that his argument structure makes no sense if ‘reason’ is understood here in the deductivist way ascribed by most previous generations of commentators, and his argument seems equally incoherent if ‘reason’ is understood in what is now a more fashionable way, as our natural inferential faculty.⁵ Instead my own favoured interpretation takes ‘reason’ to signify a supposed faculty of rational *perception*, taken for granted by almost all previous philosophers, but here undermined. Hume’s famous argument thus turns out to be radically sceptical, in denying that any of our factual inferences to the unobserved are founded on any perception of evidential connexions. Instead, they are founded on ‘custom’, a non-rational instinct (introduced in Section V Part i), which leads us unreflectively to expect inductive uniformity, so that our presumed evidential connexions are ‘read into the world’ rather than being ‘read off it’ (a Copernican reversal intimately entwined with Hume’s theory of causation). The paper then sketches how this ‘Sceptical Solution’ to Section IV’s ‘Sceptical Doubts’ is able to provide the basis for an inductive science which can discriminate between good and bad factual reasoning: having identified the true foundation of such reasoning, consistency with that foundation then becomes the appropriate norm (and the Humean notion of ‘reason’ is accordingly reinterpreted). Thus, paradoxically, inductive scepticism paves the way for a thoroughly inductive Humean science.

Although most of the paper is closely focused on Hume’s main argument of Section IV, other relatively self-standing topics discussed in particular sections, which may be useful for independent reference, include Descartes’s and Locke’s ‘perceptual’ view of reason (§2), Hume’s notion of apriority (§4.1), the senses in which he is, and is not, a ‘causal realist’ (§9.2), and his understanding of ‘reasoning concerning matter of fact’ (§3.1) and of ‘demonstration’ (§7.1).

*BELIEF AND INSTINCT IN HUME’S
FIRST ENQUIRY (BELL)*

The sixth and final aim of the collection is to identify and account for substantial changes between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*. This is of clear significance for the interpretation of both works, since it can shed light on Hume’s motivation for including, or omitting, the relevant material. But it may be of particular additional interest to those many students and professional philosophers who

⁵ This is the way in which ‘reason’ is interpreted by Don Garrett in his book *Cognition and Commitment in Hume’s Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), from which his paper on miracles in this volume (Ch. 11) is taken. That paper briefly outlines Garrett’s view of Hume on induction and explains in detail how he takes it to fit with Hume’s general epistemological stance. But to fill out his interpretation as an alternative to my own, he has developed the two most relevant sections from his book chapter entitled ‘Reason and Induction’ to provide an appendix to Chapter 11.

are already familiar with the *Treatise*, not least because such experience can make it very hard indeed to read the *Enquiry* with fresh eyes, and to keep in mind exactly what Hume has said there and what he has not. Martin Bell's essay (Chapter 5) bears on a central topic to which this particularly applies, namely Hume's theory of belief.

In the *Treatise* Hume's account of causal inference based on custom had given a unified answer to two different questions: why do such inferences lead to the particular beliefs that they do, and what is the nature of belief? In the *Enquiry*, however, the two issues are separated, with custom being dealt with in Section V Part i and Hume's theory of the nature of belief in Section V Part ii. Moreover the latter is explicitly bracketed, as being intended only for readers who 'love the abstract sciences' (*E* 47). Bell's paper seeks to explain these changes in a principled way (and thus implicitly contests the relatively crude hypothesis, espoused in my own Chapter 1, that Hume had simply lost confidence in the details of his associationist psychology and anyway now saw these details as relatively unimportant).

Hume's theory of belief in the *Treatise* centres on the conveying of force and vivacity from a present impression to an associated idea, through an associative relation set up by the observation of a constant conjunction. Thus his explanation of causal inference in terms of custom, and his account of the nature of belief in terms of the vivacity of ideas, go hand in hand. There is, however, a problem with the latter account, because causation is just one of three associative relations capable of conveying vivacity to ideas (the others being resemblance and contiguity, as at *E* 24), so if Hume's theory were correct, it would seem anomalous that of these three relations only causation can generate belief. Hume grapples with this problem in *Treatise* I. iii. 9, moving away somewhat from his initial simple definition of belief in terms of force and vivacity, and explaining how it involves the incorporation of ideas into two systems of *realities*, one involving ideas of the memory and senses, and the other involving ideas that arise from custom (*T* 108). In the Appendix to the *Treatise* (published with Book III in 1740) he dilutes still further his commitment to the 'force and vivacity' definition, describing belief as a *feeling* which 'I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity* . . .', but which is in fact indefinable—it can be understood only by experiencing it, and 'its true and proper name is *belief*, which is a term that every one sufficiently understands in common life' (*T* 629). He reproduces this account, largely verbatim, in the *Enquiry* (*E* 48–50), and thus avoids his earlier problem since he is now able to assert, without implying any associationist anomalies, that we observe this feeling to arise only from causation (*E* 53–4). All this, however, leaves a theoretical gap, since there is no evident connexion between the indefinable feeling arising from custom, and what it is to conceive something as *really existing*.

Conception of this kind is automatically generated by the impressions of the memory and senses, and so the gap can be filled by re-emphasizing the link (present both in Hume's initial associative account, and in *Treatise* I. iii. 9) between belief and such impressions. Thus our instinctive tendency to ascribe reality to what we perceive (described later at *E* 151–2) provides a basis for explaining why our other fundamental instinct, to make inferences by custom, also issues in real belief (cf. *E* 45–6). However, the instinctive tendency to trust our senses cannot stand up to detailed critical scrutiny: as Hume discovers in *Treatise* I. iv. 2 and I. iv. 4 (echoed at *E* 151–5), deep analysis of our sensory beliefs leads to the conclusion that not only do they lack any ultimate rational foundation (just like our inductive beliefs), but more seriously, they are incoherent and therefore false. An unbelievable sceptical paradox such as this would be completely unhelpful to Hume's purposes in the *Enquiry*, particularly given his desire to make this work (unlike the *Treatise*) suitable for a general audience. Bell's suggestion is that this change in his literary aims explains Hume's reluctance to take his readers into the murky foundations of his theory of belief, and hence the bracketing of the second part of Section V.

HUME, BELIEF, AND PERSONAL IDENTITY
(*BROACKES*)

Justin Broackes's essay (Chapter 6) also deals with Hume's theory of belief, but from a very different perspective. Where Bell sees Hume as bracketing the details of his theory for strategic reasons, to avoid getting into sceptical complications concerning the external world that would perplex and repel the general reader, Broackes sees the bracketing as a symptom of philosophical dissatisfaction arising from a continuing instability in the theory, largely due to Hume's difficulty of making it consistent with his views on personal identity and the ontological independence of perceptions. Thus both Bell and Broackes attribute key features of Hume's theory of belief to the lingering effect of sceptical theses developed in the *Treatise* but either downplayed in the *Enquiry* (as in the case of the external world) or omitted entirely (as in the case of personal identity).⁶ In developing these claims, moreover, both papers examine interesting and important links between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, many of which

⁶ Along with personal identity, there is one other major sceptical argument that Hume drops from the *Enquiry*, namely, his radical 'scepticism with regard to reason' of *Treatise* I. iv. 1. In this case, however, there is clear evidence of his having changed his view of its significance, since at the beginning of *Enquiry* XII he dismisses such 'antecedent . . . universal doubt . . . of our very faculties' as incurably futile (*E* 149–50). Moreover, this sceptical argument never resurfaces in any other of Hume's writings (unlike the argument about personal identity, which is at least echoed at *D* 159, though without stressing any radical ontological implications).

have a significance far wider than the specific interpretations of Hume's theory of belief that they are here used to support.

Most of Broackes's paper is devoted to exploring a number of apparent inconsistencies in Hume's account of belief as it developed over time, and detects three distinct views competing for attention. Belief is variously defined as:

- (A) a steady and vivid *idea*,
- (B) a steady and vivid *conception of an idea*,
- (C) a *feeling* (of steadiness and vivacity) annexed to an idea.

Of these only the first is entirely in the spirit of the theory of ideas, according to which the activity of the mind is determined purely by its contents, with these contents taking the form of 'perceptions'. But Hume freely combines this first view with both the second and the third, without ever explicitly acknowledging the tensions between them. One major pressure to renounce view (A) comes from the difficulty of accounting for belief as a mere variation in 'force and vivacity', where this is understood as the very same characteristic of perceptions that distinguishes impressions from ideas. View (B) provides far more flexibility, in allowing for variation along two dimensions—the level of vivacity of the perception itself, and the vivacity of the mind's conception of it (so now the mere contemplation of a very vivid idea can be clearly distinguished from the firm belief in a dull one). Often in the *Treatise* Hume expresses himself in a way that seems ambivalent between (A) and (B), though there is at least one passage (at *T* 105–6) that can be interpreted only in the latter way, and both seem to play a role in his thinking. However, in the Appendix to the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, view (C) comes to prominence (though (A) and (B) still remain in the background). (C) has its own difficulties, not least because the 'feeling' to which it refers should presumably itself be a perception of the mind, and yet Hume's arguments seem to rule out its being either an idea or an impression. In discussing these issues Hume seems to be driven back towards view (B), with the 'feeling' being interpreted not as an independent perception, but as an aspect of the mind's conception of the idea concerned.

Of the three views Broackes identifies, (A) and (C) seem subject to major objections of which Hume was at least to some extent aware, and his discussions of both seem to lead him in the direction of (B), which is philosophically by far the strongest. Why, then, did Hume not adopt (B) wholeheartedly, rather than continuing to vacillate between all three? Broackes suggests that what lies behind this is Hume's conviction in the ontological independence and self-sufficiency of perceptions, and his rejection of what he took to be the unacceptable Cartesian notion of a mind standing in distinct relation to, and thus separate from, the ideas which it conceives. If Broackes is right, then the discus-

sion of belief in the *Enquiry* evinces Hume's continuing commitment, either consciously or unconsciously, to some major metaphysical themes of the *Treatise* that make no explicit appearance in the later work.⁷

THE IDEA OF NECESSARY CONNEXION (CRAIG)

With the three essays by Edward Craig, Galen Strawson, and Simon Blackburn we move on to the most prominent interpretative debate in recent Hume studies—whether Hume is, or is not, a 'causal realist'—presented from the point of view of three of its major participants. Craig's paper (Chapter 7) sets the scene for this debate by explaining the background and general shape of Hume's discussion of causation in *Enquiry* VII, but in doing so he develops a conception of Hume's purposes that fits very comfortably with the 'New Hume' favoured by Strawson and other proponents of the causal realist interpretation,⁸ but far less comfortably with the 'positivist' Hume beloved of the twentieth-century analytic tradition.

The first chapter of Craig's book *The Mind of God and the Works of Man*⁹ argues that the 'dominant philosophy' of the early modern period was the idea that man is made in the image of God and thus has a semi-divine status above nature rather than just part of it. The second chapter, from parts of which Craig's paper here has been adapted, then presents an interpretation of Hume's philosophy which takes this 'Image of God' doctrine to be his primary target. Although the doctrine can be seen as influencing thought over a wide range, including the philosophy of perception, action, and morality, its most significant impact was to inspire a rationalistic conception of human reason, viewing this as our pre-eminent faculty which radically distinguishes us from the animals and gives us a form of insight which in its essential nature, if not its extent, approximates to the transparent perception attributed to God. The prevalence of such a conception can explain why intuition and

⁷ Bell's and Broackes's discussions, along with my own Chapter 1, thus present three quite different perspectives on the differences between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, focusing on belief and its relation to scepticism. Bell sees the changes as primarily strategic, to avoid leading Hume's intended audience down paths that they would find uncongenial and off-putting. Broackes too sees the underlying fundamentals as broadly the same in both works, though suggesting that Hume has lost confidence in the details of his theory of belief without being able to correct it. I see the *Enquiry* as fundamentally different in orientation from the *Treatise*, so that the details of that theory cease to matter, and I also speculate (in n. 37) that Hume's underlying metaphysics may have radically changed through loss of commitment to his Separability Principle. All three papers make clear why interpretative controversies such as these can only properly be approached in the context of an overall understanding of Hume's intentions.

⁸ Another who deserves particular mention alongside Craig and Strawson is John Wright, whose book *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), ch. 4, first brought the 'sceptical realist' interpretation of Hume to prominence.

⁹ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

demonstration—the most plausible examples of transparent rational perception—were so widely taken to be the paradigms of reason’s activity, and this, Craig suggests, somewhat justifies a tendency on Hume’s part to view reason in a ‘deductivist’ manner (a tendency commonly attributed to him, though contested in my own Chapter 4, as remarked above).¹⁰

Against this background Craig sees Hume’s main concern in Section VII as being unambiguously epistemological, to undermine the rationalist claim that our reason gives us insight into causal relations, and to replace this with a naturalistic conception of causal reasoning based on the instinctive associative mechanisms of the ‘imagination’. This has the implication that the real point of most of Hume’s arguments is to re-emphasize the conclusions of Sections IV and V, even though his investigation is here superficially presented very differently, not as an enquiry into the foundation of our causal inferences, but instead as an analytical quest into the origin (and hence the nature) of our idea of necessary connexion. Ostensibly this analytic strand may indeed dominate, but in practice epistemology plays the major role, as becomes evident from the examination of Hume’s arguments at *E* 63–9, where he considers and rejects in turn a variety of possible sources for the idea in question. In each case Hume’s form of argument is the same: some impression is proposed as the source of our idea of necessity (in accordance with his Copy Principle), but that impression is then summarily rejected on the ground that it cannot yield a priori knowledge of the resulting effect. But despite the confidence with which Hume repeatedly wields this argument, its basis is extremely unclear, for Hume nowhere explains why he feels entitled to assume that a perception can count as an impression of necessary connexion only if it is such as to sanction an a priori causal inference. Even more confusing, when Hume eventually discovers, at *E* 75, what he takes to be the genuine impression of necessary connexion (namely, the ‘customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant’), it apparently itself falls foul of the very ‘apriority’ criterion which he has used to dismiss all other contenders, though he mysteriously completely fails to remark on this.¹¹ Craig sees this ‘muddle’ as symptomatic of a general confusion

¹⁰ Craig’s thesis that the dominant notion of reason was modelled on the ideal of divine insight can stand independently of his suggestion regarding Hume’s deductivist tendency. Although the thesis is obviously weakened to some extent if rational insight is allowed to be fallible (and hence less plausibly Godlike), it could potentially derive strong support from evidence for the ubiquity of the Image of God doctrine in other fields, such as Craig provides in the first chapter of his book. There is much interesting work waiting to be done on the historical development of the concept of reason since ancient times, and the extent to which it was affected at different periods by religious thinking.

¹¹ Since this is one of the most perplexing pieces of argumentation in the entire *Enquiry*, it is worth noting that there are possible rationalizations which might reduce the impression of confusion (Blackburn also makes some relevant comments, mentioned later). For example, perhaps Hume is taking for granted that the impression of necessary connexion must be an impression of *connexion*, and must therefore provide some link between ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ (cf. *E* 77 n.). No such link is perceivable in

between analysis and epistemology, resulting from a partly unrecognized conflict between, on the one hand, a conventional Lockean emphasis on the nature and origin of our ideas (which initially encouraged Hume to present his work as building on the theory of ideas) and, on the other hand, Hume's own far more fundamentally sceptical interests (which repeatedly led him to give his overtly analytical arguments an underlying epistemological thrust).

Hume's discussion of the idea of necessary connexion is rounded off with two 'definitions of cause', in which he has traditionally been understood to be spelling out the nature of the idea of cause (and hence the meaning of the word 'cause') by reference to the impression of necessary connexion which he has finally tracked down. The two definitions, which seem to define causation in objects as mere regularity, have long been a source of interpretative debate because they do not seem to be equivalent, and this apparent confusion provides further grist for Craig's mill. The final part of his paper, in line with his general theme, challenges the assumption that Hume's notion of a definition is to be understood in the traditional analytical manner, and argues that the two 'definitions' are best seen instead as attempts to specify the conditions under which a belief in a causal connexion arises, with 'one concentrating on the outward situation, the other on the state of the believer's mind that those outward facts induce' (p. 227). Hume's definitions thus amount to a summing up of his discussion of the epistemology of causation rather than the outcome of a piece of conceptual analysis, even though his explicit approach to the problem via his theory of ideas might naturally lead a modern reader to expect the latter. Craig concludes his paper by hinting that this lesson applies more generally: even when Hume makes claims in explicit analytical or ontological language, it is often more illuminating to read these claims epistemologically because that is where his true interests lie. So when he presents his definitions of 'cause', or states that the self is a bundle of perceptions (another example explored in detail in Craig's book), these are best read not as claims about what 'cause' *means*, or what selves *really are*, but instead as claims about causes, or selves, 'so far as [these] can concern, or be known to, or pointfully investigated by, the human mind' (p. 228). It is this point of view which underlies the interpretation of Hume as a 'sceptical realist'.

any one instance, and the point of Hume's 'apriority' criterion may be to *prove* this, on the ground that perception can give no certain knowledge of causal relations. (This supposed 'proof' appears to rest on the assumption that a priori or perceptual evidence should yield certainty if it yields any link whatever, but ascription of such an assumption to Hume is not gratuitous for it seems to play a role in his argument concerning induction.) Thus the crucial difference with Hume's own candidate for the impression of necessity would be that it arises from experienced repetition (*E* 74–6) and is in that sense a posteriori. It is able to confer the required link between 'cause' and 'effect' by reference to this past experience, and hence is absolved from any need to pass the 'apriority' criterion.

DAVID HUME: OBJECTS AND POWER (STRAWSON)

Galen Strawson's paper (Chapter 8) is a forthright presentation of the 'New Hume' sceptical realist interpretation, marshalling the relevant arguments from his book *The Secret Connexion*¹² with a particular focus on the *Enquiry*, which Strawson takes to be both Hume's authoritative statement, and far more clearly committed to causal realism than the *Treatise*. Strawson has also added some responses to criticisms of his book made in Blackburn's paper in this volume, so that the two papers together give a good understanding of the ongoing debate surrounding this contentious issue.

Strawson begins from the kind of distinction emphasized by Craig, between an epistemological claim:

(E) All we can ever know of causation is regular succession,

which Hume accepts, and a positive ontological claim:

(O) All that causation actually is, in the objects, is regular succession,

which is easily confused with the former, but which Strawson takes Hume to deny. He therefore ascribes to Hume a belief in some form of causation in objects which is more than regular succession (capitalized 'Causation' for short). Hume has traditionally been presumed to make the move from (E) to (O) by means of the theory of ideas, but Strawson, like Craig, casts doubt on this, adding some new points to those already considered above. He starts by arguing that a definite claim such as (O) is 'violently at odds with Hume's scepticism . . . with respect to knowledge claims' (p. 236). The *denial* of (O) might also seem to conflict with scepticism, but Strawson points out that this only applies if the denial is a claim to *knowledge*: there is no inconsistency in a 'strict sceptic' supposing that we have a 'natural belief' in Causation which falls short of knowledge.

Strawson then proceeds to take on the traditional assumption that as far as Hume is concerned, the theory of ideas renders the notion of Causation unintelligible (and therefore incoherent and unrealizable) because there is no impression from which any such idea could be derived. Here Strawson invokes a notion from Hume's discussion of the idea of external existence (*Treatise* I. ii. 6) to argue that his principles allow us to have a 'relative idea' of Causation as 'that in reality in virtue of which reality is regular in the way that it is' (p. 240). Such 'relative ideas', Strawson suggests, fall short of the 'positively contentful' ideas that are copies of impressions, but they have the considerable virtue of

¹² (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

being able to succeed in referring without the requirement for any corresponding impression to give them content. Thus Hume is able to maintain a belief involving the relative idea of 'Causation in objects' without there being an impression of any such thing. On this interpretation, therefore, his investigation into the idea of 'cause' in *Enquiry* VII, with its accompanying search for the impression from which that idea is derived, does not give an analysis of what we mean by 'cause', but simply shows that our idea of it as something in objects is 'merely relative' rather than 'positively contentful'.

Strawson also presents a selection of quotations from the *Enquiry* and the *Dialogues* to illustrate his claim that Hume is in fact a believer in Causation. Though many of these are controversial in detail,¹³ they together add up to a very substantial case for supposing that Hume believes in some sort of 'hidden powers'—powers that exist but of which we are ignorant—and Strawson argues strongly that such powers cannot be interpreted as mere undiscovered regularities, but must involve Causation that outruns regular succession. He finds particular support for this view in Hume's comments on his two definitions of cause, where he describes our causal ideas as 'so imperfect . . . that it is impossible to give any just definition of *cause*, except what is drawn from something extraneous and foreign to it' (*E* 76), and goes on to imply that the specific nature of this 'inconvenience' is that the definitions cannot 'point out that circumstance in the cause, which gives it a connexion with its effect' (*E* 77). Appealing both to Craig's discussion of the definitions, and to a contemporary treatise by Burke, Strawson interprets Hume's definitions not as any sort of attempt to give the *meaning* of 'cause', but rather as a record of 'human understanding's best take on . . . the nature of the phenomenon' (p. 255).

To sum up, Strawson's strategy can be seen as falling into two parts. First, he aims to weaken the case for the traditional interpretation by casting doubt on Hume's strict adherence to the theory of ideas which seems to make the idea of Causation impossible. Part of this weakening involves appeal to a theory of 'relative' ideas which, though it does not appear in the *Enquiry*, has the merit of having played a parallel role in the *Treatise* in regard to the belief in external objects. The second part of Strawson's strategy is then to produce evidence, both from the nature of Hume's scepticism and from the particular passages in which he expresses it, to indicate that he was in fact a believer in Causation. Before making a brief further comment on this overall case, I shall consider a paper whose main object is to oppose it.

¹³ Those from *Enquiry* IV and V are particularly disputable because of the footnote at *E* 33 n., as explained in §9.2 of Chapter 4, while those from the *Dialogues* can obviously be interpreted as expressing only the views of Hume's characters rather than his own.

HUME ON THICK CONNEXIONS (BLACKBURN)

Simon Blackburn's paper (Chapter 9) is in direct response to Craig and Strawson, arguing that Hume is not a causal realist, though the position that Blackburn takes him to have espoused is not traditional positivism but rather a form of 'anti-realism' or 'quasi-realism' (the latter being the term that Blackburn coins for his own position as developed in his book *Essays in Quasi-Realism*¹⁴ from which this paper is taken). On this account, the rejection of genuinely objective causal powers in objects, as traditionally ascribed to Hume, need not imply either the renouncing of causal language and thought, or its positivist redefinition in explicitly non-realist terms. Blackburn's quasi-realist instead aspires to continue speaking and thinking in much the same ways as the naive objectivist, but without presuming that such objectivist language presupposes a realist metaphysics. The quasi-realist project as a whole thus aims to vindicate our attachment to truth claims and factual language in a variety of fields (e.g. morality, intentionality, modality, and probability, as well as causation) where sceptical enquiry in a Humean spirit has cast doubt on their supposed metaphysical foundations.

Blackburn's first object of attack is the conception of 'relative' ideas attributed to Hume by Strawson (and, in his book, by Craig). He sees Hume as having a very dismissive view of such 'ideas', even in the context of *Treatise* I. ii. 6 where he invokes them, and as denying their ability to provide a notion of sufficient objectivity and perception-independence to ground realism. Strawson's paper responds at some length to this attack (pp. 243–5), and the points made on both sides illustrate the genuine difficulty of establishing on textual grounds even what the *Treatise* account of the relative idea of external existence amounts to, let alone how far Hume would have been prepared to deploy or develop a parallel account in the service of causal realism.

Blackburn then goes on to draw a distinction between two different notions of causal realism, which he thinks Strawson somewhat conflates under the single term 'Causation'. The first is the idea of a causal 'nexus' between two events, meaning some kind of dependency or connexion between them which is more than mere regular succession, and which makes it the case that when the first happens the second must follow. The second notion is that of a 'straitjacket', something which guarantees that the causal order of the universe will remain the same, so that the same causal nexuses which applied in the past will continue to apply in the future. Hume's argument concerning induction seems to distinguish clearly (at *E* 36–8) between a nexus and a straitjacket, showing how the supposition of 'secret powers' (i.e. hidden nexuses) behind our past observa-

¹⁴ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

tions does nothing to indicate that those powers will remain the same (i.e. does not provide a straitjacket). Nevertheless, Blackburn suggests that the distinction is in some respects unstable, and that some of the oddities of Hume's argumentation at *E* 63–9 in Section VII (earlier remarked on by Craig) may have arisen from his losing track of it in that context. But even if so, Hume's use of the nexus–straitjacket distinction in Section IV at least partially draws the sting of one argument which featured quite prominently in Strawson's book, that without Causation the uniformity of the universe would appear to be a 'pure fluke'. For it indicates that *nothing* could account for uniformity over time or (in Blackburn's words) 'smooth away inductive vertigo'—if this implies a continuing outrageous fluke, then it is one that, on Hume's principles, we are simply stuck with.¹⁵

Blackburn sees Hume's main interest in causation as being to refute the idea that we could ever apprehend a straitjacketing fact, or make any sense of what such a fact would be. It even seems dubious to attempt to form a 'relative' notion of such a fact, especially in the light of Hume's theory of abstract ideas which requires that we can form a general idea only if we have specific examples to build on. Blackburn is less hostile to the idea of a nexus, and sketches an account whereby such an idea, of a 'thick' connexion between events, could naturally arise when, after the observation of constant conjunctions, we come to make predictions on the assumption that those conjunctions will continue. He sees a close parallel here between Hume's views on causation and on morality—in each case, our apprehension of neutral facts arouses certain inclinations and passions, which we then have a tendency to objectify. Blackburn is therefore confident that attacks on causal anti-realism (e.g. the claim that it cannot account for our use of realist language) can be deflected by responses that are already familiar from the moral sphere. He ends by suggesting that the loss of realism about causation is far less serious than might be expected, for the inferential behaviour of a 'Bare Humean', who has no such belief, could be effectively indistinguishable from that of the rest of us.

The debate between Craig, Strawson, and Blackburn has brought to light many interesting points about Hume's theory of causation, and will enrich the understanding of anyone who studies it. But the gladiatorial context of the Strawson–Blackburn confrontation in particular can be misleading, masking a number of important respects in which their positions need not be so very far apart. Strawson emphasizes Hume's commitment to powers and forces in nature of which we are ignorant, and draws the conclusion that he is a causal

¹⁵ In his paper Strawson acknowledges that Causation cannot play the role of soothing inductive vertigo (n. 36), though apparently he still sees it as explaining regularities and thus reducing the 'fluke' which a regularity account would imply (cf. n. 33 and 35).

realist. Blackburn sees causal realism as typically involving a commitment to the dubious notion of a ‘straitjacket’, unequivocally rejected by Hume, but sees him as comfortable with a ‘nexus’ between events if this is interpreted as a quasi-realist objectification of our inferential practices. However Strawson appears to agree that a straitjacket is not to be had, and fully recognizes Hume’s insistence that our only ‘positively contentful’ idea of causation is derived from our tendency to make inductive inferences. Meanwhile Blackburn would surely be happy to allow (cf. his note 14) that the quasi-realist account which he favours must, if it is to reflect Hume’s repeated endorsements of Newtonian science, accommodate the idea of *quantitative* powers and forces in nature which are at least in some sense ‘out there to be discovered’ (as, for example, when we experiment to find out ‘whether the force of a body in motion be as its velocity, or the square of its velocity’; *E* 77 n.). ‘Where then, cry I to both these antagonists, is the subject of your dispute?’ (*D* 218). Maybe this debate can be largely resolved, while accommodating the insights of both sides, by paying due regard to the intended role of Hume’s notion of force, power, or necessity within quantitative empirical science (for a sketch along these lines, and some relevant quotations, see §9.2 of Chapter 4, in which I discuss *Enquiry* IV, a section whose true relevance to this debate has perhaps not been sufficiently explored).

HUME ON LIBERTY AND NECESSITY (BOTTERILL)

George Botterill’s essay (Chapter 10) turns to Section VIII of the *Enquiry*, and aims to clarify the arguments presented in that section, to distinguish them clearly from those in the corresponding section of the *Treatise*, and to set the record straight regarding Hume’s contribution to the ‘compatibilist’ tradition. Philosophers in this tradition, since Hobbes, have argued for the compatibility of the *Principle of Determinism* (Hume’s ‘doctrine of necessity’, that all events are entirely the result of prior causes) with the *Free Will Assumption* (Hume’s ‘doctrine of liberty’, that people have the capacity to act freely and are therefore morally responsible for their actions). The most popular argument for their compatibility has been the *Contrastive Argument*, which maintains that although the concept of freedom indeed involves a contrast between actions that are freely performed and those that are not, nevertheless the contrast here is not the same as that between free actions and *caused* ones, and hence there is no contradiction between causation and freedom. One of Botterill’s principal conclusions is that Hume does not himself advance this Contrastive Argument, although he has frequently been misrepresented as doing so, not least by fellow members of the compatibilist tradition.

Botterill begins, however, with the differences between Hume’s accounts of ‘liberty and necessity’ in *Treatise* II. iii. 1–2 and in *Enquiry* VIII. What he calls the

‘striking difference’ is that in the *Treatise* Hume advocates the ‘doctrine of necessity’ and denies the ‘doctrine of liberty’, whereas in the *Enquiry* he presents an overtly compatibilist ‘reconciling project’ to unite the two. But behind this difference lie deeper similarities, the first of which is that in pressing the case for the doctrine of necessity, in both works, his account of the idea of necessity (from *Treatise* I. iii. 14 and *Enquiry* VII) plays a starring role, which Hume sees as his most distinctive contribution to the issue.¹⁶ This account implies that we have no notion of necessity beyond observed regularity and our tendency to make inferences accordingly; but both regularity and inference, Hume argues, are as applicable to human affairs as they are to the physical world. Hence when we encounter what appear to be irregularities in people’s behaviour, we should attribute these to ‘the secret operation of contrary causes’ (*E* 87), just as we would with irregularities in the behaviour of physical objects. Botterill draws attention to a number of problems with Hume’s arguments for the doctrine of necessity, perhaps the most serious of which arise from his apparent wish to establish that the doctrine applies in particular to the connexion between motives and actions. Such *psychological determinism* seems to rule out the secret operation of purely *physical* causes in determining our behaviour, and hence falls far short of what could reasonably be established by any analogy between physical science and human affairs.¹⁷

Fortunately the deficiencies in Hume’s arguments for the doctrine of necessity do not undermine his contribution to compatibilism, for a compatibilist need not be committed to the truth of determinism. Moving on, then, to the ‘doctrine of liberty’, Botterill notes that the ‘striking difference’ between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* is more apparent than real, since in the former Hume takes the doctrine to imply that our actions are uncaused—Botterill calls this liberty₁—whereas in the latter he interprets the doctrine as stating that we have ‘a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will’ (*E* 95)—liberty₂. Both of these are to be distinguished from liberty₃, the absence of unwelcome restrictions affecting our choice of action, which in the *Treatise* Hume refers to as ‘liberty of *spontaneity* . . . the most common sense of the word; and [the only] species of liberty, which it concerns us to preserve’

¹⁶ This role is not mentioned in the discussion of Hume’s causal realism above, nor in any of the three papers devoted to that topic, though it is arguable (Ch. 1, pp. 58–9) that it provides a crucial motivation for his discussion of the idea of necessity, and in particular for his desire to encapsulate the results of that discussion in the two definitions of ‘cause’.

¹⁷ Hume certainly does not rule out the impact of physical causes in determining our behaviour, and to this extent the term *psychological determinism* might seem infelicitous: ‘A person of an obliging disposition gives a peevish answer: But he has the toothake, or has not dined.’ (*E* 88). But when Hume goes on to say that ‘the conjunction between motives and voluntary actions is as regular and uniform, as that between the cause and effect in any part of nature’, he seems to be implying that physical causes can have such an impact only indirectly, in virtue of affecting our motives.

(*T* 407–8). In both works Hume’s view, if not the language in which he expresses it, is much the same. As we have seen, he denies that we have liberty₁ (which in the *Treatise* he calls ‘liberty of *indifference*’), and he bolsters this denial with an important argument (*T* 410–12 and *E* 97–9) that such indifference, so far from being essential to morality, would actually be incompatible with it (hence morality presupposes the ‘doctrine of necessity’). In the *Enquiry* Hume then points out that we clearly do have liberty₂, which ‘is universally allowed to belong to every one, who is not a prisoner and in chains’ (*E* 95), and he goes on to argue that this too is just as well, because liberty₂ is obviously essential to morality (*E* 99). Regarding liberty₃ Hume says very little in either work, and moreover its well-known mention in the *Treatise*, quoted above (and given far too much emphasis by commentators), occurs only in the context of alleging a confusion between it and liberty₁.

Summing up, Botterill finds virtually no evidence of the traditional Contrastive Argument in either the *Treatise* or the *Enquiry*, and this is to Hume’s credit, for that argument typically involves a conflation between liberty₂ and liberty₃, whose difference from each other is at least as important as the distinction between liberty₁ and liberty₃, which the argument misleadingly emphasizes. Botterill sees Hume’s emphasis, on the other hand, as being in exactly the right place, focusing on liberty₂ or intentional agency (‘what it is about an agent in virtue of which he may be held responsible for his actions’), and arguing that this ‘is not only consistent with those actions being caused, but actually requires them to be caused—by psychological states of the agent’ (p. 299). It is this important argument, that causation is a necessary condition of responsible agency, which constitutes Hume’s major, and very significant, contribution to compatibilism.

HUME ON TESTIMONY CONCERNING MIRACLES (GARRETT)

Don Garrett’s essay (Chapter 11) is an adapted chapter from his book *Cognition and Commitment in Hume’s Philosophy*.¹⁸ It conforms to the general strategy which Garrett follows in that book, of identifying difficulties and controversial issues in the interpretation of Hume, and then giving his own account of how they are to be resolved. Such an approach is particularly helpful in relation to Section X of the *Enquiry*, for here Hume’s arguments are more than usually subject to misunderstanding, not so much because of any special lack of clarity in his writing, but rather because of a perceived fundamental clash between his

¹⁸ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 7.

basic philosophical principles and his case against the credibility of miracles. The clash centres on Hume's attitude to induction and probability, which in *Enquiry IV* is denied any basis in reason, but then in Section X is apparently appealed to as a touchstone of reasonableness. Garrett's interpretation of Hume has the great merit of being able to resolve this clash, and so his paper can usefully be seen not only as a clarification of Hume's views on miracles, but also as a spelling out of an alternative position on induction to that developed in my own paper on Section IV.¹⁹

Garrett identifies six 'apparent inconsistencies' in Hume's discussion of miracles. The first concerns the meaning of 'experience', which sometimes seems to be restricted to that of an individual, but sometimes seems to include reported experiences of others. The second involves Hume's references to 'laws of nature', which are hard to interpret in a way that makes sense of his argument. The third casts doubt on the basis of the distinction between the 'miraculous' and the merely 'marvellous', which Hume uses to rebut a potential objection. The fourth concerns the difficulty of reconciling his talk of 'superior proofs' and 'greater miracles' with passages in which 'proofs' and 'miracles' appear to be defined by reference to an absolute standard. The fifth draws attention to Hume's talk of the 'absolute impossibility' of miracles, which seems hard to square with his views on induction and causation. The sixth and final apparent inconsistency is the most fundamental—having denied that the uniformity of nature has any basis in reason, how can Hume then rely on it to argue against the credibility of miracles?

Garrett's responses to these six difficulties are conveniently collected together near the end of his paper, and it would be inappropriate here to attempt to summarize what effectively amounts to a sophisticated working out of Hume's norms of inductive reasoning. Garrett's intervening discussion covers most of the principal arguments of *Enquiry X*, and although his main emphasis is on Part i, where most of the controversial issues arise, he also usefully outlines the so-called 'a posteriori' arguments of Part ii. Throughout, his focus is on the interpretation of Hume, but the position that emerges is epistemologically rich, and suggestive of further reflections on the central notion of probability. Garrett ends by drawing attention to the most obvious direction that such further reflections might take, towards Bayesian considerations of the sort that provide the topic of the next paper.

¹⁹ To provide further background for this alternative view, an appendix to Garrett's paper contains a development of the two sections from *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, ch. 4, where he presents his own position on induction (most of the rest of that chapter is concerned with the criticism of others' views, mainly the 'deductivist' and 'anti-deductivist' interpretations on which he and I very largely agree, and which are dealt with in a very similar spirit in Chapter 4 of this volume).

*HUME VERSUS PRICE ON MIRACLES AND
PRIOR PROBABILITIES (OWEN)*

David Owen's essay (Chapter 12) examines Hume's argument concerning miracles in a Bayesian light, and finds in the contemporary objections of Richard Price a fascinating anticipation of modern discussions of probability and evidence. Although the paper is not seriously technical, some readers might find it helpful to begin with a brief explanation of Bayes's Theorem.

Suppose that we are considering whether some hypothesis H is true, and that prior to our investigation we take the view that its probability is 0.2—this we call its *prior probability*, and represent by the symbol $P(H)$. We then observe some evidence E which bears on H , and wish to establish what impact that evidence has on the probability of H itself. In order to assess this, we need to have some idea of whether the truth of H would make the occurrence of E more, or less, probable. So let us suppose, for the sake of the illustration, that E has a 0.9 probability of occurring if H is true, but only a 0.1 probability of occurring if H is false; this seems to imply that observation of E should substantially raise the probability of H . But by how much? The answer is given by Bayes's Theorem. Representing the *conditional probability that H is true given that E is true* by the symbol $P(H|E)$, and the other conditional probabilities correspondingly, we have:²⁰

$$P(H|E) = \frac{P(H) \times P(E|H)}{P(H) \times P(E|H) + P(\neg H) \times P(E|\neg H)}$$

and substituting:
$$P(H|E) = \frac{0.2 \times 0.9}{0.2 \times 0.9 + 0.8 \times 0.1} = 0.69.$$

Here an initially improbable hypothesis has been rendered probable through the observation of strongly supporting evidence.

Interpreted in a straightforward Bayesian manner, Hume's argument in Section X Part i claims that the prior probability of any miracle is so low (because it is by definition a violation of a law of nature) that no testimonial evidence could possibly raise its probability above 0.5. Owen gives some illustrations to show that this interpretation is indeed in the spirit of Hume's argument, and broadly yields what he would presumably have seen as appropriate results. The essence of the argument, therefore, is to emphasize the impact of prior probabilities on the assessment of evidence: the more unlikely the hypothesis,

²⁰ The formula is less fearsome than it looks, for its numerator simply represents the prior probability that *both H and E* are true, while the denominator represents the prior probability that E is true. Intuitively this makes sense, because what we seek is the probability that the actual state of affairs lies within the 'logical space' in which *both H and E* are true, *given that* we know it to lie within the 'logical space' in which E is true.

the stronger the evidence must be to establish it. Understood in this way, miracles simply provide a limiting case, in which the hypothesis is maximally unlikely, so that the demands on the evidence cannot be met.

All this might be suspected of anachronism, but in fact Bayes's Theorem was known in Hume's lifetime, and the contemporary objections of Richard Price bear a striking resemblance to points made by Jonathan Cohen in a fairly recent debate concerning the appropriateness of using Bayes's Theorem in the assessment of testimony. Owen's discussion of Price's and Cohen's objections to Hume's Bayesian approach brings to light a number of important points, principal among these being a distinction between *credibility of testimony* on the one hand, and *reliability of the witnesses* on the other. The first of these represents the probability that an event occurred as reported, while the latter represents the probability that the event would be reported truly if it had occurred. Armed with this distinction, Owen defends Hume from Price and Cohen, and sets out to vindicate his argument concerning miracles as a powerful anticipation of modern work in probability theory and cognitive science.

RELIGION: THE USELESS HYPOTHESIS (GASKIN)

John Gaskin's well-known book *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*²¹ provided a comprehensive treatment of Hume's writings on religion, but, given the enormous range of these writings, was able to devote relatively little space to the generally neglected Section XI of the *Enquiry*. In his essay here (Chapter 13) Gaskin fills this gap, both discussing the section in its relation to the rest of the *Enquiry* (Section X in particular), and examining its arguments in detail. He starts by explaining how Sections X and XI are to be read together as two complementary parts of a systematic attack on the Christian apologetic tradition, the first challenging the supposed validation through miracles of the specific Christian revelation, and the second undermining the most popular argument from *natural* theology (i.e. independent of revelation) for belief in a provident God. Gaskin shows that both of these targets were indeed flourishing in the eighteenth century, and for a long time before and since. He then goes on to discuss the significant connexions between Section XI and the other parts of the *Enquiry*, including Section I, which declares Hume's anti-theological purposes, Section IV, which establishes experience as our only guide to matter of fact, and Section XII, which rounds off his attack on natural theology by demolishing the a priori arguments for God's existence.

Section XI itself is focused on the revered Design Argument and is presented as a dialogue, no doubt to enable Hume to distance himself from his most

²¹ (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978, 1988).

dangerous views. Gaskin divides the discussion into four main phases, of which the first is concerned with religious scepticism and toleration (a phase on which considerable biographical light is shed by Stewart's paper, Chapter 2). The second phase presents the main argument of the section—that it is illegitimate to argue first from the world to God and then back again, drawing new conclusions about the world beyond those that can be observed within it. The third phase deals with the effects of belief upon conduct, and adds more argument for religious toleration. The fourth and final phase brings what appears to be a fundamental objection to the Design Argument, that cause and effect relations can be identified only where two *species* of objects have been found conjoined, and hence no causal reasoning can apply in the unique case of the world and its supposed creation.

In his analysis of Hume's discussion Gaskin first concentrates on the epistemological arguments of phases two and four. Regarding the former, he agrees with Hume in emphasizing the unsolvability of the 'Inference Problem of Evil'—the problem of inferring a perfect God from a world which appears to be far from perfect. As Hume points out, this prevents the theist from arguing that the world requires the hypothesis of a perfectly good Creator, and then arguing back from the supposed perfect goodness of that Creator to conclude (for example) that the world must exhibit perfect justice in regions hitherto unknown. Gaskin also sees considerable force in the 'Unique Cause' objection which Hume puts forward in phase four, despite what might seem to be a modern counter-example to this, that modern physicists regularly discuss, and purport to draw rational conclusions about, a unique first event, namely the Big Bang. Gaskin suggests a distinction here between 'internal' and 'external' causes, where an internal cause such as the Big Bang is inferable through extrapolation from known regularities, whereas an external cause such as God is supposed to be entirely different from any known entity, and therefore cannot be so inferred.

Moving on to the practical arguments of phase three, Gaskin shows the close relationship between *Enquiry* XI and some of the central doctrines of the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (he also makes frequent reference to the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*). He ends by stressing the important role of Section XI, and Hume's assault on natural theology, in his philosophy as a whole. So far from being (as some have claimed) a mischievous addition to the *Enquiry* of little philosophical relevance, Section XI is crucial to the work's practical focus and its revolutionary implications.

OF THE ACADEMICAL OR SCEPTICAL
PHILOSOPHY (NORTON)

David Norton's essay (Chapter 14) provides a systematic commentary on Section XII of the *Enquiry*, explaining its themes and aims within the context of

the interpretation of Hume's scepticism that he developed in his book *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician*.²² This interpretation sees Hume as a 'mitigated sceptic', favouring a moderate form of scepticism associated with the later philosophers of Plato's Academy (so-called 'academic scepticism').

Hume's discussion proceeds through a survey of various different forms of scepticism. His first distinction is between *antecedent* and *consequent* scepticism, which depends on whether the doubts about our faculties arise in advance of any examination of their deliverances, or as a result of such an examination. Antecedent scepticism can come in either an extreme or a moderate form, and Hume dismisses the former (e.g. Cartesian) variety while expressing considerable sympathy with the latter. Moderate antecedent scepticism is useful for 'weaning our mind from . . . prejudices', and involves the sort of careful, reflective enquiry which alone can enable us to 'attain a proper stability and certainty in our determinations' (E 150).

Hume then considers various types of consequent scepticism, focusing first on those raising doubts about our senses, including two arguments taken from the *Treatise*. The first of these denies our ability to prove the existence of external objects resembling our perceptions, while the second indicates that our very concept of an external object possessing so-called 'primary qualities' (e.g. physical size and solidity) is dubiously coherent. In Part ii of Section XII Hume moves on to scepticism about our reasoning faculty, distinguishing between reasoning concerning abstract relations of ideas, and that concerning matter of fact and existence. Scepticism about abstract reasoning is mainly centred around the traditional problems of infinite divisibility, whereas scepticism about 'moral' reasoning (i.e. induction), at least in its stronger 'philosophical' form, involves Hume's own famous argument of Section IV. The weaker, 'popular', form of such scepticism (which Hume calls Pyrrhonian) is, however, dismissed as excessive and futile, producing no conviction and being easily overcome by the 'more powerful principles of our nature' (E 159). Even this excessive scepticism can leave a positive result, however, by moderating our inclination to be dogmatic and inspiring us 'with more modesty and reserve' as a consequence of our recognizing 'the strange infirmities of human understanding, even in its most perfect state' (E 161).

Part iii of Section XII goes on to develop further this positive aspect of the sceptical arguments, by suggesting that they can also inspire 'another species of *mitigated* scepticism, which may be of advantage to mankind', namely, 'the limitation of our enquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding' (E 162). It is not so much that this limitation is *supported* by the sceptical arguments, but rather that the arguments will tend to

²² (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

bring it about by moderating our confidence, and thus changing the way we think. Indeed Norton sees this emphasis on the *causal*, rather than purely intellectual, impact of scepticism as being a significant theme in Hume's account. For although Hume (unlike Descartes) takes belief to be involuntary, and hence denies that the sceptical arguments can persuade us of their negative conclusions,²³ nevertheless he also (again unlike Descartes) sees doubt as compatible with belief, so that the incredibility of the sceptical arguments does not rule out their moderating the *nature* of our commitments. Doubt is voluntary even if belief is not, for the form of doubt that Hume advocates is not palpable uncertainty or suspension of belief, but *philosophical* doubt, a matter of attending to the counter-evidence and counter-arguments to what we believe, avoiding precipitate judgement, and taking note of our faculties' limitations. Such doubt does not attempt to destroy our belief, but to mitigate it, and for this reason Norton concludes that Hume's scepticism, unlike the extreme 'Pyrrhonian' varieties criticized in Section XII, is practically viable.

Norton rounds off his paper by linking Section XII of the *Enquiry* with the discussions in various earlier sections, notably IV, X, and XI, and in doing so he effectively sketches an overview of the *Enquiry* and its purposes which has important points of both similarity and difference with those presented in the initial two papers in this volume, by myself and Stewart (Chapters 1 and 2). Norton and I are apparently in agreement in viewing the work as having a greater underlying unity of philosophical purpose than Stewart suggests. But, like Stewart, Norton sees Hume's battle against intolerance as a primary theme of the work (a view which gains considerable circumstantial support from Stewart's historical investigations), whereas I lay more stress on Hume's desire to provide a *rational* basis for distinguishing inductive science from the pseudo-sciences of theology and rationalist metaphysics.²⁴ But perhaps after all such disagreements amount to no more than a difference in emphasis, for all three views undoubtedly contain a substantial element of truth, and what we have seen running right through this volume is an appreciation of the rich variety of themes and arguments that combine to make Hume's *Enquiry* such a rewarding and stimulating work.

²³ Here Norton emphasizes connexions between Hume's theory of belief and Section XII, which was also an important topic of Bell's paper (Ch. 5), though interestingly his emphasis was in the opposite direction.

²⁴ Hence I find significance both in Hume's contrasting attitudes to inductive and sensory scepticism, and also in the final flourish of Section XII, which seems *prima facie* to be problematic for Norton (though he suggests an attractively ingenious interpretation of it as a deliberately ironic response to religious intolerance).

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