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How Hume Became a Sceptic

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Preface

This book tells the story of how Edinburgh philosopher, David Hume, author of one of the most important works in the history of Western philosophy, became a sceptic. The account, which begins with the 1739-40 publication of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, draws together two plausible, but quite different, perspectives on Hume and his philosophy. One of these perspectives is philosophical; the other historical. Considered independently, neither gets at the whole of the truth. However, when taken together, the two perspectives yield a rich account of the development of Hume's philosophy and reputation that merits our careful consideration.

The first account is that Hume earned his reputation as a sceptic when he wrote and published, in 1739-40, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. This book, so it was claimed, rejected widely accepted tenets of metaphysics. Book I, Part IV, for example, treats of scepticism with regard to reason and the senses. There, Hume questions the presuppositions that reason supplies a foundation for causal belief, that the senses give rise to notions of independent, continued, external existences, that the soul is immaterial, and so on. To Hume's early readers, these criticisms seemed to tear at the heart of many belief systems. Indeed, Hume was well aware that a negative assessment might follow the publication of his *Treatise*: "I have expos'd myself to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians; and can I wonder at the insults I must suffer? I have declar'd my dis-approbation of their systems; and can I be surpriz'd, if they shou'd express a hatred of mine and of my person?" (Hume 1978: p.264)

In addition to the above considerations, it should be noted that Book I of the *Treatise* culminates in a discussion of scepticism. There, Hume doubts whether philosophy can ever justify claims to extravagant opinion, and expresses the view that philosophy "can present us only with mild and

moderate sentiments." (Hume 1978: p.272) This tendency to doubtfulness, is, of course, characteristic of the sceptical stance. These and other examples provide ample evidence to show, it would seem, that the content of Hume's *Treatise* is sufficient to explain his coming to be viewed as a sceptic.

According to the second account, Hume's reputation as a sceptic followed upon his effort to secure a position at what was then variously styled 'Edinburgh College', 'Edinburgh University' &c.. Hume's 1744-45 application failed, but the proceedings themselves led to a pronouncement on Hume and his philosophy that had a lasting effect. William Wishart, Principal of the College, wrote a letter alerting Edinburgh's Town Council against the "Heresy, Deism, Scepticism and Atheism" of Hume and his philosophy. (Stewart 2001: p.12) Several influential figures of the day, including Francis Hutcheson, Glasgow's Professor of Moral Philosophy, joined in the assessment. With evaluations such as these, Hume's candidacy would have held little appeal. In the ensuing decades, as subsequent commentators followed the lead of Hume's early critics, his reputation as a sceptic was sealed. On this second account, understanding of the development of Hume's reputation as a sceptic requires considerable attention to the nuances of historical and contextual detail.

While the former account locates the source of Hume's reputation in the philosophical content of his *Treatise*, the latter places emphasis on historical context. Which of the two accounts is correct? Perhaps neither. Indeed, it is arguable that Hume was not really a sceptic at all. For one thing, in the "Advertisement" to his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume distanced himself from the ideas expressed in his "juvenile" *Treatise.* He claimed to have become "*sensible of his error in going to the press too early*" and to have "*cast the whole anew*" so that "*some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression*" were corrected. (Hume 1975: p.2) While it is tempting to pass off these remarks as mere irony, Hume further insists that we are to regard only his *Enquiry* as authoritative, writing that "*Henceforth, the Author desires, that the following Pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.*" (Hume 1975: p.2) In addition to this public disavowal, and to other instances in which Hume appears to soften his philosophical position, there is a case to be made to the effect that, philosophically, Hume was no more a sceptic than empiricist predecessors such as John Locke and George

Berkeley. On this account, Hume is to be viewed as a system builder who just so happened to draw out some obvious implications in the work of his predecessors. Seen in this light, the charge that Hume was merely a convenient scapegoat - someone against whom incendiary charges could be made to stick, and who surfaced at a time and place where a scapegoat was needed - gains in plausibility. Indeed, we may go even further and ask whether Hume's reputation as a sceptic was fairly earned at all? If not, then why continue to litter his statue with construction pylons, beer cans, empty packs of cigarettes, and the like? For, in doing so, we risk repeating an injury to the most maligned and misunderstood of British philosophers.

The object of this book is not to deny that Hume was a sceptic; rather, it is to investigate the historical circumstances surrounding the reception of Hume and his philosophy, with the aim of setting these circumstances against developments in Hume's philosophical position and reputation as a sceptic. As I will show, Hume's considered view, his *mitigated scepticism*, was barely appreciated by his early critics. While this result will not shock readers already familiar with the story of Hume and his philosophy, it is here achieved in a new way. To date, no systematic effort has been made to demonstrate the proximity of the relationship between historical circumstance, Hume's philosophical development, and the legacy of Hume's person and philosophy. The account given here demonstrates the connections between these elements, bring together historical and philosophical details in an extended analysis. Both archival and published records are used to track how Hume was singled out, charged with scepticism, denied an academic career, given a reputation - and how these circumstances, perhaps more than Hume's texts themselves, affected the interpretation of his scepticism. Ultimately, the point is to show that an adequate account of the development of Hume's reputation and philosophy requires appeal to both the philosophical and historical accounts. In other words, the correct account of how Hume became a sceptic requires that the two types of explanation, the one emphasizing philosophical analysis and the other emphasizing historical context, remain fused together. The final result is that the lines between philosophical analysis and historical context are often crossed, and the notion that philosophical inquiry stands apart from the accidental circumstances of human lives is called into question.

Introduction

The story of the development of Hume's reputation as a sceptic begins in January 1739, with the publication of the first two volumes of his *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The book, in Hume's words, fell "*dead-born from the press*." (Hume 1985a: p.xxxiv) Over the course of the ensuing decades, Hume's *Treatise* would gain a great deal of attention - though most of this attention was, unfortunately, negative. Hume anticipated this negative reception, believing that the sizeable gap between his own system of philosophy and the metaphysical prejudices of his critics would present an obstacle to the book's receiving a fair reading. In a letter to Henry Home dated 13 February 1739, he speculates that, "Those who are accustomed to reflect on such abstract subjects, are commonly full of prejudices; and those who are unprejudiced are unacquainted with metaphysical reasonings. My principles are also so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take place, they would produce almost a total alteration in philosophy: and you know, revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about." (Greig 1969: vol.1.,p.26)

Apparently then, Hume was well aware of the novelty and controversy of his own ideas. As he pointed out in the letter to Home, were his own views to be accepted, they would produce "almost a total alteration in philosophy". It is conceivable, of course, that Hume was merely blowing his own horn when he made the claim to "total alteration" - succumbing to vain ambition in a way that he would later come to regret. However, there are good reasons to suppose that he was being entirely sincere. Indeed, in the *Treatise*, Hume had already predicted that his radical ideas would inspire a *hatred* of both his system and person. (Hume 1978: p.264) But, in contrast to what did Hume's views represent such a radical alteration? Taking the above remarks as our guide, we must suppose that Hume's

views were inimical to both the abstract doctrines of the tutored and the common sense beliefs of the untutored. In other words, Hume's conclusions resembled neither those of metaphysics nor those of common sense.

Taking Hume's above remarks seriously raises an important question for our investigation: Namely, "To what extent did Hume's ideas in fact represent a radical departure from previous metaphysics?" This is not a simple question to answer. One complication arises from the widespread interest in scepticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This interest, originating with a re-discovery of Greek scepticism, led to discussions of scepticism in French and British philosophy. What these discussions show is that Hume was not alone in his questioning of metaphysical prejudice. In fact, Hume developed his own sceptical position in close association with a number of existing sceptical systems, so it is important to assess the extent of his departure from these sceptical systems. A second complication stems from the fact that Hume's remark about the prejudices of the schooled and the sentiments of the unschooled would appear to include all metaphysical reasoning. That is, his remark applies to the ancient metaphysics of substance and accident; to the scholastic theology of God, the soul, and the angels; to the early modern faculty psychology and its epistemological turn; and so on. This makes it difficult to establish just what it was that Hume took to be especially novel about his own philosophy. Complications arise then, from the multiple senses of scepticism and the multiple belief systems at stake. In consequence, it might be better to temporarily trade our above question for one that can be more readily answered: Namely, "Against which sceptical and metaphysical traditions does Hume frequently set his own philosophy?" Though the two questions need not yield the same answer, an answer to the latter will at least supply some points of reference for our subsequent discussions of Hume. For practical purposes then, let's turn to the more manageable task of addressing the latter question.

Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Hume was affected by the early modern revival of interest in Greek thought. Far from the usual scholastic fare, Greek scepticism encouraged a way of thinking that challenged every level of belief and certainty. The most influential of the Greek sceptics was Sextus Empiricus, whose writings became accessible after 1562, when they were published in Latin translation. Sextus Empiricus is associated with a form of scepticism called Pyrrhonian

scepticism. The Pyrrhonian sceptic accepts only that which is given at the level of appearance and rejects all unqualified assertions about "matters of opinion." (Norton 1982: p.257ff.) More specifically, the Pyrrhonian sceptic accepts the certainty of starting points given in appearance, but, in considering arguments for and against matters of opinion, reaches a point of uncertainty that leads him to suspend judgement. Hence, the Pyrrhonian sceptic claims to begin with certainty, but ends with the view that all matters of opinion formed subsequent to this are in fact doubtful. Though some subtlety is required to properly interpret the nature of this form of scepticism, what is important for us at this stage is to note that Hume regarded the Pyrrhonian view as a form of *consequent scepticism* characterized by a desire to avoid dogmatic assertions about matters of opinion and an end-state of uncertainty.

Inspired by the sceptical insights of Sextus Empiricus, French writers such as Pierre Bayle and Michel de Montaigne developed a new sceptical tradition, a tradition that culminated in a sceptical challenge posed by Réné Descartes. What Descartes argued was that it was the initial starting points of investigations could always be called into doubt, and that inquirers should suspend judgement on all such starting points until a certain foundation for knowledge could be found. Hence, Descartes proposed his sceptical "method of doubt." However, Descartes also claimed that inquirers could overcome their initial doubts by appeal to immediate intuition and reason. Through these, Descartes claimed, we discover that there is in fact a certain foundation for knowledge after all - an innate, veridical perception called the *cogito*. Moreover, following upon the discovery of clear and distinct ideas, Descartes claimed, the subject could prove the existence of God and uncover a metaphysics of mind and body consistent with the demands of religion and theology. Hume would label this "Cartesian doubt", which is characterized by its questioning of the foundations of knowledge, an *antecedent scepticism*.

A third line of influence on Hume's sceptical thought can be traced back to the empiricist philosophies of John Locke and George Berkeley. Locke had argued that we build complex and abstract general ideas from sensation, and that the operations of the mind work quite naturally upon the same to produce knowledge of the real, external world of material objects. Hence, the idea of a grey cat is built from simple ideas about color, size, shape, & c., which I receive through my sense organs. Additional

reflection upon such ideas enables us to build new and more complex ideas. For example, if a resemblance is noticed between two cats, this becomes the basis for a new idea - the idea of the resemblance between the two cats. Such ideas can in turn become the basis for even more general ideas, such as the general idea 'cat'. The resulting general ideas can then be modified by the process of abstracting sensible qualities from them, yielding ideas that are both general and abstract. According to Locke, such ideas are empirically meaningful, since they can be traced back to their origins in sense experience. This empiricist theory, it turns out, raised doubts about various of the metaphysical prejudices of Locke's day. For, as Locke maintained, there were only two "fountains" of knowledge "from whence all the ideas we have" arise - sensation and reflection upon sensation. It would be absurd to claim that we are born with an idea or that God gave us the idea if we could just as easily explain its origin through appeal to abstraction from ideas of sensation and reflection. As such, Locke called into question the tradition of appeal to veridical innate ideas such as the Cartesian *cogito*. In addition, Locke's reductionist method of ascertaining the meaningfulness of ideas called into question many metaphysical concepts, on the grounds that they could not be shown to have origins in sensation.

Hume was evidently sympathetic to Locke's findings, for he develops his own argument against innate ideas and frequently employs the method of tracing ideas back to original sense impressions. However, as George Berkeley showed, Locke's analysis was flawed. In particular, Locke's empiricism was based on philosophically unjustified assumptions about material existence. The Lockean empiricist, he pointed out, assumes that certain qualities of objects - qualities such as size, shape, motion &c. - represent objective, real properties of mind-independent, material bodies. And, while common sense may demand us to suppose the existence of just such a world, the claim had nowhere been philosophically defended. In fact, Locke's external material objects are, by definition, not the same things as sensible ideas, so they are not, technically, objects of perception. How then, asks Berkeley, can we justifiably claim to know anything about this an unseen material world beyond sensation? Indeed, when Locke refers to an unseen material substratum - a substratum that he takes to play a causal role in the perception of ideas -, he has no *idea* of what he is talking about. Ironically then, Locke's philosophy undermines, rather than supports, the

empiricist account of knowledge of an external world of material causes.

In his various discussions of scepticism, Hume often set his own view against alternative sceptical doctrines. *Antecedent scepticism*, he pointed out, begins with certainty and ends in suspended judgement; whereas, *consequent scepticism* begins with suspended judgement and ends with certain knowledge. But, neither form of scepticism is a real possibility. In the former case, we could never truly achieve an initial state of suspension of judgement that included all of our former beliefs. Humans are prone us to speculate philosophically, claims Hume, and this prevents us from entering into a full suspension of judgement. (Hume 1975: pp.8-9) Moreover, even if it were possible, we could never find a certain foundation that would allow us to escape our state of doubt. Hume also turned the tables against *consequent scepticism.* In the latter case, our natural propensity to form common sense beliefs would force us to snap out of our end-state of uncertainty about matters of opinion. As such, we would end up forced into dogmatism, even while pretending to suspend judgement. Ultimately then, maintaining *consequent scepticism* leads to the absurdity of self-contradiction.(Hume 1975: p.160)

Hume was likewise critical of empiricism and its treatment of "sceptical topics." In this case, Berkeley's replies to Locke appear to have influenced the development of Hume's own empiricism - particularly his doubts about our ability to demonstrate a world of external causes. In fact, Hume went farther than Berkeley, noting that all metaphysical systems presuppose a world of continued existence that is independent of the interrupted perceptions of mind. And, surely, Hume reasoned, the inference to a world of continued existence goes well beyond the evidence presented to understanding. If so, then even our most basic assumptions about the world - assumptions made by metaphysics and common sense alike - can be called into question. Thus, not only did Hume think that the sceptical traditions involving a total suspension of judgement rested on an implausible epistemology and psychology, he also found fault with the demonstrative arguments of his empiricist counterparts and the common sense assumptions of everyday life. Hence, Hume speaks of "the weakness, and disorder of the faculties" and of the "impossibility of amending or correcting these faculties." (Hume 1978: p.264) "Every step I take", says Hume, "is with hesitation, and every new reflection makes me dread an error and absurdity in my reasoning." (Hume 1978: p.265)

Despite these shocking pronouncements, the *Treatise* advanced the seemingly modest view that philosophy “can present us only with mild and moderate sentiments.” (Hume 1978: p.272) What Hume proposed was a *mitigated scepticism* that begins with the recognition of the limits of the faculties, and then recommends caution, modesty, and a willingness to re-examine accepted beliefs. This *mitigated scepticism*, Hume maintained, was actually less extreme than other varieties of philosophy. Even so, Hume expected that this modesty, with the curtailing of philosophical fancy that it implies, would lead to a hatred of his philosophy and person. Indeed, the giving up of extravagant opinion was not going to be a popular prescription. For, why adopt a *mitigated scepticism* at all? Hume’s contemporaries were not convinced that there was good reason to doubt our ability to represent things as they are in themselves. By way of contrast, Hume claimed that the natural limitations of the operations of the mind meant that caution would always be required in metaphysics. The few criteria of truth supplied by experience, such as vivacity and the principle of causal association, would be of feeble assistance in extending knowledge beyond what is present to the senses. Precaution then, recommends carefully restricting philosophical fancy: “For, if we assent to every trivial suggestion of the fancy; beside that these suggestions are often contrary to each other; they lead us into such errors, absurdities, and obscurities, that we must at last become asham’d of our credulity. Nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of imagination, and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers.” (Hume 1978: p.267) Hence, when we do succumb to philosophical temptation, we must be “mild and moderate” and not indulge our inclination “to be positive and certain in *particular points*”. We must “guard against that assurance, which always arises from an exact and full survey of an object” and bear in mind that the reasoning underlying our various belief systems are subject to many difficulties and contradictions when we overstep the limits of understanding. (Hume 1978: p.273-4)

Hume’s *mitigated scepticism* then, was intended to be extensive and wide-reaching, in the sense that it called into question metaphysical prejudice of all stripes and urges caution for all systems of belief - including sceptical ones. At the same time, Hume did not recommend the excessive doubt that leads to suspension of judgement. So, despite its wideness of scope, Hume’s doubt was not intended to run quite as deep as the forms of

scepticism recommending indefinite suspension of judgment. In view of the moderate nature of this *mitigated scepticism*, we can ask whether Hume's worry and fixation with the reception of his philosophy was out of proportion with the force of his doubt? Indeed, if Hume's views did represent a significant threat, it was not to be found in any positive metaphysical claim, but rather in the lack thereof. For, what Hume had done was to raise questions about the certainty of knowledge. These doubts touched on all belief systems, including the sceptical ones. But, all that Hume was pointing out to his readers was that there could be no certainty attached to empirical knowledge claims. Today, this would be an accepted, even mundane, claim. However, in Hume's day, the point seemed to completely undo prejudices about the certain nature of metaphysical knowledge. For, included in the analysis of every single philosophical system was the assumption that metaphysical knowledge, if properly obtained, would be certain knowledge. Thus, in his very abstinence and modesty, and in his insistence upon the frailty of the rational faculties, Hume was at odds with all of the metaphysical prejudices of his day, - including the common sense and sceptical traditions. In point of fact, there *was* no major doctrine left untouched by Hume's *mitigated scepticism*. Presumably then, when Hume claimed that his own position would represent "almost a total alteration in philosophy", he must have been aware that his modest prescription would run counter to the tradition of "ostentation" that was widespread in metaphysics.

With this in view, we can now provisionally discharge our original question: To wit, "In what sense could Hume properly lay claim to having introduced ideas that would produce 'almost a total alteration in philosophy'?" For, it turns out that our survey of the systems to which Hume most frequently appeals in order to explain the nature of his own doctrine, and the various comments that he makes about scepticism and metaphysical prejudice, provide enough clues for a rough answer to our original question. What we have found is that, while the *depth* of Hume's sceptical doubt is not extreme, the extent of its reach in recommending caution is very wide indeed. So, it is in virtue of proposing of a new cautionary method for metaphysics that Hume's philosophy represents "almost a total alteration in philosophy". This then, can serve as a provisional answer to our initial query. A substantial answer explaining the sense of Hume's *mitigated scepticism* in more detail will be forthcoming as

part of the account of how Hume became a sceptic.

Chapter 1

Reading Hume's *Treatise*, 1739-40

The circumstances that mark the beginning of our story are as follows. The first two books of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* were published in 1739. Hume was preoccupied with thoughts of the fame and notoriety that he expected to follow upon the work's publication, but the handful of reviews that followed in 1739-40 were something of a disappointment. They were negative in tone, and Hume's early critics had clearly failed to appreciate the central arguments of his *Treatise*. In an effort to re-direct his reader's attention, Hume wrote, in 1740, *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*. These circumstances give rise to a couple of questions for our account. First, "What did Hume expect his readers to learn from his *Treatise*?", and, second, "To what extent did the early critical reviews square with the text of the *Treatise*?". Primary sources that yield answers to these questions include Hume's 1739 *Treatise*, his 1740 *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature* and the handful of critical reviews of the *Treatise* published in 1739 and 1740. As we shall see, this material, along with the personal correspondence of Hume, reveal discrepancies between the *Treatise*, its intended reading, and the early responses to Hume.[1]

Let's begin our investigation by considering Hume's intentions for the *Treatise*. An obvious clue to this is featured prominently in the original subtitle of the book. There, Hume says that the work is an attempt to introduce an experimental method into moral subjects. The goal of such an investigation, he tells us, is to isolate general principles lying at the

foundation of the science of human nature.[2] To many commentators, it has seemed reasonable to interpret this expressed intention as an intention to emulate Newtonian experimentalism. On this reading, Hume's intention was to develop a science of human nature that would accomplish for human understanding what Newton had accomplished for physics.[3] As we shall see, there are good reasons to think that Newton's "Rules of Reasoning" influenced Hume. However, the parallel between Newton and Hume can be developed in a manner that presses the analogy between Newtonian mechanics and Humean psychology too far. Moreover, what Hume clearly indicates in the *Treatise*, is that he intends to advance the a Baconian "science of man" due to Locke, Shaftesbury, Hutchinson and others, by extending their efforts to base the science on experiment and observation. (Hume 1978: p.xvii) The analogy to Baconian experimentalism is also borne out by the evidence. Bacon, for example, proposes a method of careful observation and analysis that is aimed at distilling the "principle" of the phenomenon. Thus, in Book II of his *Novum Organon*, after a detailed account of an investigation of heat, Bacon concludes his empirical investigation with the general hypothesis that "Heat is a motion, expansive, restrained, and acting in its strife upon the smaller particles of bodies." (Bacon 1960: p.158) Similarly, Hume proposes that, "we must endeavour to render all our principles as universal as possible" by "tracing up our experiments to the utmost" and "explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes." (Hume 1978: p.xvii) This basic program is later reiterated when says that he hopes to isolate "those few simple principles" underlying the science of man through careful expression and reasoning, and the development of "a regular science". "But 'tis at least worth while to try", he elaborates, "if the science of *man* will not admit of the same accuracy which several parts of natural philosophy are found susceptible of. There seems to be all the reason in the world to imagine that it may be carried to the greatest degree of exactness. If, in examining several phaenomena, we find that they resolve themselves into one common principle, and can trace this principle into another, we shall at last arrive at those few simple principles on which all depend." (Hume 1965: p.6) Hence, Hume's experimentalism, generally conceived, is consistent with the Baconian paradigm of experimental science.[4]

Supposing a Baconian paradigm then, how then, should we characterize Hume's collection and analysis of psychological data? The fundamentals of

Hume's psychology are laid out, it so happens, in as scientific of a manner as possible, in Book I, Part I of the *Treatise.* In terms of data collection, Hume's account draws on introspective analysis of the contents of the mind in order to characterize psychological phenomena. The primary components of perception, Hume determines - presumably on the basis of introspection - are twofold; simple impressions and simple ideas. Analysis of these leads Hume to observe that impressions precede ideas and are characteristically more vivid. From this observation, he then formulates his "vivacity principle", which expresses the idea that impressions can be distinguished from ideas in terms of their greater vivacity. Hume further notes, again by means of introspection, that simple ideas are in fact always copies of simple impressions. Thus, he arrives at his "copy principle" that all ideas are copies of impressions. He reasons that it is by means of the operations of our faculties of sensation, memory, and imagination that we build simple impressions and ideas into the complex impressions and ideas . Indeed, Hume supposes that the basic components of ideas must exist in an "entirely loose and unconnected" fashion, and that it is only in virtue of the various "associating qualities" of the mind that the disparate elements in our psychologies are united. These "associating qualities", it turns out, are the three psychological principles of association of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. (Hume 1978: p.11) As principles, they take on a role analogous to Newtonian laws of mechanics. Hence, Hume arrives, apparently by "experimental methods", at three general principles of human psychology. [5] This then, is the experimental foundation upon which the *Treatise* builds.

Of course, Hume did not end his "science of man" with his theory of ideas. Rather, he hoped to use both his empirical psychology and his theory of ideas as a foundation for an extended analysis of the various operations of human understanding. Hence, he went on to draw epistemological and metaphysical conclusions from his psychology and theory of ideas. For example, following Locke, he argued that complex concepts were reducible to simple ideas and their corresponding simple impressions. He even rested the adequacy of his theory of ideas on the claium that we could demonstrate this reduction for any given complex idea. All concepts, Hume claimed - no matter how abstract or metaphysical - could be traced back to original collections of sense impressions and ideas. (Hume 1978: p.16) Thus, an abstract metaphysical concept such as

"substance" is nothing more than a collection of simple ideas built up from sensation. Following this reductionist style of analysis, Hume proceeded to demystify many of the foundational concepts of metaphysics. Following Berkeley, he claimed that abstract ideas were nothing more than ideas of particulars that were annexed, by convention, to a general term. (Hume 1978: p.17) He also appealed to his empiricist psychology to dispensed with traditional appeals to intuitive knowledge and innate ideas. Such appeals could be used to undermine empiricist theories of ideas, and Hume, like Locke, wanted none of this. Hume's most famous argument was that ideas of cause and effect were not discovered by reason or intuition, but by means of experience and the customary association of ideas.

Upon reflection then, while it is clear that Hume's general plan is to follow an experimental method in developing his empiricist psychology and epistemology; it is by no means clear that Hume's experimentalism is Newtonian *per se*. Many of the key elements of Newton's "rational mechanics" are conspicuously absent from the *Treatise*. In particular, Hume goes so far as to reject the sort of mathematization of nature that Newton invokes in his reasoning. Moreover, Hume's experimentalism is more loosely conceived than Newton's "rational mechanics" and his observational methods are consistent with older, established methods - bearing more in common with Aristotelian empiricism and Cartesian introspection than with Newton's highly constructed empiricism.[6] All of this notwithstanding, there is in fact an important line of influence stemming from Newton's *Principia*. This influence, which affects the whole of Hume's philosophy, comes from the direction of Newton's infamous "Rules of Reasoning".

Hume's *Treatise* shows great sensitivity to Newton's "Rules of Reasoning". In fact, these rules appear to shape the character of Hume's *mitigated scepticism*. To wit, consider what Newton's four rules state: That we should admit no more causes than is necessary to explain the appearances; that the same causes should be assigned for the same effects; that the qualities of bodies that admit of no variation of degree are to be regarded as universal qualities; and, that we should regard hypotheses inferred by induction as very nearly true, even though contrary hypotheses may be imagined, until disconfirming evidence is discovered. (Cajori 1934: vol. II,pp.398-400) Hume's "Rules by which to judge of causes and effects" adapt and extend these same ideas to all forms of causal reasoning. Hume's rules then, differ from Newton's in that they are intended to be wholly

general and to describe the rules governing all causal reasoning. The first three of his rules state that causal belief formation requires observations of objects that are contiguous in space, successive in time, and constantly conjoined. Taken together, these three rules recommend a manner of causal belief formation that prevents the introduction of more causes (e.g., invisible causes) than is required to explain the phenomena, as per Newton's first rule. Hume's fourth rule corresponds to Newton's second rule; while his fifth, sixth and seventh rule loosely correspond to Newton's third rule, by specifying how variation in the degrees of qualities should influence our causal reasoning. Finally, Hume's last rule, like Newton's fourth rule, tells us when we are to reject causal hypotheses. (Hume 1978: pp.173-6) Hence, while Hume is certainly not a slave to Newtonian experimentalism, he does seems to adopt the methodological restrictions regarding causal hypotheses expressed in the *Principia's* "Rules of reasoning." When Hume claims, for example, that there are limits on what can be achieved in an empirical investigation, his explanations point to the methodological lessons that Newton emphasized. Hence, "tis still certain", says Hume, "that we cannot go beyond experience". Nor is there any guarantee of finding universal principles or ultimate causes in empirical investigation. (Hume 1978: p.xvii-xviii) Newton taught this very lesson when he refrained, for methodological reasons, from insisting that an etherial active fluid was the cause of gravitational effects. Hume applauds Newton for being both "cautious and modest" in allowing "that it was a mere hypothesis, not to be insisted on, without more experiments." (Hume 1975: p.73,n.1) Like Newton, Hume is content to stay within the proper limits of an experimental philosophy. As far as experimentalism reasoning goes, if we have done our utmost, says Hume, then "we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, besides our experience of their reality." (Hume 1978: p. xviii) This, presumably, is an important part of Hume's statement of his experimental method; and in this respect at least, Hume is as Newtonian as can be.

It is this Newtonian call for restraint that guides Hume's discussion of knowledge in Book I, Part III and inspires the sceptical doubts of Book I, Part IV. Hume's purpose in these latter sections of Book I seem to be twofold: Part III shows that associationist principles do in fact govern human understanding, and, Part IV develops the implications of this result

for metaphysics. In Part III, Hume considers the various types of ideas of relations that we form, and shows that associations of ideas based on contiguity and succession are integral to causal belief formation. He further notes that reflection upon ideas of causal connection leads to the idea of necessary connection. In saying as much, Hume was raising a challenge to traditional metaphysics, according to which epistemological or metaphysical principles were assumed to be the source of our ideas of necessary connection. Hume notes that the idea that a cause is necessary for every effect is often taken to be grounded in the causal axiom that "Whatever begins to exist must have a cause", and that this principle is in turn taken to be the source o the idea of causal necessity. However, Hume reasons, no amount of demonstrative reasoning could yield knowledge of particular causes from their effects, so we cannot demonstratively prove that the causal axiom is necessary. Nor can we claim that an uncaused cause could not exist - i.e., that "something cannot come from nothing" - without begging the question in favour of the causal axiom. Moreover, the claim that the causal axiom "Whatever begins to exist must have a cause" is simply analytic also fails, since events in nature are not necessarily effects. Finally, it is implausible to claim that science, with the limited nature of its investigations, supplies the answer to the question of whether every event requires a cause. Hume proposes that it is his associationist account, which draws on the empiricist theory of ideas, and bases causal reasoning on the perception of contiguous, successive, and constantly conjoined objects, that best explains the formation of causal beliefs. Moreover, to assist us in avoiding error in causal judgment, Hume recommends that we use his eight rules for judging causes and effects.

Having ended Part III on a somewhat doubtful note, Hume proceeds, in Part IV, to develop the implications of his methodological directives. As philosopher, Hume tells us, he adopts an associationist account of knowledge. This associationism, it turns out, leads to doubts about knowledge of the external world. Knowledge of the continued existence of external objects is limited, Hume reasons, to what is discoverable by the human mind and its operations. Indeed, all knowledge, it turns out, is quite limited from the outset; for, the principle of individuation of objects, Hume says, is based on the assumption of invariableness and uninterruptedness in our perceptions. (Hume 1965: p.201) But, in fact, objects, including the human mind itself, are nothing but bundles of individual perceptions

brought together through association. (Hume 1965: p.207) As such, belief in the continued existence of external objects is a sort of habit of feigning in which we indulge ourselves. (Hume 1965: p.208) Moreover, factors such as the manner or vivacity of our conception play a large role in influencing the strength of our beliefs than previously assumed. Given all of this, it would appear that the philosophical justifications that we have heretofore offered for most of our knowledge claims are questionable. For, we do not, after all have certain knowledge of continued existences and their causal relations; rather, we have fleeting, interrupted ideas of objects, that we construct as continued existences and causal interactions. What philosophical analysis shows then, is that the operations of the mind secure much less by way of certain knowledge of external existence than was previously thought. Nonetheless, we should take heart; for, as Hume reminds us, the philosophical doubts that we entertain in abstract study vanish upon return to our everyday lives. Hence, the basis for methodological restraint is developed in Part III, and the implications are explored in Part IV in a way that leads Hume to express sceptical doubts. In the end, however, Hume thinks that these doubts do not deter the reasonable man from following the dictates of common sense in daily life.

What we have seen so far then, is that Hume attempted to make his *Treatise* more scientific by introducing observation and analysis of phenomena. Following predecessors such as Bacon and Newton, he "promises to draw no conclusions but where he is authorized by experience." (Hume 1978: p.xvii) Having considered Hume's intentions for the *Treatise* and outlined his application of an experimentalism to the investigation of the operations of the human mind, we can now turn to the matter of how Hume's earliest critics understood the *Treatise*. It is only fair to say by way of warning, that the concerns and emphases reflected in the early critical reviews did not reflect Hume's expressed aims and arguments. Rather, the early critical responses mainly involved taking aim at Hume's conclusions, which seemed to contradict accepted metaphysical dogma. In doing so, they overlooked the force of the arguments that Hume offered and presented a caricature of his position. Nevertheless, these early reviews are important, since they influenced subsequent readings of Hume and spurred Hume to further develop his analysis. Hence, while there is little to suggest that the significance of Hume's *Treatise* was properly digested in this early period, it is worth considering these reviews, mainly because they tell us

something about the reception of Hume's *Treatise* in 1739-40.

Hume's *Treatise* received relatively scant attention following its 1739-40 publication. One review appeared in 1739. Five others followed in 1740. All were relatively short.[7] The first review was the 1739 review that appeared in *The History of the Works of the Learned*. (Anonymous 1739) It is the most interesting of the reviews, not only because of its specific criticisms, but also because we know for a fact that Hume himself read it. For, as Hume would later remark in a letter to Francis Hutcheson, the review was "somewhat abusive"; indeed, it was evident that its author was unsympathetic to Hume and his philosophy. (Greig 1969: vol.1.,p.38)

The 1739 reviewer begins by setting an unflattering tone, repeatedly suggesting that Hume's text is a tiresome read. He dismisses arguments for which he has the least patience, and claims to set down only "the Heads of the Arguments" for the difficult bits. Despite all of this hand waving, the reviewer manages to raise a considerable number of objections to the text. The first point of note is the claim that Hume's science of human nature is founded on the concept of necessity or determinism. (Anonymous 2000f: p.4) The evidence given in support of this charge is taken from in Hume's introductory remarks to the effect that, "Tis evident, that all the Sciences have Relation, greater or less, to human Nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one Passage or another. Even *Mathematics, Natural Philosophy*, and *Natural Religion*, are in some measure dependent on the Science of MAN; since they lie under the Cognizance of Men, and are judged of by their Powers and Faculties...&c." (Hume 1978: p.xv) Presumably, what the author is getting at here is that Hume's associationism attributes a determinism to the mind. In fact, it is true that Hume defends the view that the mind is "determined" to make certain psychological associations. Claims of this nature are not hard to find in the *Treatise*. As Hume writes, "Thus as the necessity, which makes two times two equal to four, or three angles of a triangle equal to two right ones, lies only in the act of understanding, by which we consider and compare these ideas; in like manner the necessity or power, which unites causes and effects, lies in the determination of the mind to pass from the one to the other." (Hume 1978: p.166) In connection with this view, the reviewer charges that Hume is adopting a claim that is at least as controversial as the views that he criticizes. For, it appears, at least to this reviewer, that Hume has made something of an extravagant metaphysical

claim here, despite claims to the contrary.[8]

Having finished with this point, the reviewer briefly sums up the material in Book I, Part I. He suggests that readers already familiar with Locke's theory of ideas will be disgusted by Hume's own paltry version of the theory. He then likens Hume's discussion of abstraction to Berkeley's, and dismisses both with the following remark: "It is above twenty Years", he writes, "since I looked over that Piece of Dr Berkeley's", and "I do not find it has met with any favourable Reception among the Literati." (Anonymous 2000f: p.8) Of Book I, Part II, the reviewer notes that Hume there repeats "a great many odd Fancies", and that he will give the "Reader a taste, by the Recital of two or three in their Order." (Anonymous 2000f: p.11) In this case, the reviewer finds Hume's sensationist evaluation of mathematical concepts to be deficient. "There is not, I am persuaded, any Reader hardy enough to withstand such Reasoning as this"; indeed, the "Idea of Extension may be had" he writes, "without closing the Eye-lids." (Anonymous 2000f: p.13-14) For similar reasons, he finds fault with Hume's argument that a vacuum is impossible because we cannot imagine extension in the absence of perceivable parts. At one point, the reviewer even likens Hume's introspective method to a "Meditation" - presumably drawing the comparison with Descartes' method in his *Meditations on First Philosophy.* (Anonymous 2000f: p.6)

Faced with the prospect of summarizing Book I, Part III, the author claims that he cannot possibly cover the material in much detail. Instead, he will content himself with "selecting here and there an extraordinary Passage, for the Reader's Information and Entertainment." (Anonymous 2000f: p.11) He notes that Hume admits that the mind is liable to confuse sensible ideas that are similar, and says that with this admission, Hume comes off sounding like a rationalist critic of the senses such as "*Cartesius or Malbranche*." (Anonymous 2000f: p.17) He further notes that Hume's denial that ideas of relations are accessible to pure intellect is based on a controversial claim that all ideas are copies of impressions - a claim that he likens to an appeal to magic. (Anonymous 2000f: p.20) It is at this juncture that the reviewer takes up a point of particular interest, namely, his criticism of the significance of Hume's critique of causality for the *a priori*, or cosmological, proofs for God's existence. Here the reviewer draws the reader's attention to the section of Hume's *Treatise* entitled "Why a Cause is always necessary." The reviewer's discussion of the section is deeply

sarcastic. He says that the section is suitable for "All manner of Persons, that may have any Antipathy to the Argument *à Priori* for the Existence of God", since they will "have the Satisfaction of seeing it utterly demolished". "The Writer", he continues, "has here destroy'd the Foundation of it, and so there's an End of the whole Fabrick." (Anonymous 2000f: p.20) Indeed, it is here that Hume denies the causal axiom that "Whatever begins to exist, must have a Cause of Existence". The reviewer attributes to Hume the view that there is no corresponding impression for the idea of necessity invoked in the maxim. Moreover, he says that for Hume, ideas of cause and effect arise merely as a result of a determination of the mind to make associations between objects. As such, there are no properly 'objective' grounds for the causal maxim that "Whatever begins to exist, must have a Cause of Existence" or even the causal principle that "like effects must follow from like causes". According to the reviewer, Hume's denial of these causal maxims is tantamount to asserting that something may arise from nothing. As such, Hume has challenged the doctrine that creation and annihilation are solely the provenance of God. (Anonymous 2000f: p.26) The author then wonders whether Hume's criticisms might not also imply a denial of the being and existence of God. (Anonymous 2000f: p.21) Finally, he expresses concern with Hume's doctrine concerning the soul and says that he is unimpressed with Hume's accusation that immaterialism degenerates into Spinozism and atheism. Hume's argument, he says, depends on the objectionable assumption that the mind is not a continued substance. (Anonymous 2000f: p.35) These charges, as we shall see, are often repeated in the literature on Hume's philosophy.

Hume read the 1739 review, and his dissatisfaction with the commentary may have prompted him to write his own 1740 *Abstract*. As Hume explained to Francis Hutcheson, on 4 March 4 1740 that, "I have got it [the *Abstract*] printed in London; but not in the Works of the Learned; there having been an Article with regard to my Book, somewhat abusive, printed in that Work, before I sent up the Abstract. (Greig 1969: vol.1.,pp.37-8) Thus, it seems likely that, after reading the 1739 review, Hume quickly proceeded to the task of sending out his own review, with the intention of remedying the damaging effects of the first review. In the meantime, an extremely short and insubstantial German review of the *Treatise* was published in the January edition of *Göttingische von gelehrten Sachen.* (Anonymous 2000d) But, soon after, by March of that same year, Hume

had published his own *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*, which answers many of the points raised in the 1739 review. (Hume 1965)

Hume's *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature* aims to underline the "chief argument" of the *Treatise*. Indeed, the central argument of Hume's book was in fact overlooked in the 1739 review. Hume's *Abstract* is especially interesting because it highlights the line of thought to which Hume wanted to draw attention. "I have chosen one simple argument", he writes, "which I have carefully traced from the beginning to the end." (Hume 1965: p.4) What Hume's review aimed to develop then, was the basic argument underlying his new science of human psychology - the evidence and the logic that had led him to conclusions regarding the principles of association, the causal relation, and the limits of human understanding. Along the way, as we shall see, Hume re-directs the attention of his readers on many of the points raised in the 1739 review.

In his *Abstract*, Hume indicates that his *Treatise* touches on "a great number of speculations very new and remarkable." At the same time, he explains, the doctrine of causality serves as a specimen of the whole. Hence, he writes, "We shall therefore chiefly confine ourselves to his explication of our reasonings from cause and effect." (Hume 1965: p.8) To begin, he briefly recaps his theory of ideas and reminds the reader "*that no ideas are innate*." He then develops the basis for his analysis of causation by asking the reader to consider the case of one billiard ball striking another and setting it into motion: "Here is a billiard-ball lying on the table, and another ball moving towards it with rapidity. They strike; and the ball, which was formerly at rest, now acquires a motion. This is as perfect an instance of the relation of cause and effect as any which we know, either by sensation or reflection. Let us therefore examine it." (Hume 1965: p.11)

With this image in mind, Hume stresses several points regarding the formation of causal beliefs. He reminds us that ideas of cause and effect depend upon experience of contiguity, priority, and constant conjunction. (Hume 1965: pp.12-13) Indeed, it is quite evident that we are unable to form a causal belief after having seen just one instance or by analysis alone: "Were a man, such as *Adam*, created in the full vigour of understanding, without experience, he would never be able to infer motion in the second ball from the motion and impulse of the first. It is not any thing that reason sees in the cause, which makes us *infer* the effect." (Hume 1965: p.13)

It follows, Hume claims, that our reasoning concerning cause and effect is founded upon experience. One explanation for the experience of such regularity in nature is that nature's course is itself uniform. But this assumption, it turns out, is not provable. The alternative account is that the regularity that leads to causal belief formation is founded upon customary associations of the mind. On this account, it is merely the observation of customary conjunction that lead us to suppose that the future will resemble the past. (Hume 1965: p.16) Moreover, when we believe a causal connection with conviction, it is not a mark of truth, but merely a reflection of the manner of our conception. Belief is just a peculiar sentiment or lively conception produced by habit. (Hume 1965: pp.20-1)

Having established that ideas of cause and effect are based on nothing more than custom, Hume goes on to remind the reader that the same reasoning extends to other operations of the mind. (Hume 1965: p.21) All reasoning concerning matters of fact arise as a result of the comparisons of objects. With this in mind, Hume questions the basis for our ideas such as 'power', 'force' and 'energy', none of which, it turns out, can be traced back to sensible impressions. Moreover, as Hume points out, apart from experience, we have no observational basis for, and hence, no meaningful idea of causal power in a Supreme Being: "*What idea have we of energy or power even in the Supreme Being?* All our idea of a Diety (according to those who deny innate ideas) is nothing but a composition of those ideas, which we acquire from reflecting on the operations of our own minds." (Hume 1965: p.23) What Hume here claims then, is that the theory of ideas raises difficulties for our claim to having an idea of 'power' such as that associated with God's causal efficacy.

Finally, Hume spells out the sense in which his philosophy may appear 'sceptical' to his readers:

> By all that has been said the reader will easily perceive, that the philosophy contain'd in this book is very sceptical, and tends to give us a notion of the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding, Almost all reasoning is there reduced to experience; and the belief, which attends experience, is explained to be nothing but a peculiar sentiment, or lively conception produced by habit. Nor is this all, when we believe any thing of *external* existence, or suppose an object to exist a

> moment after it is no longer perceived, this belief is nothing but a sentiment of the same kind, Our author insists upon several other sceptical topics; and upon the whole concludes, that we assent to our faculties, and employ our reason only because we cannot help it. Philosophy wou'd render us entirely *Pyrrhonian*, were not nature too strong for it. (Hume 1965: p.24)

As the above passage makes clear, the sense in which Hume takes his *Treatise* to be 'sceptical' is simply this: the book emphasizes the limits of human understanding and treats of various sceptical topics. These presumably, are the lessons of empiricism and experimentalism. It is important to note, however, that Hume himself never suggests that the limits of human understanding actually lead to Pyrrhonian scepticism.

Hume concludes his discussion of his "logics", with digressions on the subjects of the self and infinite divisibility, and the review is completed with a brief summary of Book II of the *Treatise*. Finally, in closing, Hume indicates what he takes to be the significance of his *Treatise*, saying that "this reasoning puts the whole controversy in a new light, by giving a new definition of necessity." (Hume 1965: p.31) For, as it turns out, it is merely the imagination that contributes the idea of necessary connection, through the associations that we make between ideas; nothing in the external universe itself accounts for the sense of necessity that we attach to our beliefs about cause and effect. (Hume 1965: p.31) Thus concludes Hume's exegesis of the "chief argument" of the *Treatise*.

Hume's *Abstract* does in fact supply answers to many of the points raised in the 1739 review. Among the strongest objections raised in the 1739 review are claims to the effect that Hume's empiricist psychology is founded in a concept of necessity; that Hume's argument has destroyed the foundations, and indeed, the very fabric, of the *a priori* argument for God's existence; and, that Hume denies the being and existence of God. In making these points, the 1739 reviewer omits Hume's reasoning, and therefore presents a straw man of his position; In contrast to this, the *Abstract* attempts to expose the actual train of argument that leads to Hume's conclusions about our ideas of causation and necessity. Hence, Hume argues that his book merely sets the controversies around necessity in a new light, that his scepticism holds only that there are limits to human understanding, and that he aims to refrain from extravagant opinion.

Finally, Hume's treatment of the idea of a Supreme Being seems intended underline the Lockean origins of the criticism. Hume then, replies to the most damaging of the charges against him in his *Abstract*.

The remaining 1740 reviews are less substantive, but nonetheless worthy of some attention. The third review of 1739, which was published in the April-June edition of the *Bibliothèque raisonnée des ouvrages des savans de l'Europe*, was, in the main, a French-language digest of Hume's *Abstract*. (Anonymous 2000c) However, what was of some novelty there turns out to be of interest.

The *Bibliothèque raisonnée* review of the *Treatise* is neutral in tone, but the reviewer does raise a few worthwhile critical points. For example, the author claims that Hume's doubting of the principle of uniformity is actually contrary to experience. He maintains that if the course of nature were to change, then either the cause itself, or the surrounding circumstances, would likewise have to have changed - a point that many of Hume's later critics would seize upon. (Anonymous 2000c: p.56) The review also adds a curious twist to the discussion of Hume's scepticism. What the reviewer maintains is that Hume's doctrine does in fact render us nearly Pyrrhonian and border on a "universal doubt".[9] For, if Hume is right, the author says, then "we know few things with certainty, and philosophy would render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were Nature not strong enough to oppose it. Feeling tempers reason; without it, reason would very nearly lead us to universal doubt." (Anonymous 2000c: p.61) The reviewer then goes on to add that "the spirit of Pyrrhonism" directs Hume's manner of philosophizing, thereby suggesting that the *Treatise* is in fact characterized by a spirit of "universal doubt." (Anonymous 2000c: p.62) Though never, he continues, has he seen "a more dogmatic Pyrrhonist." (Anonymous 2000c: p.63) For, so it is claimed, Hume sweeps away many of the central claims of metaphysics, including the claims that everything that exists must necessarily have a cause of existence, that we have a proof *á priori* of God's existence, that mathematicians can be sure of their propositions, and so on. (Anonymous 2000c: p.63) Whether the criticisms are fair ones is an interesting question; however, of special interesting to us here is the author's attribution to Hume of Pyrrhonism and *universal doubt*. In fact, Hume had already tried, in 1740, to clarify the modest nature of his scepticism. The reviewer's 1740 remarks are historically significant, for they probably influenced later readings of Hume. (Anonymous 2000a) What

Hume actually claimed is that common sense must prevail over the state of suspended judgement associated with the Pyrrhonism or *consequent scepticism*.[10] He nowhere claims that his own scepticism leads to a permanent state of suspended judgement or universal doubt.

The fourth of the 1740 reviews was published in two parts, in the July and September editions of *Nouvelle bibliotheque, ou histoire litteraire des principaux ecrits qui se publient*. (Anonymous 2000e) The reviewer makes two small, but noteworthy points at the end of the review. First, the reviewer says that Hume "turns all modern philosophers into so many sceptics." (Anonymous 2000e: p.83) He does this, apparently, by establishing that their theory of ideas does not explain the phenomena.[11] The second point is that Hume "saps the foundations of religion" when he argues that the doctrine of the immateriality of the soul is untenable and leads to Spinozism and atheism. (Anonymous 2000e: p.84) A similar point had already been suggested in the 1739 review, but its repetition here is significant, because other critics pick up the point using the same turn of phrase as this last reviewer.[12]

Finally, it is worth mentioning a point raised in a later, July 1740, editorial. This author takes up the question of the moral and religious implications of Hume's *Treatise*. He holds that "The *Liberty* of Human Action is a Doctrine so agreeable to Reason, and to the common Sense of Mankind, that it is never opposed but by those who either lay down to themselves *false Principles*, or *mistake* the *Terms* they make Use of." (Anonymous 2000b: p.86) Such is the case, he thinks, among those who defend necessitarianism. Indeed, the doctrines of the immateriality and free agency of the soul, he says, are "necessary for the Establishment of Religion, Virtue, and Morality." (Anonymous 2000b: p.86) With this remark, the author raises additional questions about the moral and religious implications of Hume's necessitarian view of the faculties.[13] The reviewer then argues against Hume's account of necessity and materialism, maintaining that we do in fact perceive ourselves to be engaged in motions that are not necessary. This answer, the reviewer supposes, "will be sufficient for preventing my Author's *Philosophy* from having any *mischievous* Effect upon the Opinions or Morals of Mankind." (Anonymous 2000b: p.89) Again, the editorial is significant primarily because it provides a template for later criticisms that dwell on the religious, moral, and so-called "mischievous" consequences of Hume's doctrine.

Having thus touched on Hume's aims, his *Treatise*, and the 1739-40 reviews, we can now ask what these reviews tell us about the discrepancies between Hume's texts and the early readings of the *Treatise*. One thing that seems clear is that Hume's critics attached little emphasis or significance to his actual arguments. Despite Hume's efforts in the *Abstract*, neither the substantive arguments regarding causation and necessity drew much attention from Hume's early critics. What Hume was trying to argue was that neither knowledge of cause and effect nor knowledge of causal necessity is *certain* knowledge at all, and that it is impossible to provide a certain philosophical justification for the claim that the course of nature will continue, uniformly, in the same way. For all we know, the course of nature could change - there is no contradiction in this possibility. (Hume 1965: pp.14-15) For, as it turns out, when we predict the future by appeal to the lawlike behavior of the past, our prediction is based on nothing more than the inevitability of our habitual ways of associating ideas. (Hume 1965: p.19) But, if Hume's "chief argument", had been overlooked, what did draw the attention of the early critics? Apparently, it was the very themes set out in the original 1739 review of the *Treatise* rather than the themes set out by Hume himself. Hence, the connection made between Hume's theory of ideas; the criticism of the *a priori* argument for the existence of God; the various arguments concerning accepted religious and moral notions &c.. These themes, raised in the very first review, were consistently pursued. They attracted a great deal of negative attention for many years, as did Hume's forthright manner of expressing his doubts. Hence, it was the religious and moral questions raised by Hume's analysis, rather than the nuances of his views on causality, his associationism, or the problem of induction, that drew the initial notice.

While Hume did anticipate some negative response, Hume may not have been fully prepared for the critical attention that would eventually fall upon his discussion of moral and religious topics. Indeed, he naively pursued the critical acclaim that he felt his work deserved, trying to correct errors and answer misleading reviews. In one sense, Hume was simply avoiding his worst fear; namely, that his ideas would go entirely unnoticed. Indeed, we find Hume worrying, in his February 1739 correspondence with Michael Ramsay, that his work will not meet with critical success. He longs for the sort of recognition that will follow if his book is recommended by a great authority - someone, perhaps, of the stature of Francis Hutcheson.

(Greig 1969: vol.1,p.30) By the spring of 1739, he writes with disappointment to Henry Home that his work had in fact been received with complete indifference. A little later, he reflected somewhat bitterly, if still hopefully, upon this fate, in the Preface to his 1740 *Abstract*:

> THE *Author must be content to wait with patience for some time before the learned world can agree in their sentiments of his performance. 'Tis his misfortune, that he cannot make an* appeal to the people, *who in all matters of common reason and eloquence are found so infallible a tribunal. He must be judg'd by the* FEW, *whose verdict is more apt to be corrupted by partiality and prejudice, especially as no one is a proper judge in these subjects, who has not often thought of them; and* such *are apt to form to themselves systems of their own, which they resolve not to relinquish.* (Hume 1965: p.4)

Of course, Hume's work did eventually attract a great deal of attention. However, when it did, it was not of the positive variety. What is left unclear is whether in 1739-40, Hume had in any real sense anticipated that he would hereafter be persistently accused of holding a *universal scepticism* that cut at the foundations of knowledge and undermined both morality and religion. It is quite possible, at any rate, that Hume had expected the lion's share of the attention to fall instead on his experimentalism, on the nature of the various mental operations, and on the justificatory difficulties that he had raised for causal claims. This, however, turned out to be far from the case.

Chapter 2

The Hume Affair

The *Treatise* began to attract wider notice in 1744, after Hume applied, unsuccessfully, for the Chair of Ethics and Pnewmatical Philosophy at Edinburgh University. The attention, however, was uniformly negative, and mainly consisted in sounding the alarm against the moral and religious threat that Hume and his philosophy were imagined to pose. Although the Hume episode has been well documented in Mossner (Mossner 1970), Stewart (Stewart 2001), and Emerson (Emerson 1994), I propose to tell the story of the evaluation of Hume's candidacy in a way that considers not only the personal and political factors in the case, but also the connections between Edinburgh University's institutional history and the scholarly reception of Hume's *Treatise*. While it seems likely that many factors contributed in tipping the balance against Hume, and that no single factor can be identified as the deciding one, I will argue that the decision against Hume is best understood in light of Edinburgh University's institutional history and the professional assessments of Hume's candidacy. It is of particular interest to note that the academics on Hume's committee seem to have gone to the greatest length to ensure that his candidacy was undermined. Indeed, the Town Council might readily have elected Hume, but for the determined interventions of its academic membership. It was they who collected the evidence against Hume, and they who ensured that neither Hume nor his philosophy received a fair hearing. All of this notwithstanding, the episode is worth our attention because it contributed in important ways to the development of Hume's philosophy and reputation.

We'll begin our look at the Hume affair by considering ome of the

relevant aspects of the institutional history of Edinburgh's university - and, particularly, the politics associated with the Chair of Ethics and Pnewmatical Philosophy. There are two main points of interest. The first is that in drawing up the original constitution for the college, King James VI gave the patronage to the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh. The second is that the King then granted a special right of *avisamentum* in university appointments to the Ministers of Edinburgh. This arrangement represented a step away from the traditional form of church patronage, and it led to centuries of institutional struggle between the Town Council, the Church, and the University. These struggles typically came to a head on matters of university governance and appointments.[14] Hence, in consequence of their having been granted the right of patronage in the late sixteenth century, the Town Council spent the next three hundred years embroiled in disputes over details relating to the governance and administration of the university. By the turn of seventeenth century, the Church had clearly gained the upper hand. And, when the original charter was lost, it attempted to re-negotiated the terms of their relationship to the college in way that was favourable to them. A 'contract' was drawn up in 1608 that established that the mission of the college was for the "trayning up and instructing of the youth in godliness and good letters", and that in exchange for financial support, the Ministers of the Church would henceforth, on account of their "knowledge in letters", have "one vote with same in electing of the Principal and regentis of the said College."[15] (Commission 1826a: pp.9-10) Following upon the triumph of Presbyterianism, it was further decided that the students should swear a Confession of Faith before receiving their degree.[16] Church encroachment deepened over time. As one critic remarked, "The glorious Revolution of 1688 was followed by what was known in Episcopalian circles as the "Presbyterian Inquisition", which transformed Edinburgh from an Episcopalian college, with one or two masters who had hobnobbed with the Jesuits, into a Presbyterian seminary."[17] (Horn 1967: p.36) Church influence over the College was further entrenched in a 1707 Act of Parliament, the "Act for Securing the Protestant and Presbyterian Church Government" and the 1711 "Act 14th" of the Scottish General Assembly. The Acts required that all masters subscribe to the Confession of Faith before the Presbytery associated with the university.[18] (Universities Commission 1837: p.207) Hence, what had begun with King James VI as a step away from church patronage, and a mere concession to the Ministers in

the form of an *avisamentum*, had led, by the early eighteenth century, to the requirement that all professors and teachers in the universities of Scotland swear before the Presbytery of the bounds, in a declaration to this effect: "I hereby declare solemnly before God, that I will not use my public influence as professor in this university, to the overturning of the Protestant Presbyterian religion, as the same was recognised in this country by the Revolution of 1688, in any way, directly or indirectly; and that I will not, in my public prelections or in my private intercourse with the students, say anything against the Calvinistic system of theology held by the Protestant Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, as the same is comprehensively set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith." (Blackie 1843: p.37)

It turns out then, that in Hume's day, the Ministers of Edinburgh, the General Assembly, and the Town Council, held considerable influence over all aspects of college affairs. This influence was not always appreciated by the university faculty, who sought to establish some measure of governance and administration for themselves.[19] This was no easy task, however, for in addition to their efforts to secure the *avisamentum* and the Confession of Faith, the Ministers were also determined to see that Presbyterian teachings were foremost in the curriculum. They insisted on Presbyterian religious and moral instruction, and made church attendance mandatory. In cooperation with the Church, the Town Council declared in 1708, that, "at such times as the students are not obleidged to be in their classes", the faculty would be required to provide extra-curricular teaching of "Pnewmaticks and Morall Philosophy."[20] (Morgan 1937: p.164) As the power struggles and controversies continued, the professoriate continued to pursue their objective of achieving some measure of academic freedom. In May 1728, the "Masters and Professors of the College" took it upon themselves to "meet and act as a faculty by doing certain Deeds namely by drawing up and signing a certain protest to be given to the Venerable Assembly", all "under the pretence of saving the Rights and Priveleges of the said College touching the proceedings of the said Assembly."[21] (Town Council of Edinburgh 1808: p.37) But the faculty made little headway. the Town Council responded in much the same fashion as in 1704; namely, by denying the existence of rights and privileges on the part of the faculty. Moreover, by 1734, it was decided that the teaching of Pnewmatics - the Presbyterian Church's doctrines on metaphysics and moral philosophy - would be tied to the university's moral philosophy position. Hence, the

Chair of Ethics and Pnewmatical Philosophy was created, and on 13 February 1734, the initial appointees to the position, Dr Pringle and Mr William Scott, were elected to a "Joint Professorship of Pnewmatics and Moral Philosophy." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1808: p.42) This, of course, was the very chair for which David Hume had applied in 1744.

Not surprisingly, the implications of Hume's moral and religious views would have been a matter of some consequence to the hiring committee. For, the Chair of Ethics and Pnewmatical Philosophy expressly required that its possessor teach "Pnewmatics". The subject of "Pnewmatics" is defined as "consisting of two parts" the "first part treats of the Human Mind" and the "second part of the Being and Attributes of GOD."[22] (Ferguson 1776: p.7) In other words, the professor of "Pnewmatics" had to "praelect" "upon the Truth of the Christian religion." (Hume 1967: p.x) This requirement did not seem to deter Hume, whose close personal friend, the Lord Provost, John Coutts, encouraged him to apply in the spring of 1744 - as soon as he learned that the Chair might become vacant. (Mossner 1970: p.154) Indeed, it was likely the Lord Provost, John Coutts, who led Hume to think of himself as the only serious candidate for the job. But, evidently, both Hume and Coutts had underestimated the interest that the committee would take in the moral and religious views attributed to Hume's *Treatise*. Indeed, when considered from an institutional point of view, the Chair of Ethics and Pnewmatical philosophy was one of the placeholders of Church influence. From this perspective, it is not hard to understand their motives for a close inspection of Hume's candidacy.

Though Hume and Coutts had misjudged the situation, it was also true that the Town Council hiring committee was an administrative body. Its members were drawn from various sources, and few had any real background in philosophy. It is perhaps for this reason that Hume and Coutts had not anticipated many difficulties. Indeed, at the time, committee members might well have had many other weighty matters on their minds. For instance, the vacancy occurred at a time of great civil unrest in Scotland. The Jacobite movement, which aimed to advance the Stuart claim to the throne against William and Mary, had grown widespread, and civil unrest had begun to move southward from the Highlands. From the perspective of the committee, the truly pressing concern for the Town Council in 1744-45 was probably not the Hume appointment, but Jacobite unrest and the possibility of an advance on

Edinburgh itself. Hence, the substantial concern of the leaders of Edinburgh was not with Hume *per se*, but with the threat of a complete subversion of the governance of the Church, Town Council, and College.[23]

Another incidental factor that may have played a role in the vote-casting relates more specifically to the dynamic underlying the power struggles within the ruling Whig party. According to Roger Emerson, Hume's failure to secure the position at Edinburgh may relate to political power struggles between competing Whig factions:

> The first thing one must understand about Scottish university appointments in the eighteenth century is that they were politicized, and that the politicians concerned with them were intent upon controlling every office of profit and honour in the kingdom. The more one controlled, the greater one's prestige, power and ability to manage affairs in ways useful to oneself and one's associates or masters in London. The privilege of managing Scottish affairs for the ministry in London had been sought since c. 1714 by two competing Scottish factions - the Squadrone and the Argathelians. Both were Whiggish in outlook, but their territorial bases and leaders were very different. (Emerson 1994: p.1)

However, despite the influence of party politics, it seems unlikely that Hume's failure to secure the position can be adequately explained with reference to internal party politics alone. Hume had friends in both Whig camps, and initially, he was supported by the leading officials from both parties - the Squadrone's Marquis of Tweeddale the powerful Duke of Argyll. (Emerson 1994)

The strongest case to be made for political manoeuvering actually points to the academic members of the committee, and to their resolve to use Hume's philosophy as a weapon against him. The involvement of committee members has been carefully documented by M.A. Stewart, who has examined the chronology of the Hume affair and the individual roles of the main parties. (Stewart 2001) As Stewart notes, there was a considerable delay with Dr Pringle's resignation from the Chair, so that the vacancy did not actually materialize until the spring of 1745.[24] In consequence of the delay, there was ample time for Hume's opponents, and, particularly the

academic members of the committee, to rally against him. They set about procuring a body of evidence to establish that Hume was not in fact a suitable candidate for a professorship in Ethics and Pnewmaticks.

The two academics who appear to have played principal roles in mounting the case against Hume were Francis Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glascow, and William Wishart, Principle of Edinburgh College. Both gave testimony against the moral and religious implications of Hume's thought, and both contributed to the political campaign against Hume. Wishart, who had long wanted Pringle out of the Chair, having had his own designs on the position, and it was through Pringle that the attention of the committee was drawn to negative pronouncements against Hume's philosophy.[25] (Stewart 2001: p.6ff.) This feat could easily have been accomplished merely by collecting and summarizing the various critical reviews of Hume's *Treatise* published in 1739-40. By the summer of 1744, Hume despondently reported "that such a popular Clamour has been raised against me in Edinburgh, on account of Scepticism, Heterodoxy & other hard Names, which confound the ignorant, that my Friends find some Difficulty, in working out the Point of my Professorship, which once appear'd so easy." (Mossner 1970: p.157)

The vacancy was at this point delayed until the spring of 1745. And, when the committee resumed, it moved, on 3 April 1745, to offer the position to Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson refused, but his letter to the committee recommended several candidates, including a candidate named James Cleghorn. In consequence of Hutcheson's refusal, the committee had to make a decision on the basis of a three-way competition between Cleghorn, Hume and Wishart. (Stewart 2001: p.16) When Wishart realized that his chances of winning the election were slim, he decided to back Cleghorn, who had been recommended by both Hutcheson and Pringle. In a last ditch effort to clear his name, Hume's supporters published a letter in which he responded to charges raised against him, apparently by Wishart & c., in a smear campaign that had been mounted against him. Published in Edinburgh in May 1745, *A Letter from a Gentleman* summarized and replied to the main charges against Hume's philosophy. It represents the most significant piece of evidence in the "Hume Affair", and speaks volumes about the perception of Hume's philosophical position and his reputation as a sceptic. In addition to the institutional history and the academic and civil politics, the missive supplies a main piece to the puzzle

of Hume's failed candidacy.

The six charges against Hume's philosophy identified in the *Letter* were as follows: (1) "Universal Scepticism", (2) "Principles leading to downright Atheism, by denying the Doctrine of Causes and Effects", (3) "Errors concerning the very Being and Existence of a God", (4) "Errors concerning God's being the first Cause, and prime Mover of the Universe", (5) "denying the Immateriality of the Soul, and the Consequences flowing from this Denial", and (6) "sapping the Foundations of Morality, by denying the natural and essential Differences betwixt Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Justice and Injustice; making the Differences only artificial, and to arise from human Conventions and Compacts." (Hume 1967: pp.17-18) According to Hume, the charges were supported by extracts from the *Treatise* - extracts that represented a pastiche of out-of-context statements taken from the concluding section of the *Treatise*. (Hume 1978: pp.264-71)

None of the six charges was entirely new. Quite to the contrary, they can all be traced back to the scholarly criticisms of Hume's *Treatise* raised in the early critical reviews. The first charge, concerning "universal scepticism", can be traced back to the 1740 *Bibliothèque raisonnée* review, which links Hume's view to Pyrrhonism and "universal doubt". (Anonymous 2000c: p.61) The charge represents Hume as confounded with a "forlorne Solitude", as "leaving all established Opinions", as finding "not the *lowest Degree* of Evidence in any Proposition either in Philosophy or common life", as finding folly in those who pretend to know anything with certainty, &c.. (Hume 1967: pp.4-7,17) The second and third charges might easily have sprung from the 1739 *The History of the Works of the Learned* review or the 1740 *Bibliothèque raisonnée* review.[26] The fourth charge may have been prompted by Hume's claim in the *Abstract* that we could have no idea of a the causal efficacy or power associated with God.[27] Indeed, the critic makes his point by linking it with passages that are very close in meaning to those described in the 1740 *Abstract*. (Hume 1965: p.23) The fifth charge was raised in the 1740 *Nouvelle bibliothèque* review and elsewhere.[28] Finally, the sixth charge can be linked to the 1740 editorial identifying the immoral and mischievous implications of Hume doctrine concerning the soul. This topic, in addition to the negative implications of Hume's moral philosophy, was developed in a 1741 review of Book III of the *Treatise* in a manner similar to the sixth charge.[29] This last reviewer makes explicit the conventionalism of Hume's account of morality, to wit, his

claim that morality arises neither from reason nor from the nature or order of things, but from origins that are, in part, artificial.[30] Hence, whoever it was that authored the 1745 charges against Hume need have done little more than elaborate on the various charges already laid against Hume in the reviews published between 1739 and 1741.

In his *Letter*, Hume replied to the charges as follows. He reads the first charge of *universal scepticism*, perhaps in light of the 1740 *Bibliothèque raisonnée* review of the *Treatise*, as a charge of holding the doctrine of the "*Pyrrhonians* or *Scepticks*". To this, he indicates that such doctrines are conventionally regarded among the learned as mere curiosities that do nothing more than "abate the Pride of *mere human Reasoners*". (Hume 1967: p.19) He states that his only aim was to show that principles that are usually taken to be certain are not in fact demonstrable. (Hume 1967: p.19) Moreover, none of this was intended to lead to a "universal doubt", "*Modesty* then, and *Humility*, with regard to the Operations of our natural Faculties, is the Result of *Scepticism*; not an universal Doubt, which it is impossible for any Man to Support, and which the first and most trivial Accident in Life must immediately disconcert and destroy." (Hume 1967: p.19) To this Hume adds the reminder that such modesty is not intended to actually subvert belief in an external world or in the principles of religion, "Tis evident, that so extravagant a Doubt as that which Scepticism may seem to recommend, by destroying *every Thing*, really affects *nothing*, and was never intended to be understood *seriously*, but was meant as a *mere* Philosophical Amusement, or Trial of *Wit* and *Subtilty*." (Hume 1967: p.19) In fact, given the full context of his passages, Hume maintains, the reader would see that far from recommending a "universal doubt", he denounces these abstract speculations as "the Effects of *Philosophical Melancholy* and *Delusion* - apparently a common affliction among philosophers from ancient times. (Hume 1967: pp.20-1) For, as Hume notes, many great philosophers have probed the "Weakness and Uncertainty of *mere* human Reason" and denounced those who have entertained too great a confidence in the same. (Hume 1967: p.21)

To the second charge of holding opinions concerning causality that lead to atheism, Hume replied that he had only intended to deny one of the arguments for the existence of God - namely, the *a priori* argument built on the causal axiom "That whatever begins to exist must have a Cause of Existence." (Hume 1967: p.22) This axiom, Hume says, can never be

defended by appeal to "*demonstrative* or *intuitive Certainty*." (Hume 1967: p.22) However, there is "*moral Evidence*" leading to the conviction of God's existence, and Hume's intent was to assign the latter kind of evidence, rather than *a priori* evidence, in support of the proposition. (Hume 1967: p.24) Hume further notes that what he has said about the *a priori* proof does not affect the other arguments for God's existence, including the *a posteriori* and Cartesian arguments. (Hume 1967: pp.22-3)

To the third charge of errors concerning God's being and existence, Hume answers that his argument against the possibility of abstract or general ideas that are distinct from ideas of particular existence is not tantamount to a denial of God's existence. (Hume 1967: pp.26-7) Following such a line of reasoning would commit him, he points out, to the denial of all propositions concerning existence. And this, he says, is surely not a doctrine that he could fairly be charged with having professed. (Hume 1967: p.26) However, Hume does insist that the traditional doctrine of abstraction fails to yield a meaningful idea of God sufficient to establish proof of God's existence. (Hume 1967: pp.26-7)

To the fourth charge, which concerns the undermining of the cosmological argument by the denial of knowledge of God's causal efficacy, Hume replied that he had only intended to attack the Cartesian tradition of appeal to occasional causes in the physical world, and not the First Cause argument, the latter of which is not based on the doctrine of physical causation. (Hume 1967: pp.27-9)

To the fifth charge regarding the immateriality of the soul, Hume denied having made any such direct avowal. (Hume 1967: p.30) What he maintained on the subject, he insisted, was simply what Locke and Berkeley had already shown, namely, that the "Question did not admit of any distinct Meaning." (Hume 1967: p.30)

Finally, to the sixth and "severest" charge, i.e., the charge of sapping the foundations of morality by denying a foundation in reality for the differences between good and evil, right and wrong & c., Hume responded that his claim that human society is the source of social contract does not rule out the possibility that moral obligation is concomitant to such contracts. (Hume 1967: p.32) He further notes, in his defence, that the moral sense theory has been adopted by moralists such as Hutcheson, and protests that his critic has taken his meaning out of context. (Hume 1967:

p.30) Furthermore, he denies that identifying both natural and artificial bases for virtue can have a pernicious effect on either our understanding of morality or moral obligation itself.

Hume closes the *Letter* with the following recommendation in favour of his own candidacy, thereby giving himself a bit of a character reference in addition to defending his philosophy, “But he has one Advantage, I trust, which is worth a Hundred of what his Opposers can boast of, viz. *that of Innocence*; and I hope that he has also another Advantage, *viz. that of Favour*, if we really live in a Country of Freedom, where Informers and Inquisitors are so deservedly held in universal Detestation, where Liberty, at least of Philosophy, is so highly valu'd and esteem'd.” (Hume 1967: p.34)

Hume's missive had little or no effect on the committee. A meeting for the *avisamentum* was scheduled at Laigh Councill House in late May 1745. Though there are no minutes for the meeting, we do know that it was there that the Ministers gave their *avisamentum* to the Magistrates and Council. In the end, the position was awarded to William Cleghorn, who was nominated and elected to the to the office of Professor of Pnewmaticks and Morall Philosophy on 5 June 1745. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1745: p.188) Upon his acceptance of the offer on the 19 June 1745, Mr Cleghorn “gave his oath of alleadgiance and signify the same with the assurance to his Majesty King George the second.” (Town Council of Edinburgh 1745: p.222)

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it was largely the efforts of the academic community that undermined Hume's candidacy. Indeed, the “metaphysical prejudices” of the learned few who stood in judgement diverged sharply from those of Hume. It would not have escaped the attention of the academics on the committee that Hume's *Treatise* had expressed doubts on subjects touching the broad heading of Pnewmatics, which taught of “salvation, grace, and a proper understanding of the spiritual substances such as “God, the Angels, and the souls of men.” (Grant 1884: p.274) These were, of course, the very themes of traditional metaphysics that so many Continental philosophers seemed to be tearing down. But the sceptical trend in metaphysics had yet to penetrate the walls of Edinburgh's principal institutions, and Hume's philosophy, as interpreted by his academic superiors, was not one that the hiring committee wished to advance.[31]

Of course, Hume's philosophy was not likely to have been the only factor involved in the decision. In the final analysis, the reasons for Hume's failure to secure the Edinburgh appointment seem to have been quite complex, so that it would be impossible to identify a single factor as the deciding factor. But what is certain is that neither the tenets of Hume's philosophy nor his accomplishments received much of a hearing. Hume's academic superiors had charged him with "Heresy, Deism, Scepticism and Atheism", and such charges could only have served to feed existing power struggles at the institutional level and worries about political unrest. At some level, it must have been apparent to all sides, that both Hume and his "dangerous" philosophy would be quashed. Given the political climate of 1745, even Hume's supporters would eventually have been afraid to give the appearance of sponsoring an "infidel" and hence, of fostering further social unrest.[32] Whatever the true status of Hume's candidacy in the eyes of the Town Council, there appeared to be little will in 1744-45 to vet the philosophical and theological charges in any sort of extended debate.

In retrospect, we can ask exactly what it was about Hume's philosophy that sounded the warning bell in 1744-45. Indeed, why had Wishart, Hutcheson, and others objected to Hume's philosophy in particular? It was not, for example, Hume's associationism or analysis of induction that drew special notice. The best evidence of what drew offense can be found in Hume's mention of the charges against him in his *Letter*. And, what the *Letter* reveals is that Hume's doctrine had initially been interpreted in a way that fit neither the content of the *Treatise*, nor that of the *Abstract*. In particular, Hume was charged with a *universal scepticism*, a scepticism that cast doubt in such a manner as to topple the edifice of knowledge, religion and morality. This was achieved, Hume earliest critics charged, by his undermining of the *a priori* argument for God's existence, by his denial of the immateriality of the soul, by his questioning our knowledge of God's causal power, and by his reduction of the foundations of morality to convention. But Hume, as we have seen, defended himself against all of the charges. The most salient of these replies, for our purposes, concerns the question of whether he intended to endorse a *universal scepticism*. And, as we have seen, Hume immediately distanced himself from the view, pointing out that he intended to advance only a modest form of criticism. He explains this quite clearly in the *Letter*, saying that his aim was to show that the principles of metaphysics were not in fact demonstrably certain,

but only probable. This, on the face of it, is something quite distinct from professing a *universal scepticism.* The distinction, however, was lost on his critics. Hence, it seems that "metaphysical prejudices" about morality and religion influenced not only the early reception of Hume's philosophy, but also the negative judgement of the Town Council. Evidently, Hume had correctly predicted at least this much: That it would in fact be the existing "metaphysical prejudices" of his readers, rather than the merits or demerits of his own doctrine, that would weigh most heavily in the minds of his early critics.

One curiosity that remains for the historian, is the question of the role played by Francis Hutcheson. It is hard to determine just who was behind the 1744-45 attack on Hume, but, in any event, the six charges were simply a collation of the points that had been made by Hume's early critics in the 1739-41 reviews. As such, Wishart could easily have assembled and embellished upon the charges for the committee. However, for all we know, Hutcheson might well have been the mastermind behind the charges alluded to in Hume's *A Letter from a Gentleman.* It is almost certain that Hutcheson would have concurred wholeheartedly with the third and sixth objections, the latter of which Hume took to be the severest of all. (Hume 1967: p.30) These two charges rested on Hume's denial of an abstract idea of God's existence and his assertion of a conventional foundation for morality. They were interpreted by Hume's peers as tied to a *universal scepticism* that denied knowledge of God and morality.[33] Hume himself reflected despairingly over his treatment at the hands of those he took to be his friends - especially Hutcheson - one of the great names in philosophy that Hume might have hoped would positively influence the reception of his *Treatise.* In the spring of 1745, he expressed astonishment at the perceived betrayal by Hutcheson. He seemed genuinely surprised to learning that Hutcheson entertained "a bad opinion of [his] orthodoxy." (Emerson 1994: p.10) "What can be the meaning of this Conduct in that celebrated & benevolent Moralist, I cannot imagine", he wrote in a letter to his friend, Mure of Caldwell. (Mossner 1970: p.157) (Greig 1969: vol.1,p.58) Whether ill-used or not, all things considered, the outcome of the Hume affair was not hard to predict. In part, Hume was doomed by his own discussion of scepticism in the *Treatise.* In part, he was sunk by the testimony of experts who happened to disagree with and misinterpret his analysis. In part he suffered by means of his own hubris. But, he was also, at some level, the

victim of a country deeply divided on both political and religious grounds. And, to an important extent, Hume's candidacy was undermined by the impersonal facts of institutional history - a history reflecting patronage and ideology that had long governed both the country and its universities. In the end, the political and intellectual controversy that unfolded in the Hume affair was relatively insubstantial, although the episode created a suspicion around Hume and his philosophy that would long endure.

Chapter 3

The First *Enquiry*

Hume's dissatisfaction with the critical reception of his *Treatise* was evident not only from his personal correspondence, his *Abstract*, and his *Letter*, but also from his penning of the 1748 *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* - later renamed the *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*.[34] In fact, the first book of the *Enquiry* was drafted during the Hume affair of 1744-45, and it is not much of a stretch to suppose that Hume's purpose was to revise his theory, or at least its presentation, to advantage. Hume seems to have viewed the differences between the *Enquiry* and the more "juvenile" *Treatise* as mainly stylistic. He encouraged this view with remarks to the effect that the formal *Treatise* and the informally styled *Enquiry* contained one and the same doctrine. "I believe the philosophical Essays contain everything of Consequence relating to the Understanding, which you could meet with in the Treatise; & I give you my Advice against reading the latter. By shortening & simplifying the Questions, I really render them much more complete. *Addo dum minuo.* The philosophical Principles are the same in both." (Greig 1969: vol.1.,p.158) At the same time, Hume also said that he hoped that the corrections to "*some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression*" would somehow "*cast the whole anew*" in the minds of his readers. (Hume 1975: p.2) But just how Hume intended to accomplish thi epiphany is unclear, as is the extent and nature of the differences between the two works. One way or another, Hume seemed to think that a few changes and a stylistic make-over would set his readers straight on some substantive points of interpretation. Unfortunately, these efforts did not

succeed. Within Hume's own lifetime, there emerged a substantial secondary literature confirming the most negative of readings of Hume and his philosophy. Ironically, this literature focussed on charging Hume with professing doctrines the he had taken pains to distance himself from in the *Enquiry.*[35]

Whether Hume's *Enquiry* amounts to mere stylistic change or to substantive revision is a difficult matter to decide. Selby-Bigge's comparative study of the *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry* provides a useful overview of the shift in emphasis in the *Enquiry.* (Hume 1975: pp.vii-xxxi) The most obvious change is the move to an essay format. This change may be more substantive than it first appears; for, with it, Hume abandons all pretension to present a "science of *man*". He reduces Book I to less than a fifth of its *Treatise* counterpart and collapses the long discussion of space and time in Book II of the *Treatise* into two short sections. With these changes, Hume virtually eliminates the science of human psychology that lies at the heart of the *Treatise.* There is little empiricist psychology of the perception of objects and relations, and evidently, no basis upon which to elaborate an experimental reasoning leading to the principles of association. Hence, the ambition to emulate experimentalism has all but disappeared. But perhaps these omissions were intended only for the purposes of simplification? Even so, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they amount to a substantive change. Whereas the *Treatise* sets out to correct the errors of metaphysics by adopting a more rigorous method, the *Enquiry* introduces philosophical and rhetoric styles that actually obscure Hume's experimentalism. Hume evidently wants his readers to accept his conclusions; but he seems to care much less whether his readers follow the empirical reasoning that originally led to them. One explanation for the changes is that Hume thinks that the reasoning of the *Treatise* is beyond the grasp of his readers. However, it is also possible that Hume is himself no longer convinced that the *Treatise* succeeded as an experimental work. In the latter case, the stylistic changes of the *Enquiry* would indicate a substantial change in Hume's views. Hence, in abandoning the psychologistic, experimental thread, Hume may have hoped not only to simplify his work, but also to correct a deficiency.

In addition to deflecting attention away from his empiricist psychology, Hume's *Enquiry* recast what he took to be the novel bits of his doctrine - the parts concerning causality and methodology. Hume underlined the

weakness of the *a priori* argument that one object may be associated with another in such a manner as to determine the mind to form ideas of cause and effect and necessary connection. He also elaborated on the question of the origin of our idea of a causal power. Both topics, as we have seen, had already been the source of considerable controversy. Critics charged that Hume's analysis undermined the *a priori* argument for God's existence. Hence, whereas the Hume of the 1745 *Letter* tries to redirect the reader to the remaining arguments for the existence of God, the Hume of 1748 abandons this sleight-of-hand approach. Instead, he carefully reiterates the empiricist epistemology that leads him to conclude that the cosmological argument is insufficient to prove the existence of an all-powerful, transcendent being. To this he adds his the *caveat* that philosophical arguments hold little practical appeal, and that religious matters must rest on *faith.* (Hume 1975: p.144 ff.,p.165)

The most significant bit of rewriting is in the final section of Book I, where Hume re-casts the justificatory issues concerning causality, induction, and the principles of association. Here he reminds the reader that knowledge built upon the causal relation is merely probable, and hence, not certain knowledge. This conclusion leads to a protracted discussion of Hume's main methodological point. His argument, he maintains, leads not to an extreme scepticism, but to a moderate or *mitigated scepticism.* The logic underlying this *mitigated scepticism* is as follows: Metaphysics will never be in a position to justify extravagant opinions; yet, at the same time, common sense will never allow us to remain in a state of suspended judgement. Hence, caution with respect to metaphysics, not pessimism, is advisable. It is here that Hume makes an effort to distinguish his own view from the *consequent scepticism* of the Pyrrhonists and the *antecedent scepticism* of Descartes. The former, he says, recommends an unrealistic form of suspended judgement; while the latter pronounces such a negative verdict on the trustworthiness of the senses that it leads to *universal scepticism.* What we find then, is that Hume's *Enquiry* combines and refines the strategies of his 1740 and 1745 responses to his critics. It downplays the empiricist psychology and theory of ideas, it directs attention away from the 'scientific' aspect of his *Treatise*, and it re-casts the doctrines of causality and scepticism. In fact, the simplifications and clarifications of the 1748 publication suggest a theory of a wholly epistemological character; Hume reaches the same conclusions, but he no longer lays claim to having

undertaken the experimental approach of natural philosophy.

The simplified presentation of the *Enquiry* made it easier for critics to follow Hume's text, and it was this work would eventually become the focus of critical attention. Nevertheless, only one short review of the *Enquiry* - then anonymously published under the title of *Philosophical Essays* - followed in the year after its publication. The German review consisted mainly of a listing of the topics discussed in the *Enquiry.* Its tone was generally positive, and the author praises the quality of the *Enquiry's* prose.

A more substantial contribution to the literature on the *Enquiry* followed in 1751. The publication was due to Henry Home, Lord Kames. Kames' criticism is focussed on the *Enquiry's* account of belief. Contra Hume, Kames argues, vivacity is not a true criterion of our willingness to believe propositions. (Home 1779: p.228) For example, a historical narrative may be more strongly believed than a fictional account simply because the historian is considered a "true historian" - even if the manner of conveying perceptions is not especially lively. (Home 1779: p.230) In such a case, it is the authority of the historian that produces belief "more than any fabulous narration can do." (Home 1779: p.230) This shows that vivacity and belief are distinct and separable things. Kames also makes the point "that any doctrine, which leads to a distrust of our senses, must land in absurd scepticism." (Home 1779: p.206) For, "if our senses be not admitted as the evidence of truth, I see not that we can be certain of any fact whatever." (Home 1779: p.206) Hence, he concludes that, "The evidence of this perception cannot be rejected without introducing universal scepticism; and without obliging us to doubt of things, of which no man ever doubted." (Home 1779: pp.374-5) With this charge Kames suggests that the *Enquiry's* scepticism is not a *mitigated scepticism* after all, but rather, a form of *antecedent scepticism* leading to *universal scepticism.* This line of criticism, we shall see, would prove influential.[36]

A second German language review of the *Enquiry* followed in 1753. (Anonymous 2000g) By 1753, the authorship of the *Enquiry* had become generally known to the public, and this review was was less positive than the first. Following the negative tenor of Hume reviews, the critic develops a an incendiary charge against Hume; namely, that he proposes "deceptive objections against religion." (Anonymous 2000h: p.114) The main source of offence is Hume's essay "Of Miracles." There, Hume argues that we are right to doubt all reports of miracles, since the weight of evidence is against

the occurrence of an interruption in the course of nature. "Who would of thought this of an author who had just attempted to demonstrate the weakness of inferences from experience[?]", the reviewer remarks. (Anonymous 2000h: p.115) The author is also incensed by Hume's claim that only ignorant barbarians lay claim to the occurrence of miracles. Worse still, Hume falls back on a "deceitful defense of Christianity", when he proposes that religion demands faith, not rational investigation. (Anonymous 2000h: p.116) Finally, the author charges Hume with the denial of God's existence and the denial of rewards and punishments in a future life. (Anonymous 2000h: p.116) Hence, the 1753 review is similar in tone to the negative reviews of the *Treatise*.

With the authorship of the *Enquiry* now known to the public, additional negative commentaries soon followed. John Leland, like Kames before him, argued against Hume's views on morality and religion via an attack on Hume's theory of ideas. Drawing principally from the *Enquiry*, rather than the *Treatise*, Leland claims that Hume's way of arguing, "proceeds upon a wrong foundation, and is contrary to truth and reason." For, Hume holds "that we cannot have any reasonable certainty of the truth of a thing, or that it really is, when we cannot distinctly explain the manner of it, or how it is." (Leland 1754: p.9) This analysis, however, is mistaken: "[But] certainly we may know, that there is something in the cause which produceth the effect, though we cannot distinctly explain what the circumstance in the cause is, by which it is enabled to produce it." (Leland 1754: pp. 10-11) What Leland maintains then, is that, even though we may not be able to distinctly conceive the manner of causation, this does not prevent our knowing that a causal relation exists.[37] (Leland 1754: p.10) Ultimately, Leland reasons, Hume's has "carried scepticism to an unreasonable height", and his writing "strikes at the foundation of nature, as well as the proofs and evidences of revealed religion."[38] (Leland 1754: p.2)

At this point in time, there also emerged a secondary literature that virtually ignored Hume's empiricist psychology and epistemology, and confined its attention to the religious and moral conclusions of the *Enquiry*. There are too many individual responses to consider here; however, the literature shows a considerable degree of consensus in terms of its censure of Hume.[39] Without exception, it rejects Hume's criticisms of the cosmological argument and his views on miracles. Hume's moral theory was

criticized for its resting of morality on a moral sensibility and artificial virtues and the doctrines of the *Enquiry* were characterized as tending toward "dangerous consequences". The critically acclaimed forerunner of this literary trend was Dr Adams, Master of Pembroke College, Oxford. Adams' principal objective was to defend the miracles of the New Testament. He characterizes Hume's argument of the "Essay on Miracles" as an argument that extends the sceptical doubt concerning knowledge of the future to include knowledge of the past. He quotes Hume as saying that, "The ultimate standard by which we determine disputes of this kind, is always derived from experience and observation."[40] (Adams 1754: p.5) In response to this argument, Adams adopts a simple strategy. Namely, he points to the numerous testimonial that have been given to defend the credibility of the testimony in the Gospel. For Adams, the bottom line is that "A great part of mankind have given their testimony to the credibility of miracles." In other words, "they have actually believed them." As such, "we have universal testimony to the credibility of miracles." (Adams 1754: p.17) The more general sentiment that Adams' conveys, however, is the sentiment that critiques of religious authority amount to an unjustifiable undermining of Christianity. His conclusion is that Hume's philosophy, whether intentionally or not, leads to a view that is anti-religious and anti-Christian:[41]

> They who believe religion must think that the cause of virtue and the happiness of mankind are bound up in it: and this will justify a degree of zeal and ardor in its defence. But what is there to call for or excuse this spirit in those who oppose it? If the author be a friend to virtue, which, from his elegance of mind and taste, I scarce can doubt - if he be a friend to natural religion, which a person of so much thought and reflexion sure must be - what principles has he in reserve for the support of these, when Christianity is taken away? The best philosophy, as I have already said, availed but little in reforming the religions or morals of mankind: and, as to the philosophy of this author, it is, as far as I understand it, as ill calculated for this purpose as any I have met with. (Adams 1754: p.101)

The solidarity in the early secondary literature on Hume is a point of considerable interest. This solidarity was characteristic not only of the

literature on Hume's religious and moral conclusions, but also of the literature on Hume's metaphysics.[42] The basic strategies of writers such as Kames and Leland were copied by later critics. Richard Price, for example, follows the lead of Kames and Leland when he attacks the foundations of Hume's theory of ideas, and finds that the doctrine leads to an extreme form of scepticism.[43] This solidarity in the critical reception of Hume seems to have led to a firming of the position against Hume and his philosophy. The consensus that had emerged was that Hume had questioned religious authority, advanced doctrines harmful to Christianity, cast doubt on the faculties, and promoted an extreme form of scepticism. These negative pronouncements, however nicely framed, amounted to a death sentence for Hume's academic career. He turned his attention to history.

One might have expected that, with time, the controversy associated with Hume and his philosophy would have lost its appeal. Hume published his well-received *History of England* and established himself as a historian.[44] However, at this juncture there began to emerge an even more substantive critique of *both* Hume's person and his philosophy. As early as 1754, there emerged a Hume 'persona' - a fictionalized caricature of Hume that would figure increasingly in literary spoofs. The 1754 publication was entitled *Admonitions from the Dead, in Epistles to the Living.* In it, the spirit of the deceased Bolingbroke - another controversial figure - attempts to save the soul of a living Hume from scepticism. The moral of the story is that Hume and his followers should try to save their souls. As we shall see, this genre of literary chastisement would play an influential role in perpetuating the public perception of Hume.

Thus, at a personal level, Hume became an increasingly controversial figure. Outside of his intimate circle of supporters, his reputation grew distorted. Most damaging were the authoritative public pronouncements of disapprobation by the clergy. These pronouncements, in effect, legitimated all negative perceptions of Hume. In 1755, for example, one clergyman published a pamphlet entitled, *An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments Contained in the Writings of Sopho, and David Hume, Esq.* The pamphlet drew comparisons between the work of Kames and Hume, and was circulated for the express purpose of keeping Kames, from holding an official position in the Church of Scotland. (Bonar 1755) Attributed to John Bonar, the pamphlet opens with a reminder that it is the business of the established Church of Scotland to promote "purity of faith" and

"sanctity of manners." It reminds the reader that these ends must always be kept in view: "Then, and then only, doth the[e] act with dignity in her respective courts, when these important ends are the great objects of her attention." (Bonar 1755: p.1) The author claims to raise an issue of "very general concern"; namely, "the public attack which in this country has of late been made on the great principles and duties of natural and revealed religion, in the works of DAVID HUME, Esq; and in the essays of an author who has been distinguished by the name of SOPHO." (Bonar 1755: p.2) He then calls on his colleagues to do their duty and to "to give warning of the poison contained in these volumes." (Bonar 1755: p.2) However, Bonar does not engage the finer metaphysical points in the "dangerous" works in question. Instead, he invents propositions, which he bases on quotes taken out-of-context. Those cited as representative of the view of Kames, are made to sound Humean. Those cited as representative of Hume's view are made to sound *inhuman*.[45]

In a reply to this pamphlet entitled *Observations Upon a Pamphlet, An Analysis of the Moral and Religious Sentiments Contained in the Writings of Sopho, and David Hume, Esq &c.*, Hugh Blair defended the "freedom of inquiry and debate" as a "noble principle" such that "all attempts to infringe so valuable a privilege in cases where the peace of society is not concerned, must ever be regarded with concern by all reasonable men." (Blair 1755: p.2) Blair inquires whether the author of *An Analysis* "has not, in many instances, misrepresented the meaning, and quoted unfairly the words of those books he would expose to censure." (Blair 1755: p.2) He also notes the numerous misleading and unfair misrepresentations of the authors' views. "From the whole survey of this *Analysis*," Blair writes, "the misrepresentations and false quotations contained in it are evident." (Blair 1755: p.27) "By arts such as these, are the characters of two Gentlemen attacked and defamed. The public will judge with how little candour this attack has been carried on." (Blair 1755: p.28)

Despite Blair's noble efforts, Bonar succeeded in gaining his objective, namely, Kames' exclusion from the official body of the Church. On 28 May 1755, the General Assembly's Committee on Overtures voted in favour of the following motion, aimed at censuring all infidels who might, like Kames, dare to follow in Hume's footsteps. A year later, in May 1756, the matter of Hume's infidelity was taken up directly - this time as an independent matter before the General Assembly.[46] The question before the assembly

was whether a further public censure of Hume might not serve to curb the growth of infidelity. Hume, it was claimed, had boldly made open attacks on the gospel of Christ. The Assembly was divided, however, and it was pointed out that many members had not read Hume's work, and that the investigation into his philosophy would be an arduous task. In the end, the motion was dropped.[47] Thus it was that, ten years after the "Hume Affair" of 1744-45, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland felt the need to articulate a "warning against the infidel principles of Mr Hume." (Inglis 1806: p.89n)

Soon thereafter, in late 1756, Hume's public image became further distorted through his connection to his cousin, John Home's, theatrical endeavors. Home, Minister of Athelstane-ford, was under fire for his play-writing and for absenting his parish in order to oversee productions of his plays in London. In particular, the production of Home's tragedy, *Douglas*, which had been acted at the Cannongate in Edinburgh for several nights beginning 14 December 1756, had given rise to objections.[48] The Presbytery of Edinburgh decided to write letters to various presbyteries, and to form a committee "to draw up an Admonition concerning the play house to be read from the pulpit." (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1756: p.247) An anonymous letter of censure entitled *A Letter to the Reverend the Moderator, and Members of the Presbytery of Haddingtoun* was circulated. The *Letter* attributed a major share of the blame to Hume and his influence on Home. Having spent too much time with Hume, Home was now setting forth as an example "the cursed principles and doctrine of his intimate acquaintance and beloved friend, David Home the Infidel, concerning the warrantableness of self-murder."[49] (Anonymous 1757a: p.4) The author goes on to warn that "We see, by the growth of Infidelity, the fatal effects of thus permitting David and John Homes to go on after the manner they do without being censured", and concludes that, "You must either depose and cast out John Home and his adherents, or be cast off yourselves." (Anonymous 1757a: pp.4-6) By May 1757, the Synod of Lothian and Tweedale, a mid-level ecclesiastical court within the Church of Scotland, had convened to discuss the *Douglas* controversy and the question of whether clergy should write or attend plays.[50]

In opposition to this trend, Adam Ferguson proposed a serious defense of the theater. Ferguson's 1757 *The Morality of Stage-Plays Seriously Considered* admits that there have been plays of a "degree of indecency and

licentiousness", but questions whether all plays should be forsaken on account of some of their number being unacceptable. He hopes that audiences will have "judgment and severity enough" to reject bad examples. (Ferguson 1757: pp.3-5): "But I cannot admit any such abuse, as a valid argument against the stage in general. We do not prohibit the use of food and drink, because some men abuse them to excess; nor do we forbid all relaxation from business, because some unhappy persons do mischief in their sports: Neither should we condemn every poetical composition, intended for the Stage, because some Writings of this kind have been found faulty and licentious." (Ferguson 1757: pp.5-6)

As with Blair's defense of free-speech, Ferguson's defense of theater was heavily outnumbered by a vocal opposition.[51] Less than a decade later, in the mid-1760s, one of Hume's most virulent critics, James Beattie, added fuel to the growing appetite for personal attacks on Hume and for his fictional persona.[52] Following in the same vein, Hume's relationship with Jean-Jacques Rousseau became the subject of public curiosity. Hume had been personally criticized by Rousseau and others as a poor host. Though there is ample evidence to suggest that Rousseau was actually beset by paranoia in his finding of fault with Hume, the opportunity to criticize Hume seemed too good to pass up. Hence, a series of critical commentaries and rejoinders dissecting Hume and his character ensued.[53] (Mossner 1943)

As if to counterbalance the appetite for petty criticism, there began to emerge, from the mid-1760s until Hume's death in 1776, a substantive critical responses to Hume's philosophy. These responses were due mainly to professional philosophers, and they were much more elaborate than the earlier critiques of the 1750s. The aim was now one of systematically dismantling Hume's metaphysical doctrine from its very foundation, and to this end the scholars turned not only to the *Enquiry*, but also to the *Treatise*. The most influential criticisms were due to Thomas Reid, James Balfour and James Beattie. Reid was Regent of Philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen (and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glascow), Balfour was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, and, Beattie, held the Chair in Moral Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen's Marischal College.[54]

Reid's earliest criticisms were outlined in his 1764 *Inquiry*. They set the agenda for his later work of the 1780s, which aimed to dismantle Hume's scepticism via his theory of ideas. In 1764, Reid aims to "justify the

common sense and reason of mankind, against the sceptical subtleties which, in this age, have endeavoured to put them out of countenance." (Reid 1863a: p.96) Strategically, Reid makes his chief target the *Treatise*. He refuses to take Hume's expressed intent there to produce a complete system of the sciences at face value, and likens Hume to Pyrrho, claiming that the real point of the *Treatise* is to show, "that there is neither human nature nor science in the world." (Reid 1863a: p.102) Hence, Reid writes of Hume's *Treatise* that, "It is surely the forbidden tree of knowledge; I no sooner taste of it, than I perceive myself naked, and stript of all things - yea, even on my very self." In consequence, "I see myself, and the whole frame of nature, shrink into fleeting ideas, which, like Epicurius's atoms, dance about in emptiness." (Reid 1863a: p.103) The final result, says Reid, is nothing short of an "abyss of scepticism." (Reid 1863a: p.103)

Reid identifies the source of Hume's scepticism in his theory of ideas. This theory, he charges, is based on false claims about psychology and epistemology. For, in restricting conception to sensation and reflection on sensation (i.e., impressions and ideas), Hume's theory of ideas gives root to scepticism. Although the same fault can be found in the work of Hume's predecessors (Descartes, Malebranche, Locke and Berkeley), Hume differs from them because he had neither reserve nor remorse. Rather, Hume "wantonly sapped the foundations of this partition, and drowned all in one universal deluge."[55] (Reid 1863a: pp.101,103) With this 1764 contribution, Reid initiates what will become an extended and influential philosophical critique, published later in the century.[56]

Balfour's position against Hume's scepticism is interesting, not only because of its originality, but also because it broaches the topic of the various scepticisms at stake in the interpretation of Hume. Balfour's main objective, so he says, will be "to point out the absurd and even pernicious consequences of this species of philosophy." (Balfour 1768: pp.36-7) He begins by establishing the sceptical character of Hume's philosophy, pointing to several of Hume's metaphysical arguments. He points to a discrediting the authority of the senses that undermines both out causal reasoning concerning existence and the foundations of mathematics. These arguments, he reasons, are intended to lead to scepticism. The unexpected twist, however, says Balfour, is that Hume's "sceptical philosophy" is unviable. It leads to lethargy, because it destroys the foundation for the distinction between truth and falsity and good and evil. By Hume's lights,

"each individual would be abandoned to a state of total indolence and despair, and the whole race of men would speedily be extinguished." (Balfour 1768: p.44) Indeed, Hume claims to translate us from an absolute to a more modest *mitigated scepticism*, but, in resting this translation on an appeal to instinct, he leaves us no notion of truth and error. As such, there can be no escape from the unsound and disordered faculties that lead to an absolute scepticism. In the end, we are left to "the deserted principles of the old academy", i.e., Pyrrhonism. (Balfour 1768: p.44-5) Balfour further notes that Hume's boldness of tone is dogmatic and thus contrary to what the "old academy" advised in the face of finding imperfections in our ideas; namely, caution and modesty. (Balfour 1768: p.33) Hence, what Hume actually effects is a transition from "the most determined scepticism to the highest extravagance of dogmatism." (Balfour 1768: pp.37-9) In the end, Hume's *mitigated scepticism* is not modest at all, but leads us right back to Pyrrhonism. (Balfour 1768: p.45)

Balfour also argues that the scepticism in the section of the *Enquiry* entitled "Of Academical or Sceptical philosophy" is actually built from a doctrine that confounds the Academical Philosophy with Greek scepticism - two species of philosophy that are not only different, but even contrary to one another: "The first lets fall a gentle light upon these truths which are of great importance: The last wraps up all things in total darkness. The one, inspiring us with modesty and caution, preserves us from error: The other, destroying all distinctions, leaves the mind without any guard at all. The principles of the one are calculated to prevent rash assent, and positive opinion; but the other, having no foundation to fix upon, cannot secure us against even the highest dogmatism. Hume's *mitigated scepticism* presents itself as something akin to the Academical Philosophy, but devolves into Pyrrhonic Scepticism, particularly in terms of its negative effects on the heart. Indeed, "their difference is perhaps still more conspicuous in their effects upon the heart, than those upon the mind." (Balfour 1768: pp.56-7) Scepticism, he writes, "exhausts the native strengths of the soul, by withdrawing every thing that can cherish and support it." And, as for conduct, the effect of scepticism is to cut "all the sinews of action" and to remove "every connection with, or concern for others &c.". (Balfour 1768: pp.57-8) Fortunately, "Some truths are so plain and evident, that reason must assent to them", writes Balfour, and such is the self-love that would induce us to abandon Hume's philosophy in favour of the true modesty of

the old academy. (Balfour 1768: p.59)[57]

Beattie, arguably the most influential Hume critic of his generation attempted to mount a truly comprehensive attack on Hume. His work is important, in part because it appears to influence Reid's later views. Moreover, Beattie explicit blurrs the boundaries between personal and philosophical attack, setting a standard for later commentators. Both aspects of Beattie's contribution are worth considering.

Philosophically, Beattie's aims to critically examine Hume's doctrine and to supply a general estimate of scepticism. With the former task in view, he begins by drawing a sharp distinction between reason and common sense. Reason, he tells us, refers to "the faculty by which we perceive truth in consequence of proof" and "that power by which we perceive self-evident truths." (Beattie 1776: p.21) On the other hand, common sense is "that power of mind which perceives truth, or commands belief, not by progressive argumentation, but by an instantaneous and instinctive impulse; derived neither from education nor from habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will, whenever its object is presented, according to an established law, and therefore not properly called *Sense*; and acting in a similar manner upon all mankind, and therefore properly called *Common Sense*." (Beattie 1776: pp.26-7) Beattie evaluates the potential of both reason and common sense to produce an account of truth and error. The two faculties, he says, seem to be connected, "although we can conceive a being endued with the one who is destitute of the other." (Beattie 1776: p.27) Beattie notes that philosophers such as Hume and Berkeley have cast doubt on both reason and common sense, denying not only the reliability of their inferences, but also the possibility that one faculty can correct the mistaken inferences of the other. "In a word" he says, "we must deny the distinction between truth and falsehood, adopt universal scepticism, and wander without end from one maze of uncertainty to another." Beattie rejects this "universal scepticism", and argues that both Reason and Common Sense supply criteria of truth. Ultimately, however, Beattie affirms that common sense is the final arbiter of truth. "I presume", says Beattie, that "the reader will be of my opinion that the causal maxim" that "whatever beginneth to exist, proceedeth from 'some cause'" is "an axiom, clear, certain, and undeniable". (Beattie 1776: p.64) This maxim, he elaborates, is an intuitively certain principle of common sense that provides proof that God is the First Cause. (Beattie 1776: p.71)

He concludes his examination into the nature of truth with the finding that the distinction between truth and falsehood “is something fixed and determinate, depending not upon man, but upon the Author of nature. The fundamental principles of truth must therefore rest upon their own evidence, perceived intuitively by the understanding.” (Beattie 1776: p.89) Hence, “the dictates of common sense must be admitted as decisive and final.” (Beattie 1776: p.99)

Beattie next attacks Hume’s theory of ideas, denying the intelligibility of the impressions and ideas distinction. These terms of art, Beattie maintains, which are central to sceptical arguments, are carelessly employed by both Berkeley and Hume. (Beattie 1776: pp.97-8) Berkeley, for example, employs the distinction in order to cast doubt on the truth of common sense perception. (Beattie 1776: p.31) He rejects this scepticism regarding the faculties on the grounds that various absurdities follow from it. “[Whereas] the sceptics, from strange conceit, that the dictates of their understanding are fallacious, and that Nature has her roguish emissaries in every corner, commissioned and sworn to play tricks with poor mortals, cannot find it in their heart to admit any thing as truth, upon the bare authority of their common sense.”[58] (Beattie 1776: p.102) In order to “confirm” his own doctrine against these forms of scepticism, Beattie critically examines a series of “detached sentences” on topics ranging from the necessity of human action to the idea of causal power to the ideas of God and the soul taken from Hume’s *Treatise*.[59] (Beattie 1776: pp.101-9) Beattie responds to Hume’s doubts by appealing to common sense. For example, he says that it would be unreasonable to deny that propositions, such as “My body exists”, can be known with certainty. (Beattie 1776: pp.104)

Beattie also reflects at length on the rise of modern scepticism, which he traces back to the Cartesian philosophy and its method of doubt. (Beattie 1776: pp.141-69) He argues that Descartes’ attempt to prove the truth of our faculties is based on an argument that presupposes their truth. (Beattie 1776: p.144) Because Descartes reasons in a circle, he leaves room open for further doubts concerning the faculties. Hence, “Descartes begins with universal doubt, that in the end he may arrive at conviction: Hume begins with hypothesis, and ends with universal doubt.”[60] (Beattie 1776: p.149) As such, Hume, who is “more subtle, and less reserved, than any of his predecessors, hath gone still greater lengths in the demolition of common sense.” (Beattie 1776: p.157) Ultimately, Beattie reasons, the whole tissue

of lies implicit in modern scepticism is built upon the mistaken doctrine of ideas and impressions, a doctrine that denies a source of ideas other than the external sense. Beattie goes on to remind us, "all just reasoning does ultimately terminate in principles of common sense; that is principles which must be admitted as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority." (Beattie 1776: p.239)

Finally, Beattie also comments on the particular danger attendant to metaphysical scepticism, is the obscurity and abstruseness of the reasoning upon which it is based. (Beattie 1776: p.315) The specific danger, it seems, is that striking at the foundations of knowledge and virtue may influence the opinions and conduct of men. (Beattie 1776: p.317) "Every doctrine is dangerous that tends to discredit the evidence of our senses, external or internal, and to subvert the original instinctive principles of human belief." (Beattie 1776: p.320) A society cannot exist, Beattie maintains, under the subversion of human sentiment that results from Hume's philosophy. Such a detestable philosophy can only create monsters.[61] (Beattie 1776: p.320) For these reasons, Hume's philosophy is pernicious to the youth.[62]

What we see then, is that the controversies around Hume and his philosophy persisted even after the publication of the first *Enquiry.* While Hume's *Enquiry* may have been an attempt to remedy the errors of the *Treatise* (which Hume evidently took to be the focus of the negative attention), critics weren't about to overlook the logical train of Hume's argument or the supposed dangers of his conclusions. The early scholarly reception of Hume's work led to a general consensus that Hume was in fact a dangerous sceptic who endorsed a *universal scepticism.* This main strategy was to argue that the foundations of Hume's empiricism were flawed in such a manner as to commit him to a *universal scepticism.* This reading, initiated in 1740 and clearly articulated by Kames in 1751, was continuously developed in the years leading up to Hume's death. One way or another, it was believed, Hume's questioning of the faculties and of the causal axiom was sure to undermine truth, religion and morality. Hume's scepticism, whatever it might amount to, was "universal" and dangerous. Yet, the label of *universal sceptic* is applied without much reference to Hume's own discussion of moderate or *mitigate scepticism.* Hume was repeatedly criticized for making foundational errors in his theory of ideas and regarding the faculties, and for the dangerous implications that follow from them - even though he claimed only to advise modesty and caution in

philosophy. In consequence, Hume's efforts to revise his *Enquiry* were entirely subverted - all the more so when his academic critics chose to feature the foundational claims in the *Treatise* rather than the *Enquiry* in their critical appraisals. In his 1770 "Advertisement" to the reader, Hume makes an explicit plea to have his *Enquiry* considered as his official doctrine:

> 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 errors 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. Yet several writers, who have honoured the Author's Philosophy with answers, have taken are to direct all their batteries against that juvenile work, which the Author never acknowledged, and have affected to triumph in any advantages, which, they imagined, they had obtained over it: A practice very contrary to all rules of candour and fair-dealing, and a strong instance of those polemical artifices, which a bigotted zeal thinks itself authorized to employ. Henceforth, the Author desires, that the following Pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.* (Hume 1975)

This last-ditch effort to redirect attention, whether sincere or not, did not succeed. Perhaps the problem was that the *Enquiry* was too much like the *Treatise*. Yet, the *Enquiry* did in fact bear some important differences from the *Treatise*. One of these was the downplaying of the empirical psychology featured in the *Treatise*. Hume could have underplayed his empirical psychology because he came to doubt whether it was truly scientific or, alternatively, simply because he hoped to improve the presentation of his central arguments. Both are plausible explanations. The move could also have been part of an attempt to forestall the charge of *universal scepticism*, since it had early on been linked to Hume's account of the faculties. So, if the account of the faculties were severely reduced, then perhaps the charge that Hume advanced an extreme scepticism founded on a doubting of the faculties would also be forestalled. Ironically however, the

charge that Hume doubts the faculties becomes a favourite one after the publication of the 1748 *Enquiry*.

Another major change in the *Enquiry* was the added attention given to the doctrine of scepticism in the final section of the first book, entitled "Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy." The changes afforded Hume an opportunity to explain his own *mitigated scepticism* and to distinguish it from other forms of scepticism, including *universal scepticism*. Hume's strategy appears to draw on a well understood division between common sense philosophy and abstract metaphysics (as described in the introduction to the *Enquiry*) to argue against the plausibility of the two main sceptical traditions, Pyrrhonian and Cartesian scepticism. He opens with a brief mention of the Cartesian philosophy, which he describes as founded on an *antecedent scepticism* that is based on doubting the initial starting points of our philosophical investigations. One problem with the Cartesian argument, Hume reasoned, was that the natural drive to speculative philosophy would prevent us ever achieving the Cartesian state of suspended judgement about antecedent beliefs. Another problem related to the fact that Cartesian scepticism could only be discharges if a veridical, self-guaranteeing perception such as the Cartesian *cogito* was secured. Contra Descartes, Hume denied the possibility of finding a certain criterion of truth. In the end, Cartesian *antecedent scepticism* would lead only to a *universal doubt*:[63]

> It recommends a universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principle, but also of our very faculties; of whose veracity, say they, we must assure ourselves, by a chain of reasoning. deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful. But neither is there any such original principle, which has a prerogative above others, that are self-evident and convincing: or if there were, could we advance a step beyond it, but by the use of those very faculties, of which we are supposed to be already diffident. The Cartesian doubt, therefore, were it ever possible to be attained by any human creature (as it is plainly not) would be entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject. (Hume 1975: pp.149-50)

Ultimately then, Hume describes Descartes' claim to have escaped *antecedent scepticism* as incoherent.

Hume also contrasts the Cartesian *antecedent scepticism* with the *consequent scepticism* of the Greeks. The latter is unlike the former in that it denies the possibility of escaping suspension of judgement about matters of opinion. The Pyrrhonian sceptic begins with certain knowledge, but ends with the view that all matters of opinion are in fact doubtful. On this account, we are indefinitely committed to a state of doubt regarding the conclusions of science. For there is always a level of doubt that arises in connection with *consequent beliefs*, since no final justification can ever be produced for any matter of opinion.

Hume criticizes this *consequent scepticism* on the grounds that it overstates the difficulty when it suggests that we are never be able to accept any opinion as "received." Hume took this end-state of suspended judgement of *consequent scepticism* to be an excessive doubt that is unrealistic in light of our natural propensity to believe things with or without justification. (Hume 1975: pp.158-9) Thus, as a practical matter, our natural drive will eventually force us to trade speculative doubt for common sense. As such, the Pyrrhonic sceptic is dogmatic, while claiming to suspend judgement. This lands her in self-contradiction: "*consequent* to science and enquiry, when men are supposed to have discovered either the absolute fallaciousness of their mental faculties, or their unfitness to reach any fixed determination in all those curious subjects of speculation, about which they are commonly employed. Even our very senses are brought into dispute, by a certain species of philosophers; and the maxims of common life are subjected to the same doubt as the most profound principles or conclusions of metaphysics and theology." (Hume 1975: p.150)

Despite his rejection of Cartesian and Pyrrhonian scepticism, Hume nonetheless acknowledges that the senses can, in other ways, present us with a certain sceptical challenge. "There are more profound arguments against the senses, which admit not of so easy a solution", he writes. (Hume 1975: p.151) And, following this last remark, he turns directly to a discussion of the "sceptical topics" that arise in connection with the empiricist theory of ideas. It is clearly this set of sceptical topics that most interests Hume and that guides the development of his own *mitigated scepticism*.

The difficulties raised by empiricism, Hume indicates, are substantial ones linked to the fact that knowledge must be obtained through the senses. For, strictly construed, empiricism leads to the denial of the possibility of certain knowledge of metaphysical principles, and much of the difficulty

traces back to the impossibility of identifying a sensible basis for traditional metaphysical ideas and principles. Another difficulty stemmed from the assumptions of empiricism. Locke, for example, had simply assumed the existence of an external world of material objects that gives rise to the sensible ideas in us. He had not really taken the trouble to properly defend the claim. Berkeley's criticisms of Locke's analysis would influence the development of Hume's own empiricism, and especially his doubts about our ability to demonstrate a world of external causes. Indeed, all metaphysical systems, it turns out, have presupposed a world of continued existence independent of the interrupted perceptions of mind. But, surely, Hume reasons, such an inference to a world of continued existence goes well beyond the evidence presented to understanding. As such, even the most basic assumptions about the world, - assumptions made by metaphysics and common sense alike - could be called into question. Thus, not only did Hume think that the sceptical traditions involving a total suspension of judgement rested on an implausible epistemology and psychology, he also found errors in the demonstrative arguments of his empiricist counterparts and in the common sense assumptions of everyday life.

Presumably, Hume hoped that invoking the categories *antecedent scepticism* and *consequent scepticism* and discussing the sceptical topics associated with empiricism would help him to explain the true nature of his own *mitigated scepticism.* For the empiricist, Hume maintained, need not adopt the permanent suspension of judgement of the *consequent sceptic.* Nor need he adopt the approach of the *antecedent sceptic*, which casts serious doubt on the possibility of knowledge through the senses. For, in the end, nature will always pull us back from the precipice of metaphysical doubt, and restore to us the perceptions of common sense. Hence, Hume recommends a *mitigated scepticism*, which is intended to be more modest than either a foundational assault on the faculties or a complete suspension of judgement. What Hume thereby shows is that the form of doubt that arises for the empiricist is much different in character than the doubt proposed by Descartes or the Greeks. Indeed, in his extended discussion of his own *mitigated scepticism* in the third part of section XII of the *Enquiry*, Hume's emphasizes his "Newtonian" methodological of restraint in the face of uncertainty in our knowledge. Clearly, it is this lesson of empiricism that inspire Hume's *mitigated scepticism.*

In considering what Hume hoped to accomplish with the changes in his

Enquiry, two things stand out: First, the severe reduction to the foundations of psychology; Second, the reshaping of the framework for the discussion of scepticism. These changes do in fact make sense if we view Hume as addressing the charges of *universal scepticism* raised by his early critics. In other words, Hume may have thought that the religious or moral controversy would be quelled if the foundations of his theory of ideas was obscured - i.e., if the particulars concerning knowledge acquisition through the faculties and its connection to the foundations of religious and moral knowledge were made less apparent. Moreover, by more carefully articulating that his *mitigated scepticism* represented a form of restraint and caution regarding ostentatious claims, rather than an actual denial of knowledge, Hume may have hoped to avoid the charges of excess associated with his doubting. What is interesting to note, however, is that the early responses to Hume's *Enquiry* show that Hume's efforts were wasted on his critics. The critics persist in the common mis-perception that Hume's philosophy aims to produce a scepticism concerning the faculties and to advance a scepticism that it is "extreme" or "universal" in character. In fact, a specific strategy of targeting the foundations of Hume's theory of ideas is adopted. The strategy is given different slightly different spins; either it is claimed that we do have ideas that are not preceded by sensible impressions (such as intuitions or apprehensions), or it is claimed that we do have impressions corresponding to ideas of causal power and necessity. The commom goal however, seems to be to reject Hume's criticisms of the causal axiom and causal principle, and to thereby disarm any challenge to the cosmological proof &c..

So much then, for Hume's efforts to draw his reader's attention away from the *universal scepticism* reading of his philosophy. His efforts in this vein seem only to have made matters worse. By the end of his life, Hume himself concluded that, "I wantonly exposed myself to the rage of both civil and religious factions." (Hume 1985a: pp.xli). In the end, whatever the reasons for the writing of the first *Enquiry*, the widespread misunderstanding of Hume's philosophy as an effort to advance a *universal scepticism* by undermining the faculties and challenging religious proofs persisted throughout Hume's lifetime and beyond. This reading of Hume, it turns out, goes some distance in explaining the ongoing developments around Hume's reputation as a sceptic.

Chapter 4

Hume and the Revolutionary Lens

In spite of the ongoing stigma, and in a strange way, both Hume and his philosophy became part of the very fabric of Scottish society. Prominent members of the community were on intimate terms with Hume until his death in 1776, and through these channels, there grew to be a faction of Hume supporters to counterbalance his opponents. Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding Hume and his philosophy continued to brew throughout the eighteenth century - and, especially following Hume's death. Hume's efforts to distance himself from his reputation failed, and Britain's scholarly community continued to strongly endorse a reading of Hume as an extreme sceptic. Meanwhile, Continental philosophers were now beginning to take notice of Hume's contribution, this no doubt lending an air of importance and heightening the sense of danger associated with his scepticism. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Edinburgh's conservative leaders were happy to re-direct hostile attention toward Hume and his "dangerous" philosophy - particularly when venturing opinions about the underlying causes of civil unrest. The cumulative effect was that Hume's reputation and the interpretation of his scepticism developed side-by-side, and became an integral part of Scottish society.

During his lifetime, most of the support for Hume came from the direction of Edinburgh's circle of "moderate" professors and men of letters, many of whom held considerable sway as church, government, and university leaders. Ideologically, these moderates presented what would

today be considered a "liberal" stance - one based on compromise between the opposing tendencies of the ruling parties. They advocated greater freedom of conscience, increased liberties, and conciliation in the face of controversy. (Sher 1985) William Robertson, one of Hume's supporters, was the acknowledged leader of the older generation of moderates. As a moderate, Robertson, along with associates such as John Home, Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson, and Alexander Carlyle, defended enlightenment ideals such as personal freedom of conscience. They supported Hume's right to free philosophical expression and rejected the view that Hume's doctrine led to dangerous atheistic and extreme sceptical conclusions. The overall impression was of a reasonable or "moderate" political and ideological stance: "[The moderates] esteemed a rational, polite form of Presbyterianism that would bridge the gap between John Knox and David Hume, between fanaticism and infidelity, between tradition and modernity. They emphasized the moral lessons of Christianity within a thoroughly Presbyterian framework and remained loyal, active members of their national church despite their other interests and activities." (Sher 1985: p.324)

The moderate stance grew popular, and under Robertson's leadership as Principal of the university and Head of its affiliated Presbytery, the town grew increasingly independent, secular, and tolerant. There were occasional attacks on moderate ideals, but Robertson and his followers found ways to negotiate with Edinburgh's conservatives. Their strategy was unique, if somewhat opportunistic. They looked for ways to uphold the values of the establishment, while standing firm on their commitment to intellectual freedom. Even as they came to wield considerable power in the General Assembly, the Town Council, and the College, they remained supporters and friends of Hume, and, in their own way, they secured him a measure of dignity. Through their influence, the larger issues around both Hume's philosophy and the politics of moderatism remained alive in Edinburgh for many decades to come.[64]

It was not simply the moderate party's vision of compromise that held appeal; Robertson was also skilled in averting conflict. In the years following the Hume controversy, Robertson managed to arrange things at the university so that most of the chairs established there were in the sciences - a domain not generally thought to require theological advice. (Sher 1985: p.309) Robertson's practice seems to have been to shift people

around within the university in order to prevent the exercise of the Minister's *avisamentum.* Humanities positions were filled internally, so that newly vacant positions would be in the sciences. Moreover, eleven of the thirteen new chairs created at University between 1762 and 1859 were scientific or technical chairs, including chairs in areas such as astronomy, agriculture, technology and medicine. In consequence, the *avisamentum* - by now regarded as a political instrument used for excluding or including candidates connected with one political party or another - was infrequently exercised. Nor did Robertson insist on the formal Westminster Confession of Faith - the oath of allegiance to the Presbyterian Church traditionally required of incoming candidates.

Robertson's resistance to the Confession of Faith was not appreciated by religious conservatives: "This test was constantly evaded in the University of Edinburgh, and notably so from the commencement of Robertson's Principalship (1762), but it still existed as part of the law of the country." (Grant 1884: vol.1,pp.86-87) But, Robertson knew how to handle the inevitable controversy. He encouraged off-campus forums for controversial debate and discussion. Numerous literary and intellectual societies sprang into existence in Edinburgh, including, among others, the Select Society, the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh (which later became the Royal Society of Edinburgh), and the Pantheon Society. With the leadership of local intellectuals such as Hume, Carlyle, Ferguson, Smith and others, these societies were much in demand. As Hume wrote to Allan Ramsey, founder of the Select Society, "Young and old, noble and ignoble, witty and dull, all the world are ambitious of a place amongst us." (Greig 1969: vol 1.,pp.219-221) Since these literary societies were more or less independent of the College, campus affairs could unfold smoothly.

Hume's defenders doubtless afforded a certain measure of comfort, but there was still ample negative attention to counter the good will. When Hume died in 1776, friends such as Adam Smith and James Boswell were quick to advance positive portrayals of Hume's life and character. Smith showed real affection for Hume when he said that, "Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." (Rae 1977: p.311) Indeed, given the trying circumstance of Hume's life, it would only seem natural for a friend to offer such kind remembrances. But, these few kind

words were too much for Hume's opponents, and there ensued a series of distorting fictional stories and recollections aimed at reconstructing Hume's life and character. The majority of these stories were little more than demonstrations of human cruelty. For instance, it was said by some that Hume had been easily led into fits of anger, and that he had trembled in fear at the prospect of death, had died in a manner befitting of a beast of hell, &c.. The accounts could not withstand scrutiny, yet when debate erupted concerning the propriety of this posthumous slander, the prevailing sentiment was that the ill-treatment of Hume was in fact justified. Hence, the protection that Hume had enjoyed during his lifetime grew increasingly limited following his death.

Given the history associated with Hume and his philosophy, and the literary predilections of the day, it is not really surprising that Hume's character was subjected to further discussion and dissection after his death. It is difficult, however, to make sense of the extent of the ongoing censure in the decades following his death, without taking into account the atmosphere surrounding the American and French Revolutions. In 1777, in the year following Hume's death, Scotland's parish ministers were called upon to give sermons denouncing the American Revolution. That same year, the recently deceased Hume was resurrected to play the part of a dispassionate mediator in a fictional dialogue between opponents (Wolfe and others) and proponents (Montgomery) of the American Revolution. (Anonymous 1777) In *Dialogue in the Shades*, Hume plays the part of a cool and impartial philosopher who thinks that both sides in the Revolutionary dispute are in the wrong, since both support the act of war itself. Still, there is little point, according to the fictional Hume, in disabusing either side of their error in going to war. This would only add fuel to the fire - presumably because each party would take the other to be in the wrong. Unlike Montgomery then, the 'danger' that Hume presents is not the danger of a partizan to the colonies, but the danger of ambivalence and lethargy that follows from too much philosophy.

Meanwhile, the philosophical discussions addressing Hume's philosophy continued to emerge in the final decades of the eighteen century. Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion* and other works were publish posthumously.[65] Hume's posthumous works, particularly those concerning suicide and immortality, shocked his reading public, and several commentators took it upon themselves to create moralistic dialogues and

fables denouncing Hume. Substantial works of fiction began to replace the earlier storytelling approach, although the general point remained the same; namely, to deter would-be followers of Hume. A look at a couple of these fictional productions is sufficient to get the general picture.[66]

In one 1778 piece, entitled *Philosophical and Religious Dialogues & c.*, the spirits of William Dodd and David Hume, both recently deceased, engage in a discussion with moral overtones. Dodd, an Anglican clergyman executed for forgery, represents a faithful believer with vices. Hume, a writer of sceptical philosophical treatises, represents a virtuous non-believer. The dialogue compares the virtues and vices of the two individuals, and is supposed to lead the reader to the realization that evil deeds of both men would, in the end, lessen the measure of their character. As "Mr Hume" says in closing, "Posterity will review your character with a high degree of abhorrence on account of your vices, and the pernicious tendency of my metaphysical system will considerably lessen their admiration of my virtues and genius."[67]

Another curious literary production was a 1779 publication entitled "The Story of La Roche", written by Henry MacKenzie. The story is a fictional account of Hume's adventures in France. "More than forty years ago" the story opens, "an English philosopher, whose works have since been read and admired by all Europe, resided at a little town in France. Some disappointments in his native country had first driven him abroad, and he was afterwards induced to remain there" (MacKenzie 1803: p.173) This philosopher, David Hume, had been viewed by many as "deficient in warmth and feeling"; however, this perception, it turns out, is far from the true. (MacKenzie 1803: p.173-4) For, not only does Hume develop a genuine affection for a Swiss clergyman and his daughter, but he assists them in their time of need, and, in the end, is all but converted to Christianity in virtue of his warmth of feeling for them. Hence, "The Story of La Roche", according to its Introduction, "aims to convert the deist by the mere force of sensibility." (MacKenzie 1803: p.v)[68]

In addition to the posthumous fictionalization of Hume, figures such as James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, and Thomas Reid continued to develop the philosophical response to Hume. These responses grew to incorporate reactions to Hume's shocking essays on suicide and immortality, which were generally available after 1783. Predictably, there were many texts urging the dangers of Hume and his philosophy and few texts aimed at smoothing

out his reputation. Moreover, as the political scene in Europe grew increasingly unstable - the Revolution was gaining momentum in France and the riots were erupting in England - Hume and his dangerous philosophy became convenient scapegoats for those promoting "fear mongering". Hence, in the decades following Hume's death, his reputation as a sceptic, far from softening, was being firmly cemented. This cementing was in part due to the clergy, in part due to members of the professional scholarly community, and in part due to members of the public at large.

An important contribution that drew negative attention to Hume's essays on suicide and immortality was due to James Burnet, Lord Monboddo. Monboddo claimed to have been morally compelled to give an answer to Hume. In 1779, he writes that, "I have seen two specimens of his posthumous impiety." "One of them is a treatise upon Suicide" and "The other is a Discourse on the mortality of the Soul." (Burnet 1779: p.vn) As Monboddo explains, his answer Hume aims at preventing the destruction of the nation:[69]

> There are, I know, who think that such authors are best treated with contempt and neglect, and that, to answer them, may do more ill than good: But, when their writings are read and admired by persons of rank and condition - when their opinions are adopted by men of science, it is time for every good man, and lover of his country, to take the alarm. I think it is impossible that any man of common sense can really believe, whatever he may profess, that religion, as well as government, is not absolutely necessary for men living in society. Now, it is well known, that opinions, as well as manners and customs, descend from the better sort of people, in every country, to the lower sort, and so become universally prevalent. To the disbelief, therefore, and neglect of religion, among persons of high rank, in Britain, may, I think, fairly be ascribed that irrelegion, and the consequent corruption of manners, which distinguish more, I am afraid, than any thing else, the commonality of this island from the same rank of men in any other nation in Europe, and which, if not soon checked, must end in the destruction of the nation. (Burnet 1779: p.vi-vii)

Following this strong condemnation of Hume, Monboddo has no

hesitation in dismissing the strategy of the defamatory answer to Humean doubt. This type of answer, he writes, sets forth “with a great deal of wit and ridicule”, the absurdity of such an opinion’ and showing, “at the same time, that it leads to a universal scepticism, and a disbelief of the most important truths of religion and morality.” (Burnet 1779: p.416) Ridicule, Monboddo objets, is no substitute for philosophical argument.[70]Philosophically, Monboddo held, contra Hume, that consciousness and reason play roles in our coming to believe anything. Following Descartes, he insists, “the evidence of consciousness is infallible.” (Burnet 1779: p.421) Moreover, since neither the mind itself nor innate ideas could account for the workings of sense, we can deduce that the senses must be moved by objects external to them: “Thus, I think, I have proved, that the scene which nature presents to us is not an illusion, but consists of real objects, which, by impulse upon our organs of sense, produce all our sensations; and, as nothing can impel, or be impelled, that is not solid and extended, and, as everything that is solid and extended is body, I think I may conclude, that what exists without us, and produces our sensations, is body. And, though it be fleeting and transitory, and in a constant flux like a river, yet I think I have shown, that intellect can apprehend something of it as it passes, and make it a permanent object of art and science.” (Burnet 1779: pp.428-9)

Appealing to this same mechanistic account of how the senses produce ideas in hand, Monboddo also counters Hume’s reasoning on cause and effect, which he says leads to impious assertions regarding the Deity. “Some of Hume’s school”, he maintains, have “carried his doctrine of our having no idea of *cause* and *effect*, so far as to overturn the principles, not only of theology, but of every other science, and of all demonstration.” (Burnet 1779: p.455) However, Burnet counters, the whole analysis turns on Hume’s confounding of sensations and ideas. This confounding, he writes, undermines the account of mind, and therefore leads to atheism; since “the foundation of Atheism is a total ignorance of the philosophy of Mind.” (Burnet 1779: p.vn) In an anachronistic move, Monboddo proposes to resolve the issues around cause and effect by following an Aristotelian model. The premises in deductive syllogisms are to be regarded as the causes from which effects are inferred. (Burnet 1779: p.455) The “first two propositions in a syllogism” he writes, “are the *cause* of the conclusion.” (Burnet 1779: p.455) Moreover, following Aristotle, there is an obvious

difference between demonstrative argument and induction. In induction, no matter how many instances of something are observed, we "never could from thence infer that it was universally true." (Burnet 1779: p.457) However, in demonstrative argumentation, "we not only argue from *cause* to *effect*, but the demonstration evidently shows us how the *cause* produces its *effect*. Hence, we can deduce the properties of a triangle from its definition &c.. (Burnet 1779: p.458)

Another major contribution to the Hume literature was due to Thomas Reid, who had by now developed his response to Hume's metaphysics. In 1785, Reid published his *Intellectual Powers*, followed, in 1788, by his *Active Powers*. In both works, Reid attributes an extreme form of scepticism to Hume, arguing that Hume's scepticism is rooted in his theory of ideas. In his 1785 *Intellectual Powers*, Reid argues that, in pushing the theory of ideas to its logical extreme, Hume actually reduces it to absurdity. Hume's theory of ideas fails on several counts: It is contrary to our "universal sense"; it is based on a mistaken view of perception; it fails to clarify the nature of our mental operations; and, it neglects to describe how impressions refer to objects. Reid's systematic reply to Hume addresses these topics under the general headings of perception, knowledge of external objects, memory, conception, abstraction, judgment and reasoning. In addition, in his 1788 *Active Powers*, Reid addresses the notion of causal powers and necessary connection. The main difference between these latter works and Reid's earlier pronouncements against Hume is the extent to which Reid's later analysis is systematically developed and defended.

Regarding perception, Reid charges that Hume's definition of 'perception' is too broad, since love, hate, anger, doubt, &c. could all be described as perceptions. Reid notes that, "What we have said of perceiving, is equally applicable to most operations of the mind." (Reid 1863c: p.224) Reid also denies that a true distinction can be drawn between impressions and ideas by appeal to liveliness. The distinction, in such as case, is one of degree, not of kind. "To say, therefore, that two different classes, or species of perceptions, are distinguished by the degrees of their force and vivacity, is to confound a difference of *degree* with a difference of *species*, which every man of understanding knows how to distinguish." (Reid 1863c: p.227) Reid further complains that Hume's conception of "impressions" is vague. (Reid 1863c: p.227) For, Hume uses the term "impression" to refer to operations of the mind, objects of mental

operations, or both. (Reid 1863c: pp.227-8) And, regarding perceptions of the external world, Hume wrongly assumes that all ideas are copies of mediating impressions, and that mediating impressions in turn refer to external objects. Against this, Reid argues that there is no need to invoke mediating impressions - ideas are in fact direct copies of external objects. Attention to these weaknesses in Hume's theory of ideas is crucial, argues Reid; for, it is in virtue of the impressions/ideas distinction that Hume establishes the inferential gap that leaves room for sceptical doubt. Hence, if the impressions/ideas distinction fails, so too must Hume's argument for scepticism. "But Philosophers maintain that, besides these [the objects of perception], there are immediate objects of perception in the mind itself: that, for instance, we do not see the sun immediately, but an idea; or, as Mr Hume calls it, an impression in our own minds. This idea is said to be the image, the resemblance, the representative of the sun, if there be a sun. It is from the existence of the idea that we must infer the existence of the sun. But the idea, being immediately perceived, there can be no doubt, as Philosophers think, of its existence." (Reid 1863c: p.298)

Reid further argues that Hume's account of memory is based on an argument from ignorance, since he does not explain how thoughts derive from impressions. (Reid 1863c: p.357) As a result, it is not hard to find internal inconsistencies in Hume's view. For example, if our perceptions are said to be fleeting and without existence except when we are conscious of them, then, for Hume's account to work, objects must persist during intervals when we are unaware of them. (Reid 1863c: p.357) As for conception (the train of thought in the mind), Reid is critical of Hume's account of association, which he describes as inadequate and incomplete: "Causation, according to his philosophy, implies nothing more than a constant conjunction observed between the cause and the effect, and therefore, contiguity must include causation, and his three principles of attraction are reduced to two." (Reid 1863c: p.386)[71]

Reid also comments on the higher functions of mind, such as abstraction, reason, and judgement. Regarding abstraction, Reid argues that Hume fails to show that it is impossible to form abstract or general ideas without having precise notions of quantities, qualities, or other attributes. (Reid 1863c: p.410) Regarding reason, Reid says that Hume aims to show that all demonstrative knowledge is in fact only probable. Reid counters that demonstrations, properly executed, are in fact infallible. (Reid 1863c:

pp.484-5) In his treatment of judgement, Reid distinguishes between first principles that are contingent and first principles that are necessary. The former group includes immediate knowledge of conscious perception, i.e, "the existence of everything of which I am conscious", including consciousness of ourselves as persons. (Reid 1863c: pp.442-3) By way of contrast, the latter group includes grammatical principles, logical axioms, mathematical axioms, axioms of taste, first principles of morals, and metaphysical principles. Of metaphysical principles, Reid holds that the causal axiom is a self-evident truth that needs no proof. The very universality of belief in this axiom speaks to its being self-evident, says Reid. (Reid 1863c: p.455) For, "every man perceives" that the causal axiom "is a necessary truth, and that it is impossible it should not be true." (Reid 1863c: pp.459-60) In his *Active Powers* of 1788, Reid adds an important addendum to these criticisms. In taking up the notion of a causal power, he argues that we do in fact have an idea of necessary connection, and that it is known as a necessary truth. [72] The principle is not learned from experience, since the idea of causality is connected with only a fraction of what we see, so that it cannot be experience that leads to knowledge of causal powers. "*Another* reason to shew that this principle is not learned from experience is - *That experience does not shew us a cause of one in a hundred of those changes which we observe, and therefore can never teach us that there must be a cause of all.*" (Reid 1863b: p.522)

Other contributions to the emerging literature on Hume in the final years of the eighteenth century were less influential and less historically important. They focused on rejecting Hume's idea of a "causal power", which had, by then, becomes central to theological discussion.[73] However, these voices did add to the growing consensus that Hume was in fact a *universal sceptic* and still a danger to civil society - even from the grave. In 1788, no doubt amidst local talk of the dangers civil unrest, Professors Stewart and Gregory declined to publish papers delivered on the subject of causality to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Stewart's official reason was the connection between the paper and others that "he did not chuse to publish at present." (Royal Society of Edinburgh 1788: p.21) Dr Gregory simply stated that "he did not incline, that either the Essay itself, or any abstract of it, should appear in this volume of the Society's Transactions." (Royal Society of Edinburgh 1788: pp.27-8)[74] Although it is far from explicit, it seems plausible that fears of social unrest and public censure

contributed to their decisions not to publish on this "dangerous" subject.

The nervousness of scholars engaged in the critical discussion of Hume's philosophy was doubtless exacerbated by the ever-growing trend of "fear mongering" in connection with the French Revolution. As Great Britain looked to events on the Continent, it witnessed the overthrow of the French monarchy and nobility, and the beginning of Robespierre's "reign of terror". Extreme conservatives pointed the finger at "dangerous" ideologies and urged that the unrest and infidelity witnessed on the Continent might soon take hold closer to home. It was claimed, for example, that the German illuminati had "conspired to overturn the religion and government of their country, and [who were to] prepare their way by seizing on the Universities, and excluding Clergymen from the places of trust and influence which they occupied in those seats of learning." (Playfair 1806: p.57)[75] At about the same time, conservatives began to rally against the publication of texts such as Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* - a critique Britain's monarchy and government that seemed to pose a significant threat to the status quo.[76] In one angry reaction to Paine's *Rights of Man*, the author betrays a deep underlying fear of civil unrest when he argues that, "For an itinerant political quack to pretend to more sound sense and judgement than all the inhabitants of the British isles put together, and to dictate his own fanciful form of government to them, is in the highest degree assuming." (Highlander 1792: pp.3-4) He goes on to claim that, "A man who endeavours to rouse a mob, is of all men the most dangerous to society; - he must either have interested views, be mad, or infamously wicked." (Highlander 1792: p.19)

In the face of such turmoil, Edinburgh's older generation of moderates grew more careful and conservative. Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy, endeavoured "to show that a zeal for liberty could be combined with a philosophically and religiously safe stance." (Jacyna 1994: p.65) In 1792, Stewart maintained that there was a need for limitations on political liberty in light of the "reckless boldness of the uncompromising freethinker" and the dangers of civil unrest,

> The danger with which I conceived the youth of this country to be threatened by that inundation of sceptical or rather atheistical publications which were then imported from the Continent, was immensely increased by the enthusiasm which,

> at the dawn of the French Revolution, was naturally excited in young and generous minds. A supposed connection between an enlightened zeal for Political Liberty and the reckless boldness of the uncompromising freethinker, operated powerfully with the vain and the ignorant in favour of the publications alluded to. (Stewart 1855: pp.111-12)

Thus, by the 1790s, the moderate leaders of Edinburgh, after what we might consider a rather conservative fashion, came to advocate a more restricted vision of political liberty. Fear of revolutionary forces prevailed throughout Great Britain, and the call for increasing conservatism was soon followed by seemingly justifiable cases of persecution and bigotry.[77] Over the ensuing decades, opposing parties would engage in bitter leadership contests in Edinburgh, and opposition between liberal and conservative values would become a focal point in public debate.

Thus it was that, despite the magnitude of national and international political developments, the topic of Hume's scepticism was far from old news in late eighteenth century Edinburgh. As the German visitor and Kant scholar, Anthony Florian Madinger Willich remarked, with some surprise, "Hume's scepticism seems to be the favourite and inexhaustible topic, on which our modern champions of orthodoxy still insist." But "these modern practitioners" he continues, are "more attentive to the cant of their profession, than observant of the spirit of Christianity" and "betake themselves but to invective, personal attacks, foul aspersions and declamation, instead of argument." (Willich 1799: pp.v-vi) Let people alone, Willich pleads, "if they have talents, if they show a spirit of profound and new inquiry, in a word, if they possess but reason, which always gains." For otherwise, "if ye call out high treason, call together, as if by alarmbell, the commonwealth, which by no means understands such subtile elaborations, ye render yourselves ridiculous." (Willich 1799: pp.xiv)[78]

Though Willich evidently supported Hume, his efforts to popularize the philosophy of Kant in Edinburgh may actually have helped to legitimate the perception that Hume was in fact a dangerous sceptic. Indeed, it was probably through him that Kant became notorious for his claim to having been awakened from dogmatic slumber by Hume.[79] As René Wellek notes in his book *Immanuel Kant in England: 1793-1838*, late eighteenth century Edinburgh society witnessed a sudden interest in Kant. (Wellek 1931)

Beginning in about 1792, Walter Scott, William Clerk, William Erskine, Thomas Thomson, John Colquhoun, and others, submitted to German language instruction under Willich, whose interest in the Kantian philosophy led to a convergence of German and Kant studies. (Lockhart 1957: p.62)[80] As a former student of Kant's, Willich offered not only lectures on the German language, but also an account of Kant's philosophy. In 1798, he published works that were evidently outgrowths of these lectures; *Elements of the Critical Philosophy*, and *Essays and Treatises On Moral Political and Various Philosophical Subjects*.[81] The former brought together the historical context of the critical philosophy, the tenets of transcendentalism, a representative selection of short summaries of Kant's epistemological works, and translations of three philological essays. The latter work was quite similar, but devoted to Kant's moral philosophy and to other miscellaneous writings.[82]

Edinburgh's literary and elite circles were obviously interested in Kant, and particularly in his response to Hume. In his books, Willich skillfully handles the local concerns regarding British scepticism and promotes Kant as the only satisfactory answer to Hume. In so recommending Kant, he pacified the clerics by saying that Kant is "the only person who has ever yet been able to subvert the reasoning of the British sceptic." But, he adds, for the sake of his scholarly readership, that the critical philosopher's answer is "not from a *theological* moralist, but from a moral theologian", thus underlining, in contrast to Hume, the purity of Kant's character. (Willich 1799: pp.v-vi) In any event, Kant's answer is sorely needed, Willich laments, for as Kant pointed out in his *Prolegomena*, writers such as Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and Priestly had all missed Hume's point. They took for granted that which Hume had doubted, and doubted that which it had never occurred to Hume to doubt: "It was not the question, whether the conception of cause be right, useful and, relatively to the whole cognition of nature indispensable, for of these Hume never harboured a doubt; but whether it be thought *a priori* by reason, and in this manner have an internal truth independent upon all experience: on this head Hume expected information and, as he himself says, still kept his mind open to instruction, if any would vouchsafe to bestow it on him." (Willich 1799: pp.viii-ix) In saying as much, Willich entered the seed of doubt into the mind of his readership regarding the correctness of Hume's Scottish interpreters. Indeed, in the coming decades, the correctness of these

interpretations would in fact become an issue in the Hume literature.

Willich then, making a direct appeal to his Scottish readership, had tried to set Kant's transcendentalism in a positive light, by setting it against Hume's sceptical empiricism. In doing so, he had also tried to clarify the nature of Hume's doubts about the causal relation. Thus it was that Willich endorsed Kant as an antidote to the dogmatism, atheism, and scepticism of Hume. Though the polemic on persecution may have been appreciated by some of Hume's supporters, Willich's recommendation of Kant as a philosophical antidote to Hume held little general appeal. Willich may even have raised the ire of a few local scholars when he at one point likened empiricist doctrines to noxious weeds - and then applauded Kant for having choked them out. In any event, local figures such as Brown and Drummond would go on to censure Kant's transcendentalism, and it is likely that the Kantian remedy sounded worse than the ailment. It would be a long time before the idea of correcting the local reading of Hume would sink in, and even longer before the reading of Hume as a *universal sceptic* would be called into question. This may have been, in part, due to Hume's own texts, in part, due to Hume's portrayal as a sceptic by the scholarly community, and, in part, due to associations made between Hume's "dangerous" philosophy and the American and French Revolutions. One way or another, neither Hume's efforts nor those of his supporters were able to put a stop to the misreading of Hume or the caricature of his person.

Chapter 5

Dangerous Philosophy: The Case of Mr Leslie

A major influence on the development of Hume's reputation and interpretation can be traced back to a specific episode in the history of Edinburgh; namely, the election of John Leslie to the mathematical chair at Edinburgh University. The events in question took place in 1805-06, and they echoed an earlier controversy in 1744-45, regarding an appointment sought by David Hume. (Church of Scotland 1805b) The details of the Leslie case are worth revisiting, for they are telling with respect Hume's continued notoriety in Edinburgh and of the state of Hume interpretation at the turn of the nineteenth century.

There were a number of similarities in the "Hume Affair" and "the case of Mr Leslie". Both men had sought academic appointments at Edinburgh, and, in both instances, Hume's theory of cause and effect had been the main obstacle to the candidacy. In addition, both cases had turned on the Minister's *avisamentum*. However, the two cases also differed in important respects. In the "Hume Affair", the Minister's *avisamentum* had gone undisputed. However, in the case of Leslie, the professoriate had challenged the Minister's *avisamentum*, and Leslie received a disproportionate amount of public attention. Indeed, both Leslie's candidacy and the *avisamentum* became matters of widespread public dispute, and "the case of Mr Leslie' quickly escalated into a scandal of unprecedented proportion. Ironically, Leslie had little more than an arm's length connection to Hume and his

"pernicious" doctrine of causality; the whole scandal was cooked up out of a single footnote reference to Hume.

One of the most striking differences between the Hume and Leslie affairs related to the fact that John Leslie was a chemist and mathematician, and not a moral philosopher. To clarify, Leslie was not a 'philosopher' in the broad sense of the word associated with metaphysical speculation, but rather, a 'natural philosopher' in the narrow sense that eventually came to be synonymous with the term 'scientist'. Almost everything that Leslie had to say in print could properly be classified under the heading of pure and applied science. By 1805, Leslie was well on his way to establishing his reputation as a scientist, having already produced the 'Differential Thermometer' in 1800. His offending endorsement of Hume had been printed as an endnote to an 1804 publication entitled *An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat*, for which Leslie had received the Royal Society of London's Rumford medal. (Leslie 1804) The main object of this dissertation was to discredit the view that heat radiation is a real emanation of caloric in rays propagating from heated bodies. Leslie argued that "there is no proper radiation of caloric" and that, furthermore, the propagation of heat cannot be explained by means of an aetherial medium. (Anonymous 1815: p.341) Instead, Leslie maintained, the effect of heat radiation "is produced entirely by the mediation of the air." (Anonymous 1815: p.341) Leslie rested his case against the received view on experimentation and mathematical analysis. His method could be described as Baconian in spirit, for he proceeds experiment by experiment, ruling out implausible alternatives as he goes along. A careful scientist, Leslie limited his speculative and tangential remarks to notes on the text. There, he would occasionally venture his asides, usually in areas such as etymology, and rarely on properly philosophical subjects. As etymologist, Leslie had some measure of expertise; however, the same cannot be said of him with respect to the broader fields of philosophy. Leslie's views on philosophical subjects were not especially novel; they were merely representative of the views discussed in his day, if not always published, by many of the scholars of his day. In the final analysis, John Leslie was through and through a natural scientist. He was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a metaphysician or "moral philosopher".

The events surrounding the Leslie controversy began to unfold following the death of Professor Robinson. John Playfair, Professor of Mathematics,

expressed an interest in the chair in natural philosophy, where he would accordingly be translated. Upon learning of this development, a lecturer by the name of Macknight, also one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, approached Dugald Stewart about his interest in the Mathematical Chair. Stewart's response was that as far as he was concerned, Macknight would have to seriously consider giving up his ministry in order to fulfill the duties associated with the Mathematical Chair.[83] Macknight relayed Stewart's message to the Ministers of Edinburgh, who then began to mobilize against Stewart and his stated requirement. In the meantime, in February of 1805, Professors Stewart and Playfair wrote letters to the Provost, George Baird, regarding the matter of the performance of academic duties while employed in two jobs.[84] This was Stewart's second letter protesting the holding Professorships in conjunction with ecclesiastical Livings. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.165) The practice, he warned, would be the "ruin of an establishment, from which this City has derived for more than two Centuries, much solid emolument as well as literary distinction." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.166) For his part, Playfair calls the practice a "A dangerous innovation" that underestimates "the degree of effort and application necessary for the discharge of duties." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.172-3) Indeed, the University had a distinguished history in regard to its Chair of Mathematics, and the position would be compromised by "the appointment of a clergyman holding a living in the Church to the Mathematical chair in this university." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.174)

The missives were persuasive, and it soon "became known that the Patrons were determined to decide upon a comparison of claims, and that Mr Leslie must triumph." (Napier 1836: p.21) Angered by the interventions of Stewart and Playfair, the Ministers of Edinburgh met later in February of 1805 and resolved to take up the matter of Leslie's candidacy in connection with their right of *avisamentum*. Thus, "in an evil hour for themselves, the City Clergy were induced to raise an objection to his eligibility, on the serious grounds of his having, in one of the notes appended to his work on Heat, approved of a doctrine directly leading to atheism." (Napier 1836: p.21) To set the context for the by then unusual request for an *avisamentum*, on 27 February 1805, the Ministers passed the following motion relative to the subscription of the Confession of Faith by professors:

> Whereas for many years past, the Members of the University of

> Edinburgh have not been in the use of complying with those Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, by which they are expressly required to acknowledge, profess, and subscribe, before this Presbytery, the confession of Faith which was ratified by the said Parliament on the 7 June 1690: it is moved, That the Presbytery should appoint a Committee of their number to write in their name a Letter to the Rev'd. Dr George Baird, Principal of the University, intimating the desire and expectation of the Presbytery, that the Laws on this Subject shall be observed and obeyed by the said University, and requesting him to communicate the said Letter to that learned body with all convenient speed. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.295)

One of the Ministers, Henry Grieve, who had connections to the original "Hume Affair", wrote a letter to Principal Baird of the University on 9 March 1805. The letter notified Baird that the motion had passed and that a committee had been appointed to oversee the matter. The Ministers pointed out the relevant Act of Parliament, and reminded Baird that members of the University were required comply with the said Act. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: pp.300-1) But Leslie, it seemed, had no objections to subscribing to the "Formula". Hence, the next step was to make a request to exercise the right of *avisamentum*, a practice that had been much neglected at the university.[85] Letters were exchanged, and party lines began to form. The opposing parties began to take steps to secure the position for their respective candidates. Leslie as the candidate supported by Stewart and his followers; Macknight as the preferred candidate of the Ministers of Edinburgh.

The *avisamentum*, and its connection to Hume's doctrine, quickly became the focus of controversy. The reason for the warning against Leslie, the Ministers claimed, was Leslie's endorsement of Hume's view of causation. Indeed, John Leslie, in a footnote remark to his 1804 *An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat*, had openly admired Hume's analysis:

> Mr Hume is the first, as far as I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner. His *Essay on Necessary Connexion* seems a model of clear and accurate

> reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery which has so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiments of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than a *constant and invariable sequence.* (Leslie 1804: pp.521-2) [86]

Initially it appeared that the interests of Leslie and the moderate party would prevail, and that Leslie's appointment would unfold with only a modest scuffle. But the Ministers of Edinburgh were determined to put up a fight. They began to prepare a case against Leslie's candidacy. First they notified Leslie of their intent to submit an *avisamentum* against him. The notification arrived just two days in advance of the meeting called for Leslie's election, via John Muir, Dean of the Guild and Member of Town Council, and Dr Andrew Hunter, Minister of Edinburgh and Professor of Divinity. Leslie wrote replies to both letters. In his letter to Muir, he thanked him for the notice and assured him that he in no way represented the sort of radical element that would conspire to overturn either church or government.[87] (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.92-7) On the understanding that a letter of explanation would satisfy the Ministers of Edinburgh, Leslie also wrote to Dr Hunter. In the letter, he denied ill-intent, affirmed his religious principles, and clearly stated had never intended to extend his discussion beyond the subject of 'physical' causation.[88](Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.194-200) On 12 March, the letter to Dr Hunter was read at a meeting of the Minsters of Edinburgh. As Macvey Napier summed it up, "Mr Leslie, on being informed of the charge, immediately declared, in a very pointed Letter laid before the junto, that his observations "*referred entirely*" to the relation between cause and effect, considered as an object of *physical* examination. (Napier 1836: p.23) In fact, Leslie explicitly sought to distance himself from Hume in the letter. He condemned the "gros misapplication which Mr Hume has made of these premises, to invalidate the argument for the existence of the Deity", which, he says, it did not occur to him to "point out in a treatise entirely confined to physical discussions." (Stewart 1805: p.37)

Though the Ministers had laid before them Leslie's letter to Dr Hunter, "the meeting were by no means satisfied with said Explanation; and that after deliberation maturely on the several particulars respecting this

subject which fell under their consideration they appointed Dr Grieve Mr David Black Mr David Dickson and Dr Inglis a Committee to lay before the Lord provost Magistrates and town Council a Representation and Protest against the proposed Election of a person to fill the Mathematical Chair in the University." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: pp.59-60) This Representation drew attention to the right of *avisamentum.* As the Ministers explained, they felt it "their duty to insist upon exercising the Privilege with which they are thus invested by the Royal Charter" but that "no intimation has hitherto been received of any intention on the part of the Town Council to apply in this case for the advice of the Ministers." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: p.60) Nonetheless, the Ministers decided to proceed with their *avisamentum.* They also decided to suppress Leslie's letter of explanation; for, the letter was not mentioned to the Magistrates and Council when the Ministers' *avisamentum* was delivered.[89] The Ministers had in fact decided that Leslie's letter was intellectually dishonest. According to Stewart, they held that the letter was "little more than an attempt to deny and misrepresent the obvious meaning of words, as if both Mr Hume's doctrine and Mr Leslie's referred merely to physical causes; while every man who reads Mr Hume's Essay in connexion with Mr Leslie's Note, must perceive that their conjoint doctrine upon the subject of causation is placed upon the broadest ground, extending to every thing under the name of cause, in either matter or mind." (Stewart 1805: pp.118-19)

Even while the Ministers were busy preparing their plan of attack, the Council announced that Leslie was about to be elected. Upon learning of this, the Ministers immediately resolved to intervene by delivering their *avisamentum* to the meeting of the Magistrates and Council. Drs Henry Grieve, Minister of the old Church, and John Inglis, Minister of old Greyfriar's, made long speeches relative to the election of Leslie. The specific charge against Leslie was the claim "that Mr Leslie, having along with Mr Hume denied all such necessary connection between cause & effect as implies an operation principle in the cause, has of course laid a foundation for rejecting all the argument that is derived from the works of God to prove either his being or attributes." This doctrine, they maintained, was connected with "dangerous opinions."[90] (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.85-91) Having heard the *avisamentum*, the Magistrates and Council then turned to consider "the string of certificates

produced to the Council in favour of the abilities and good character of Mr Leslie" - to which the attending Ministers refused to listen. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.97) For, they were firmly convinced that, as the Representation and Protest notes that Leslie is the author of a treatise on heat in which "he has avouched to World and has endeavoured to support by argument an Opinion Calculated to undermine the foundation of all religion both natural and revealed." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: p.61) The Council read and inscribed all of the letters and certificates in favor of Leslie into the Council minutes. Leslie's letter to John Muir, Dean of Guild and Member of Town Council, was forwarded and read before the Council. There were thirteen others. Letters from Leslie's Minister and distinguished members of the community were submitted. The list of referees included Sir William Erskine, George Dempster, Messrs. Wedgewood, Charles Hutton, Thomas Laurie, Francis Maseres, Nevil Maskelyn, and Spense Oliphant.[91] The academic recommendations included letters from Professors Robison, Playfair, and Stewart.[92]

With all of the relevant information in hand, the Magistrates and Council then "maturely considered" the evidence, and proceeded to elect Leslie. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.99) According to the Council Minutes, the Council was "fully satisfied with the abilities & good qualifications of Mr John Leslie." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.100-01) But, it was also decided that, owing to peculiar circumstances associated with the mathematical chair, which was held jointly with Professor Ferguson, that a formal consultation with Professor Ferguson would be required. The time delay afforded a window of opportunity for the Ministers the continue mobilizing against Leslie.

Several of the Ministers were apparently quite angered that their *avisamentum* had not produced the desired effect. On 22 March 1805, Dr Thomas Davidson, acting Senior Minister to the city, called a meeting concerning the Ministers' *cum avisamento eorum ministrorium* or "right to be consulted in the appointment of Professors." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: p.59) This right was, in their view, "of essential importance to the public, especially in cases where Candidates shall be proposed whose principles in matters of religion are liable to suspicion." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: p.59) And, Hume's doctrine of cause and effect, they stressed, "seems calculated to undermine the foundations of Religion both natural and revealed." Moreover, recent events, they reminded, had made

it “necessary to deliberate on the Steps which should be taken for maintaining their Privilege.” (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: p.59) In consequence, a sub-committee of Ministers was formed and empowered to ask for legal counsel. In other words, several Ministers decided to pursue the matter in civil court. What they in fact hoped to do was to overturn the election by claiming that a legal right to exercise the avisamentum had been violated. This right, they pointed out, dated back to the original charter of King James VI, and had been further entrenched in subsequent agreements. On 27 March, representatives of the Presbytery registered a legal protest with a “Bill of Suspension and Interdict” drawn up from the minutes of 22 March.[93] Following the news of legal intervention, several of the Ministers of Edinburgh declared that they wished to have no further concern in the case. Sir Henry Moncreiff moved that the Presbytery should have no further business in this matter, but a vote nevertheless carried in favor of the legal proceedings. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.311)

The next major event in the case was Leslie’s second election, on 29 March, which resulted in his re-election, this time as joint possessor, along with Ferguson, to the Cchair of mathematics. On this occasion, “The Lord Provost Magistrates & Council with the extraordinary Deacons unanimously *elected, nominated and appointed* the saids Professor Adam Ferguson & Mr John Leslie jointly.”[94] (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.214)

Though the matter of Leslie’s appointment had now technically been settled, the public tribunal was only just beginning. During the months of April and May, with the legal case pending, the Ministers continued to harass Leslie. They decided that the Presbytery would be “willing to cease their proceeding so far as concerns Mr Leslie individually in the event of his consenting to withdraw the offensive part of his publication either by cancelling the Leaves of the Book which contains the note referred to or by any other means equally effectual that may be more agreeable to himself.” (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805: p.64) Leslie was then invited to meet the named condition by the last Wednesday in April. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.314) Leslie sent no word in reply to the Ministers’ communication. The Town Council sent no word regarding the civil proceedings. Finally, Lord Craig appointed both parties in the civil suit “to state their case in memorials.” (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805b: p.155) Dissent among the Ministers of Edinburgh continued to grow, and by 7

May, the Ministers' Committee for Bills, Overtures, References and Appeals (i.e., Grieve, Inglis, and Ritchie) was appealing for the help of a higher church court; namely, the Synod of Lothian and Tweedale. (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1805) The Synod listened to the evidence, and then voted in favour of pursuing the affair in an even higher court; namely, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Complaints against the Reference were registered by several of the Ministers, and leave was requested to complain to the Assembly and others before the case of Leslie was judged by the Assembly.[95] (Church of Scotland 1805a: p.1)

That same day, 17 May 1805, the Council lodged its Memorial with the courts. The Memorial represented the interests of the Council, and was focussed on undermining the Minister's claim to a legal right regarding university elections. To this end, it was noted that the original university charters stated only that "consultation" may be given by the Ministers, that the Ministers' attempts to amend the original charters were illegal attempts to impose restraints on an original Crown charter, and that there were no relevant legal analogies to the case in question.[96] Indeed, the Memorials even claimed to be uncertain as to whether the "Hume Affair" had ever in fact taken place. The Memorialists, it was claimed, "do not even know that Mr Hume ever stood candidate for any chair in this University. It is traditionally said that he wished to obtain that of Moral Philosophy. If so, this was a very different professorship from the Mathematical... [given] scepticism as to moral and religious opinion, might there be a serious objection indeed. But the Memorialists know nothing of any such discussions having taken place."[97] (Commission 1826b: p.241)

The General Assembly held two days of debate regarding the Leslie affair and the issue of the Reference to the Assembly, ending with a vote on 23 May 1805. A Report of the proceedings was published in October 1805.[98] (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.15) There was considerable public interest in the General Assembly debate, since it is remarked in the minutes that in the future, "strangers should not in future be admitted without tickets." (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.239) In fact, the Leslie affair had now become something of a public relations disaster for the church. Not even the courts would validate the Ministers' claims. On 21 June 1805, Lord Craig agreed with the reasoning given in the Council's Memorial, and refused the Minister's Bill of Suspension. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805b: p.265) It had now been legally decided that the *avisamentum* was not in fact a power

of veto.

With its charges of heresy and atheism, back-room politics, General Assembly debate, and a legal case involving the Town, the Ministers and the University, the Leslie controversy created a local sensation. To a large extent, the case had built on the well established prejudices stemming back to the Hume controversy. One of its foundational elements, for instance, concerned Hume's philosophy. The Ministers' charge was that Leslie's footnote was an explicit endorsement of Hume, and therefore an endorsement of atheism: "Mr Leslie, having, along with Mr Hume, denied all such necessary connection between cause and effect, as implies an operating principle in the cause, has, of course, laid a foundation for rejecting all argument that is derived from the works of God, to prove either his being or attributes." (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.6) The tactic of the Ministers then, had been to charge that Leslie's footnote was an explicit endorsement of Hume and of atheism - an endorsement that justified the need to exercise the *avisamentum*.[99] (Stewart 1805: pp.43-4,75) According to Dr Henry Grieve, the thinking behind the case of Mr Leslie had been to put a stop to the youth's "imbibing" of Hume's infidel principles: "We have reason to dread, that young men, who have imbibed infidel principles, will rejoice at the sanction which some of their tenets may appear to have this day received. Hitherto they have been timid: They may acquire additional boldness from what has been said; and refer to the arguments and conduct of our opponents as an apology for their tenets. The opinions of Mr Hume will thus become palpable, and his errors be more widely diffused." (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.70) Thus it was that, while "Mr Hume's Essays had been, "for some time, in a great measure neglected and forgotten" the Ministers' zeal had recommended them "to renewed and increased attention." (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.234)

While it had been convenient to develop the case against Leslie by tying it to existing fears of Hume and his philosophy, Leslie's defenders questioned the Ministers' right of *avisamentum*. Moreover, they insisted that Hume's philosophy was subject to interpretation, and that the *avisamentum* was inimical to academic freedom. Playfair summed up his concerns in a moving plea for tolerance:

> If it was no longer safe, when a work contained in it exceptional doctrines, to express satisfaction with any part of it; if a man

> must be answerable for all the inferences which the ignorance or ingenuity of his adversaries could draw from his opinions; there was an end of all the freedom of debate, and the truth of any principle was no longer sufficient to give it currency in the world. The days of intolerance were returning: the clouds which we supposed dispelled for ever seemed again to be gathering round our horizon; and we were reminded of the age when the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo were subjected to the anathemas of the church. (Playfair 1806: p.71)

There was dissent among the Ministers as well, and a few Ministers joined in the defence of Leslie, expressing concerns about the "proper extent" of the *avisamentum*. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.20-23) The attack on Leslie was, according to Dr Hunter, Professor of Divinity, personally devastating. "He was represented, in the church courts, and even in the public newspapers, as hostile to religion, and as an abettor of atheism, and as having carried the sceptical tenets of Hume further than Hume himself."[100] (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.33) And, those Ministers most vocal in their opposition to Leslie were charged by Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy, with exhibiting "an unbecoming zeal" and as "tending to persecution." (Inglis 1805: p.141) However, the point of an academic freedom defence of Leslie was lost on the leading antagonists. They felt that the existing scholarly critiques of Hume had established Leslie's culpability as an open and shut case, and they perceived the calls for open debate as hypocritical. Hence, as John Inglis bitterly retorted, the so-called moderates of the professoriate had not always been complacent when it came to the philosophy of David Hume. For "*Campbell*, and *Gerard* and *Reid*, were not afraid that they should be accused of a 'zeal unworthy of *genuine moderation*', in withstanding the philosophy of Mr Hume". (Inglis 1805: p.143)

The Ministers of Edinburgh then, insisted on the sanctity of the *avisamentum*, and on thier right to single out Leslie as an infidel supporter of Hume who would adversely influence the students. They charged that Leslie was "*with reason* suspected of infidel principles", and it is "not more safe now than it was in the days of *Mr Hume* "to entrust those who are so suspected, with the important charge of the education of youth." (Anonymous 1805b: p.33) They saw their role as one of "guarding the

entrance to those academical chairs from which the youth of the land receive their instruction" and preventing "false philosophy" from "subverting the foundations of the Christian faith, and, by consequence, the foundations of civil society". (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.?) However, what they characterized as a moral high ground had begun to look like persecutory politics, and public opinion turned against the Ministers. Even after the public debates had terminated, the Ministers continued to justify their actions in the case of Leslie in Presbytery meetings. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: pp.322-36) Leslie's antagonists insisted that they had done nothing improper. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.325) They insisted that, like every man in Scotland, they had a right to expect that no one shall be appointed to teach in the university who professes doctrines subversive to religion. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.327) It was further claimed that the right of *avisamentum* is a right of the Ministers "which merely enables them to be, in some particular circumstances, more useful guardians of the religious interests of their people and of the Country at large." (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.329) The point was further underlined in their final remarks explaining why they felt justified in exercising the *avisamentum* and in their pursuit of Leslie: "The Presbytery is not able to see what harm is done to any person by the proceeding; or what law of the Church or principle of equity is contravened. That Mr Leslie suffers no *wrong* seems to be undeniable, - unless it can be proved that the public prosecutor *does wrong*, when he conscientiously discharges his duty in claiming to have the law executed against any person who has transgressed it."(Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: pp.332-3) Most importantly, it could not be overlooked that Leslie's had committed an offence against religion":

> That the specific objections brought forward against Mr Leslie are unfounded in themselves, seems to the Presbytery to be an assertion which could be made only by Men who do not rightly apprehend the nature and consequences of the doctrine objected to. It is well known that the doctrine of causation which is laid down in Mr Hume's Essay entitled "Of the idea of necessary connection" - is the foundation of the greater part of the atheistical notions which are to be found in various parts of his Philosophical writings. - In that Essay he endeavours to shew that there is no connexion between cause and effect but mere

> *sequence*; all events seeming according to his reasoning to be *loose* and *separate*, *conjoined* but never connected; and the necessary conclusion seeming to be that power is a word *absolutely without any meaning* when employed wither in Philosophical reasonings or common life. On this essay, certainly the most fundamentally hostile to all religion both natural and revealed, of any of the speculations which that celebrated author has given to the World, Mr Leslie, in the Note objected to, bestows his unqualified approbation: and the sole purpose of the note seems to be, to establish by a new argument, that very doctrine in the Essay from which the Atheistical conclusions are deduced, and even to carry it farther than Mr Hume himself has done. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: pp.333-4)

With these remarks on the nature of Leslie offense, the Ministers now revised their original charge. They now claimed that Leslie was not only guilty of endorsing Hume's view, but that he had offered additional support for the doctrine with his etymological analysis. For, Leslie's analysis showed that, in many languages, the term 'cause' implied antecedence or priority in a sequence of events alone rather that "necessary connection".[101] However, the Ministers felt that judicious men had already established that Hume's doctrine of causation leads to atheism because it subverts the proof for the being and attributes of God.They argued that, "The Doctrine of Causation laid down in the Note referred to appears to the Presbytery so comprehensive as to be necessarily applicable to every species of cause which the mind can conceive, and they think it moreover, so radically dangerous to religion as to be susceptible of no more *explanation*." (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.335) "Mr Leslie", they insisted, "has committed a public offence against the religion of his Country." (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.336) And, while the Presbytery did not claim to prove that Leslie was aware of these implications before he wrote his note, they maintained that "now when he is aware of the dangerous tendency of this doctrine he has borrowed from Mr Hume, he ought to withdraw his sanction of it; and that if he will not withdraw it, the matter ought to be referred to the Superior Court."[102] (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1805: p.334)

Thus it was that the case of Mr Leslie had been made to run inside the grooves of the Hume affair. The controversy touched on long-standing

disputes between the Town Council, the Ministers of Edinburgh and the professoriate regarding university appointments and the respective powers of the Council, Church and faculty. It had been fuelled by ongoing disputes over the interpretation of Hume and the "dangers" associated with his doctrine. As part of the public discussion, there had been frequent jibing about the significance of footnotes in scholarship. Numerous texts reserved serious discussion for footnotes, or claimed that the serious discussion had been moved from footnotes, or that an important point would follow in the footnotes, and so on. Henry Erskine, a well-known local wit and highly placed advocate with thirty years experience in the General Assembly, could not resist the following pun relating the etymology of the term 'metaphysics' to the ongoing *footnotes* controversy.[103] Erskine remarked that he failed to follow the reasoning of some of his esteemed colleagues; For, "They have told us, that because the *subject* of Mr Leslie's book is *physical*, therefore the *notes* must be *metaphysical*; that notes make up no part of a book, and have nothing to do with it. This is a discovery equally ingenious and amusing."[104] (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.205) More pointed still, is the following excerpt from an anonymous poem written to deride the Leslie episode. The piece opens by conjuring an image of the persecution and hypocrisy of John Knox, thus making the point that religious persecution was alive and well in Scotland:

> Once more, John Knox, erect your surly front,
> And teach the snarling hypocrites to grunt:
> At soaring L****e point your blust'ring thunder,
> And plunge him down to hell, and bolt him under!
> For, lo the Culprit, with an impious hand,
> And what, with toilsome care, unwearied Jove
> Displays in wrath, or manifests in love,
> (And hides in darkness deep the hidden cause,)
> Ascribes to *Nature*, and her *General Laws* (Anonymous 1805a).

Sadly then, the case of Mr Leslie, like the Hume affair, had become the subject of considerable ridicule.[105]

Though the Leslie episode did reach comic proportions, the underlying issues were far from superficial. The reputations of Leslie and his defenders had been stained by the intentional misrepresentation of facts, and the

Ministers of Edinburgh had preyed upon the well-established fear of Hume and his "dangerous philosophy". To many in Edinburgh, "the case of Mr Leslie" became an unpleasant reminder of the more unfortunate aspects of the "Hume Affair". And, while much of Edinburgh would presumably have preferred to lay their infamous "Saint David" and the whole philosophical controversy to rest following the Leslie episode; the "Hume Affair", it turned out, was far from over.[106]

Chapter 6

Edinburgh Debates the Causal Relation

In addition to committee deliberations, back-room politics, a civil lawsuit, and the Reference to the General Assembly, the case of Mr Leslie generated considerable philosophical discussion. For, Leslie's public "trial" led to the publication of letters, articles, proceedings, statements, and even treatises - all of which came into wide circulation in Edinburgh in 1805 and 1805.[107] Thus, there ensued dozens of statements, replies, and clarifications - most of them long-winded and caustic. The central issue under discussion was the interpretation of Hume's philosophy and its apparently "dangerous" consequences. Hume scholarship had by this time been underway for over a half-century; however, there was still considerable confusion concerning Hume's main tenets. In fact, what the Leslie episode shows is that there had been little progress in understanding Hume's scepticism. The received view was that Hume was a *universal sceptic* whose philosophy led to dangerous consequences. Fortunately, with the case of Mr Leslie, this mistaken reading of Hume was finally brought into dispute. Foremost among the scholars to question the received reading were Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown. Stewart advanced modest departures from the received reading, while Brown proposed a reading that was entirely novel. What is perhaps most interesting of all, is that Leslie's footnote remark suggests that he may in fact have been one of the first critics to have most closely grasped Hume's intended sense of a *mitigated scepticism.* Leslie's reading of Hume's scepticism was not typical for its day, and it was

probably a consequence of Leslie's own study of experimental method. In any case, the Edinburgh debate gives evidence of a growing disparity regarding the interpretation of Hume's doctrine of causality and scepticism. In fact, it turns out that the debate plays an important role in setting Hume interpretation on a new track.

Leslie's 1804 *An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat* set the context for the Edinburgh debate. It was this text that had drawn the attention of the Ministers to begin with, and the debate concerned not only to the received interpretation of Hume, but also Leslie's text. The first order of business then, for any account of the philosophical debate, is to elaborate on the aspect of Leslie's research that led him to make his footnote remark on Hume's doctrine of causality. There are several points of interest, including Leslie's focus on experimental method, his criticism of Newton's aether hypothesis, and the connection between these and his praise for Hume.

Like many natural philosophers of his day, Leslie saw himself as fitting into a tradition of experimental philosophy dating back to the father of British empiricism, Francis Bacon. In Leslie's case, Bacon was an important role model for at least two reasons. First, he had made an investigation into the nature of heat. Second, he had made contributions to the conceptual foundations of scientific induction. In Bacon, the two subjects come together in Book II of his *Novum Organon*, with the illustration of inductive method that appeals to the example of heat. (Bacon 1960) Bacon's experimental method depended on the construction of tables of data which could be carefully analyzed in the search for the "true causes" of phenomena. The first step, according to Bacon, is to "have a muster or presentation before the understanding of all known instances which agree in the same nature, though in substances most unlike."[108] (Bacon 1960: p.130) Hence, in the investigation concerning heat, a list is made of the instances where heat is present; for example, the rays of the sun, fiery meteors, burning thunderbolts, all flame, natural warm baths, and so on. A second list that is much like the first - except that heat is taken to be absent from the phenomena - is then compiled. In this case, the examples include the rays of the moon, stars, and comets, and the "negatives" of various previously warm things, like liquids, vapors, air, metals, and so on.[109] (Bacon 1960: p.132ff.) A third is a made of instances where heat is present, but varies in degree with the degree of something

else.[110] (Bacon 1960: p.142ff.) With these tables, we are to perform an induction; namely, we form a hypothesis about the "true cause" of heat that is reached by a method of reasoning about the data that enables us to rule out accidental generalizations. With the investigation of heat, we are to reject things that are present in the first and second tables that do not vary when what is under investigation -in this case heat - varies. This method of exclusion is supposed to shorten the tables dramatically, so that we are eventually in a position to form a hypothesis. In the heat example, Bacon's hypothesis is that, "Heat is an expansive motion whereby a body strives to dilate and stretch itself to a larger sphere or dimension than it had previously occupied."[111] (Bacon 1960: p.158)

Leslie's admiration of Bacon was not based on a desire to endorse his general theory of heat. In fact, Leslie was something of a contrarian when it came to the received theories on heat, and was critical of the main heat theorists of his day. Leslie claimed that the theory of radiant heat suffered from a "total want of precision and the unavoidable obscurity and mystery in which it is involved." (Leslie 1804: p.43) He explicitly rejected the Baconian hypothesis that "heat consists merely in certain intensive motions" since it supposes that "all heat must gradually lax and die away." (Leslie 1804: pp.141-42) Observation, Leslie maintains, shows us that when something loses heat it passes its heat to other things, so the heat is not really lost.[112] Nor did Leslie endorse the prevailing theory of the caloric. Lavoisier, for example, who was famous for having disproved the phlogiston theory of combustion, had maintained in his *Traité élémentaire de chimie* (1789) that heat is a latent property of an invisible substance in bodies called "caloric". "It is difficult to comprehend these phenomena [concerning heat]", says Lavoisier, "without admitting them as the effects of a real and material substance, or very subtile fluid." (Lavoisier 1952: pp.9-10) Indeed, he concludes, "We know, in general, that all bodies in nature are imbued, surrounded, and penetrated in every way with caloric, which fills up every interval left between their particles"[113] (Lavoisier 1952: p.57), and "we have distinguished the cause of heat, or that exquisitely elastic fluid that produces it, by the term caloric." (Lavoisier 1952: p.10) As such, Lavoisier maintained, "invisible agents" such as caloric and aether were integral to the chemical explanation of heat radiation.

Leslie's main criticism of his forerunners related to their claims to have found confirmation for theories, when in reality, they had invoked invisible

agents and, in some cases, relied on shoddy experimentalism. Leslie determined to improve upon the state of affairs in his field by making careful measurements of the relative proportions of heat in the various bodies involved in heat transmission and diffusion. To this end, he employed his Differential Thermometer to make exact measurements, and controlled the angle of the reflection of heat from one body to another with reflectors. Ultimately, he hoped to discover quantifiable laws describing the process of heat radiation. Though he did achieve this end, his experimental results enabled his to conclude that in heat radiation, "there is an actual flow or impulsion of some corporeal substance", the matter of which "is of a palpable nature" unlike "aether or any other imaginary fluids." (Leslie 1804: p.27) Heat, he notes, like light, is an "elastic fluid" which is "extremely subtile and active." (Leslie 1804: p.150) At the same time, heat differs from light; for example, in terms of absorption, the effects of opacity, and speed of travel. (Leslie 1804: pp.31,152) Nonetheless, Leslie ventures, as a tentative speculation; perhaps "heat is only light in the state of combination."[114] (Leslie 1804: p.162) In other words, heat is light with its properties altered through combination with particles. Indeed, Leslie speculates, heat radiation may be "produced entirely by the mediation of the air" and there is no reason to suppose that it involves the mediation of aditional invisible agents.

In thus rejecting the received hypotheses about aether and caloric, Leslie likely saw himself as following in the experimental tradition of simplicity, which tells us not to introduce unnecessarily entities in explanations.[115] For, if there is no evidential justification for invoking invisible agents, then the methodological principle of simplicity should lead us to reject explanations that invoke invisible entities. "But why have recourse to invisible agents?" Leslie asks.[116]

How did Leslie's experimentalism lead him to a discussion of Hume? As it turns out, Leslie's remark on Hume was prompted as part of a criticism of Newton's speculation that aether might be the cause of gravitational effects. This speculation, however tentative, seemed to many to be in violation of Newton's own claim in his *Principia* that he would "feign no hypothesis" concerning the causes of gravitation in the absence of empirical evidence. (Cajori 1934: vol. II, p. 400) Given such a methodological commitment, it was unclear to some why Newton would have speculated aloud at all. To Leslie, it sounded as if Newton was very nearly prepared to

assign an invisible cause to gravity. It is possible that Newton imagined that this would involve assigning a mechanical cause for gravitational effect. Nonetheless, in speculating that invisible agents might be the cause of gravitational effects, Newton was forgetting his usual, and more laudable, methodological caution. Hence, with a flair for the dramatic, Leslie maintained that it was an "evil hour" in which Newton had proposed that the material medium of aether (rather than action at a distance) might be invoked to explain gravitational effects. (Leslie 1804: 136) To Leslie, it was a mistake for Newton to have reverted to an old-school approach to experimentalism that relied on invisible agents. With this in mind, Leslie indicates that the feature that finds most praiseworthy in Newton's method is his recommendation of caution and modesty in assigning the "true causes" of phenomena. This methodological point, it turns out, is the basis for the link to Hume. Indeed, is saying this, Leslie is actually echoing Hume's tribute to Newton. For, when Hume recommends modesty and caution in causal reasoning, he is actually adopting the Newtonian principle of "feigning no hypothesis" where there is no evidential support. And, just as Hume follows Newton when he "feigns no hypothesis" concerning the "true causes" of mental association, so Leslie "feigns no hypothesis" beyond the evidence concerning the "true causes" of heat. What Hume and Leslie share then, is a common desire to be "Newtonian" when it comes to restricting causal hypotheses. As Leslie explains, in a way that sounds very Humean, his own preference is for the action-at-a distance hypothesis; or he is suspicious of both the common sense hypothesis (corpuscular mechanism) and the metaphysical prejudice that makes appeal to invisible intermedia (Newton).[117] (Leslie 1804: pp.134-6) Appended to this digression was, of course, the infamous footnote on Hume:

> Mr Hume is the first, as far as I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner. His *Essay on Necessary Connexion* seems a model of clear and accurate reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery which has so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiments of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic, and imply nothing more at bottom, in the relation of cause and effect, than a *constant and invariable sequence.* (Leslie 1804: pp.521-2)

With the addition of this footnote, Leslie had explicitly drawn together the subjects of Newton's aether hypothesis, Hume's doctrine of causality, and the methodological appeal for restraint in experimental reasoning. What Leslie's text and footnote show then, is that the issue at stake for Leslie is, at base, methodological. For, Newton's and Hume's views on causal reasoning teach an important lesson in methodological conservatism: Given the potential for error in inductive reasoning, we must proceed with caution where there is insufficient evidence to form causal hypotheses. In reflecting on his own methodology, Leslie says that, "In this inquiry, I have endeavoured to tread with cautious steps; I have carefully avoided hypotheses, and where actual observation failed, I have sought the guidance of analogical reasoning." (Leslie 1804: pp.x-xi)

What is significant in all of this is that Leslie's linking of Newton, Hume, and causal reasoning suggest that he has a more sophisticated interpretation of Hume's *mitigated scepticism* than his contemporaries. Recall that the prevailing reading of Hume due to Reid and others, was that Hume's doctrine was based on a mistaken theory of ideas and a doubting of faculties that led to *universal scepticism*. With Leslie, we see evidence of a more modern grasp of Hume's *mitigated scepticism*. For, as Leslie's footnote shows, Hume's main concern is to advise caution in the forming of causal hypotheses. Not only can common sense empiricism be misleading, but it presupposes a form of realism that is, strictly speaking, philosophically unjustified. As Leslie realizes, it is these sorts of considerations that lead Hume to doubt or scepticism. And, the point of this doubt is not extreme scepticism, but to recommend a cautionary approach in reasoning concerning matters of fact and existence. The common sense view may be "fitted for the ordinary business of life", but is not to be relied on in natural philosophy and metaphysics. With Leslie then, the discussion of Hume begins to extend beyond the early debates on *universal scepticism*, and to encompass theoretical issues in natural philosophy. This, of course, is a salient development, and it is worth tracking the development of the reading of Hume that eventually becomes standard in the scholarly literature on Hume.

It would be wrong to conclude from what has been said above that the interpretation of Hume as a *universal sceptic* was, by 1805, defunct. Much of what Leslie was getting at seems to have been lost on his Edinburgh readers. However, it would be fair to say that, by 1805, the claim that

Hume's philosophy aimed at atheism or embodied extreme sceptical implications had become a matter of dispute. Two professional philosophers responsible for drawing attention to the need to reinterpret Hume were Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown.

One of the principal advocates on Hume's behalf was Thomas Brown. Brown maintained that Hume had in fact been misread and misunderstood by his critics. It is arguable that the public debate on Hume began in earnest when Thomas Brown published his 1805 *Observations on the Nature and Tendency of the Doctrine of Mr Hume concerning the Relation of Cause and Effect*. Brown's *Observations*, which was written just prior to the 1805 General Assembly debate, represented an effort to challenge the Ministers' received analysis of Hume. (Brown 1805: pp.i-ii). The short treatise prosed to "examine minutely the steps by which Mr. Hume was led to his general conclusion on the Nature of Cause and Effect" with the end of securing a better appreciation for the truth of his propositions, and the "the tendency, of the whole connected doctrine." The book, although short, represented a serious attempt to critically engage the philosophical issues at stake in Hume's work. (Brown 1805: p.ii)

Properly interpreted, Brown maintained, Hume's doctrine led neither to atheism nor to scepticism. To demonstrate this, Brown addresses several of Hume's major tenets. He begins by agreeing with Hume that a "Cause" may be defined, "*an object followed by another, where, if the first object had not been, the second had not appeared, and which, existing again in similar circumstances, will always be followed by the second.*" (Brown 1805: p.2n) He then attribute five propositions to Hume, taking them up one at a time, for the purpose of examining, and ultimately defending, Hume's theory of causation. The five propositions are as follows:

1. That, *the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered* a priori. (Brown 1805: p.2)
2. That, *even after experience, the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered by reason.* (Brown 1805: p.9)
3. That, *the relation of cause and effect is an object of belief alone.* (Brown 1805: p.9)
4. That, *the relation of cause and effect is believed to exist between objects, only after their customary conjunction is known to us.* (Brown 1805: p.15)

5. *When two objects have been frequently observed in succession, the mind passes readily from the idea of one to the idea of the other; from this transition, and from the greater vividness of the idea thus more readily suggested, there arises a belief of the relation of cause and effect between them.* (Brown 1805: p.24)

Brown accepts the first three of the propositions, and then argues that together they form the basis for Hume's modest form of "sceptical doubt." In defending the first proposition, Brown argues that the idea of power "is not derived from the phenomena of mind." (Brown 1805: p.8) The phenomena of mind and of matter, he argues, furnish ideas of sequence, and the "very feeling of power, or of connection", he reasons, "would be itself only a new part of a sequence." (Brown 1805: p.9) Moreover, since we cannot, without experience, arrive at the the idea of a particular consequent in relation to a particular antecedent, the first proposition follows. (Brown 1805: p.9) Brown next argues that the second proposition, that the relation of cause and effect is not discovered by the mere analysis of experience, follows because "*future and invariable* antecedence and sequence" are neither discernible in nor implied by what is given in past experience. (Brown 1805: p.9) The next claim is that when Hume asserts that the relation of cause and effect is an object of *belief*, what he in fact means is that it is an object of *faith*. (Brown 1805: p.10) For, the first proposition shows that the causal relation cannot be *perceived*, and the second proposition shows that the causal relation cannot be *inferred* from experience, so the only remaining sense of 'belief' is in the sense of 'having faith'. Brown interprets this to mean that "as soon as we *believe* the relation of cause and effect, the idea of power arises. "The belief, indeed, is instinctive; but the ideas, which flow from that belief, will be the same, whether it be founded on immediate perception, or on the slower results of reason, or on the instinctive feelings of our mind." (Brown 1805: p.10) As Brown goes on to explain, these three propositions together form the basis for what should properly be understood as a modest form of "sceptical doubt".

> The three propositions, already considered, form a whole, independently of those which follow. They comprehend all that part of the theory on which Mr. Hume has unfortunately drawn

> unjust suspicion, by giving it a name which the vanity and folly and guilt of genius have taught us to hold in dread. He has termed it *sceptical doubts*; but it is a mild and moderate scepticism, which suffers us to take shelter in a first principle of intuitive belief, and is, in truth, the only part of the theory which at all deserves approbation. In every reasoning, however small its number of propositions, there must always be one proposition assumed without proof; and is it not wonderful, therefore, that, in our reasonings concerning matters of fact, Mr. Hume should have been able to point out such a proposition. He has shown us that we *believe*, rather than *discover*, the relation of cause and effect. (Brown 1805: pp.13-14)

In the final analysis then, Brown argues, Hume does provide a kind of foundation for causal beliefs. This foundation is based on instinct rather than reason, so that "we *believe*, rather than *discover*, the relation of cause and effect." (Brown 1805: p.14) According to Brown, this is akin to saying that mental operations naturally dispose us to form causal beliefs. Where Hume's view of cause and effect differs from the received view, is that the underlying operation is neither attributed to reason nor linked to an *a priori* causal principle. As such, Hume's position, Brown asserts, amounts to little more than "a mild and moderate scepticism", not atheism or scepticism.[118]

Brown further argues that Hume's doctrine of causality is not "dangerous", since it leads only to a moderate or *mitigated scepticism*. (Brown 1805: p.37) While Hume does in fact deny that the standard appeals to perception and inference can account for causal belief formation, he replaces these accounts with a new account of the mechanism for causal belief. This appeal, according to Brown, is akin to an appeal to intuition or faith. Hence, causation rests on an "instinctive principle" - a firm foundation that makes it impossible for us not to believe the causal relation. In fact, Brown questions whether, "the suspicious name of *scepticism*" should be given "to a question of the justest philosophical analysis." (Brown 1805: p.41) What Hume has raised is a mere philosophical puzzle, and, as Brown reminds the reader, the philosophical paradoxes and puzzles that have been raised by philosophers about infinite divisibility, causation, and the existence of the external world, are not such as actually command assent: "Yet, though the conclusion be *logically*

irresistible, it is a conclusion, at which we smile only, without admitting it." (Brown 1805: p.43) Hume says as much, Brown notes, when he claims that "only a fool or a madman" would deny common sense. (Brown 1805: p.44) There is no basis then, for thinking that Hume's doctrine of causation leads to atheism or *universal scepticism*.

Brown's position differed from that of his contemporaries in important ways. It angered the Ministers of Edinburgh, who discounted it on the grounds that the position did not align well with other interpretations of Hume. Indeed, Brown's 1805 analysis was publicly discounted as "substantially and radically different" from the discussion of both parties in the Leslie controversy, following which Brown was pronounced by the Ministers to be "disqualified, as an antagonist." (Inglis 1806: pp. 46-8) The moral philosopher whose analysis won the most popular support was Dugald Stewart. In his *Short Statement of Facts*, Stewart framed his analysis in terms familiar to his audience; he defended Leslie by maintaining a sharp division between Leslie's discussion of "physical causation" and the Minister's discussion of "metaphysical causation".

To begin, Stewart established that dozens of eminent British philosophers and theologians had already endorsed Hume's position on physical causation - whether intentionally or not. He cited Barrow, Clarke, Butler, Berkeley, Hale, Price, Reid, Ferguson, Robison and Gregory as examples.[119] He pointed out that the Ministers' reproach of Leslie on the grounds of his having "denied an operating principle in the cause" suggested that they hold that the necessity in the operating principles of nature is to be attributed to physical events. Stewart elaborated as follows: To what species of cause, he asked, is the "operating principle" described in the Ministers' charge to be applied? It cannot be to God, for, as Dr Gregory has explained, events bound by necessity do not require God, and nothing on heaven or earth could prevent them from being what they are. "The only supposition, then, that remains", Stewart argued, is that "the operating principle is to be understood to belong to the physical cause itself, connecting it *necessarily* with the effect; or, in other words, that physical and efficient causes are one and the same." (Stewart 1805: p.89) Stewart went on to say that he could hardly believe that the Ministers could have intended such an argument. Indeed, it is "the very essence of the system of Spinoza", which "acknowledges in words the existence of a Deity" but, by means of the doctrine that active powers in physical causes connect

them necessarily with their effects, is "subversive of that fundamental principle of all religion." "The amount of the system" (says Dr Clarke) is *this*, "that all things are equally self-existent, and consequently, that the material world is God." (Stewart 1805: pp.89-90) Thus, the Ministers' view had been shown to lead to a Spinozistic atheism.[120]

Having thus raised the question of the philosophical perspicuity of Edinburgh's clergy, Stewart had, wittingly or not, set off what would become an extended debate. Taking for themselves the very liberty they had refused Leslie, the Ministers clarified the meaning of their original charge against Leslie. As Macvey Napier later reported, "owing to an ignorant blunder in their statement of what they conceived to be the true notion of Causation", Leslie's persecutors "were themselves obliged to have recourse to explanation, in order to show that their own doctrine was not identical with that of the Fatalists and Spinoza!" (Napier 1836: p.24) Retracing their steps, what the Ministers now decided to argue was that Leslie had in fact denied *both* a connection between cause and effect and the existence of an operating principle in the cause. (Stewart 1805: p.112, n4) As such, they claimed, Leslie's doctrine amounted to a denial of Divine power. For, either the doctrine claimed a (necessary) connection independent of the will of God, or it denied an operating principle in causes. Clearly then, Leslie's statement was, after all, tantamount to the denial of God as Creator.

As Stewart pointed out, the new charge was merely a trap contrived to make it impossible to admit or deny the view, since all implications could be made to sound bad. (Stewart 1805: p.96) Stewart's own positive view, at least in 1805, was that Hume's position, was, in a strange and accidental way, compatible with theism. Hume's point, Stewart argued, was that our descriptions of cause and effect are *analogies* to what is observed in nature, and that the *real* metaphysical links are invisible to us. Hume's underlying rationale was that metaphysical and physical senses of causation must be kept separate. Moreover, Leslie's intent, Stewart reasoned, had been to discuss "physical causation", and nothing else. To add further support, Stewart cited his own definitions of "cause" in his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, where he distinguishes between "metaphysical" and "physical" causality. The metaphysical sense of cause is that every change in nature indicates the operation of an underlying cause - an unseen cause that is supposed to be necessarily connected with

the observed change. The term "physical cause", however, is used merely with reference to observations of constant conjunctions. Admittedly, it is these very constant conjunctions that lead us to speak in terms of "metaphysical causes", says Stewart; however, the two forms of discourse are entirely distinct. (Stewart 1805: pp.49-50n) With this distinction in hand, it is to be further understood that hypotheses concerning physical laws such as the law of gravity are based on observational evidence, and express only the contingent necessity associated with "physical causation". Such contingent necessity is not to be confused with the sense of necessary connection associated with metaphysical causation. The latter sense of necessary connection cannot be known by observation. Hence, Stewart concludes, to maintain that there is in fact observational evidence of necessary connection in the former sense is contrary to received opinion and absurd.[121] On Stewart's reckoning, this account of causality supports theism, since it "keeps the Deity always in view, not only as the first, but as the constantly operating cause in nature, and as the great connecting principle among all the various phenomena which we observe." (Stewart 1805: p.83) Understood in this way, Stewart argues, Hume's position *is* consistent with theism, so long as it is admitted that the mind can infer that observed changes are ultimately due to unobserved causes.

Stewart's strategy then, was to attempt to distinguish between two senses of causation; the one physical, and the other metaphysical, and to maintain that only the latter involved talk of necessary connection. He argued that Leslie, and those professors and students who defended him, intended only to endorse this doctrine. Stewart maintained that a simple limitation expressed by inserting the word "physical" before the word "cause" would have been sufficient to dismiss the ambiguity of expression that led to the charge of atheism against Leslie. As Macvey Napier reports, the general sentiment regarding the outcome of the debate was that Stewart's argument had won the day. For, "It was on all hands admitted, that if Mr Leslie had, by a single word, limited his observations to *Physical* causes, they, in that case, would have been wholly free from objection." To suppose some other meaning would lead to a "most perverse and intolerant construction" of a footnote to "a work purely physical" in which the criticism was "obviously levelled at those theories which resort to certain invisible *intermedia*, in order to account for the connection of physical sequences." (Napier 1836: p.23)

Having committed themselves to a fairly specific charge, the alternatives for the objecting Ministers were to back down defeated, or to continue with their offensive. Reverend John Inglis, head of the Presbytery bearing the right of *avisamentum*, decided to forge ahead. Much of his commentary was aimed at establishing an inconsistency in Stewart's position. But the substantial point on which Inglis's case rested was the claim that the only theologically acceptable understanding of the term "efficient cause" was a scholastic one. Citing authorities such as Malebranche and Archbishop King, Inglis maintained that the sense of causality still in general acceptance was the scholastic sense of the term. Thus, a "*true* cause", as Malebranche writes, is "that betwixt which and its effect, the mind perceives a *necessary connexion*." (Inglis 1805: p.122) Similarly, Archbishop King writes that when we contemplate ourselves, we realize that we do not exist of ourselves, and that "we are *necessarily carried to some cause* distinct from us" and that our understanding "*must have a necessary connection* with some cause distinct from us." (Inglis 1805: p.123) As Inglis later elaborated, "The word *cause*, in its primary use, and as still understood by most writers, does, *in itself*, denote efficiency. A physical object or event, if it possesses no efficiency, is improperly denominated a *cause*." (Inglis 1806: pp.57-8)

With this argument, Inglis hoped to deny the validity of the distinction between metaphysical and physical causation proposed by Stewart. However, in appealing to scholastic sources, Inglis showed little sensitivity to the sort of philosophical defense that would be effective in early nineteenth century Edinburgh. In a post-Humean and post-Kantian context, the return to scholastic authorities sounded hollow. Scholastic traditions had long since been replaced in Edinburgh's literary circles, and recent epistemological debate had centered on questions such as the relative merits of empiricism and transcendentalism. Inglis simply could not muster a contemporary sounding epistemology to accompany his theological precepts. In the end, he fell back on the standard appeal to ignorance. In trying to drive a wedge that could mitigate the damage caused by the Ministers claim about "operating principles *in* the cause" Inglis suggested that the conception of necessity applicable to the physical world might well be different from that applicable to divine legislation. For all we know, the argument goes, mathematical necessity might not hold a candle to divine necessity. If so, then no one, including Hume, could understand the sense of

necessity at work in God's creation. One problem with this argument is that the appeal to ignorance fails to supply evidence in support of theism. Another difficulty is that as a sceptical appeal, the argument is surely just as "dangerous" as Hume's doctrine of causality.

Many letters and pamphlets followed upon this dispute, but none of the commentaries were as substantive as those produced by Brown and Stewart. In 1806, Brown elaborated and embellished upon his 1805 *Observations* in his *Short Criticism of the Terms of the Charge against Mr. Leslie in the Protest of the Ministers of Edinburgh as Explained by them in this Late Pamphlet*.[122] As Brown reminds us in his 1806 edition, the 1805 text was but "the work of a few days", and was occasioned by the circumstances surrounding the election of John Leslie, whom he describes as a man "of great and deserved scientific celebrity." His goal at that time, he explained, was to engage a philosophical issue of "the greatest importance", which was "about to come for decision before the highest ecclesiastical court in Scotland."[123] Thus, Brown's 1806 edition expands and revises his 1805 text. There are a few substantial differences between the works as well. For example, Brown revises the definition of 'cause'. In 1805, what Brown says is that a 'cause' is as "an object followed by another, where, if the first object had not been, the second had not appeared, and which, existing again in similar circumstances, will always be followed by the second." (Brown 1805: p.2) With this definition, Brown adopts Hume's first definition of 'cause'. But this definition, it turns out, presupposes a form of realism that is not strictly consistent with, or, as Brown argues, necessary for, the Humean notion of causality, which requires only the believed invariableness of a sequence. Hence, Brown has modified his position in 1806, arguing that "a *cause* may be defined *the object, or event, which immediately precedes any change, and which, existing again in similar circumstances, will be always immediately followed by a similar change*." (Brown 1806b: pp.44-6) Brown's 1806 text also includes a discussion of Reid's interpretation of Hume. Reid's interpretation, he says, though it misrepresents Hume's position, greatly influenced the Edinburgh debate. Indeed, following Reid, philosophers have "magnified his [Hume's] scepticism, by representing him as denying, not merely the *perception* or *inference* of power, as a quality of bodies, but the very *idea* of power, as an existing phenomenon of mind." (Brown 1806b: p.10)

Against Reid, Brown argues that Reid's view is "in direct contradiction

to the great argument which pervades it [Hume's theory of causation]." (Brown 1806b: p.12) For one thing, Reid misrepresents Hume as "denying the existence of the very idea of necessary connection" (Brown 1806b: pp.178-9) Hence, it is still necessary to show "that the idea of power is not considered by him, as altogether without meaning." (Brown 1806b: p.179) For, 'He [Hume] does not deny, that we have an idea of *power* or of *invariable priority* in sequences: he denies only that we can perceive or infer it, as a quality inherent in the subjects of a sequence." (Brown 1806b: p.180) Brown also replies to Reid's discussion of whether there is an impression that leads to the idea of a causal power. (Brown 1806b: p.181) Brown maintains, contra Reid, that Hume does in fact hold that such an idea exists and is copied from an impression. Granted, Hume's section on sceptical doubt shows that we do not directly perceive or infer the idea of cause, but the "Solutions" section that follows shows that we form the idea as a result of customary associations. (Brown 1806b: p.182) Hence, the sceptical doubts that arise in the one section, are shortly resolved. Of course, the fact that events seem conjoined also needs explanation. In this case, Hume shows that there is a feeling of connection that leads to an impression of reflection, and from thence to an idea of power. (Brown 1806b: p.190) "The belief of power is immediately intuitive, not borrowed from any *resemblance* in the transitions of thought." (Brown 1806b: p.194) Hence, Brown's main point is to show that Reid's theory is "assuredly a misrepresentation" and that it has led Reid to ascribe an "almost inconceivable scepticism" to Hume. (Brown 1806b: p.195) For, unlike an atheistic doctrine, Hume's theory leads us to expect warmth from the fire and satiety from food. (Brown 1806b: p.219) Moreover, there is no grounds to think that Hume's doctrine of causation has led to scepticism. Hence, "The just and beautiful analysis, which reduces our expectation of similarity in the future train of events to intuition, we may therefore safely adopt, without any fear of losing a single argument for the existence of God."[124] (Brown 1806b: p.220)

In addition to defending Hume against Reid, Brown argues, with Hume, that antecedence and consequence are not merely signs of causation, they are "the only essential circumstance of causation." But the theory, Brown argues, still needs to be scientifically proven. If true, he maintains, it would tend to make the great doctrines of religion "more intelligible and sublime" rather than to oppose them. (Brown 1806b: p.36) To this end, Brown

projects a work that he hopes will "remove much of the obscurity which at present darkens out metaphysics"; "for we must not assent to the opinions of those, who consider the discussions of metaphysics as relating only to verbal definition of phenomena previously understood, and to the mere arrangements of nomenclature, which afford no addition to our real knowledge." (Brown 1806b: p.12) Brown defends a project of a 'philosophy' or physiology of mind that is done in a manner that is scientific, i.e., such that the experiment can be repeated and observations made &c..[125] (Brown 1806b: p.16) He proposes to use the power of analysis, and, without decomposing the compound, to "retrace the circumstances" of concept formation, "exhibit it [the concept] in definite parts", "state the order of combination", and "discover the leading circumstances, analogies which connect the aggregate with other compound feelings." (Brown 1806b: pp.18-19) The project, he says, will be like any other science involving observation, even though the process involved "is wholly internal." (Brown 1806b: p.20)[126]

What Brown hoped to secure then in supporting Hume, was not a defense of atheism, but "evidences for the most important of all truths"; namely, the truth of God's existence. At the same time, his bold sarcasm did not win him any favours with the conservative Ministers. Indeed, in 1806, Brown took the opportunity to engage the General Assembly debate from which he had been de-barred. He mocked Inglis's scholastic approach, showing that it reduced to absurdity. He pointed out that, on Inglis's view, the terms "physical cause" and "efficient cause" are to be understood as follows: A physical cause is "the observed antecedent of an event, considered merely as the prior in a sequence of changes." An efficient cause denotes "that unobserved, but imagined circumstance of power, supposed in the schools to be essential to the sequence, by which a physical cause is *rendered the invariable antecedent* of its proximate event." (Brown 1806c: p.15) The Ministers of Edinburgh, in having "expressly excluded from their ground of accusation, any thing relative to physical doctrine", denied the physical sense of cause intended by Leslie. (Inglis 1805: p.111) Rather, they insisted that the word "cause" be used only with reference to the Supreme Being. Thus, the Ministers' charge against Leslie rested only the theologically sanctioned sense of 'efficient causality'. The absurd implications are as follows:

Mr Leslie will then be accused of *denying all such necessary*

> *connection between an efficient cause and its effects, as implies an operating principle in the efficient cause*; or, as an *operating principle* is only another phrase for *efficiency*, the expression may be thus varied, without altering in any respect the intended sense; *Mr. Leslie having along with Mr. Hume* DENIED ALL SUCH EFFECT, AS IMPLIES EFFICIENCY IN THE EFFICIENT CAUSE, *has of course laid a foundation for rejecting all the argument that is derived from the works of God, to prove either his being or attributes.*[127]

(Brown 1806c: p.19)

In other words, if restricted to the sense of efficient causality sanctioned by the Ministers, the charge against Leslie is the denial of a tautology, and this leads to contradiction. Professor John Playfair later gave the nod to Brown's argument, which he described as a "masterly and victorious refutation." Brown's analysis, he wrote, was "as clear and exact as could be expected in the solution of an algebraic equation" and it "proved that Leslie was accused of denying an identical proposition."[128] (Playfair 1806: pp.72-3)

The Edinburgh debate on the causal relation took place largely between the professoriate and the Ministers of Edinburgh. The victory in the debate belonged to the professoriate, for, Dugald Stewart and his followers had succeeded in defending Leslie against the charges of the "Protestant Divines." Though Stewart would later regret having entered into a philosophical dispute, it was largely his philosophical engagement of the charges against Leslie that initiated the public dimension of the debate. Stewart and his students, wrote Inglis, sought to "contribute to the maintenance and advancement of sound philosophy", and were "convinced that the agitation of *this question* ... was essential to that important object." (Inglis 1805: p.146) But, as Stewart explained, he could not overlook the Leslie affair, which represented a rather unfortunate constellation of many of the themes of his own life's work. Having devoted his life to defending a form of political liberty compatible with "theological interests", he felt compelled to rise up to Leslie's defense:

> Interests of a higher nature than those of any individual were now at stake. Insult after insult had been offered to the

> University; and the opinions of our Academical Youth, concerning the foundations of those essential principles which it is my professional duty to illustrate, and which it has been the great object of my life to defend, were in no small danger of being unsettled by the crude and contradictory notions which were everywhere afloat. On the one hand, I saw a doctrine, which had been sanctioned by the highest names in Theology and Philosophy, and which I myself, for more than twenty years, had laboured to establish, from the firmest conviction of its importance, not merely to the progress of physical science, but to the best and highest interests of mankind; this doctrine I saw menaced with the anathemas of a powerful party in the Church; while, on the other hand, Persecution was preparing, as of old, to display her banners, in defense of an inconsistent jargon of metaphysical words, which waged war with the human understanding. (Stewart 1805: p.99)

The Leslie episode was regrettable in many respects, but, as Stewart had noted, there were indeed important issues at stake. The philosophical question was taken up quite widely, and Leslie's case became a testing ground for a protracted and complicated debate involving a wide spectrum of issues. As part of this debate, numerous philosophical texts, letters, and pamphlets were published that not only elevated the controversy by couching censure or approbation in principled, philosophical terms. What began as an unkind attempt to undermine Leslie's candidacy, had become tied to a philosophical debate. In the end, the Minister's charges were critically appraised by Scotland's scholarly community, who publicly championed not only Leslie and Hume, but also the philosophical quest for truth. Ironically, at this point in time, the reading of Hume that showed the most sensitivity to Hume's *mitigated scepticism* was ot penned by a philosopher, but by the mathematician and natural philosopher, John Leslie. However, Brown too, despite some unorthodox aspects to his reading of Hume, was clearly following the train of Hume's reasoning. Hence, though "the case of Mr Leslie" was surely unfortunate, the debate that ensued in consequence was quite fortunate.[129] Moreover, one thing that the debate clearly established was the growing distance between the reading of Hume associated with *universal scepticism* and *atheism* and reading of Hume associated with *mitigated scepticism* and methodology. Hence, the

Edinburgh debate revealed a growing gulf between old-school discussions of Hume and the emerging analysis of his *mitigated scepticism*. In this respect, the outcome could not have been worse for the Ministers of Edinburgh.

Chapter 7

Spurious Connections

By the turn of the nineteenth century, there had emerged two distinct lines of Hume interpretation. However, there was still a great deal of confusion regarding the nature and consequences of Hume's scepticism. Only a handful of philosophers had grasped the fundamentals of Hume's *mitigated scepticism* - the vast majority of critics held fast to the *universal scepticism* reading - and to its attendant view that Hume was a menace to civil society. As the nineteenth century continued to unfold, the controversy surrounding Hume and his "dangerous philosophy" began to take on even broader associations than those evident in the Edinburgh debate. Hume and his supporters came to be directly associated with a variety of complaints regarding the dangers of empiricist ideologies. These complaints culminated in a call for publication bans. Thus, Hume, along with many other adherents of the new empiricism, was implicated as an agent of social decay.

An excellent example of the constellation of ideas that had emerged can be found in a William Keir's *A Summons of Wakening or, The Evil Tendency and Danger of Speculative Philosophy Exemplified in Mr Leslie's Inquiry into the Nature of Heat; and Mr Malthus's Essay on Population, And in that Speculative System of Common Law, which is at the present administered in these kingdoms. To which is subjoined, A prospectus of one Inquiry into the Origin of Government and Law.* The main portion of the work is a critical response to Leslie's 1804 *An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat*; however, Keir also claimed to identify the theoretical features that make empiricist ideologies so dangerous.[130] Thus, Keir's *Summons of Wakening* has several distinct dimensions. First, it

contains a philosophical critique of empiricism, and of Leslie's empirical research in particular. Second, it includes numerous *ad hominem* attacks on proponents of empiricism. Third, it makes appeal to the dangerous consequences of empiricism to motivate a call for publication bans. The resulting text, while sometimes bewildering, is notable for its perpetuation of dehumanizing, fictional caricatures of empiricists.

William Keir, a London physician with a dissertation in chemistry from the University of Edinburgh, takes the science of Leslie's 1804 text quite seriously.[131] Keir's text begins with an extended critical evaluation of Leslie's scientific reasoning in his 1804 *An Experimental Inquiry into the Nature and Propagation of Heat.* (Leslie 1804) The evaluation is highly critical, and focuses on rebutting Leslie's attack on "invisible agents." Keir argues that Leslie's analysis suffers from something like 'confirmation bias'; specifically, that Leslie overlooks evidence against his own assumptions about heat, and that the evidence against the aether hypothesis is ambiguous. Keir argues that it is Leslie's prior theoretical commitments that predispose him to favor his own theory. (Keir 1807: p.9) In fact, he holds that Leslie's position amounts to little more than false speculation, a speculation that, when combined with the mathematization of nature, leads to an evil end. Keir writes that, Leslie, when acting as an experimentalist who attends to the evidence and to "real mathematical truths", wears the hat of "Mr Truth." However, when Leslie acts as someone who enters into science "with a speculative opinion of his own", he wears the hat of "Dr Speculative." (Keir 1807: pp. 24-5) Moreover, Keir charges, Leslie's quantitative experimentalism has its origins in the "false constructions of language" of empiricism. As such, Leslie has slyly mixed together truth and speculative opinion, and this leads him to conclusions that are inconsistent with revelation. (Keir 1807: p.6) The resulting "heterogeneous mixture of truth, falsehood, and speculative opinions, has a direct tendency to darken the minds of men, to lead them to the path of error, and to bring them into a state of bondage or slavery." (Keir 1807: p.3)

Keir is not content to simply reject Leslie's experimental results and to identify their evil consequences. He wants to show that the root of his problem is the empiricism borrowed from Hume's empiricist theory of ideas. Leslie, he maintains, draws on Hume's false doctrine of causality and "rears a building upon this false foundation." (Keir 1807: p.45) Indeed, Leslie admits that he sees little role for *a priori* causal axioms and for mysterious

notions of causal interaction. “Science has experienced much obstruction, from the mysterious notions long entertained concerning causation”, writes Leslie. (Keir 1807: p.47) From Keir’s perspective, Leslie is here asking his readers to reject conclusions that “the Almighty has been graciously pleased to bestow upon us” - and so, Keir concludes, “the cloven foot appears.” (Keir 1807: p.48) John Leslie, agent of the Devil, is “the means which the great deceiver of mankind, has employed to seduce them from their allegiance to God; and to bring them under bondage to himself, and to his ministers.” (Keir 1807: p.48) For, “those axioms, or simple natural truths, are not as Mr Leslie affirms, to use his own learned language, *gained a posteriori from familiar experience, but a priori*; being instantaneously conveyed to the mind by the organs of sense. (Keir 1807: p.53) Moreover, there is in fact a “necessary connexion between the senses and understanding”, writes Keir. (Keir 1807: p.50) For, “if we were totally deprived of our organs of sense, the understanding would become altogether useless.” (Keir 1807: p.50) In short, by adopting Hume’s view of causation, and by abandoning the proper combination of reason and revelation, Leslie, like Hume before him, has distorted the natural evidence that proves “that the revelations of God are the words of truth”: (Keir 1807: p.55) “The speculative opinion respecting *causation*, which Mr Leslie has introduced in the last sentence of the eighth chapter of his book, and which he seems to have adopted from Mr Hume, and his reasoning upon it in the note there referred to, are, like these other speculative opinions which we have already examined, evidently founded on error, and has evidently, like them, a direct tendency to destroy the fear of God in the minds of men.” (Keir 1807: p.56) Leslie and Hume then, “renounce faith in the testimony of their own natural faculties”, without which “it is obviously impossible to have any such thing as true religion in the world.”[132] (Keir 1807: p.55)

In addition to his rejection of Leslie’s experimentalism and criticisms of Hume’s doctrine of causality, Keir is quite generally opposed to the application of mathematics to natural phenomena. (Keir 1807: p.75) He extends his criticism of the mathematization of nature to an invective against Thomas Malthus’s 1798 *Essay on Population.* (Malthus 1986) Malthus, Keir claims, deceives readers into thinking that something other than God might be responsible for population growth, by claiming that there is a simple mathematical explanation for population growth; namely, that the population will tend to grow at a geometric ratio while the means

of subsistence will tend to increase at an arithmetic ratio. This view, Keir reasons, presents a state of affairs in which we are "perpetually tormented by our own offspring, and die *miserably of famine and contagious diseases.* (Keir 1807: p.86) "It will appear very evident from the following observations" he writes, "that this *essay on Population*, is, like Mr, Leslie's Inquiry into the Nature of Heat, a complete mixture of truth, falsehood, and speculative opinions." This "not being itself the language of *truth*" he continues, "it is evidently impossible that it can convey any knowledge of truth to the mind of any other man."[133] (Keir 1807: p.86) Keir further charges that in regarding the chief cause of misery and vice as "that unequal distribution of the bounties of nature", Malthus is "like Tom Paine and the *French Philosophers*." (Keir 1807: p.88) Moreover, when Malthus warns that multiplying too fast leads to poverty, contagion, and death - advising couples to delay marriage and procreation - he advances a system that is pagan rather than Christian. (Keir 1807: p.111)

Finally, Keir's text turns to the a reproach of both lawmakers and the common law. "The liberty of the press has, by the mercy of Providence, been preserved in these kingdoms; and it has become one of the chief instruments in his hand, for the protection of British liberty, and for diffusing knowledge to all the rest of mankind. But neither the law of God, nor the laws of this kingdom, will permit any man to abuse this liberty of the press, and employ it to the injury of other men."[134] (Keir 1807: pp.122-3) "Is there no law in this kingdom" he writes, "for punishing a man for publishing a libel against the Almighty himself, and for endeavoring to seduce all the rest of mankind to join with him, for the purpose of overturning his government?" (Keir 1807: p.123) Keir's ultimate goal then, has been to establish that there ought to be publication bans on treatises such as Leslie's, Malthus's, and Paine's. And, why is such a publication ban necessary? Apparently, because of the quite general threat that empiricist ideologies present to civil society. [135]

Keir's text can be difficult to follow, mainly because it combines several distinct objectives. The foremost thread in the discussion relates to Leslie's experimentalism. However, the more general point that he makes is the complaint against empiricism. For, as Keir argues, the empiricist approach combines mathematization and empirical analysis in a way that creates a sly mixture of speculative and empirical elements. This "heterogeneous mixture" obscures truth and, ultimately, leads to evil. In particular, as Keir

explains in his preliminary "Observations", the empiricist language upon which the works of Leslie and Malthus draw is "the invention of a wicked spirit who was the original cause of all evil, and the father of lies." That language is, evidently, Hume's language, and it leads to "a direct tendency to destroy the fear of God in the minds of men, and to overturn established religion and government of this kingdom." (Keir 1807: p.3). Hence, Hume, Leslie, Malthus, Paine and other empiricists are to be considered as agents of the devil whose works are destructive to civil society.

Apart from the confusion generated by Keir's text, one thing is quite evident. Namely, that Hume and other empiricists were wrapped up in an ongoing hysteria associated with empiricism. As part of this, there ensued a widespread public disregard for their persons. The popular clamour surrounding Hume, for example, was far from over. As Benjamin Silliman reports in his *A Journal of Travels in England, Holland, and Scotland, in the Years 1805-1806*, Hume continued to be a favourite subject for derision: "From the same venerable friend of Dr Witherspoon, I have derived the following circumstances concerning Hume, with whom this gentleman was well acquainted. He alleges that this sceptical philosopher did not die in all that composure, or rather that impious levity of mind, which has been ascribed to him, by the ardent but indiscreet zeal of his friend Adam Smith; he cites the testimony of the nurse who attended the bed-side of Hume at the trying hour, and she asserted that *he died in horror*." (Silliman 1810: p.7) Another story that Silliman recounts is that Hume's mother is said to have complained that he had taken away her only source of comfort in her times of affliction, and that she was sinking into despair. (Silliman 1810: p.7) Both anecdotes were challenged by Hume's family. In view of this, Silliman revised the Preface to his 1820 edition, saying that "The anecdotes concerning Mr Hume, the celebrated historian, have been suppressed. I received them from the most respectable authority ... I believed them to be true, and as Mr Hume made his religious principles no secret, and their influence had been great, I thought the publication justifiable." However, their truth having been denied by Hume's nephew, Silliman acknowledged that, "it becomes *me* to enter into no discussion of the subject." (Silliman 1820: p.7)

The fiction and myth surrounding Hume and his doctrine of causality continued to develop well into the nineteenth century. Mme de Staël's (posthumously published) 1818 *Considérations sur les principaux*

événements de la Révolution française, had the working title of *Des Causes et des Effets de la Révolution Française*.[136] (Smiles 1891: p.316) Mme de Staël's working title, which was almost certainly tongue-in-cheek, is suggestive of the growing inclination to mock not only Hume, but also his opponent's claims regarding the dangers of his philosophy. In a similarly irreverent style, Richard Whatley's 1819 *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte* turns Hume into a comedic foil for Napoleon. Whately's *Historic Doubts* touched on many of the issues raised by Hume and his critics, including not only Hume's scepticism, but also our knowledge of miracles and of historical characters. Highly entertaining and enormously popular, the book posed a challenge to Hume's supporters. Given Hume's "universal scepticism", Whately writes, what philosophical grounds could the Humean give for belief in the existence of Napoleon Buonaparte?[137] (Whately 1837: p.iii)

In making his case against Hume's followers, Whately points out that most of the evidence concerning Napoleon comes from newspaper reports. These reports, he says, are treated as pieces of evidence about Napoleon and his existence - but what sort of evidence can such stories really provide? They are traded around from one newspaper to the next, until they eventually take on the form of appeals to the masses. This evidential problem is further complicated by the fact that we are not normally in a position to verify newspaper reports about Napoleon. Hence, we can't appeal to personal testimony in support of newspaper claims. Moreover, those who claim to have visited Napoleon, Whately notes, could well be deceived by the testimony of their own senses. After all, how can they know that the person that they have seen is in fact Napoleon? Yet another important consideration that raises doubt about Napoleon, Whately notes, is the fact that media reports palpably contradict one another on important points. Finally, it is well to bear in mind that the defenders of liberty and the publishers could easily have conspired to fabricate stories about Napoleon in support of their own cause! Having offered these various reasons to doubt our belief in Napoleon, Whately then poses his sceptical challenge: "Let those who pretend to philosophical freedom of inquiry, who scorn to rest their opinions on popular belief, and to shelter themselves under the example of the unthinking multitude, consider carefully each one for himself, what is the evidence proposed to himself in particular, for the existence of such a person as Napoleon Buonaparte." (Whately 1837: p.29)

Whately goes on to congratulate those who would persist in believing in Napoleon without good argument on their "easy faith". In his *pièce de résistance*, the future Archbishop of Dublin includes a mock-up of a Biblical extract, starring Napoleon: "And when Napoleon saw that the kingdom was departed from him, he said unto the rulers which came against him, Let me, I pray you, give the kingdom unto my son: but they would not hearken unto him. Then he spake yet again, saying, Let me, I pray you, go and live in the island of Elba, which is over against Italy, nigh unto the coast of France; and ye shall give me an allowance for me and my household, and the lands of Elba also for my possession. So they made him ruler of Elba." (Whately 1837: pp.41-2)

Whately's ability to find humour in the Hume episode was not universal. At about the same time as *Historic Doubts* was making waves, there ensued a number of prosecutions for the publication of "seditious" material. There were famous public trials, such as the trial of Richard Carlile, who was sent to jail for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason.* Paine's trial was controversial and the publication bans came to be regarded by many as unjust. It was becoming increasingly clear that the nature of the right to free speech was one of some subtlety. Hence, while the Crown might not have a right to limit free speech on matters of philosophical dispute, there were nonetheless limits as to what could freely be uttered about individuals. One famous publication-related trial that occurred at about this time was the libel suit brought against the publisher William Blackwood by John Leslie, who had been repeatedly slandered in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.* The Leslie trial established that, while most forms of free speech should be protected, personal attacks on individuals such as Leslie were beyond the pale. Hence, the trial touched on the general matter of the appropriate boundaries of free speech.

Beginning in 1819, there ensued a series of vicious and slanderous attacks on John Leslie in the press. The attacks amounted to an ongoing persecution, and they led to the prosecution of the publisher, William Blackwood. As Leslie's *Summons* reads, the writers for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* "have for some time past, conceived an unjustifiable rancour and malice against the pursuer; in gratification of which, they have had recourse of the most false and abominable libels against him", including "the most foul and atrocious calumnies against his private and public character, as a man, and as a Professor." In doing so, they have

shown a "profligate and wanton disregard of his feelings and reputation."[138] (Macbean 1820: p.1) The attacks themselves were initiated in the November 1819 issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, No. XXXII. There, Leslie was accused of making a slur against the Hebrew language. The slur, located in a note about numeration in ancient Hebrew, was made in Leslie's 1817 *Philosophy of Arithmetic.* In the note, Leslie says that Hebrew is "the rudest and poorest of all written languages" because in representing the higher numbers, ancient Hebrew "has recourse to the clumsy expedient of addition." (Leslie 1817: n.218)

As with the 1804 footnote, Leslie's remark on the Hebrew language had gone unnoticed until 1819, when Leslie was proposing to translate from his Chair in Mathematics to the Chair in Natural Philosophy - a move occasioned by the death of Professor Playfair. It was at this point that the Blackwood's attacks began. What the magazine claimed was that Leslie had made a slur against "*the language of the Old Testament*; - the language, as a philosopher like Hume, or a partizan of Mr Hume's, would say, dedicated to superstition."[139] (Wilson 1820) Various other aspects of the new episode, in addition to explicit connections made during the trial, established that the attacks represented an ongoing persecution of Leslie for his holding of certain beliefs:[140] "A man who would go out of his path", so the comments went, "in an inquiry on the nature of heat, to *recommend an impious work*; and, in a Treatise on Arithmetic, to cast an ignorant sarcasm on the *language of the Bible*, or to sneer at the *fancies of one of the Apostles, must ever be an object of suspicion to those who hold the Scriptures in honour* ... We have no assurance that he may not digress as culpably hereafter, and if he does so, it is only fair to give him warning that I shall take care to point it out." (Bennet 1822: p.62)

The author of the *Blackwood's* attacks turns out to have been John Wilson, who was then the candidate in place to succeed Thomas Brown in Dugald Stewart's old Chair of Moral Philosophy.[141] Wilson was a controversial figure and a controversial candidate, in part because he had a reputation for intolerance and for making severe attacks on Edinburgh's public figures. As Macvey Napier said of him in a letter to James Mill dated 11 May 1820, "it makes one sick to think of him", explaining that as a professor of moral philosophy, Wilson would be likely to persecute those with unorthodox views: "Instead of delightful exhortations to mental enterprise, and to press forward unceasingly to new attainments, to which I

listened with rapture from the lips of Mr Stewart, the unfortunate youth will hear from the man in question nothing but exhortations to the implicit adoption of opinions already received, and to hate and persecute every man who shows a disposition to go beyond them." (Bain 1882: pp.189-190) Thus it was that Leslie and his "dangerous philosophy" translated to the Chair of Natural Philosophy, and John Wilson, author of the attacks on Leslie, succeeded to the Chair of Moral Philosophy.[142]

What is especially interesting concerning the Leslie trial are the four general classes of personal attack identified in the libel charge against William Blackwood. All of them related to malicious comments aimed at the destruction of Leslie's character and reputation.[143] The first charge concerned the "general impeachment of Leslie's reputation as a philosopher, and as a man of science." (Bennet 1822: p.35) "He is accused of ignorance and presumption, and even where his superiority as a man of science has been universally acknowledged, he has been treated as a plagiarist, as of secondary talents, and as deserving of contempt."[144] (Bennet 1822: p.35) To establish the falsehood of the charge, several experts in chemistry and mathematics spoke on behalf of the originality of Leslie's inventions and discoveries, and more generally on behalf of his reputation as an academic.[145] The second charge concerned an insinuation against Leslie of "dishonesty, and collusion with others to impose upon the public." (Bennet 1822: p.35) This charge related to the claim that Leslie had published an essentially unchanged version of his 1817 *Philosophy of Arithmetic* with a new publisher, in 1820. (Bennet 1822: p.35) This charge was also easily defended. The third charge concerned the "malicious ridiculing of his person, which, taken in conjunction with the other charges, is evidently calculated to lower his estimation in society, and consequently his usefulness and comfort in the station in which he is placed." (Bennet 1822: p.35) In response, the argument of the defense claimed that, as a university professor, Leslie held a public office, and that this had entitled Blackwood's to launch their public attack:

> The liberty of the press in this country is well known to you. We are at full liberty to discuss the public conduct of public men, and to attack or defend the measures of government, and to maintain the rights of the people through the medium of the press ... In like manner, if an instructor of youth in his

> discourses to his pupils, should instill into their minds principles contrary to the established faith, whether as a professor in a university, or as a private teacher; or, if the ministers of the Gospel in the pulpit (and the people of this free protestant country do not go to private houses to be instructed by their priests, but to church) should do the same thing, and we should find fault with them for doing so, through the medium of the press - we do nothing but attack them in their public characters, and we are entitled to do so. (Bennet 1822: pp.111-12)

In what would amount to a small victory of sorts for Leslie and Hume, the first three charges were found in favour of the pursuer.[146] The last charge, which was perhaps the most significant of all, was skilfully avoided. For the charge read that the attacks had injured Leslie's position as a university professor by portraying him as an enemy to religion: "There is a malignant attempt to injure him in his usefulness as a public teacher; as having a spiteful enmity to our holy religion, and as being a corrupter of the religious principles of the young men who come as students to the University of Edinburgh." (Bennet 1822: p.35) However, the published material in question described, in vague terms, a sentiment of "grief" expressed for the many young men who go to Edinburgh to study medicine and return "with their religious principles perverted, and their reverence for holy things sneered away." (Bennet 1822: p.139) The vagueness of the claims allowed the defendant to successfully argue that the passage cited did not single out Leslie in particular. (Bennet 1822: p.141)[147]

The Leslie trial challenged the right to publish slanders against individuals, while upholding the right to free speech - a distinction that was apparently quite often lost on the critics of Hume and his followers. For, Leslie, like Hume, had been both fictionalized and demonized. Their caricatures were made possible by means of a widespread public consensus, however ill-founded, that empiricist ideologies had pernicious consequences. And, though the interest in Leslie faded over time, that in Hume persisted. Indeed, both Hume and his philosophy continued to attract a surprising level of voyeuristic interest. As part of this attention, Hume was not only treated ill, he was even blamed for his own ill-treatment - accused of having brought it on by staging a melodrama at his own death:

> No thing can be more affected, more evidently contrived for

> stage effect; or, even on infidel principles, more disgraceful to such a mind as Hume's; than the manner of his death, according to the account given by his friend. He knew his end was near. Whether he was to be annihilated, or to be forever happy, or forever miserable, was a question involved on his own principles, in impenetrable darkness. It was the tremendous question to be decided. Reason and decency demanded that it should be seriously contemplated. How does he await the approach of eternity? Said Chesterfield (an infidel also): "When one does see death near, let the best or the worst people say what they please, it is a serious consideration." Does Hume treat it as a serious consideration? He is *diverting himself*! With what? With preparing his Essay in defence of *Suicide* for a new edition; reading books of amusement; and sometimes with a game at cards! He is *diverting himself* again! With what next? With talking silly stuff about Charon and his boat, and the river Styx! Such are the philosopher's diversions, where common sense teaches other people to be, at least, grave and thoughtful.

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What are we to make of the many connections that were subsequently made to Hume and his philosophy? At a theoretical level, it is easy to see the weakness of the substantive claims made by Keir and others, that Hume's doctrine of causality had dangerous consequences. There simply was no proof of this charge. However, some very serious personal consequences followed for Hume and others who upheld his empiricist doctrine.[149] For, as the above circumstances show, it was Hume's trumped up reputation that stood in the way of a fair reading of his philosophy.

Chapter 8

The *Treatise* Revisited

By the early nineteenth century, there had emerged two competing strands in Hume interpretation. The older tradition emphasized a scholastic view of "metaphysical" causation, *universal scepticism*, and the dangerous consequences of Hume's doctrine. The newer tradition, which began with the case of Mr Leslie, emphasized "physical" causation, *mitigated scepticism*, and scientific induction. The differences between two interpretations of Hume became increasingly apparent following the 1817 publication of a second edition of Hume's *Treatise*. This publication occasioned a critical review of Hume's philosophy, and, while not all of the scholarly attention was devoted to the *Treatise*, the neglected work received more attention than it had for years. Thomas Brown, for example, drew on the doctrines of the *Treatise* in his discussions of empirical psychology, appealing to the first *Enquiry* for his discussions of causality and scepticism. Another critic, Mary Shepherd, drew from both the *Enquiry* as well as the *Treatise*. She argued that the material in Hume's *Enquiry* was "supported by the sophistical reasonings of the youthful Treatise" and that "the arguments used in the Essays are the *conclusions drawn in consequence of great detail of previous discussion in the Treatise*." (Shepherd 1824: pp. 2-3). What is most important, however, is that the publication of the second edition of the *Treatise* led to a re-examination of Hume's philosophy, and that this, in turn, led to a discussion of whether Hume's philosophy amounted to *universal scepticism* or *mitigated scepticism*. It is also significant that first on the scene were those with a long-standing interest in Hume's doctrine - to wit, the philosophers with

connections to the original Leslie affair, including Thomas Brown, Dugald Stewart, and Mary Shepherd.

Thomas Brown was among the more influential philosophers to revisit Hume's philosophy at this time. The 1817 edition of the *Treatise* was followed, in 1818, by Brown's *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect*. Brown had made the critical examination of Hume's theory central to his life's work, and his 1818 *Inquiry* represented the culmination of the interpretation of Hume first published in 1805 and 1806. Brown explains his plans for the 1818 edition in relation to the 1805 and 1806 editions: "In the Second Edition, I ventured to take a wider range, and to add such reasonings and reflections, as seemed necessary to elucidate some of the questions of greatest difficulty, in the philosophy of cause and effect. At the same time, however, many questions relating to that most comprehensive of subjects, were left wholly unexamined, and some others only briefly noticed, which deserved a much fuller discussion, both from their own importance, and from the light which they throw on Physical Inquiry in general." (Brown 1818: pp.v-vi) For, according to Brown, his analysis of causation relates to "our intellectual nature and everything which is known to exist". For, it "considers the mind in all its possible relations to the species of truths which it is possible to discover". As such, it quite generally elucidates the "Philosophy of Physical Inquiry." (Brown 1818: pp.x-xi) In other words, Brown's train of thought is that causal beliefs are necessitated by psychological laws of association, and that the analysis of causation is at the foundation of philosophy of mind; moreover, the philosophy of mind is at the foundation of all other areas of science.

One of Brown's central aims is to disarm the critique of Hume that is based on an appeal to "metaphysical causation". According to this view, there is a "mysterious connexion" that exists "between the phenomena, that are taking place at every moment before us" and the mind. (Brown 1818: p.xii) In critiquing this position, Brown adopts his 1806 strategy of placing emphasis on Hume's second definition of "cause", which turns on the subject's awareness of antecedence and consequence. When we speak of the causal power of one object to produce another, Brown says, "we mean nothing more than our belief ... that, in all past time, in the same circumstances, it would have exhibited the same change, - and that it will continue to do so in the same circumstances in the future. (Brown 1818: p.13) "A cause, therefore, in the fullest definition which it philosophically

admits, may be said to be that which immediately precedes any change, and which, existing at any time in similar circumstances, has always, and will be always, immediately followed by a similar change." (Brown 1818: p.13) Hence, Brown limits himself to a view of causation that limits causal claims to observations of invariable antecedence and consequence. He argues that observations of antecedence and consequence can be linked to both physical and mental events, reasoning that there is nothing mysterious underlying talk of cause and effect in terms of powers and susceptibilities. Such metaphorical talk is simply a way of referring to the observed qualities or properties of objects. (Brown 1818: pp.14-16) The only danger in such a use of abstract language, Brown notes, is the mistaken tendency to suppose that the metaphors denote some reality in bodies beyond the descriptions. (Brown 1818: p.17) In the case of causality, Brown reminds us, invariable priority is the only legitimate condition necessary for designating one thing as the cause of another. (Brown 1818: p.24)

In developing his view of causation, and in restricting causal talk to that which can be tied to observation, Brown intends to challenge the influential view of Thomas Reid. Contra Reid, Brown argues, there is no justification for introducing talk of mysterious "active powers". Consider, for example, the case of volitions. Any apparent distinction between desires and volitions, Brown says, can be explained in terms of arrangements evident in the order of nature. Thus, desires are more lasting than volitions, but this is explained by the fact that desires are less speedily gratified than volitions. (Brown 1818: p.45) Hence, there is no need to invoke mysterious powers in order to explain volition. Brown's more general point is that Reid's analysis of active powers and his claim to have demonstrated a second, non-physical, form of causation is unintelligible. And, "The theory of Power" Brown writes, "seems to receive no additional light from a consideration of mental energy." (Brown 1818: p.53) In other words, the dual-causation theory is superfluous. Properly analyzed, causal belief follows only when we observe a "sequence of two phenomena, that are believed to be, in the same circumstances, uniformly antecedent and consequent."[150] (Brown 1818: p.53) Brown goes on to point out that many traditional philosophical beliefs about causality are based on delusion. Metaphorical talk of causal powers is not literally true, since we only perceive antecedence and consequence. Much of the talk of "latent powers" in substances, for example, is based on the assumption of there being something that persists

when the circumstances that produce change are no longer present. But, in reality, we have no actual evidence of any "latent power" at work. (Brown 1818: p.128) It is merely a sameness of physical character that has led us, mistakenly, to attribute a power to the substance itself. Hence, metaphorical language and our accustomed ways of thinking have led us to err about objects and their relations: "Such is the vague sort of reasoning, with respect to the continued existence of power in circumstances in which it is not exercised, that appears just, to all who are not in the habit of making any very nice analyses, either of their thoughts or of the complex things before them." (Brown 1818: p.136) In actuality, Brown reasons, the power to move the body is always relative to some other antecedent condition, such as the state of the nerves.[151] (Brown 1818: p.138)

Having rejected the "metaphysical" causation account, Brown gives his positive account of the specific circumstances under which causal beliefs arise in the mind. (Brown 1818: p.161) Causal belies, he holds, arise in connection with the idea of invariable priority. Invariable priority, he says, is accompanied by an idea of necessity. However, this feeling of necessity need not signify some necessity outside of the appearances, i.e., something in the things themselves. (Brown 1818: p.162) For, the names of sensible qualities are invented only to denote the rise of certain feelings in us. Thus, the term 'red' indicates a feeling of redness in us, not that there is something 'red' in the thing itself. As such, names do not assign a reason, but merely indicate a belief, without explaining it. (Brown 1818: p.181) We cannot infer from the names of things, the existence of certain causes or effects. Nor can we infer the relation of future antecedence and consequence by reasoning, even after experience. (Brown 1818: p.183) On Brown's account then, it is the qualities of bodies that we experience that lead us to predict phenomena and anticipate successions. (Brown 1818: p.171)

Brown also digresses at some length on the philosophical foundations of physics. His main point is just to show that appeals to *a priori* principles in science - whether the principle of sufficient reason, the causal axiom, or the causal principle - merely beg the question regarding the justification for induction. The truths of physics, including ones concerning the inertia of matter, the composition of forces, equilibrium &c., he says, cannot be known *a priori*.[152] (Brown 1818: p.184) For, "We know that a stone falls to the ground to-day; and we *believe* that it will fall to the ground in the same circumstances to-morrow: but the belief is not the result of reasoning; and

vain would be our toil, if we should endeavour to state some argument that originally convinces us of it." (Brown 1818: p.238) Indeed, a belief about the physical future "is not an *inference* from any induction of the past, however frequent our observation may have been, unless, in similar circumstances, the future be exactly similar to the past." (Brown 1818: p.238) As such, physical hypotheses such as that concerning gravitation, and indeed all phenomena falling under gravitation, must be contingent ones, rather than necessary truths. (Brown 1818: p.239) "The future course of Nature, as I have already said, is as much beyond our reasoning as it is beyond our observation." (Brown 1818: p.239) There is nothing that intervenes, i.e., no causal axiom or causal principle, between our observations of antecedence and consequence and the "instant belief" of invariableness of the same sequence in the same circumstances. (Brown 1818: p.248) To argue otherwise is to beg the question. As Brown reminds us, "some doubt is mingled in every conjecture" probabilities are "contingent on that general regularity of nature" which we assume as certain, without attempting to demonstrate it."[153] (Brown 1818: p.245)

Brown reserves the final section of his 1818 book for a discussion of Hume's scepticism. Here Brown looks to the *Enquiry* for direction. He says that Hume's section entitled "Sceptical Doubts" is not intended to advance a "mere scepticism". The force of the section extends only to "an exposition of physical truth - as far at least as relates to the impossibility of directly perceiving or inferring the powers of nature." (Brown 1818: p.254) Brown indicates that he is somewhat puzzled by Hume's references to scepticism in this section, and he even speculates that Hume may have been "imperfectly aware of the exact force and limits of the very doubts which he urged"; for, the mind cannot resist the urge, Brown reasons, to form causal beliefs: "That in all reasonings from experience there is a step taken by the mind which is not supported by an argument or process of understanding," if the opinion is to be termed Scepticism, is at least a scepticism that requires no other Solution, than the certainty of the simple fact, that the step is one which it is impossible for the mind not to take." (Brown 1818: p.255) Why then, make reference to scepticism? Brown claims that Hume's judgement on this score may have been clouded. In particular, Hume was committed to finding a sensible impression for every idea. When his search for a sensible impression for the idea of a necessary connection yielded no positive result, he returned a negative verdict. Yet,

as Brown argues, Hume's search was not exhaustive enough. For, we do in fact have an intuitive idea of a belief in power. Power is the "belief of the uniformity of some consequent change after the particular antecedent of which we think." (Brown 1818: p.266) As such, there is indeed a felt power that is a Humean impression of necessary connection, and this impression corresponds to our instant belief of invariableness of sequence that arises on the perception of any change." (Brown 1818: p.268) Contra Hume then, it is not *habitual* transition from one idea to the next that produces belief in causal connection. Rather, it is an immediate sensation that produces the belief.[154] Thus corrected, Hume's belief in power is far from sceptical, since it rests on a very real and "instinctive determination of the mind." (Brown 1818: p.367) For this reason, Brown questions the application of the term "sceptical" to Hume's theory of causation. Another point that Brown makes has to do with the proper reading of Hume's *mitigated scepticism.* Hume's opponents were wrong, says Brown, to attribute to him the denial of belief in a future sequence. (Brown 1818: p.372) Philosophical doubts are always conquered by nature, because "Nature is too strong for reason." Indeed, Hume thought it would be mad to doubt our belief in causation. Hence, Brown concludes, Hume's scepticism is not as extreme as it has been made out to be; for Hume's view does not lead to *universal scepticism*, but to *mitigated scepticism.*[155] (Brown 1818: p.378)

Though Brown's discussion of Hume changed between 1805 and 1818 - beginning simply as an exposition of what he took to be Hume's doctrine of causation in 1805 and ending with the adaptation of Humean views to develop his own philosophy of mind in 1818, the cornerstone of Brown's philosophical work had always rested on Hume's doctrine of cause and effect. And, Brown's open endorsement of Hume's view was unusual in its day. In fact, the restriction of claims about causation to what could be directly observed through external or internal observation remained controversial throughout the nineteenth century. To make matters worse, not only had Brown endorsed Hume's theory of causation and argued that the idea of necessary connection could be explained by appeal to sensible impressions and operations of the human mind, he had also argued that, properly developed, the Humean account was far from sceptical.[156] This positive reading of Hume, and the claim that Hume's scepticism was modest in nature, seemed far fetched to many. Following Brown's publication, there ensued a number of critical commentaries aimed at

rejecting Hume's claim to *mitigated scepticism* and Brown's endorsement of Hume. Some of the commentaries were more substantive than others.

Among the less substantive commentaries were those of Whately, Cousin and Herschel. In his *Historic Doubts*, for example, Whately questions the consistency of Hume's claim to a *mitigated scepticism*. What philosophical justification could there be, he wonders, for the claim that nature forces us to believe what philosophy fails to demonstrate? No positive answer could be given, says Whately, that is consistent with the tenets of Hume's philosophy. Indeed, Whately makes fun of Hume's claim to advance a *mitigated scepticism*: Using the example of the existence of Napoleon, Whately announces that, "I do not pretend to decide positively that there is not, nor ever was, any such person [as Napoleon]; but merely to propose it as a *doubtful* point." (Whately 1837: p.47) However, Whately continues, "I call upon those therefore who profess themselves advocates of free inquiry - who disdain to be carried along with the stream of popular opinion, - and who will listen to no testimony that runs counter to experience, - to follow up their own principles fairly and consistently. Let the same mode of argument be adopted in all cases alike; and then it can no longer be attributed to hostile prejudice, but to enlarged and philosophical views." (Whately 1837: p.51) And, any such proof, Whately argues, would require the moderate sceptic to adopt a non-sceptical stance. For, *mitigated scepticism*, which combines a philosophical scepticism and a common sense credulity, represents an inconsistent standpoint. Thus, in the end, the Humean sceptic who continues to believe in such mundane things as the existence of Napoleon, should either admit inconsistency or give up scepticism altogether: "If after all that has been said, they cannot bring themselves to doubt of the existence of Napoleon Buonaparte, they must at least acknowledge that they do not apply to that question, the same plan of reasoning which they have made use of in others; and they are consequently bound in reason and in honesty to renounce it altogether." (Whately 1837: p.53)

Many others joined in giving negative reviews, some of which were aimed directly at Brown. As historian Robert Blakey tells us, Victor Cousin remarked in his *Remains* of M. de Biran, that Brown's theory is "*a fantastical one, and destructive of all true metaphysics*." (Blakey 1848: p.31n) Blakey also reports on John Herschel's comment in his *Cabinet Cyclopedia* article "Astronomy". Herschel writes of Brown that, "the whole

train of argument is vitiated by one enormous oversight; the omission, namely, of a distinct and immediate personal consciousness of causation, in his enumeration of that sequence of events, by which the volition of the mind is made to terminate in the motion of material objects."[157] (Blakey 1848: p.31n) Blakey himself locates the source of Brown's difficulties as his "peculiar ideas" (read Humean ideas) on cause and effect and their dangerous, atheistic consequences. Specifically, he writes that, "The *cause* of a thing is only the immediate invariable antecedent in any sequence, while the immediate invariable consequent is the correlative effect. It is somewhat surprising that a doctrine of this kind should have met with so much encouragement in the northern part of the kingdom; fraught, as it evidently is, with the most absurd and dangerous consequences." (Blakey 1848: vol. IV, p.30)

A more substantive critique was given by Dugald Stewart. Stewart's 1821 *Dissertation* shows a complete rejection of both Brown's approach to Hume and of the *mitigated scepticism* reading. (Stewart 1854) Stewart, unlike Brown, speaks in positive terms about the notion of "metaphysical" causation. For Stewart, metaphysical causation refers to the fact that every change in nature indicates the operation of an underlying cause - an unseen cause that is supposed to be necessarily connected with the observed change. In contrast to this, physical causation refers to observed constant conjunctions of things. While Brown admits that the two types of causation are both possible, he maintains that there is only evidence of physical causation. Stewart, on the other hand, thinks that our observations of physical causation leads us to directly infer the reality of unobserved metaphysical causation. (Stewart 1805: pp.49-50n) As such, Stewart maintains, Hume's account of physical causation could actually support theism, since the account "keeps the Deity always in view, not only as the first, but as the constantly operating cause in nature, and as the great connecting principle among all the various phenomena which we observe." (Stewart 1805: p.83) But it is only understood in this way that Hume's position can be made consistent with theism. Stewart then, unlike Brown, argues that physical causation serves to underline the mysterious action of metaphysical causation.

There are other important differences between the views of Stewart and Brown. Indeed, Stewart's 1821 *Dissertation* shows a pointed disagreement with the central tenets of Brown's analysis of Hume. Stewart, for example,

attributes all manner of scepticism and sceptical intent to Hume. He maintains that Hume's "aim is to establish a universal scepticism, and to produce in the reader a complete distrust in his own faculties." (Stewart 1854: p.437) Moreover, as Stewart points out, Hume argued that "our conviction of the permanence of the laws of nature be not founded on any process of reasoning." (Stewart 1854: p.443) What else could this amount to but an extreme form of doubt? Nor would it be correct to suppose that the psychological laws laid at the foundation of Hume's sceptical doctrine were intuitively certain, as Brown maintained. (Stewart 1854: p.442) Hence, Stewart is not at all inclined to accept Brown's analysis as the truly Humean one. Indeed, his characterization of Hume's method in the *Treatise* shows that he takes Hume to be an unrelenting sceptic of the highest order:

> With this fundamental principle of the Gassendists [the division of perceptions into impressions and ideas and the account of the origin of ideas in impressions], Mr Hume combined the logical method recommended by their great antagonists the Cartesians, and (what seemed still more remote from his Epicurean starting ground) a strong leaning to the idealism of Malbranche and Berkeley. Like Descartes, he began with doubting of everything, but he was too quick-sighted to be satisfied, like Descartes, with the solutions given by that philosopher of his doubts. On the contrary, he exposes the futility not only of the solutions proposed by Descartes himself, but of those suggested by Locke and others among his successors; ending last where Descartes began, in considering no one proposition as more certain, or even as more probable than another. (Stewart 1854: pp.436-7)

Ultimately then, the Humean analysis must end in a *universal scepticism*. For, uncertainty regarding the faculties, claims Stewart, undoes the proof of external existence: "It would, indeed, have done still greater honour to his sagacity if he [Hume] had ascribed this [difficulty with proofs for external existence] to its true cause - the impossibility of confirming, by a process of reasoning, the *fundamental laws of human belief*; but (as Bacon remarks) it does not often happen to those who labour in the field of science, that the same person who sows the seed should reap the harvest." (Stewart 1854: p.440)

In sum, Stewart rejects both Brown's reading of Hume and the claim to *mitigated scepticism*. And, while he acknowledges the importance of Hume's contributions to the development of philosophy, he also expresses grave concern for what he takes to be the "extravagant and dangerous" conclusions to which Hume's philosophy has led. The difficulty, presumably, is the same one seen by Reid and his followers; namely, Hume's flawed view of the faculties and the *universal scepticism* that follows as a consequence. In the end, Stewart regrets Hume's failure to see that his flawed conclusions constituted "proof of the unsoundness of his data." (Stewart 1854: p.439)

While Brown's interpretation of Hume may be skewed in certain respects, Stewart's interpretation represents a dogged pursuit of the older *universal scepticism* reading of Hume. A third critic who contributes to this new wave of scholarly literature on Hume is Mary Shepherd, whose 1824 *An Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect* aims to subvert the scepticism and atheism that she attributes to Hume. Shepherd publishes her work nearly twenty years after the Leslie affair, though she says that the work was written earlier. In any event, in her introductory remarks, Shepherd ties her book to the Leslie debate:

> It is not many years since Mr Hume's notions were the occasion of much dispute, on the very ground on which I have undertaken it; a dispute which nearly lost the mathematical chair in one of our universities to the present possessor of it, on account of his favouring this doctrine. His opinion, however, as far as it related to any countenance it might afford to the principles of atheism, was defended by a learned treatise, from the then Professor of Moral Philosophy, in the same University. This treatise, whilst it controverts Mr Hume's opinions in some respects, denies that atheistical inferences may be deduced from them; but I shall endeavour to show, that, in this respect, the author wanted observation and acuteness; neither perceiving the corollaries that go along with the doctrine, nor detecting the sly and powerful sophistry of the reasoning by which they are supported (Shepherd 1824: pp.5-6).

The majority of Shepherd's book is devoted to defending five propositions that contradict those attributed to Hume by Brown in his 1805 *Observations*:[158]

1. FIRST, That *reason*, not *fancy* and 'custom', leads us to the knowledge That everything which begins to exist must have a Cause.
2. SECONDLY, That reason forces the mind to perceive that *similar* causes must necessarily produce *similar effects*.
3. THIRDLY, I shall thence establish a more philosophical definition of the relation of Cause and Effect.
4. FOURTHLY, show, in what respects Mr Hume's definition is faulty.
5. FIFTHLY, proceed to prove that Nature cannot be supposed to alter her Course without a contradiction in terms; and, finally, show that *Custom and Habit* alone are not our guides; but chiefly reason, for the regulation of our expectations in ordinary life (Shepherd 1824: pp.27-8).

Shepherd takes up these five propositions and discusses them at length. Unlike Brown, who rejects only two of the Humean propositions, Shepherd rejects all five Humean claims, offering her own analysis of the manner in which Hume's doctrine fails. She argues "That *reason*, not *fancy* and 'custom', leads us to the knowledge 'That everything which begins to exist must have a Cause."' The causal axiom, she claims, follows from the impossibility of conceiving of causes and effects existing apart in nature without contradiction. (Shepherd 1824: p.30) For, "when the mind perceives by what passes within itself, that no quality, idea, or being whatever, can *begin* its own existence, it ... perceives the general necessity of a cause for every effect". (Shepherd 1827: p.xv) Moreover, an empirical act of introspection leads the mind to the discovery of this necessary connection. For, any attempt to *think* "dependent qualities that begin to exist" as uncaused, she says, leads to contradiction. (Shepherd 1824: pp.46-9) Shepherd's second proposition follows, she holds, for the simple reason that we observe invariable regularities. There is, she argues, an overwhelming amount of empirical support for the claim that like effects follow like causes. With this in hand, she next sets out to define a more "philosophical" notion of cause and effect. She holds that ideas of cause and effect are mixed together with other sensible ideas in the process of concept formation, and that all determinations before the mind necessarily

contain ideas of cause and effect. Drawing on this account of the manner of causal belief formation, Shepherd's advances a criticism of Hume's reasoning about cause and effect.

Shepherd's strategy in rejecting Hume is to begin by rejecting the definition of causality in terms of antecedence. This definition, she says, rests on a faulty analysis. Hume is wrong, she reasons, to say that noticing the temporal order of sensible qualities is essential to the formation of causal judgements. While sensible qualities do give rise to ideas of invariable sequences, the compound objects before the mind have ideas of cause and effect and sensible qualities already mixed in at *the very moment of formation*. As such, temporal succession is not essential in the definition of causality; rather, succession is a mere by-product of our abstract analysis of the representational object. (Shepherd 1824: p.42n) To this Shepherd's adds a point about the justification for induction, which she says is founded on two senses of necessary connection. Here, Shepherd appeals to the two explanations of necessary connection defended above. First, there is the necessity of certain effects arising from unknown causal objects, which, she says, depends on the fundamental causal axiom that "Whatever begins to exist must have a cause." Second, there is the necessary connection of invariable antecedence and consequence, which, she says, is discovered in introspective experience, and linked to the necessity of the causal principle that "Like causes give rise to like effects." Both principles play a role, Shepherd argues, in justifying empirical hypotheses. Whereas the latter is the foundation for probabilistic knowledge of empirical hypotheses; the former, the *a priori* axiom, is used to determine, with certainty, that a candidate empirical hypotheses is necessarily true. Shepherd explains her experimentalism as follows: "Thus all experimental reasoning consists in an observation, and a demonstration, as has been shown; - an observation whether the circumstances from which an object is produced, and in which it is placed, are the same upon one occasion as upon another; - and a demonstration, that if it is so, all its exhibitions will be the same." (Shepherd 1824: p.108) In the first instance, the mind takes notice of "like qualities" and "invariable sequences of effects" in compound sense objects, and the invariability of sequences leads us to conclude that there probably exists a causal connection (Shepherd 1827: p.131). Next, an *experimentum crucis* is performed in which the mind considers whether the difference in qualities could have begun of itself, and concludes that "after the

application of an exact experiment, it is impossible to imagine a difference of qualities to arise under the same circumstances."[159] (Shepherd 1824: p.129)

Looking back on the contributions of philosophers such as Brown, Stewart, and Shepherd, we find that the interpretation of Hume was mixed during the first half of the nineteenth century. Following the case of Mr Leslie, Hume's theory of causation comes to be increasingly associated with philosophical issues in science. In many respects, this change in the approach to Hume interpretation was the legacy of the case of Mr Leslie and of the philosophical discussion spurred by the work of Thomas Brown. In the mid-nineteenth century, the *mitigated scepticism* thread in the debate took on new life, following the 1843 publication of J.S. Mill's *A System of Logic*. In his *System of Logic* Mill defends Hume's view that causality is no more than uniformity of the antecedent.[160] (Mill 1973: Bk. III) Hence, Mill holds that a causal judgement is made whenever a succession of events invariably follows from a preceding set of events. On this reading, science avoids speculation about things as they are in themselves, and no assumptions are made about metaphysical powers beyond the appearances. In fact, all that science can show by means of observation, experiment and mathematics, are the invariable sequences in phenomena. As such, science gives probable knowledge of the conditions upon which things follow from one another. According to Mill then, the domains of metaphysics and science are quite distinct, since each employs different methods to different ends. Science cannot yield answers to metaphysical questions; nor can metaphysics cannot correct the results of science. Hence, like Brown, Mill went against the grain, endorsing Hume's view of causality as constant conjunction. Moreover, like Brown, Mill's reading of Hume met with controversy, and gave rise to a spate of interpretations aimed at showing Hume to be a *universal sceptic*.

Many critics rejected Mill's endorsement of Hume's position on causality and inductive inference, and later nineteenth century critics, such as McCosh, Cain and Carlile, framed their rejection of Hume within the new terms of the debate set by Mill. The challenge, it seemed, was to show that even within the new terms of the debate, Hume was mistaken, and that he was mistaken in a way that led to *universal scepticism*.

McCosh argues that, in following Hume, Mill has made an "unwarrantable" application of the laws of association. In particular, he is

wrong in claiming to derive all higher ideas from sensations through associations. Hume's theory of causation, says Mccosh, undermines the argument for the divine existence, since there is no effective way to argue for knowledge of God except by maintaining that an effect necessarily implies a cause. And, "he who undermines the fundamental truth spontaneously discovered, is doing an injury to humanity", because a man "may be led by wretched sophistry to deny the necessary relation of cause and effect when it would lead him upward from God's works to God himself, or induce him to seek peace in Him." [303] As such, we should aim to prevent attacks on fundamental truths about causation and divine existence, "not because the attack will have any influence on the practical affairs of this life, but because it may hold back and damp our higher aspirations, moral and religious."[304] Hume may have "hoped that his scepticism might soften asperities" and "not wish to think that any bad influences could follow from it", but he was mistaken. [304] In consequence, Hume ends up advancing an extreme, rather than a *mitigated scepticism.* As McCosh apologetically suggests, Hume may not really have known what sort of scepticism he was advocating. "Sometimes it looks as if his sublime aim was to expose the unsatisfactory condition of philosophy, in order to impel thinkers to conduct their researches in a new and more satisfactory manner." [300] ... But I suspect that the settled conviction reached by him was that no certainty could be attained in speculative philosophy; he was sure that it had not been attained in time past. [301]

Another critic, Cain, also argues against Mill's reading of Hume. Contra Mill, Cain holds that it is false to assert that the inmost nature or essence of a thing is unknowable and inconceivable. The definition, he writes, "manifests the essence of a thing."[318] So, even though objects known experimentally are not readily defined, their essences can nevertheless be apprehended and defined with "perfect certainty."[161] To assert otherwise, says Cain, leads to empiricist scepticism, and this, in turn, leads to a "relativity of knowledge" which "seems to be a reproduction of Hume's skepticism, with modern skeptical additions." [318] This modern view, of which Mill's philosophy is an example, holds that all knowledge is mutable, and that there are no *a priori* truths. In fact, on this view, there is no absolute certainty at all. Rather, all knowledge is phenomenal and relative to the knower.

Cain further argues contra Mill and Hume that experience does in fact

furnish the "complete evidence which enables the intellect to perceive a real *nexus* between the effect and its cause, so that one may, with certainty, be inferred from the other." [320] And, where experience is limited, reason and intuition are not. According to Cain, the causal axiom is true, and our knowledge of cause and effect depends on something more than constant conjunction. Intuition and *a priori* reasoning produce metaphysical certainty. The associationism of Hume and Mill are, in addition to being wrong, destructive to that certainty. The fact that the whole chain of cause and effect relations is not always known is not grounds for rejecting the claim to knowledge of an object's causal power. For, the mind knows causes mediately, by inference, and it knows objects directly by the senses. Both are known, contra Mill, with certainty. In fact, Mill finds no grounds for distinguishing some things as metaphysically certain. His theory of "inseparable association" aims to reduce metaphysical characteristics such as necessity and universality to "merely physical properties of knowledge which denote no more than a uniform and constant experience; he thus excludes from human knowledge any character by which it is objectively immutable and *a priori*. For Mill, the claim to metaphysical certainty is simply a claim to a more uniform and constant experience; in reality, conflicting data will always prevent our reaching metaphysical certainty. Contra this, Cain argues that the mind can possesses metaphysical certainty of a truth, and that this occurs when the opposite is simply inconceivable. Hence, we can conceive of a world without gravitation, but not the denial of the principle of contradiction. Evidently then, at least some inferred knowledge is not merely "conjectural".

As for Hume's scepticism, Cain holds that in denying knowledge of the causal relation, Hume's philosophy ultimately leads to "universal scepticism". "A survey of Hume's main principles" he writes, "will make manifest that the characteristic mark of his philosophy is doubt."[308] On the face of it, "the doubt is not so universal a kind as was Pyrrho's of old, for he [Hume] admits at least one species of knowledge to be demonstratively certain." [308] However, Hume severely limits this knowledge, so that Hume's doubt, while not advancing a *universal scepticism*, when "reasoned out", does in fact tend toward universal scepticism: "Hume is not an advocate of universal skepticism; but when his doctrines are consistently reasoned out, they tend in that direction."[311]

Like McCosh and Cain, Carlile argues against Hume and Mill's view of

causation. Both philosophers, he reasons, are selective in their appeals to certain kinds of examples of causality, and explain away examples that do not immediately fit their model. Mill's examples include change as metamorphosis, repetition, two phenomena in a series, &c. However, more obvious examples of causation are passed over, as is the more obvious use of the word of "doing something to something". These oversights, says Carlile, skew their analyses, because the more simple and obvious cases of cause and effect relations differ from the non-obvious cases of complex causal chains. It is with regard to the latter only that we have to try to reconstruct the whole from its parts, and this is the difficult task of science. But such a reconstruction is not required for other, simpler kinds of causation, including examples involving only one datum or examples wherein there is only a single instance to work with. And, causal knowledge may be had in these cases as well, even though they do not warrant a constant conjunction model.

Carlile's positive view is that what we do when we search for causal relations is inquire after similarities in phenomena. Reason is the faculty for drawing such inferences, and it draws them by analogy. In this respect, deduction and induction are not so different in science. All theories begin as guesses that are intermediate between induction and deduction, and the full deductive chains get worked out later. Knowledge of the unity of facts in a series is what leads to causal knowledge. Fully understood, this involves knowledge of the whole - including knowledge of causes and effects. Inference only comes into play when we do have knowledge of the whole, and science, which involves principles of proportion, fitness, resemblance, and identity between causes and effects, is the means by which we fill in gaps in the series. Contra hume and Mill, the main clue to filling in such gaps is resemblance; constant conjunction is just a more elementary form of the same.

As we have seen, the debate concerning the nature of Hume's theory of causation and his scepticism continued to develop throughout the nineteenth century. While the dispute as to whether Hume's philosophy represents *mitigated scepticism* or *universal scepticism* evolved slowly, the nineteenth century Hume literature reflects a definite shift in the discussion of Hume of causation and scepticism. The nature of inductive inference now takes a central place in the discussions, while the theistic implications of the empiricist theory of ideas that so exercised Hume's early critics, takes less

prominence - or at least a less exclusive prominence - in the philosophical debate. Despite the growing popularity of the constant conjunction theory - in part due to Mill - many critics seemed determined to show that, even on the new reading, Hume's position reduced to *universal scepticism*. Hence, the original "metaphysical prejudices" had led to the charge of *universal scepticism* were slowly being abandoned, although the resistance to a *mitigated scepticism* reading of Hume persisted. In consequence, the transition to the *mitigated scepticism* interpretation was very slow.

Chapter 9

How Hume Became a Sceptic

The main claim of this book is that a full and proper account of how Hume became a sceptic requires a comparative analysis of Hume's philosophy and the public discussion of Hume. The historical and philosophical threads must be taken in together in this way because the interpretation of Hume's philosophy and the development of his reputation are not really separable. This is evident in both the eighteenth and nineteenth century interpretation. So, in the end, Hume's reputation as a sceptic, and the circumstances around this reputation, had as much to do with the development of the received interpretation of Hume as it did with the actual textual evidence in his books. Let's review the basic reasoning leading to this conclusion.

Hume's earliest critics were the 1739-40 scholars who reviewed his *Treatise*. By 1744-45, the early critics grew to include academics such as Wishart and Hutcheson. All of them passed the negative judgement that Hume's doctrine advanced a *universal scepticism*. Later scholars, such as Reid, concurred with their assessment, and developped systematic critiques of Hume's philosophy. But, just what was this charge of *universal scepticism*? Initially, it had been tied to the conviction that Hume's aim, like that of the *antecedent sceptic*, was to challenge the reliability of the faculties. In Hume's case, this amounted to a doubting of reason's ability to secure foundational concepts of metaphysics, such as the innateness of our idea of God, the ideas of human nature, mind, body &c.. On this reading, Hume was taken to have destroyed crucial foundational links in the deductive chain leading to moral and religious knowledge, and ultimately,

to have undermined civil society. This charge of *universal scepticism* eventually becomes compounded in the Hume literature to include a second charge of *Pyrrhonism* - or, what Hume comes to call *consequent scepticism.*[162] Hence, the original *universal scepticism* charge was conceived as a variant of Cartesian *antecedent scepticism*, and then linked to *Pyrrhonism.* As was repeatedly affirmed by the critics, Hume's scepticism was "universal" because the deductive chain leading to knowledge that was broken at its foundation could never be repaired, so that the remaining structure of knowledge and civil society must also crumble. Dugald Stewart, though associated with the second wave of Hume criticism, carries over this *universal scepticism* charge into the nineteenth century.[163] Following Reid, Stewart's rendition of Hume's *universal scepticism* lays emphasis on the fallibilism in Humean psychology. Stewart's view is Hume intended *universal scepticism* to follow from the impossibility of securing a certain foundation for knowledge by means of the faculties. (Hume 1978: pp.180-218) Although the foundational issues associated with the charge of *universal scepticism* varied from critic to critic, the common thread in all of them is the claim that Hume's questioning of reason truncates the foundations of certain knowledge of God and morality.

The early readings of Hume as a *universal sceptic* were misleading and not well founded in textual evidence. They missed the subtlety of Hume's position in his *Treatise*, *Abstract*, *Letter*, and *Enquiry.* What the textual evidence in fact shows is that the *Treatise* develops an empiricist psychology of human understanding that responds to Cartesian and Pyrrhonian scepticism. Hume's *Treatise*, mainly written at La Fleche, may owe its deepest inspiration to Cartesian scepticism. Descartes himself can be understood as having attempted to provide an answer to the Pyrrhonian doubt that we can never achieve certainty regarding matters of opinion that claim to advance knowledge beyond the level of appearance. Indeed, Descartes' denies the inevitability of arriving at false constructions. With the correct application of the introspective faculty and reason, he claims, we can arrive at certain knowledge of the "cogito", the proposition "I am , I exist". Following this discovery, errors due to sensation can be eliminated, and certain knowledge of God, morality, the soul &. can be achieved. Contra Descartes' view, Hume - following an example set by the Greek Academical Philosophers - rejects the claim to a veridical perception of the "cogito". For, the Cartesian claim ultimately depends on an appeal to

veridical intuitive and/or immediate knowledge of innate ideas, an appeal that Hume rejects. As such, there is no way to discharged Descartes' *antecedent scepticism*. But, Hume also rejected the *consequent scepticism* of the Greeks, which doubts the possibility of our ever being able to achieve certain knowledge of matters of opinion. This scepticism recommends, Hume thinks, either a state of suspended judgement or an inconsistent dogmatism. Common sense would prevent the former from obtaining, and the latter leads to self-contradiction. However, being familiar with the various sceptical systems of his day, Hume used them to introduce a brand new kind of sceptical doubt, namely *mitigated scepticism*.

In building his system of knowledge, Hume abandons the *antecedent scepticism* of Descartes and the *consequent scepticism* of the Greeks, and develops a response to the "sceptical topics" that follow from the empiricist theory of ideas. Starting with a Lockean theory of ideas, Hume constructs a system that anchors empirical knowledge, including knowledge of cause and effect, in psychological principles of association. But the problem that arises, from a theoretical point of view, is that the foundation for these principles of association is ultimately uncertain. And, where there is uncertainty, Hume reasons, we should emulate the experimental philosopher, and proceed with caution. This means that we are to withhold causal judgements except in cases where the evidence really does warrant our making them. The real emphasis in Hume, especially in his *Treatise*, is on building a new system of knowledge in a way that carries through the insights of Baconian and Newtonian methodology. As such, the character of knowledge itself comes to be redefined. A system of knowledge can in fact been constructed, but its foundations cannot not be established with certainty. Just as Newton had to concede ignorance of the causes of gravitational attraction, so too had Hume been forced to concede ignorance of the certain principles underlying metaphysics. This, of course, is what Hume warned his readers at the outset of his *Treatise*, and it is the substantive finding that leads him to develop his *mitigated scepticism*. For, it is the limits of human understanding that lead us to *mitigated scepticism* - raising the very questions concerning the certainty of our knowledge of causality, induction, and metaphysics for which Hume became famous. What Hume's view entails is that all empirical knowledge, including the causal reasoning upon which it rests, has an uncertain foundation. Moreover, all sensible knowledge is probabilistic in character, so that reason

cannot yield certainty on matters of fact after all. Contra the Phyrronian septic then, we can have knowledge of matters of opinion; however, contra Descartes, this knowledge is not certain knowledge. The final result is that the metaphysical foundations of knowledge is a subject that must be approached with doubt or caution. In many respects then, the scepticism reflected in Hume's texts is in fact an outgrowth of an empiricist, rather than Cartesian or Pyrrhonian scepticism.

As we have seen, the outcome of Hume's analysis was in fact quite contrary to the teachings of the various "schools" of Hume's day - including the modern sceptical systems. When Hume anticipated a negative response to his *Treatise*, he must have seen the difference between the foundations that he had laid for knowledge and the traditions still prevalent in his day. He may not, however, have anticipated quite so strong of a reaction to his thought. He was, after all, setting out as a system builder intending to develop a science of psychology and to explain the extent and nature of our knowledge. His discovery was that reasoning from phenomena could yield only a limited knowledge of foundational principles. However, in saying as much, he was surely not - despite the early critics charges - setting out to promote an *universal scepticism.* Indeed, given the evidence of Hume's *Enquiry*, written during the infamous "Hume Affair", it seems likely that Hume hoped that eliminating the major portion of his empiricist psychology and theory of ideas would help to fend off the charges of "universal scepticism". The compromise involved underplaying the details of his constructivist psychology - the material that provided the explicit clues about where empiricism truncated the foundations of religious and moral knowledge - and casting the implications of his associationism in its best light. Unfortunately, Hume's early critics ignored the differences between the two works.

In fact, the gist of Hume's analysis seems to have been completely lost on his early critics. To them, Hume's criticism of the ability of reason to secure metaphysical knowledge was tantamount to charging that knowledge was impossible. Given the metaphysics of Hume's day and its emphasis on theology and certainty, it is easy to see why his critics held that extreme consequences would follow from Hume's challenge to the faculty of reason. However, the desire to protect "metaphysical prejudices" led to a reading of Hume that had entirely missed the point of his philosophy. More disturbing still, the public campaign to discredit Hume extended well beyond the

bounds of philosophical analysis to include vicious personal attacks - attacks that began during Hume's lifetime and extended well beyond.

With he advent of John Leslie and Thomas Brown, and to a lesser extent, Whately, Stewart, and Shepherd, we see a developing awareness that Hume intended to advance a *mitigated sceptism.* Leslie, with his attention to Newton's wrong-headed speculations on aether, and his admiration of Hume's restraint in the face of similar speculative temptation, is the first to show sensitivity to Hume's *mitigated scepticism.* Following Leslie, Thomas Brown provided one of the few early philosophical defenses of Hume's *mitigated scepticism* and science of human psychology. And it is with Brown that we see the second, more positive line of interpretation of Hume begin to make headway. Brown discounts the *universal scepticism* reading, focusing instead on the specifics of Hume's psychology and on defending his account of causality. He accepts the theoretical impossibility of justifying causal inference by appeal to demonstration, and attempts to defend what is basically a Humean line on causation. Brown, however, aims to answer Hume by appealing to what he takes to be an immediate and indubitable bases for causal belief; sensation and intuition. We can undo any sceptical tendencies in Hume, Brown thinks, because, contra Hume, we do in fact have immediate access to and intuitive certainty of principles of association, including the causal relation. Hence, there is no need to plead ignorance of foundational principles. Though Brown offers a controversial twist to Hume's views on causality, and even questions whether Hume's doctrine, properly interpreted, leads to scepticism, he does develop a more faithful reading of the nature of Hume's scepticism than his contemporaries.

Whately, like many other nineteenth century critics, struggled to undermine the *mitigated scepticism* reading. Stewart had rejected it entirely, preferring to read Hume as a *universal sceptic.* Another critic, Mary Shepherd, falls on the *universal scepticism* side of the debate as well. However, Shepherd, like later nineteenth century critics, develops her response to Hume in a way that takes Hume's problem of induction seriously. First, she develops a philosophical alternative to the empiricist theory of ideas that turns on an account of how we come to know the causal relation. Shepherd argues that such knowledge is obtained from analysis of the "compound objects" before the mind. These representations contain *a priori* ideas of cause and effect that are known with certainty and not immediately derived from sensation. Moreover, the justification of

inductive inference stems from analysis and argumentation that is based on appeals to both the causal principle and the *a priori* causal axiom. The end-result, according to Shepherd, is certain metaphysical knowledge. Other commentators that followed later in the nineteenth century take up similar themes, particularly in response to Mill's defense of Hume. These critics display a conspicuous tendency to try to reduce Hume's *mitigated scepticism* to *universal scepticism*.

Despite the variety of interpretations of Hume's scepticism and Hume's own claim to advance a *mitigated scepticism*, we still need to ask: Was Hume, after all, a sceptic? The answer is, not surprisingly, a difficult one. Brown had argued that Hume, when corrected for errors, was not a sceptic. But, Hume himself set his philosophy in relief to Cartesian and Pyrrhonian scepticism, arguing, essentially, that both fail because they misconstrue the character of knowledge itself. The only genuine knowledge, they hold, is certain knowledge. And, in response to this general, Hume maintains that properly conceived, knowledge is fallible. For, the operations of the mind limit the kinds of constructions that we can make. Metaphysics, therefore, must be tempered by a *mitigated scepticism*. Nonetheless, within these bounds, we can achieve a kind of knowledge - namely, probabilistic knowledge. Moreover, though we can never lay claim to certain metaphysical knowledge, we are bound, by our very natures, to believe. So what Hume's *mitigated scepticism* really shows then, is that we must abandon certainty as the standard for knowledge and be sensitive to the limits of probabilistic knowledge claims.

The nature of Hume's critique of metaphysics and of his sceptical doctrine have been more fully explored in the twentieth century. Among the important contributors to this discussion is D.C. Stove. Stove argues that it is by no means certain that Hume himself intended to establish a philosophy leading to scepticism. In the "Introduction" to his *Treatise*, Hume casts himself as system builder in the empiricist tradition. As such, the worst that we can say of Hume is that his system was imperfect and incomplete; for, it is in need of a proper justification for induction. But this charge is not tantamount to showing that Hume ever endorsed a *universal scepticism* or that he aimed to deny the possibility of knowledge. In advancing the sceptical strand in his philosophy, Hume was merely pointing out what most of us today are quick to admit; At the ultimate level of justification, there is no way to prove that one is absolutely certain about

one's metaphysical principles. It is only if this vision of *mitigated scepticism* can properly be labelled a true scepticism, that we can safely conclude that Hume was indeed a septic. Hence, by today's standards, the matter of whether Hume is a sceptic is by no means uncontroversial.

In sum, while the first half-century of Hume interpretation was based on the view that Hume's position represented a form of *universal scepticism*, by the nineteenth century, there had begun to emerge a second line of interpretation of Hume as advancing a *mitigated scepticism*. This interpretive trend was initiated with the Leslie affair, and built momentum through the efforts of Thomas Brown. There was, admittedly, a large contingent of critics still insisting on the *universal scepticism* reading of Hume. However, even though Brown's reading was controversial, one thing that he accomplished the initiation of a shift of focus in analysis of Hume's scepticism.[164] Thus, critics notwithstanding, there did eventually emerge a literature that re-examined Hume's doctrine of causality and its implications for substantive questions in philosophy. At the same time, there was a growing interest in philosophy of science - an interest devoted to examining the foundations of our beliefs in causality and induction. What is salient here, is that this whole development, along with the emergence of the alternate reading of Hume, can be traced back to the Leslie affair - to Leslie's own reading of Hume, and to the subsequent discussions due to Brown, Stewart, and Shepherd. As the nineteenth century unfolded, the interpretation of Hume's *mitigated scepticism* as a kind of methodological directive began to develop in earnest. By the mid-nineteenth century, the debate concerning Hume's philosophy gained even more momentum when John Stuart Mill endorsed Hume's view of causality as constant conjunction.

What we have also seen, is that the factors that led to the developments in Hume interpretation extend well beyond the confines of academia. The interpretation of Hume's scepticism and the development of his reputation as a sceptic were shaped in important ways by the events and people connected with the Hume and Leslie affairs. Much of their influence on the scholarly interpretation of Hume and his philosophy was due to circumstance and motivations of a much more mundane and accidental in character than is usually associated with philosophical research and the 'ivory tower'. For, as we have seen, the various early interpretations of Hume as defending a *universal scepticism* reveal more about Hume's critics

and their prejudices than they do about Hume's own interests and texts. More generally, the story of how Hume became a sceptic suggests that it is largely a myth to think that philosophical research and interpretation exists in isolation from everyday affairs of life. Philosophical inquiry is not, and never was, an ivory tower activity separable from the interests and concerns of administrators, politicians, and academics. As such, an adequate reading of the history of philosophy requires a much closer inspection of the interplay between historical circumstance and philosophical inquiry than is usually ventured.

Postscript: Hume and the University

How did Hume's name come to be synonymous with derogatory terms such as "Heresy, Deism, Scepticism and Atheism"? As it turns out, Hume's philosophical contribution in the *Treatise* is only half of the story. The labelling of Hume as a sceptic can also be attributed to historical circumstances and misinterpretation of his doctrine. Of course, the label of "sceptic" was not itself a new one. As Henry Tappan remarks in his *University Education* (1851), the "strange atrocity" of academic persecution had been part of the response to freethinkers since the rise of higher education in ancient Greece. This negative response, as Tappan suggests, is somewhat ironic, since it is these freethinkers and their schools that serve as the wellspring for upcoming generations of leaders:

> The history of our educational development must take for its starting-point the ancient schools of Greek philosophy. These schools were created by individuals who freely thought and freely taught. Disciples collected around them, received the light, and struck out new paths, and arrived at new truths for themselves. These schools existed without the patronage of the State. And it was a strange atrocity when the State, as in the case of Socrates, arrested the freedom of thought by persecution and death. Indeed, the schools rather patronized the State, for they gave that impulse to thought and disseminated those vital truths which, be they ever so abstract in their formal exposition, do, nevertheless, contain the springs of national greatness, for they make those great men the philosophers, the

> historians, the statesmen, the poets, the orators, the heros who alone make the nation great. (Tappan 1851: p.24)

Apparently then, there is a long history of tension between the State and the training provided by its freethinkers. Of course, not all radicals and sceptics have been subjected to academic persecution. Why then, are certain individuals singled out for this special treatment? In particular, why was Hume and his philosophy singled out in this way? While the factors that go into singling out some philosophers as sceptics and others as intellectual heros are undoubtedly complex, one thing does seem clear; the impetus that leads to the labelling of some individuals as "sceptics" is made in connection with exaggerated fears of social unrest and change. Indeed, tensions between freethinkers and authorities have replayed themselves over and over again through the centuries. Take, or example, some of the best known examples of the "strange atrocity" of academic persecution - those relating to the downfall of medieval scholasticism and the reformation. With the rise of Protestant critics of church and state, the universities came to be regarded as "hotbeds of heresy."[165] Indeed, over the ages, authorities aiming at deterrence have found various ways of negatively reinforcing independent voices and of persecuting those who would urge on the voice of dissent. The penalty itself ranged, over the centuries, from a lifetime of public censure to exile and even execution.

While many contemporary thinkers and citizens feel reasonably secure regarding their freedom of speech, the matter was not taken for granted by those involved with the universities in nineteenth century Britain. Many of those connected with the controversies surrounding Hume and his philosophy went on to become active in the development of institutions of higher learning in Britain. Thus, several of the Scots influenced by the affairs of Hume and Leslie, including James Mill and James Pillans, devoted themselves to university reform. One of the primary concerns was to establish an educational environment unfettered by religious tests, financial barriers, and persecutory politics. James Mill was particularly influential in the inception of London University. Others, such as James Pillans Jr. were instrumental in bringing about university reform in Scotland.

Mill's vision for a new university was based on reorganizing the branches and sub-divisions of knowledge into a systematic classification, allowing for a well-ordered plan of study and coherent advancement within each

discipline. Mill advised emphasis on the science curriculum, "with deliberate exclusion of theological studies or religious affiliation".[166] Hence, when London University opened its doors in 1836, it aimed to "supply the shortcomings of Oxford and Cambridge", by offering "higher education free of religious tests, a non-resident system that substantially reduced costs, with teaching organized upon professorial lines after the Scottish pattern". (Evans 1990: p.148) The goal of education, conceived entirely along utilitarian lines, was to "render the individual, as much as possible, an instrument of happiness, first to himself, and next to other beings".[167] (Bain 1882: p.247)

At about the same time as the new university was being conceived for London, an important battle over religious tests - one with symbolic significance for Hume and Leslie's supporters - was being fought at the University of Edinburgh. On the one side, there was ongoing resistance on the part of conservative forces; on the other, there was growing support for the removal of exclusionary religious test. About 1826, a Commission for the Visitation of the Universities of Scotland was appointed to collect and assess the various charters related to the university. The mandate of the Commission was to look into the documentation surrounding religious tests and oaths, and then report to the Scottish Universities Commission. As part of their report, the Commission raised the question of the status of religious requirements before the Senatus Academicus:

> Order LXVII- Are the Principal, Professors, Masters, and others bearing office in the University of Edinburgh, before their admission to the exercise of their respective functions, required to acknowledge, profess, and subscribe the Confession of Faith, and Formula of the Church of Scotland, as approved and fixed by Act of Parliament, and to swear and subscribe the Oath of Allegiance to his Majesty? and on what occasion, and before whom is such acknowledgement and subscription made, and such oath taken? (Universities Commission 1837: p.207)

However, it was determined by the Senate that the issue was tied to the governance and charters of the university in a manner that precluded their legal jurisdiction. Hence, the Senate merely pointed out the existence of the relevant Acts of Parliament and of the requirement of religious tests,

further noting that it has not been “uniform practice” to require that candidates produce a certificate of having complied with the qualification. (Universities Commission 1837: p.207) In the end, the Parliamentary basis for the university’s charter meant that the Senate could not itself remove the religious tests. A higher, Parliamentary authority would be require to alter the legislation.[168]

Unfortunately, the matter of religious requirements was not speedily resolved. Over several decades, memorials were issued by the faculty expressing fear that attempts were being made “to adopt means for compelling a more stringent and universal subscription of certain Tests”. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1844: pp.217-218) In a letter addressing the House of Commons, they noted, amongst other things, that the tests functioned to exclude those who did not subscribe to the Confession, those who did not conform to worship, and those who did not submit to the discipline of the established Church of Scotland. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1844: p.221) This, it was pointed out, is a great disadvantage to the advancement of science and learning in educational establishments, to the civil rights of citizens at large, and to the protection of equality. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1844: p.221) Moreover, the test was all but a dead letter, since it had hardly been invoked in the nineteenth century. This “shows abundantly that men of literary and scientific eminence may be admitted to Chairs in other Universities, without the alternative either of actual danger being caused, or hypocritical homage being professed, to a Church, from which, even tho’ established, some or many of them may happen to dissent.”(Town Council of Edinburgh 1844: p.221) Finally, in 1844, Edinburgh’s Senate, under the leadership of James Pillans Jr., returned to the question of religious tests with the proposal to restrict the tests to those involved with the professional training of students in theology. It was Pillans, Professor of Humanities at the University, who finally advanced the motion that eventually led to academic freedom at Edinburgh University: “That in the opinion of the Senatus Academicus the time is now come when - except in regard to the Faculty of Theology - a change is required in the law which calls upon every Professor in every University of Scotland to sign the Confession of Faith and the Formula before his induction.”[169] (Morgan 1937: p.?) Hence, the wheels that would introduce permanent change and protection of academic freedom had finally been put in motion. After a few more technical hurdles, in 1853, the

Town Council and Senate of the University of Edinburgh both conceded the changes that would be required to limit the University Tests to professors involved in "the professional training of Students in Theology." (Morgan 1937: p.281) Of course, it is worth noting the slowness of the change. For one thing, the Senatus only brought forward the successful motion in 1844 - a full century after the Hume affair of 1744-45.[170]

Although it was by no means an isolated case, the documentation of Hume's persecution affords a valuable opportunity for study. Upon reflection, it might have been better to say that the "strange atrocity" of academic persecution is not really that strange to us at all; rather, it follows the groove of a familiar pattern in our thinking. The groove involves the simple, yet misguided conviction that questioning authority will directly threaten the status quo and undo the power of the governing patrons - particularly if a sceptical disposition is inculcated in a new generation of leaders. The worry is that the existing system will self-destruct if the younger generation of leaders is not appropriately indoctrinated. In Hume's case, a great many collaborators played a role in interpreting Hume's philosophy and in constructing his reputation as a sceptic. Some, such as Wishart, were eager perpetrators of the myth. But others, including academics such as Hutcheson, Reid, and Stewart, also participated in the process. Their misinterpretations of Hume were clouded by their prejudicial metaphysics, and by unfounded assumptions about metaphysics, religion, morality and civil society. Moreover, it was through their assistance that blame for social unrest was laid at Hume's feet - a claim that is, upon reflection, entirely implausible. What history in fact shows is that the social unrest of today is a long-unfolding reaction to the ideologies and institutions of yesterday - ideologies and institutions that may already have oppressed peoples for decades or even centuries. By the time that conditions are ripe for social unrest, there is little that a few pages of scholarly text can do but precipitate the inevitable. In many cases, just about any catalyst will do. Seen in this light, figures such as Hume appear to be little more than timely scapegoats. Indeed, there had hardly been enough time for the scholarly community to read Hume's philosophy - let alone respond to it - when he was first branded with the labels of "heretic", "sceptic", and "atheist". Indeed, as is evident from our case study, it can take centuries for thinkers such as Hume to even begin to be understood. Hence, it was really through a *sleight of hand* that Hume and his

philosophy, rather than the various institutions and ideologies of the past, would serve as the primary target for the venting the discontent and fear associated with social change.

But our case study of how Hume became a sceptic has more than merely historical significance; for it resonates with contemporary struggles relating to academic freedom. The value of this freedom, and the existence of threats to it, are not easily overestimated. Recent challenges to academic freedom come from a variety of interested patrons of the university. Contemporary variations on the *avisamentum*, the Confession of Faith, and Pnewmatics instruction include such things as the mass scale introduction of technology into the university and the corporate sponsorship of university teaching and research. Presumably, with the case of Hume before us, it is easier to understand the significance of the claim that academic freedom must be supported, and why the abuses of patronage - whether church, state or corporate - must be prevented. Indeed, protecting academic freedom today may require attention to the historical circumstances that have previously led to challenges to that freedom. The particular names and circumstances may change over time, but the pattern of mobilizing against individuals and of making examples out of of them stays the same. As our present-day universities undergo rapid restructuring and severe pressure from changes to patronage and funding, there is a corresponding assault taking place on freedom. Tensions are evident in the university, as academics are forced to support the shift toward a commercial university that will increasingly be subject to censorship, while others struggle to defend independence and academic freedom. In the face of such pressures, universities and publishers play a special role in protecting academic freedom and in setting the model for a participatory democracy. For, it is in an environment in which freedom thrives that there can be a basis for nurturing participatory democracy and the dream of a better humanism. This freedom is not one to be unwittingly sacrificed for lack of appreciation or understanding of its true nature and value. The elements of Hume's story then, not only reveal something of the "strange atrocity" of academic persecution; they also shed light on why patrons, administrators, publishers, academics, student, and citizens at large should seek to defend and protect academic freedom.

Appendix

Appendix A, from Chapter 5

Letter from John Leslie To John Muir, Esq, 22 February 1805.

> Edinb[h] 22[d] February 1805 - Dear Sir, From what you were so kind as to communicate to me, & what has since reached my ears through other channels, I find that my opponents, conscious of their weakness have not scrupled to have recourse to the detestable Arts of calumny, and are most actively at work in secret, scattering their poison & dropping dark, shapeless, & absurd insinuations against my character and principles; - were I to consult my own feelings, I should treat such infamous & unfounded aspertions with the contempt that they deserve; and if I were capable of stooping to such base & cowardly practices, I could easily retaliate on my adversaries, to cover their heads [93] with shame. - Liberal & thinking men I am persuaded, will easily penetrate into the motives of those rumours, & will de[s]fuse the busy efforts of malice. - But there are sensible people, who with the best possible intentions may yet unsuspectingly suffer themselves for a time to be deceived by such specious, tho' groundless tales, and as I am anxious to preserve the good opinion of my fellow citizens - I have thought the best mode of repelling those insidious attacks was, therefore at once to make a frank & solemn profession of my sentiments. I hope you will listen with patience, and i shall appear to use the language of pangyric, I am sure you will pity the hardship of my case, which obliges me in Justice to myself to outstep the bounds of modesty - It was my lot to receive a most virtuous

and religious education, in the bosom of a family eminently distinguished by its extraordinary lives; & the impressions of my early years, no distance of time or change of circumstances can ever efface. - If my mind is more enlarged by culture, I have likeways learned to see more deeply the importance of those truths which bind men together in society, & which visiting their inmost recesses, appall the guilty the guilty & hold forth comfort to the wretched. I have ever been sincere lover of peace, of decency & good order; my time has been almost wholly spent in abstract researches & the study of the sublime operations of nature, The questions so much agitated of late served with me only to amuse a few le[a]sure moments, & even at that eventful period when the minds of men, & particularly of young men, were so violently inflamed. I escaped in a great measure the contagion. - I prayed indeed for the improvement of our species, but the slightest appearance of tumult or popular violence was most abhorrent to my temper; I never had the remotest connection with any party or political association whatever. In the spirit of mildness, I endeavoured to think & act for myself - my sentiments of loyalty had been confirmed by what I had sen during a short stay in America, where i witnessed the disgusting & pernicious influence, assumed by an ignorant, licentious, & disolute rabble. the respect which I have always entertained for the principles of our constitution has continuned to increase in proportion as my experience was enlarged by the opportunities which I have had of viewing other countries - time also has also sobered and matured my reflections. - I have seen monstrous and savage anarchy terminate in the most frightful military despotism; & I have seen the cries of frenzy & impiety changed into hypocritical pretentions of regard to a corrupt system of worship employed as the support of Tyrrany and usurpation - It is our native island that presents the truly chearing juncture of equal laws mildly administered, and holds up a body of religious institutions, at once rational, decent & impressive. I venerate the great principles of our Christian faith, am solicitous to mark by my external behaviour that respect which I cherish - raising my reflections above this little spot of earth, the restless scene of intrigue, & strife, & malice, I look forward with joy and

expectation to that better country beyond the grave I am Dear Sir your most obed[t] Ser[t] (signed) John Leslie (addressed) To John Muir, Esq. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.92-7)

Appendix B, from Chapter 5

Letter from John Leslie to Dr Hunter, s.d..

Reverend Sir

It was only this instant I learned that an opposition to my appointment as Professor of Mathematics is still in contemplation among some Members of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and that the ground of this attack is a note subjoined to my late publication concerning Heat. Altho personally unknown to you, the station you hold in the College as Professor of Divinity, and my entire confidence in your candour and liberality, embolden me to address myself to you in preference to any other individual, in order to shelter me from the most unjust of all imputations by calling the attention of the Presbytery to the following particulars. -

In the first place I must beg leave to observe that the note in question refers entirely to the relation between causes & effect considered as an object of Physical examination, being only a more full illustration of some reasonings in the Text in opposition to the Unphilosophical Theories which attempt to explain the phenomena of Gravitation & c. by means of invisible [AE]thers; and in so far it will not be disputed that I am supported by the unanimous voice of all the Soundest Philosophers and divines of the present age. The gross misapplication which Mr Hume has made of these premises to invalidate the argument for the existence of the Deity, it did not fall under my plan to point out in a Treatise entirely confined to Physical discussions; more particularly as this has been done by Dr Reid and various other writers in a manner which I conceive to be compleatly satisfactory to every reader who understands the argument. Had I been aware of the possibility, by my silence on this point, of affording the slightest colour to a misrepresentation of my real sentiments, I should have guarded against it effectually by following out the speculation a little farther, than the nature of my subject seems to me to require.

If the pressing circumstances of the present occasion had permitted me to put my thoughts in writing at greater length, I

have the fullest conviction that my ideas on the question to which the note refers would appear to coincide in every essential respect, with those of the most enlightened adversaries of Mr Hume's Philosophy. But limited as i am to a few moments of time, I can only disavow (which I do with the greatest Sincerity & Solemnity) every inference which the ingenuity of my opponents may be pleased to draw from the partial view I have taken of the general doctrine, to the prejudice of those evidences on which the Truths of religion are founded. If I live to publish another edition of my work, I pledge myself to show in an additional paragraph, how grossly an injuriously I have been misrepresented on this occasion. In the meantime, I beg you may make whatever use of this Letter appears to you to be necessary or proper.

It is painful to be called on, after the habits of intimacy in which I have lived with the most exemplary characters in both parts of the island, to repel a direct charge of Atheism; but whatever may be the effect of such calumnies on the minds of strangers, it affords me much consolation to think, that they will be heard with contempt & indignation by those who know the real state of my sentiments, and particularly by such as are acquainted with the strictness of those religious principles in which I had the happiness to be educated from my earliest years.

I have only to add that my Book has now been in the hands of the Public for ten months, & has passed thro' the hands of Reviewers of the most opposite descriptions & principles, without the slightest censure (as far as I know) upon the note in question. The mark of approbation which I have recently received from the Royal society of London affords in this respect a satisfaction still more grateful to my feelings; and when combined with the zeal which that learned body has uniformly manifested in discountenancing every publication which tends in the most distant manner to injure the great interests of Religion & Morality it encourages me to hope that, in the present instance, I shall experience the same candour from the reverend Presbytery.

I have the honour to be &c. &c. John Leslie. (Town Council of

Edinburgh 1805a: pp.194-200)

Appendix C, from Chapter 5

Avisamentum of the Ministers of Edin[h] by (signed) Henry Greive Preses

> Unto the Right Hon[ble] the Lord Provost the Magistrates and Council of the City of Edinburgh - The representation of the Ministers of Edinburgh assembled by citation from Dr Davidson acting as senior Minister of the City, Sheweth - That by the Charter of James the sixth erecting the university of Edinburgh, it is expressly provided that the power of electing professors in the said University, as committed to the Town Council; shall be exercised *with advice of their Ministers* ("cum avisamento tamen eorum Ministrorum") and that though this regulation has been in recent cases neglected by the Town Council, there has been a series of practice conformable to it, extending to instances as late as the Election of Professor Dalzel in the year [empty], & that of Dr Hunter [86] in the year 1780. - That there being at present a vacancy in the Chair of the Professor of Mathematics in the University, & the Ministers feeling it their duty to insist upon exercising the privilege with which they are thus invested by the Royal Charter, several of them individually have intimated a desire & intention to this effect to different Members of the Town Council, and their sentiments upon this subject have in consequence been communicated to the Meeting ordinarily denominated the Provosts Committee, but that no intimation has hitherto been received of any intention, on the part of the Town Council, to apply in this case for the advice of their Ministers. - That the Ministers, being informed that it is notwithstanding, the design of the Town Council to proceed to the election of a Professor of Mathematics on Wednesday, the 13th current feel it their duty to remonstrate against the Measure of proceeding to such election till their advice be regularly received, hereby protesting against the validity of any election that may take place in the present circumstances in the face of this remonstrance. - That owing to the Ministers being at present denied the exercise of their legal privilege, they are not regularly & officially informed respecting the candidates for the vacant Chair[s] in the University, but trusting, as for this

reason they must, to common uncontradicted report they have learned from it, & from many of the Members of the Town Council individually, that one of these candidates is Mr John Leslie author of 'An experimental Inquiry into the nature & propagation of heat' and they do hereby, more particularly remonstrate and protest in the most solemn manner, against *his* being elected to the said vacant Professorship, because the said Mr Leslie has avouched to the world & has endeavoured to support by argument, an opinion calculated to undermine the foundation of all religion both natural and revealed;

That the Ministers, in bringing forward this most serious charge, refer to a note which Mr Leslie has subjoined to his foresaid Inquiry commencing with these words - "Mr Hume is the first so far as I know, who has treated of causation in a truly philosophic manner - His essay on necessary connexion seems a Model of clear & accurate reasoning. But it was only wanted to dispel the cloud of mystery which had so long darkened that important subject. The unsophisticated sentiment of mankind are in perfect unison with the deductions of logic & imply nothing more at bottom in the relation of cause and effect, than a *constant and invariable sequence*" from which words it is evident that Mr Leslie, having along with Mr Hume denied all such necessary connection between cause & effect as implies an operation principle in the cause, has of course laid a foundation for rejecting all the argument that is derived from the works of God to prove either his being or attributes;

That it is generally understood that, by the wisdom of our Fathers, & in consequence of an ecclesiastical interposition, the original author of this Doctrine was rejected on account of it, & the dangerous opinions connected with it, when he offered himself as a candidate for a Chair in this University, and that the aspect of the present times does not seem to render it more safe than it formerly was to entrust any who are with reason suspected of infidel principles with the important charge of education of Youth. - That in the event of Mr Leslie being elected to the said vacant chair notwithstanding this representation & Protest of the Ministers, they hereby reserve

to themselves full power of questioning the validity of such an election, & of employing whatever means may to them be found competent, for preventing Mr Leslie's *induction* into the office of Professor, with full power in the event of his induction to pr[e]secute for his ejection from the said office, in any competent court civil or ecclesiatical; - That though the Ministers think it their duty to take this step, they have no design not wish to usurp, or on any degree encroach on the right of patronage which in this case belongs to the magistrates and Council, & are still willing to receive & attend to any explanation of Mr Leslies principles that may in this case be offered; - That the Ministers conclude with craving that the Lord provost Magistrtaes and Council will be pleased to order the whole of this representation & protest to be entered upon their record, & to authorize & appoint their Clerk to furnish Dr Greive behoof of the Ministers with a regular extract of the same signed in name & by appointment of the above mentioned meeting of the Ministers of Edin[h] by (signed) Henry Greive Preses. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.85-91)

Appendix D, from Chapter 5

Points raised in the speeches of various members of the General Assembly on the question of whether to dismiss the Reference to the Assembly.

Dr Hunter spoke first. Leslie's letter was read, and Hunter gave a long summary of the main events leading up to the present assembly debate. He says that, although he did not know Leslie, he had heard good things of his character and that he sent warning of the Ministers activities to Leslie. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.15) Hunter further explained that after the election, the Ministers had applied to the civil court for a sist, 'but the sist being refused, the magistrates proceeded to his induction'. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.19) Ritchie countered Hunter's speech by arguing that the tendency of Leslie's views was atheistic. Ritchie establishes a link to Reid's interpretation of Hume at some length, saying that Reid argues that the words power and cause have no meaning for Hume and Leslie, because they maintain that there is no vinculum perceived between the cause and the effect. Reid holds, contra Hume, that although the vinculum is not perceived, the idea of power necessarily accompanies the perception of change. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.42) Reid's position, therefore, is unlike Hume and Leslie's, who assert that there is no vinculum. Physical events are contingently necessary, they can be interfered with at God's will. (Church of Scotland 1805b: pp.43-4) Moncrieff then spoke, suggesting that the ministers were motivated in no small part by their desire to defend their civil right and that Leslie is a victim in this battle. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.47) To this he added that the question of civil right cannot be competently discussed by the ecclesiastical court. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.49) The object of the ministers is to see that the Assembly passes a motion that will assist with their maintaining of the right of avisamentum. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.50) But, as Moncreiff points out, the right of avisamentum had in fact been exercised in this case; for the Ministers 'have simply a right to give their advice before an election is made, either upon the application of the magistrates, or without it'. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.53) He further argues that the Ministers understanding of necessary connection is akin to a form of necessitarianism that ends in atheism. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.58) Finally, it is not merely the interest or the character of Mr Leslie Which is at stake: it is the character of our ministers and our church: it is the character of our country and of our age. We shall be judged by the decision of this day, not merely

at home by the people of Scotland, but by the inhabitants of countries from which we are far removed; in England, through Europe, in Asia, and In America. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.61) Grieve spoke next. He asked for the act 14th Assembly 1711 and act 12 Assembly 1719 to be read (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.62) He denies that the processes have been a form of persecution; they claim to maintain a legal right, and reasserts the danger he sees in Leslie's doctrine. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.64) Muckersey said that he wished to speak only because he saw the procedures as irregular and illegal. He was very concerned about the injury to Leslie: When a man's life, or character, or fortune is concerned, he has an opportunity of putting himself under the protection of law, and of receiving a fair trial. But no such justice has been extended to Mr Leslie. He has been condemned unheard, and has been allowed no legal means of redress. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.72) Inglis registered his displeasure with Stewart's pamphlet, which claimed that Hume's conclusion, but not his premises are dangerous. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.81) Stewart had argued that by the turn of the nineteenth century, many prominent theologians, philosophers, and scientists had effectively espoused the Humean view that causal necessity is not derived from experience. Inglis maintained, contra Stewart, that we must resist the premises themselves, and that in the case of necessary connection, there is a causal reasoning that differs from that used in physical investigations. 'It is to denote the connection established by the Deity among his works, according to what are called the laws of nature, that we use the expression *necessary* connection'. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.84) Hill spoke next. He argued that Leslie has suffered no injustice, but has merely been asked to disavow a dangerous doctrine. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.97) W.L. Brown compared the debate to that between nominalists and realists and the Scotists and Thomists, saying that the dispute was like 'scholastic warfare'! (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.104) He worried that in tying a trivial debate to religious doctrines, things became very serious. An accusation of atheism is a serious blow, he said, that 'sweeps away a man's entire moral character; and, at once, drives him from society, of which it supposes him to be a member no longer to be tolerated'. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.105) Asks what compensation can be made to all who have been implicated in this matter and for the injury done to Leslie's character? (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.106) He also denies that the doctrines at stake are pernicious. Lamont said that he did not see any atheism either asserted or implied by Leslie.

(Church of Scotland 1805b: p.121) Necessary connection must be either between secondary cause and effect or between Supreme Being and effect. If latter, there can be no miracles. If former, it is impossible that the world could have been otherwise. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.122) Hence there is no such thing as volition, wisdom or will in the creator. Points out that Leslie has been 'hung up as spectacles, and made subjects of public discussion' and that he yet has no standing in this house and cannot appear in his own vindication. He is no *persona standi* Begs leave that the complaint against the reference be sustained. (Church of Scotland 1805b: pp.123-4) A series of minor speakers from various areas the joined in, some of whom made serious charges against Leslie. John. A. Murray then spoke, saying that he was very upset by previous speakers and is upset by the 'insinuations and calumnies' that they had raise against Leslie. [cheers] Leslie has been accused of the infamous purpose of subverting religion, undermining authority of sacred texts &c. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.136) Murray said that he was proud to boast his friendship with Leslie. He also pointed out, contra the Ministers, that if we assert necessary connection in the physical causes, then of what use is a First cause? Is this not inconsistent with the hypothesis? (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.140) He notes the 'dangerous tendency of the language used by the ministers of Edinburgh' (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.141) For, the *Systeme de la Nature* asserts that all things act necessarily according to their particular essences, and this work is notoriously atheistical. Necessary cause that necessarily operates the train of events [order] is gone. So the principle of activity in things, the operating principle is a necessary principle. Several ministers appear to espouse this view. (Church of Scotland 1805b: pp.142-4) The first day's meeting adjourned, and, after a second day of similar debate, the motion was carried to sustain the complaint against the reference. Carried 96 to 84, by a majority of 12.

Appendix E, from Chapter 6

Leslie's explanation of his preference for the action-at-a distance hypothesis. Leslie is suspicious of both the common sense hypothesis (corpuscular mechanism) as well as the metaphysical prejudice that makes appeal to invisible intermedia (Newton).

> The whole scope of this reasoning, it will be perceived, is in direct contradiction to the noted axiom of the schools, that 'nothing acts where it is not.' But I would observe, that all axioms are merely the simple conclusions, drawn *a posteriori*, from familiar experience; that however fitted for the ordinary business of life, they are useless and even prejudicial in philosophy; and, that being derived from loose and superficial views, they often require restriction, and are liable to inaccuracy. In matters of science, the general opinion of mankind, termed common sense, is always a very suspicious standard of appeal. If a body acted only within itself, it is clear that the force could never be transmitted; there would be no communication, no sympathy with the rest of the universe. In vain shall we have recourse to the agency of invisible *intermedia*: the interposing of successive stations may divide, but will not annihilate distance; and, after torturing our imagination, the same difficulty still recoils upon us.
>
> It is a remarkable and instructive fact in the history of philosophy, that impulsion should have been at one period the only force that was admitted. The motion of a falling stone was certainly not less familiar to the senses than that of a stone which is thrown; but in the latter case, the contact of the hand was observed to proceed the flight of the projectile, and this circumstance seemed to fill up the void and satisfy the imagination. Gravitation sounded like an occult quality; it was necessary to assign some mechanical cause; and if there were no visible impulses to account for the weight of a body, might not that office be performed by some subtile invisible agent? Such was the sway of metaphysical prejudice, that even Newton, forgetting his usual caution, suffered himself to be borne along. In an evil hour he threw out those hasty conjectures concerning

[ae]ther, which have since proved so alluring to superficial thinkers, and which have in a very sensible degree impeded the progress of genuine science. So far from resolving weight or pressure into impulse, we have seen that the very reverse takes place, and that impulse itself is only a modification of pressure. This statement has already some distinguished adherents, and must in time become the received opinion. Science has experienced much obstruction from the mysterious notions long entertained concerning causation. (Leslie 1804: pp.134-6)

Appendix F, from Chapter 7

Keir, Hume, and others on the origins of government &c..

Keir's views on proper governance emerge in the final section of his book, where it is claimed that the true system of justice should be founded on scripture. The system of common law - a system that is presumably of a piece with empiricist ideologies - is contrary to God's design for the world. Keir claims that the 1807 edition was intended as a note to his proposed *Inquiry into the Origin of Government and Law.* (Keir 1808: p.iii) In Keir's prospectus for this work, he says that the projected work will have two parts.(Keir 1807: pp.257-9) Of the first part, he says that the first section will be an inquiry into the spiritual agents that God employs as ministers for his will. The second section will be an inquiry into the plan upon which all nature is formed. The third section will inquire into the system upon which nature is governed. The fourth section will explain the law by which this government is regulated. A second part is also projected as an inquiry into the system that God established for the government of the moral world, also in several chapters. There it will be shown , Keir writes, 'that the system of government, which was established in England, as described in Dr. Henry in his History of Britain, is a perfect copy, not only of that which the Creator established in Israel, but also, of that which he has established for the government of all his works'.(Keir 1807: p.258) Keir recommends a divine system of government established by Alfred the Great and outlined in Dr. Henry's *History of Great Britain.* (Keir 1807: pp.241-2) In the notes to pp. 245 and 247, Keir directs us to pp. 333-7, Volume III, of *Henry's History.* This system, he suggests, supplemented by the good conscience of individual judges, is a better standard for passing legal judgements than the system of trial by jury. (Keir 1807: pp.242-3) No human system of government could surpass the divine system. On the face of it, it certainly looks as if Keir belonged to a very old school of thought indeed.

There is a connection between Hume and Robert Henry, qua historians, that may shed fuller light on this aspect of Keir's work. This connection is explained by Disraeli in his 1812 piece entitled 'Literary Hatred' in his *Calamaties of Respecting their Moral and Literary Characters* and at greater length by Mossner in his 'Hume as Literary patron: A Suppressed Review of Robert Henry's *History of Great Britain*, 1773'. (Mossner's article contains a copy of Hume's review of Henry's *History.*) Disraeli's piece is primarily about Gilbert Stuart and his devotion to savagely

attacking the work of others. As Disraeli writes, 'The celebrity of Robertson, Blair, and Henry, with other Scottish writers, diseased his mind with a most envious rancour. He confined all his literary efforts to the pitiable motive of destroying theirs'. (Disraeli 1812: p.51) Stuart was especially exercised about Henry, whose *History of Great Britain* touched on material that he had covered in his own 1768 piece entitled *An historical dissertation concerning the antiquity of the English constitution.* (Henry 1771) Stuart advances a pro-Germanic line of interpretation according to which the political system and government of Britain is viewed as descended from the Germans. (Mossner 1942: p.365) His dislike of Henry grew more intense following the publication of Henry's second volume in the series, and with the publication of a sermon in 1773 entitled *Revelation the most effectual means of civilizing and reforming mankind*, - presumably delivered to his parish at New Grey Friar's Church in Edinburgh. We can speculate that the divine system of government was not one of which Stuart approved. In any case, Stuart had first asked Hume to review Henry's *History* for *The English Review*, and then tried to modify Hume's piece to make it sound like an attack. Stuart was particularly vicious in his criticisms, and Hume would not approve the changes, making his displeasure clear to Stuart.(Disraeli 1812: p.70). Hume's review is published with the Mossner article. (There is nothing particularly interesting in the main body of Hume's review. The general tenor of the historical account in Henry should be evident from what has been said here. The main item of praise for Henry is that he has taken vast amounts of data and made some sense of them. Hume takes this to be the mark of a historian. (Mossner 1942: p.381)) Indeed, as Mossner explains, Hume had in fact been a patron of Henry's upon his arrival in Edinburgh, and had tried to help him to secure a publisher in 1770. (Mossner 1942: pp.363-4) Not only was Hume's original review of the work positive, but Hume seems, at least on the surface, to praise Henry in his closing remarks:

> It is happy for the inhabitants of this country, that the same persons, who can make such a figure in profane learning, are entrusted with the guidance of the people in their spiritual concerns, which are of such superior, and indeed of unspeakable importance! These illustrious examples, if any thing, must make the infidel abashed of his vain cavils, and put a stop to that torrent of vice, profaneness, and immortality, by which the age

> is so unhappily distinguished. (Mossner 1942: p.382)

It is hard to know what to make of these remarks. Stuart described Hume as 'doting' in the review. Mossner takes Hume to be giving 'sincere praise of three clerical friends' [373] (Robertson, Blair and Henry) at this point in the review. But Hume is surely being (gently) sarcastic. In contrast to Hume's review, Stuart's attack on Henry was particularly malevolent. As Disraeli writes, 'That he succeeded for a considerable time in destroying the peace of mind of such an industrious author as Dr. Henry; that Stuart stopped the sale of a work on which Henry had expended much of his fortune and his life; that when the Historian, covered with obloquy and ridicule, in despair left Edinburgh for London, still encountering the same hostility - perhaps was never even known to its [his] victim.'(Disraeli 1812: p.64)(Something is amiss in the text here. The word 'its' could be a reference to 'literary hatred', which is announced as the topic of the paragraph on p. 63, but the context suggests that the correct word should be 'his', i.e., meaning Stuart's victim.) And, upon hearing of Henry's misfortune, Stuart gloated that,'Poor Henry is on the point of death, and his friends declare that I have killed him. I received the information as a compliment, and begged they would not do me so much honour.' (Disraeli 1812: p.72) Perhaps Keir, like Disraeli, was among those sympathetic to Henry's plight in the face of such literary hatred. In any case, as Mossner points out, Hume wrote his 'Of the Origin of Government' at about this time. (Mossner 1942: p.373)

Appendix G, from Chapter 8

Brown on inertia, Euler.

Brown mentions that the appeal to sufficient reason is often given as the foundation for the principle of inertia. (Brown 1818: p.191n) The principle of sufficient reason, however, is only a disguised version of the causal axiom and the causal principle, 'axioms which comprehend, indeed, all the sequences of events in the universe, but which, though applicable to them all, do not give us the slightest aid, for determining, independently of experience, the nature of any change - the particular antecedent of any consequent, or the particular consequent of any antecedent. (Brown 1818: p.192) Only experience can show what is a 'sufficient reason'. (Brown 1818: p.193) Nor is it possible to prove *a priori*, without begging the question, that motion will continue in a uniform velocity. There is no reason for us to suppose that the principle relating to inertial motion could not be otherwise. (Brown 1818: p.211)

Brown argues that Euler's two demonstrations of the principle of inertia are also, 'more or less directly' based on the Principle of Sufficient Reason. (Brown 1818: p.213) (Reference is given to Euler Mechanica, Cap. Prim. *De Motu in genere*, reference 62.. and 3 connected corollaries. 437-9, Note K from p.213) Brown accuses Euler of appealing to inertial motion in defence of absolute motion. (Brown 1818: p.216)However, he says, this begs the question, because it assumes the conditions of inertial motion (perfect equality in the tendencies of motion), conditions which would obviously not hold if the principle were untrue. Brown then considers an argument in Euler by appeal to Sufficient Reason to say that velocity must be uniform because there is no reason why it should be greater in one part of a line than another. This does sound question begging, as Brown has put it. (Brown 1818: p.220) Brown then reminds us that we can't take the principle of inertia as a principle that asserts what actual change will occur, but only the *possibility* of change. (Brown 1818: p.222) In sum, we can't know the truth of any physical hypothesis before experience. (Brown 1818: p.223) On pp. 223-4, Brown says that the uniformity of velocity is what is at stake in Euler's earlier arguments, but that his uniformity of direction argument is similarly flawed.

Brown further notes that some argue that, with the knowledge of inertial motion and of the angles of two observed motions of two bodies moving in a

plane at right angles, we can, by composition of motions, infer the diagonal of a third motion, following upon their impact. But such inference depend on the observations and knowledge of the physical effects &c.. A meeting of bodies is a different matter from a presumed composition of forces, and we must always check the empirical facts before we can determine if the circumstances of union exist, and if the forces will remain. What we should not do is beg the question, and conclude *a priori*, before the facts, that the forces will remain. (Brown 1818: p.234)

> It thus appears, that the very false opinion which asserts the absolute independent certainty of some physical inferences, as to phenomena which have never been observed, derives whatever semblance of probability it may have, from the assumption of the very circumstance, which in physics, before experience of the particular case, is the great object of our doubt. There are many situations in which bodies appear to possess the same qualities:- there are many other situations in which they seem no longer to possess the same qualities, as they certainly exhibit tendencies, which are opposite to the past. To discriminate these situations is the work of observation and experiment; and, where the circumstances of position or combination are new, we are not entitled to infer the permanence of any tendency, observed in different positions, or in different combinations. (Brown 1818: pp.236-7)

Appendix H, from Chapter 8

Brown's criticisms of Hume:

Hume was wrong about the claim that there was no corresponding sensible impression for ideas of power (idea of necessary connection). Brown goes so far as to argue that we cannot produce even a single instance of a belief of causal subsequence that is not accompanied by the notion of power. (Brown 1818: p.277) The consequences are striking. For, if we had only customary conjunction to justify our belief in power, then we would have no justification for thinking that the future will resemble the past. However, given some additional, independent basis for the belief in power, there may be such justification. (Brown 1818: p.280-1) For, if causal belief is almost immediate - if it is never mingled with doubt, and takes place even before the influence of custom can have influence - then the uniformity of nature is derived neither from reason nor experience, but is 'a single intuitive judgement, that, in certain circumstances, rises in them mind, inevitably, and with irresistible conviction'. (Brown 1818: pp.288-290) Hume, therefore, is also wrong to suppose that all phenomena, before examination, appear wholly loose before the mind. (Brown 1818: p.298) Moreover, if any phenomenon can suggest expectation of future similarity, there is no reason to suppose that an increased frequency of recurrence will diminish expectation.(Brown 1818: p.300) Custom is not required for the formation of our notion of efficiency; rather it s required for preventing our too ready a belief in causal phenomena. (Brown 1818: p.305)

Brown goes on to raise a few more points, showing that the remaining details of Hume's theory of belief do not hold up to scrutiny. He argues that, contra Hume, we may form vivid ideas even when objects are not directly present to the senses. (Brown 1818: p.310) And, though belief is a kind of feeling in the mind, vividness is not a criterion of truth. (Brown 1818: p.311) Beliefs resulting from testimony, memories, and abstract reasoning differ, and are not merely a function of the liveliness of our conceptions of an object. (Brown 1818: p.317) 'It [belief] is a sentiment attached rather to the relations of things than to the things themselves'. (Brown 1818: p.317) Moreover, it is from his theory of belief that Hume deduces his theory of probability, and he is also mistaken with regard to the latter. For Hume, probability depends on the separate effects of each chance in making a conception more vivid. It depends on the frequency with which the mind is carried to a conception. (Brown 1818: p.317) But

Hume's linking of probability and vividness doesn't fit the evidence, says Brown. In every calculation of probabilities there is nothing more than the simple preference of more to less. Greater chances does not imply greater probabilities, nor does the vividness of an idea have any bearing. (Brown 1818: p.325) The feeling of probability does not depend on mere repetition or concurrence. We cannot assess probability in a meaningful way without consideration of circumstances. (Brown 1818: p.327) Brown further notes that Hume's theory implies that ideas do not arise by chance, but according to certain laws of association. However, the idea of causal connection, properly speaking, is based in a direct awareness of immediate sensation. The 'feeling of the relation' is immediate, and uncomplicated, and we have in our minds 'a clear intuitive notion of it'. (Brown 1818: p.341) Hence, firmness or liveliness of belief is not necessary to the theory of the belief of causation. (Brown 1818: p.342) Hence the theory of belief and probability are criticized by Brown. All we need is temporal antecedence and subsequence and invariable succession. The former stems from the phenomena; the latter is an immediate sensation and awareness. This awareness serves as an intuitively certain foundation for metaphysical principles.

Brown's position then, is complex. On the one hand, in many respects, he draws heavily on the Humean doctrine of causality. On the other hand, he parts with Hume on the question of whether we do in fact have an impression of causal power. From there, he disputes central features of Hume's theory of belief. All the while, he is an apologist for Hume, insisting that Hume very nearly discovered his own, correct view. Most importantly, Brown defends Hume against the pervasive, and yet mistaken interpretation of philosophy due principally to Reid. For, Reid and others focused on the notion of power in Hume, saying that Hume wrongly took it to be a word without meaning. This became 'a sort of traditionary article of faith, and of wonder at the possible extent of human scepticism'. (Brown 1818: p.315) Brown denies that it is Hume's view that we have no idea of power. 'He does not deny, that we have an idea of *power* or *invariable priority* in sequences: he denies only that we can *perceive* or *infer* it, as inherent in the subjects of a sequence.' (Brown 1818: p.345) Reid and his followers neglected the section on the 'Sceptical Solution', where Hume's actually admits that we have an impression of power. Hume claims that this impression arises from customary connection. (Brown 1818: p.348)

(Brown, of course, disagrees on this point.) In fact, Hume actually argues that *all* ideas are copies of impressions. Since we have an idea of necessary connection, we must have an impression of necessary connection. The point of controversy is that Hume claims that the idea arises from constant conjunction (a process he further explains) rather than reason or perception. Hence, Hume's play at doubting the idea of necessary connection in the earlier stages of his argument is a rhetorical move rather than a reflection of his considered view. Moreover, even his section on the idea of a necessary connection admits that there is an impression or determination to underlie the idea. (Brown 1818: p.355) Hume may have been wrong in certain respects about the origin and nature of our idea of power, but he never denied the existence of the idea or of a corresponding impression. Hence, Hume has been badly misread on this point.

Notes

1. Just what would constitute a fair understanding or appreciation of Hume's *Treatise*? To judge the matter by contemporary standards can lead to as many difficulties as answers. There has been no shortage of interpretive dissent regarding Hume's *Treatise*. The *Treatise* has been interpreted by J.A. Passmore in *Hume's Intentions* as a positivistic phenomenology of introspection. (Passmore 1952) However, labels such as 'positivist' and 'phenomenology' are loaded terms for contemporary readers, and they can easily distort our understanding of Hume's original aims. D.C. Stove's *Probability and Hume's Inductive Scepticism* interprets Hume's contribution as the discovery of the problem of induction, but it does so at the expense of providing an historically sensitive account of the *Treatise*. (Stove 1973) Stove focuses exclusively on Hume's inductive fallibilism - Hume's often repeated argument to show that even our best confirmed generalizations and predictions could turn out to be false -, and underplays Hume's empiricist psychology and theory of ideas. Yet another contemporary framework for reading the *Treatise* is the one that places emphasis on Hume's ambition to produce a Newtonian theory of human psychology and its laws. (Noxon 1973) (Capaldi 1975). However, the attempt to force Hume's *Treatise* into a single overarching framework seems doomed to failure. Even a cursory inspection of the work is sufficient to establish the diversity of influences on the work, and an adequate account of the whole must, at minimum, characterize its unity in a manner that reflects this diversity.

2. See (Hume 1978: p.xvii) and (Hume 1965: p.6)

3. See (Noxon 1973) and (Capaldi 1975).

4. There may exist structural similarities between the *Treatise* and the *Principia* that misleadingly suggest a deeper analogy. Newton's three books proceed as follows: Book I reasons abstractly about the phenomena of motions to investigate the forces of nature. Book II reasons from these forces to demonstrate further phenomena. Book III reasons from celestial phenomena to the general hypothesis that there exists a single gravitational force that draws all bodies toward the sun. Hume's three

books follow a similar plan: Book I of the *Treatise*, like Book I of the *Principia*, draws on an analysis of phenomena in order to identify the general principles at the foundation of human understanding. In other words, Newton draws on data to establish the forces governing motions, and Hume draws on data to establish his principles of association. In Book II of the *Treatise*, which deals with the passions, Hume argues that the impressions of reflection that give rise to passions ultimately trace back to sensation. Moreover, it turns out that the same principles of association govern both the understanding and the passions. “Those principles, which forward the transition of ideas, here concur with those, which operate on the passions.” (Hume 1978: p.284) Like Newton then, Hume’s claim to generalize his results in Book II, arguing that the same associative principles discovered in his first book apply to the passions. Finally, in Book III, (not published until 1740), Hume further extends his argument to show that the principles at the foundation of the understanding form the basis for a complete theory of morals. (Hume 1978: p.458) Hence, “*Resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality*, and *proportions in quantity and number*; all these relations belong as properly to matter, as to our actions, passions, and volitions.” (Hume 1978: p.464) In the end, Hume reasons, moral judgments do not arise from an “*original* quality” or “*primary* constitution”, but through associations made between certain actions and characters and our contemplation of the motives of the agent. Thus, in Book III, the fundamental principles of Humean psychology, like those of Newtonian mechanics, are claimed to be completely general and universal. (Hume 1978: pp.473-4)(The associations give rise to the sympathetic feelings in a manner likened to the exercise of a “moral taste”, and lead to moral approval or disapproval. Thus, morality is neither based in reason nor in the nature and order of things. It arises, in part, due to the acquisition of artificial or conventional virtues.) Hence, following a Newtonian paradigm, the *Treatise* develops an analysis of phenomena that first aims at the discovery of general principles, then proceeds to deduce further consequences from them, and ends with a complete generalization of the results. (As with Newton, the material in Hume’s first book acts as the cornerstone for expansion of the theory to cover new phenomena, so that in the second and third books, two realms sometimes considered as disparate, are tied together by means of a common empirical hypothesis. In both cases then, the first book reasons from the phenomena to investigate the

underlying principles at work. In both cases, the second book reasons from these results to demonstrate further phenomena. And, in both cases the third book generalizes earlier results in order to explain additional phenomena. There is then, a case to be made in favour of viewing the structure of Newton's *Principia* as a model for the structure of the *Treatise*. However, it is important to bear in mind that the analogy between the works, if intended at all, reflects only an aesthetic parallel that is devoid of analytical force. The logic of the experimentalism in the two works is entirely different. In particular, the basis for theory-data fit in the Newtonian case is substantially demonstrated, while the same cannot be said in defence of Hume.) However, for reasons given above, it would be improper to conclude that the emulation of the plan of Newton's book is evidence of a deeper connection in the experimentalism of the works. Hume may have drawn inspiration from the broad plan of the *Principia*, but the resulting analogy is at a superficial level.

5. Hume seems to have hoped to unite these three principles under a single general psychological principle of association. However, Hume admits defeat on this score. (Hume 1965: p.6)

6. The are good reasons to avoid reading too much of a connection into Hume's references to Newton and experimentalism. Perhaps the primary reason is that the finer details of Newton's experimentalism are not evident in Hume's *Treatise*. Newton's own reasoning in support of his "general propositions" is based on a "rational mechanics." In other words, it is based on "the science of motions resulting from any forces whatsoever, and the forces required to produce any motions, accurately proposed and demonstrated." (Cajori 1934: vol.1.,p.xvii) With this brief description, Newton makes reference to what is in actuality a complex and novel methodology. For example, Newton relies extensively on an abstract mathematical analysis of motion in making inferences to the forces required to produce motions. Moreover, he appeals to objective observational data, lawlike axioms, idealizations, and methodological rules in order to demonstrate the correspondence between these results and the empirical phenomena. Finally, through the extension of his initial results, Newton is able to include more and more earthly and celestial phenomena, and so is able to generalize his results in a way that shows that a variety of observed effects are in fact due to a single gravitational

force. In short, Newton's method is very complex indeed, and there are significant differences between his experimentalism and Hume's. In fact, Hume actually appears to reject Newton's appeal to abstract mathematics in the analysis of empirical phenomena. In a long discussion of space and time, Hume maintains that we can have "no idea of space or extension, but when we regard it as an object either of our sight or feeling." (Hume 1978: p.39) As such, we can have no sensible impression or idea of infinitely divisible extended parts. In saying this, Hume is rejecting the empirical meaningfulness of a mathematical concept that is central to the Newtonian analysis of motion. For similar reasons, Hume also takes issue with Newton's appeal to the reality of abstract concepts of Absolute Space and Time &c.. (Hume 1978: p.53) Whatever can be said on the subject of space and time, he insists, reduces to what can be found in experience, and Hume will not be tempted into error by speculating about the causes of motion beyond what is given in the appearances. "Here is the whole of my system", he says, "and in no part of it have I endeavour'd to explain the cause." (Hume 1978: p.63) For, Hume's philosophy "pretends only to explain the nature and causes of our perceptions of impressions and ideas." (Hume 1978: p.64)(Hume acknowledges that Newton's explanation of phenomena by appeal to the gravitational hypothesis may be correct. He says that uncertainty regarding the analysis of phenomena does not necessitate uncertainty regarding the explanation of its causes, and vice versa. (Hume 1978: p.60)) Evidently then, Hume was not an uncritical follower of Newton, and there are even grounds to suspect that his appreciation for Newton's method was limited by a pre-commitment to his empiricist theory of ideas. But the crucial point in all of this is that Hume's science of human psychology rules out the sort of mathematization of nature that is a key to Newton's argument in the *Principia*.

7. The fifth editorial piece that appeared in 1740 was a digression on two of the topics discussed in the *Treatise*; namely, liberty and necessity and on Hume's philosophy of mathematics. The author is probably Anthony Collins, whose attention may have been drawn to the *Treatise* by the mention of his own name in the 1739 Review of the *Treatise* in *The History of the Works of the Learned.*

8. Hume, however, has at least this advantage; namely, that in drawing

his conclusion, he does not intend to extend his hypothesis beyond the evidence presented to the mind. Hence, it is supposed to be experimentalism that leads Hume to his conclusion, not a question-begging metaphysical claim.

9. This is my translation from the original rather than the Norton translation. The Norton translation of the phrase "la raisonnement ne nous mèneroit presqu'au doubte universel" reads "reason would lead us to doubt almost everything". (Anonymous 2000c: p.61) I have translated the phrase using the more literal expression "universal doubt", since I think that the use of the expression by this reviewer is important. (Anonymous 1740)

10. Hume specifically rejects the charge of *universal scepticism* in his 1745 *Letter from a Gentleman*. He uses the term *universal doubt* in the context of a discussion of the scepticism of Descartes in his 1748 *Enquiry*. Strictly speaking, the state of suspension of judgement is a caricature of the Pyrrhonist's view, as Norton and others point out. Nevertheless, this is Hume's view of Pyrrhonism. An early critic who takes up the question of Hume's misinterpretation of Greek scepticism is James Balfour. (Norton 1982)

11. Dugald Stewart seems to pick up on this idea at a later date.

12. Apart from the occasional sarcasm, the *Nouvelle bibliotheque* review is a fairly straightforward, objective summary of the first book of the *Treatise*. Its main fault is a slavish faithfulness to Hume's text. On the other hand, this slavishness leads to the first extended mention of the material on probability in Book I, Part III, - material that is largely ignored in early discussions of Hume. No critical commentary on the subject is ventured.

13. Subsequent critics repeatedly raise these same questions against Hume.

14. It is hard to date the origin of Edinburgh University with precision. The two 'original' charters issued by King James VI in 1582 and 1584, were in fact pre-dated by an earlier charter issued by his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. The following brief history of the university's Constitution is concise and helpful:

> The University of Edinburgh has grown into its present status out of what was originally a small College, called the "College of Edinburgh" or "The Town's College," which was founded in 1583 by the Town Council of Edinburgh, under the general powers to found educational institutions granted to them by the Charter of King James VI., dated 14 April 1582. No separate Charter of the foundation is now extant; but from the first the College possessed the privilege of conferring degrees. This privilege was ratified by the "Act of Confirmation," an Act of Parliament passed in 1621, which secured to the "College of James VI," (as it had come to be called) all the rights, immunities, and privileges enjoyed by the Universities of Scotland. This ratification was renewed in the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland, and in the Act of Security. Gradually, in Acts of General Assembly, Acts of Town Council, and Acts of Parliament, the "College of James VI" came to be styled "The University of Edinburgh." But the institution remained under the absolute control and patronage of the Town council of Edinburgh down to 1858, when, by the Universities (Scotland) Act, all the Universities of Scotland received new and autonomous constitutions.
>
> The University of Edinburgh is now (1889) a Corporation, consisting of the Chancellor, Rector, Principal, Professors, Registered Graduates and Alumni, and matriculated Students; and its government is vested in the Senatus Academicus, subject to the review and control of the University Court. (Senate of the University of Edinburgh 1889: p.93)

15. The source of controversy was the Ministers of Edinburgh. When the original documents relating to the university charter were lost, the Church set out to renegotiate terms to their advantage. The written 'contract' appears to be an attempt on the part of the Church to secure specific rights regarding the *avisamentum* and "rules for teaching" in a manner independent of the royal charter. In fact, by signing the document, the parties were effectively attempting to override the royal charter. In any case, the Ministers succeeded in securing their influence over appointments at the college by means of a written document in which an

agreement was made that the Church would provide land, fund buildings, and pay annual salaries (as well as provide a lump sum payment to the Town Council) in return for a guarantee of influence over the appointments and teaching at the college. The 'contract', dated 16 December 1608, was made between the Church and the Town Council at a time when the Town Council was "over burdenit with the comoun affairs greatlie run in debt and nocht abill to beir out ye chairges of the said College quhairby the sayne is in dainger to decay gif tymous remeid be nocht provydit." (Commission 1826a: p.3) Hence, under financially trying circumstances, the Town signed a document that was stated in terms very favorable to the Church. In the document, the college is described as a "seminarie of the Kirk." In particular, it is mentioned that the mission of the college was for the "trayning up and instructing of the youth in godliness and good letters." (Commission 1826a: p.2) The Town Council further "grantis and consentis that ye Ministers of this bur[t] present and to cum for samselfis and in name of the said Session becaus they have best knowledge in letters sall have one vote with same in electing of the Principal and regentis of the said College quhane they sall happin to vaik and in placing and displacing of same in all tyme cuming." (Commission 1826a: pp.9-10) The Church's influence prevailed over the next century, and, in practice, the "one vote" granted to the Ministers of Edinburgh may sometimes have amounted to a controlling vote or veto.

16. In January 1640, it is recorded that "immediatlie before they ressaive the degrie sall appeir in the common hall sweir and subscryve the confession of faith as it is prescryved be the late general Assemblie hald at Edinburgh in the month of August one thousand sex hundreth threttie nyne yeirz." (Commission 1826c: p.1)

17. In a similar vein, Professor John Blackie remarked that following the Hanoverian Succession, "suspicion stood with pricked ears" in order to guard against "the monopolizing spirit of Episcopacy", and that this led to the introduction of the Confession of Faith. (Blackie 1843: p.14)

18. According to critics, these Acts had been passed "with a view of excluding Episcopalians and Jacobites from the Universities, which obliged every Professor before induction to sign a declaration before the Pres-

bytery of the bounds that he accepted the Confession of Faith, and avowed obedience to the Established Church of Scotland." (Grant 1884: pp.86-7) It was also claimed that the Town Council, acting in concert with the Church, took steps to "abolish outlets for student high spirits which could be exploited and transformed into political demonstrations by those who disliked the Whig and Presbyterian establishment." (Horn 1967: pp.36-7)

19. Early indications of such difficulties include a 1663 excerpt that reads, "Taken from College Register that the Magistrates took away Charters and Papers &c." (Commission 1826d: p.2) and a c.1692 reference to a "College attempt to get the Power." (Commission 1826b: p.3) Hence, a further source of strife stemmed from the faculty. The professors claimed that the original charter had invested them, as an academic body, namely, the 'Senatus Academicus' or 'faculty', with certain powers. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several petitions demanding recognition of these powers were presented to the Town Council. The validity of these petitions was denied by the Magistrates and Council. The Town argued that they had clearly been vested with patronage of the College. Since the original charter, which apparently made reference to the faculty as a body with powers, rights and privileges, had been lost, the faculty could make no headway. Thus, in 1703, the faculty signed a petition in defence of their right to call themselves a 'Faculty' with certain powers of election. The patrons responded by claiming that references to the term 'Faculty' in the regulations and laws of the College were in error. The Council maintained that the terms 'Faculty' and 'Senate' did not appear in the original Charter of the university that had vested the administration and government of the college in the Town Council and Magistrates of Edinburgh. The Council further examined the laws pertaining to the university in order to note instances in which words such as 'Faculty' were used to describe the professors. They "objected to these as implying a claim on the part of the teachers to independent powers in the educational and administrative affairs of the university." (Morgan 1937: p. 230n) In 1704, a committee was formed to eliminate all such references, and to ensure that the relevant legal documents were "fairly transumed and more regullarly wrytten." (Morgan 1937: pp.152-4) Finally, "the absolute powers of the Town Council over the College were declared by legal authority." (Grant

1884: p.243)

20. Regarding curricular control, an excerpt from 16 June 1708 reads "Rules for teaching given." (Commission 1826e: p.4)

21. In this instance, a petition was signed in support of Professor Simpson of Glasgow, accused by his students of teaching a doctrine of the trinity in violating of the Confession of Faith. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1808: pp.37-40) Simpson was a followers of Clarke's metaphysics. Clarke was accused of an Aryan interpretation of the trinity according to which Christ is temporally prior to man, and coeval with God. The Nicenean creed is the official doctrine of the church. The Socinian/Unitarian doctrine is the one that makes Christ a mere human being, and was viewed as unacceptable.

22. Ferguson's book reads like a series of definitions. The definitions are not always explicitly religious, but they were supposed to be consistent with religious teachings. Hence, on p. 15, in the section on Understanding, the text reads, "We are determined by a law of our nature to believe facts to which we ourselves are witness, or to which we have the credible testimony of others." The statement here seems somewhat ambiguous regarding its support for Hume or the Church. On the following page, the marginalia of the National Library of Scotland copy (Acc. Hall.193.h) reads "David Hume", annotated to the following sentence: "The principle articles of relation are those of similitude, contiguity, cause and effect. So there may be a hint of danger in Ferguson's text on Pnewmatics! The section on the being and attributes of God opens thus on p. 25: "We believe the existence of mind, as well we do that of matter, in consequence of certain appearances with which that belief is connected in the frame of our nature."

23. In face of the Jacobite threat, church business in Edinburgh was effectively shut-down for several months beginning on 29 August 1745. On the 29th, the Ministers of Edinburgh met to pray for peace &c.: "The Presbytery of Edinburgh taking into their serious consideration the dangerous and Expensive war weare engaged in with powerful united Enemies, and how much a holy Just and Righteous God has been of late testifying his displeasure against us by their rapid success abroad, and by suffering a Popish and malignant Party with the Pretenders son at

their Head, to disturb the Peace of our own native Country by a wicked and rebellious Insurrection at Home ... call upon all persons of rank in the city to take the gravity of the situation seriously and to propose a day of fasting, to pray for tranquility &c." (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1745: p.374-6) The minutes resume in May 1746. In June 1745, just two months prior to the August 1745 interruption, the successful, 'safe' job candidate, James Cleghorn, had been sworn into office.

24. The reason for the delay, it seemed, was that Dr John Pringle, who had earlier absented himself from Edinburgh in order to serve in Flanders, was not eager to resign his Chair. The Council attempted on 20 July 1744 to secure from Pringle a definite commitment to return to Edinburgh by November 1745, with the ultimatum to otherwise "send a Resignation of your office in Course of post." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1744: p.326) Pringle promised on 19 September 1744 to "supply this Winter's College as hitherto with proper Substitutes", saying that he did hope to return to Edinburgh by November 1745. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1745: p.19). Still not satisfied, the Council demanded a firmer commitment on 26 September 1744. Once again delaying his answer, Pringle managed to put off the resignation until March 1745. Finally, on 27 March 1745, it was reported that,"Dr Pringle resigns his office of Professor into the hands of the Town Council his patrons and Mr Cleghorn appointed to teach his class". (Town Council of Edinburgh 1808: p.44)

25. It was perhaps with one eye to the history of the Chair of Ethics and Pnewmatical Philosophy and the other to the conservative political leanings of the Town Council and Church, that Wishart had told a hiring committee, back in 1742, that, were he to occupy the position in question, he would resume instruction in Latin and pay greater attention to morals and religion. (Stewart 2001: p.7) But with several philosophically adept candidates to choose from, Wishart was far from assured the post in 1745.

26. See, for example, in connection with the second charge, (Anonymous 2000f: p.20,26); in connection with the third charge, (Anonymous 2000f: p.21)and (Anonymous 2000c: p.63) The third charge, which became central to the later critical reception of Hume, was linked to a footnote

passage in the *Treatise*. (Hume 1967: p.17) (Hume 1978: p.96n)

27. In connection with the fourth charge, see (Anonymous 2000f: p.21).

28. See, for example, (Anonymous 2000e: p.84) and (Anonymous 2000f: p.35)

29. Book III appeared in the year following the publication of the first two volumes of the *Treatise* in 1739. See (Anonymous 2000b: p.89) and (Anonymous 1999)

30. He also likens Hume's theory to Hutcheson's and other defenders of the "moral sense" view. He criticizes the introduction of a new moral faculty as unconvincing to many, and further notes, with Berkeley, that, "nothing could be so arbitrary as the notions of Right and Wrong, were they dependent on Personal Taste." (Anonymous 1999: p.9)

31. With an eye to increasing student enrollment and to making Edinburgh's university amongst the finest in Europe, the university instituted a number of changes during the eighteenth century - including curricular change. The governing patrons initiated changes to the description of the teaching positions in order to attract new professors. They placed less emphasis on teaching a broad spectrum of subjects and began to emphasize scholarly research. This did attract new faculty, who successfully argued that they ought to be allowed to teach from newer publications. In making changes at the college, the Town Council looked to Dutch universities such as Leyden. The older Scotch system was based on a single college Regent overseeing the progress of a class of students through four-years of college studies. This was finally replaced by a system in which professors were responsible for teaching in a single subject area. For the first time in Scotland, professorships were established in different areas of the arts curriculum. (Stewart 2001: p.4) As such, the professors were granted a new kind of authority in their roles as scholars. For, "A Professor was appointed to pursue for life a particular subject, and, with the whole University teaching of that subject placed in his hands, was in a very different position in point of authority, responsibility, and incentives to exertion from either a Regent or a College tutor." (Grant 1884: p.270). The discarding of the old system of Regents and tutors in favor of a system designed to encourage specialization and scholarship

was an important step. Among the innovations that had been allowed at the College were included the works of empiricist philosophers such as Bacon, Newton Locke: Bacon, the early, but outspoken critic of scholastic method, was introduced in the area of classics; Locke was studied under the heading of moral philosophy; and, Newton was studied in mathematical science. The Edinburgh mathematician, Colin Maclaurin, one of the stars of the newly re-modelled professoriate, amazed students and colleagues alike with his ability to teach the mathematical foundations of Newtonian mechanics. It was reported in a 1741 issue of Scots Magazine that Maclaurin "prelects on Sir Issac Newton's *Principia*, and explains the direct and inverse method of fluxions", following this with lectures on experimental philosophy. (Grant 1884: pp.271-72). Such lectures were considered to be substantial improvements over the days of the Regents, when natural philosophy had been limited to the *Physical Lectures of Aristotle*. (Grant 1884: pp.271-72) Other professors at Edinburgh, particularly those teaching in areas seen as separable from religion and morality, were likewise engaged in expanding the curriculum. Professor Robert Stewart used works by Issac Newton, Dr David Gregory, and Dr John Keill for his natural philosophy courses. John Stevenson, who taught rational philosophy, used De Vries, Locke, and a history of philosophy text (an innovation). In most important respects, "The reaction against the old system of Regenting had been complete. The Arts Faculty of the University of Edinburgh, with the exception of its classical department, had been re-modelled after the example of Leyden and Utrecht. In supplement to the Dutch influence, inspiration was borrowed from Bacon, Newton, and Locke." (Grant 1884: p.274) In short, prior to 1744-45, there had been teaching and curricular changes at the college. In moral and political philosophy, however, the chief authors studied continued to be ancient writers such as Cicero, Marcus Antonius and Puffendorff - all of whom were thought to supply material suitable for the making of a Sottish statesman. Indeed, there is every reason to think, especially given the events around the appointment of Hume, that on matters concerning morality and religion, the old metaphysical prejudices were as strong as ever.

32. Hume was personally opposed to revolution and unsympathetic to the popular cause of the Jacobites. He identified civil war with religious fanaticism, and disliked both. Hume's personal politics were clearly on

the side of the ruling class.

33. The criticisms of Hume highlight important differences between the moral philosophies of Hume and Hutcheson. The latter was committed to the assumption of a real, benevolent creator as the basis for moral distinctions. Hume, on the other hand, had sought to develop a moral system that was grounded in experience and convention - and ultimately, in human nature itself. As such, he rejected the age-old "hypothetical" foundation of morality in favor of an experiential one. To his contemporaries, and especially to Hutcheson, Hume's strict and reductionist appeal to human experience would have seemed to undermine the very foundations of morality. See (Moore 1994) for a full account of the differences between the moral theories of Hume and Hutcheson. In any case, it is known that Hutcheson's views were communicated to the council and that he had philosophical objections to Hume's views on morality and religion.

34. For the sake of simplicity, the *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* will be referred to as the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, first *Enquiry* or *Enquiry*.

35. Two threads in the contemporary scholarly literature discussing changes in the *Enquiry* are relevant to our discussion. The first concerns a potentially substantive change in content associated with Hume's shift to an essay style. As Selby-Bigge has shown in his comparative study of Book I of the *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry*, the latter work obscures many of the foundational elements and arguments of the *Treatise*, eliminating the major portion of the empirical psychology and theory of ideas. (Hume 1975: pp.vii-xxxi) In the *Treatise*, this is the very material that Hume lays out in order to introduce the experimental method to moral subjects. Yet, despite these abridgements, some have argued that the *Enquiry* lays an even greater emphasis on "experimentalism" than the *Treatise*. (Buckle 1999). This reading seems to me to be implausible. Though Hume does make reference to experimentalism in the *Enquiry*, he has all but eliminated the content that would be required to illustrate an experimental method in the *Enquiry*. A second point of contention in the literature concerns Hume's treatment of scepticism. Miriam McCormick has argued, contra the received view, that there is no actual

shift from Pyrrhonism to *mitigated scepticism* in the *Enquiry*. Rather, the latter work is simply a clearer restatement of the sceptical doctrine in the *Treatise*. (McCormick 1999) McCormick's reading seems to me to be quite defensible, while the alternative reading seems to underline a misreading of Hume that originates with his earliest critics. In any case, my position with respect to Hume's treatment of experimentalism and scepticism in the *Enquiry* will become clearer as the chapter unfolds.

36. Kames offers an alternative account of how belief arises. According to Kames, beliefs are founded on trustworthy external and internal senses. Beliefs that arise from the testimony of others are also trustworthy, because they too trace back to the senses. As for the idea of power, it arises from the internal conviction that every man has when he feels himself exert his powers, i.e., when he feel himself act. For, "Every man is conscious of having himself a power to act; and he readily transfers the idea to other beings, animate and inanimate." (Home 1779: pp.300-1) Ultimately then, it is internal conviction and trustworthiness of the senses that are the foundation for causal belief. "No relation is more familiar than this, he writes, "nor sooner takes hold of the mind." (Home 1779: p.373) As such, we can know that objects are effects, even when their causes are unseen. (Home 1779: p.302) Nor need we consult experience to know the maxim, "That every thing which begins to exist, must have a cause." (Home 1779: p.303) As for knowledge of the future, Kames holds that God made the operations of nature uniform and gave us "an intuitive conviction of this constancy and uniformity." (Home 1779: pp.309-10) Moreover, the evidence in nature gives us very strong grounds for the belief in a Deity, so that the argument by analogy "carry a high degree of probability, which leaves little room for doubt." (Home 1779: p.324)

37. Leland claims to notice a number of inconsistencies in Hume. The most significant of these relates to Hume's claims that, for all we know, the course of nature may change, and, that the succession of ideas accounts for our belief that nature is always uniform and constant. (Leland 1754: pp.16-22) Similar points had earlier been raised in the 1753 German review of the *Enquiry*. (Anonymous 2000h: p.115)

38. Leland also claims that Hume's stance regarding scepticism seemed to

vary, and that it is sometimes positive, and sometimes negative. For example, in the final part of the *Enquiry*, but not at the outset, Hume appears to hold a low regard for sceptics, saying that the abstract reasoning of philosophers ought to be rejected as "false and trifling." "But it were well", Leland remarks, "if the worst thing that could be said of our author's excessive scepticism, were, that it is trifling and useless." (Leland 1754: p.24) Leland argued that Hume had in fact "carried scepticism to an unreasonable height."

39. For the most part, the commentary on Hume's religious and moral writings reflecting a wide consensus on the interpretation of Hume. See discussions due to Kames (1751), Rutherford (1751), Adams (1752), Ellys (1752), Anderson (1753), Douglas (1754), Manning (1754), and Leland (1754). Many commentators, for example, rested their arguments against Hume's view of miracles and providence on appeals to Biblical and religious authority.

40. Adams writes:

> But, if I may presume to explain it, his argument stands thus: The principle set out with, was, that our reasoning about matters of fact depends wholly upon experience. This he hath provided concerning such events as are future: he now wants to prove the same concerning facts that are past. Here he is aware, that, besides experience, we have another guide, which is the testimony of history, that of witnesses, &c. These he does not chuse to distinguish from the former, but insinuates, that the evidence of testimony is included in that of experience, or that every argument from testimony is only an argument from experience, for-as-much as the truth of that depends ultimately upon this. "The ultimate standard," he tells us below, "by which we determine disputes of this kind, is always derived from experience and observation." (Adams 1754: p.5)

41. Following the lead of Adams 1754 *An Essay on Mr Hume's essay on Miracles*, George Campbell, Professor of Divinity at Aberdeen's Marischal College published his *A Dissertation on Miracles* in 1762. Campbell, like many other critics, echoes and elaborates on many of the points

raised by Adam. (Campbell 1762)

42. There were very few originals in early Hume criticism. One such original was Thomas Melville. Melville's "Observations on Light and Colours" commented critically upon Hume's claims about mathematics in the *Treatise*. Melville rejects appeals to the limits of the imagination in adjudicating claims regarding infinite divisibility. He argues that such a limitation does not depend on the constitution of the thing itself, but on the constitution of the observer. (Melville)

43. In 1758, Price maintains, contra Hume, that we do in fact have "clear and distinct" apprehensions of certain ideas, including ideas of cause and effect: "Our certainty that every new event requires some cause, depends not at all on experience; no more than our certainty of any other the most obvious subject of intuition. in the very idea of every *change* is included that of its being an *effect*." (Price 1769: p.31) In consequence, nothing can be more absurd, Price thinks, than "the notion of a change which has been *derived* from nothing." (Price 1769: p.31) We have an idea of power from understanding, and the real connections of things are perceived by reason. (Price 1769: pp.32-3) Price then goes on to question the coherence of what he takes to be Hume's scepticism with regard to the faculties, since "*in the very act of suspecting them*, he must *trust* them." (Price 1769: p.153) Hence, instead of saying "upon supposition my faculties are duly made, I am sure of such and such things;" it should be said, "I am sure of such and such truths; and, therefore, I am in the same degree sure my faculties inform me rightly." (Price 1769: pp.158-9) Price is one of the few early critics to discuss Hume's "sceptical argument" regarding probability. He says that Hume shows "by consideration of the fallibility of our faculties, and the past instances in which we have been mistaken" and "the possibility of error in the estimation that we make in the fidelity of our faculties", that increasing evidence will lead to a constant diminution of probability, until it is reduced to nothing. (Price 1769: p.160n) Hence, there follows an extreme form of scepticism. Price rejects the argument on the grounds that experience restores our original assurance in a proposition "to its first strength", and hence, provides assurance of certainty. (Price 1769: p.160n)Price is one of the first to notice this aspect of Hume's argument. Price advances the positive view that there are three grounds of belief:

feeling, which gives knowledge of our own existence, operations such as the passions, sensation, and intuition, by which means the mind surveys its ideas and their relations, and argumentation, to which we have recourse when intuition fails.(Price 1769: pp.162-4)

44. There did emerge, however, an edited version of the *History of England* that was deemed more suitable for students.

45. The tenets that Bonar attributes to Sopho are obviously Humean:

    1. Prop. I. There is no necessary relation betwixt cause and effect. (Bonar 1755: p.5)
    2. Prop. IV. The powers of reason can give us no satisfying evidence of the being of a God. (Bonar 1755: p.10)
    3. Prop. V. The perfections of God are either such as we cannot prove, or cannot comprehend. (Bonar 1755: p.10)

    In treating of Hume, Bonar develops the moral and religious charges:

    1. Prop. I. All distinction betwixt virtue and vice is merely imaginary. (Bonar 1755: p.26)
    2. Prop. II. Justice has no foundation further than it contributes to public advantage. (Bonar 1755: p.27)
    3. Prop. III. Adultery is very lawful, but sometimes not expedient. (Bonar 1755: p.28)
    4. Prop. IV. Religion and its ministers are prejudicial to mankind, and will always be found either to run into the heights of superstition and enthusiasm. (Bonar 1755: p.31)
    5. Prop. V. Christianity has no evidence of its being divine revelation. (Bonar 1755: p.35)
    6. Prop. VI. Of all the modes of Christianity Popery is the best, and the reformation from thence was only the work of madmen and enthusiasts. (Bonar 1755: p.42)

    Having presented his material, Bonar went on to warn "That the promoters of such impious opinions deserve the very highest censure of the

church, is beyond dispute. What you shall think proper to do in this assembly, a short time will discover." (Bonar 1755: p.49).

46. The topic arose following Thomas Walker's defence of the need for censure in his *Infidelity a Proper Object of Censure.*

47. See *Scots Magazine* May 1756, Vols. 17 and 18 for related discussions of Hume and infidelity.

48. On 27 December 1756, the Presbytery of Edinburgh took up the question of the morality of the playhouse. A motion was made on account that "a great offence had been lately given in this City by some of our Brethren, particularly by Mr John Hume." (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1756: p.246) For, Home "has composed a Tragedy called Douglas and given it to the stage players to be publikly acted by them in the head of the Cannongate, and that Mr Hume himself was often present at the acting thereof" as well as other Ministers. (Presbytery of Edinburgh 1756: p.247)

49. Hence, connections had been made between the suicide in Home's tragic drama and Hume's own views on suicide and immortality. (Mossner 1943: p.216n)

50. The Synod minutes make note of the letter from the Presbytery of Hadingtoun in respect of John Home, "who is said to have Composed & brought upon the Stage a tragedy called Douglas, & to have been often present at the acting of it in the Playhouse in the head of the Cannongate, & who without Liberty from the Presbytery went away to London when they were proceeding to inquire into what was laid to his charge." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1757: p.237) The Synod noted that Home was not present to speak to the issue, and so decided to refer that matter back to the Presbytery. (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1757: p.237) However, on the same day, the Synod decided to propose to the General Assembly to "take this matter under serious consideration & lay down such Rules as to their Wisdom."(Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1757: p.237) In doing so, the Ministers expressed concern regarding "the entertainments of the Stage, which Entertainments from long Experience have been found prejudiciall too the great Interests of religion and Virtue." (Synod of Lothian and Tweedale 1757: p.237)

51. A parody of Ferguson's pamphlet entitled *The Usefulness of the Edinburgh Theatre Seriously Considered* suggests that Home's play might make a good substitute for Hume's (suppressed) essays on suicide and immortality. *An Address to the Synod of Lothian and Tweedale Edinburgh* (1757) mentions Ferguson's work as a piece of smooth sophistry. Other parodies of the affair also emerged. One of them, entitled *The Deposition, or Fatal Miscarriage: A Tragedy* is a short, but amusing mockery of not only the *Douglas*, but of Hume's claim to the play's rivalry of Shakespeare, the response of the Ministers &c. (Anonymous 1757b) The literary flurry reached its zenith in the 1757 publication of a satire of Hume, Home, and Edinburgh society entitled *The Philosopher's Opera*, attributed to John MacLaurin. (MacLaurin 1757)

52. See Beattie's 1767 *Castle of scepticism* and the controversy concerning the propriety of Beattie's attacks on Hume in *Weekly Magazine*, 1771.

53. For a fuller treatment of this episode, see Mossner's *The Forgotten Hume*. Hume had on his side the sympathetic voice of Voltaire and many others on the Continent who knew Rousseau's state of mind. (Voltaire 1766)

54. The position that Balfour occupied was the one that Hume had applied for in 1744-45, and that Cleghorn had held in his stead. The requirement to teach Pnewmatics was foremost in the minds of the Town Council. Balfour's hiring is recorded in the minutes as a hiring of a "Professor of Pnewmatics" - no mention of Moral Philosophy at all! The excerpts for 4 September, 1753 read: "Mr James Balfour of Pilrig appointed to Professor of Pnewmatics with no other gratification whatsoever but the salary annexed to his office - subjects himself to the Rules of the College made and to be made." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1808: p.50)

55. James Oswald, a Minister, also set his sights on dismantling Hume's scepticism, claiming that its critique of causality leads to irreligious and immoral conclusions. "These are terrible doings", he writes, "and were it not for the authority of common sense, such as would go near to introduce an universal scepticism." (Oswald 1766: p.95) Oswald rejects Hume's arguments to show "that we have no evidence for the sun's rising to-morrow, yet believe and expect it." (Oswald 1766: p.145) He holds that "all who trust to common sense, may rest assured, that the great truths of natural philosophy, theology, and ethics, will maintain their

ground against all the attacks of the most subtile reasoning." (Oswald 1766: p.95) Contra Hume, Oswald reasons, common sense provides a method of coming to such knowledge of the causal relation where intuition and reasoning fail us. (Oswald 1766: pp.130) Hence, it is common sense that teaches us that "it is impossible for us to admit the cause without having an expectation of its natural effect." (Oswald 1766: p.136)

56. According to Lehrer, Reid views Hume's theory of ideas as resting on two assumptions: "One, an assumption about psychology, is that the immediate object of thought is always some impression or idea and, therefore, that all our conceptions and beliefs are nothing but impressions and ideas. The other, an assumption about epistemology, is that all our justified beliefs are justified by reasoning from impressions and ideas. Reid held both of these theses to be false." (Lehrer 1989: p.26)

57. Balfour gives other arguments against Hume as well, but they are neither as central to the analysis nor as original as the above argument. To wit, Balfour argues in support of necessary connection that the mind has "immediate consciousness of its own operations." (Balfour 1768: p.63) He agrees with Locke that, in observing frequent changes upon things, the mind arrives at the idea of power. Both constant observation and the "clearest intuitive perception" ultimately lead us to knowledge of cause and effect. (Balfour 1768: pp.70-1) He completely rejects Hume's denial of the causal axiom, saying that "it is natural to remark the superlative absurdity of Mr Hume's opinion, in supposing an effect, at least a regular effect, to begin to exist without a cause at all." (Balfour 1768: p.78)

58. Indeed, according to Beattie, all manner of degraded and wanton individuals - the corrupt judge, the prostituted courtier, the plundering statesman, the pettifogger, the oppressor, the hypocrite, the debauchee, the gamester, and the blasphemer - are alike eager to learn more when they hear of the existence of Hume's *Treatise*. (Beattie 1776: pp.102-3)

59. Beattie defends his appeal to detached sentences, saying that, "it is not my intention to take any unfair advantages. I should willingly impute these absurd sentences and expressions to the author's inadvertency: but then I must impute the whole system to the same cause; for they imply nothing that is not again and again inculcated, either directly or

indirectly, in Mr Hume's writings." (Beattie 1776: p.108n)

60. Looking further into the roots of Cartesian scepticism, Beattie considers the ancients. Socrates, he says, was humble, and made no pretensions to extraordinary knowledge or virtue. (Beattie 1776: p.153) Aristotle's aim was to discover truth and establish conviction. (Beattie 1776: p.150) Of Cicero and Pyrrho, however, Beattie has doubts. Cicero only pretended to be an Academic, he suggests, for he wanted to argue both sides of every question. (Beattie 1776: p.154) Pyrrho, he plainly denounces as someone who denied all distinctions. (Beattie 1776: p.154) Returning to the origins of modern scepticism, Beattie next absolves Locke of all sceptical intent. (Beattie 1776: p.155) Berkeley, however, in attacking "the most incontestable dictates of common sense" ends with fallacious demonstrations of universal truths. (Beattie 1776: p.157)

61. Hume was privately angered with Beattie, possibly because of the critical remarks in his publication, but more likely because Beattie had taken his attack to a personal level, fostering a rift between Hume and his longtime friend, the poet Blacklock. It is also worth noting that Beattie emphasizes the dangers presented to Scotland's youth and his consciousness of his duty as an educator. This would surely have been a sensitive subject for Hume, whose own prospects as a professor had been ruined by such speculation. The propriety of Beattie's attacks on Hume are discussed in a series of letters published in the July-September 1771 edition of *Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement*(Vol. 13).

62. Indeed, it was the reputation of Hume's *Treatise*, and the need to protect the youth of the nation, that inspired Beattie to counter Hume's arguments:

> Ever since I began to attend to matters of this kind, I had heard Mr Hume's philosophy mentioned as a system very unfriendly to religion both revealed and natural, as well as to science; and its author spoken of as a teacher of sceptical and atheistical doctrines, and withal as a most acute and ingenious writer. I had reason to believe, that his arguments, and his influence as a great literary character, had done harm, by subverting or weakening the good principles of some, and countenancing the

licentious opinions of others. Being honoured with the care of a part of the British youth; and considering it my indispensable duty (from which I trust I shall never deviate) to guard their minds against impiety and error, I endeavoured, among other studies that belonged to my office, to form a right estimate of Mr Hume's philosophy, so as not only to understand his peculiar tenets, but also to perceive their *connection* and *consequences*. (Beattie 1776: p.xii)

63. In thus rejecting Cartesian scepticism, Hume followed a line of criticism akin to one offered by the Greek *Academical Philosophers* against the Pyrrhonist's confidence in the level of appearance. According to these "Academical Sceptics", as Hume termed them, no seemingly veridical perception could never provide an adequate criterion of truth; for no such perception could, by itself, establish its own truth. Cf. (Norton 1982: pp.270-75)

64. See (Sher 1985). After the Jacobite crisis, the professors established their credibility by strengthening the political alliances linking the old ruling Whigs and the Presbyterian leaders in the Church of Scotland. At one point during the uprising, Edinburgh briefly fell under a threat of a Jacobite invasion. Edinburgh's professors rose in defence of the town. The event succeeded in drawing positive attention to the leadership of the professoriate, and became legendary in the popular imagination. The early death of the mathematician Colin Maclaurin was attributed to his heroic efforts to defend Edinburgh from the Jacobite threat.

65. A discussion of relevant posthumous publications needs to go here. Also, compare Hume's 1745 *Letter* and his *Dialogues*. It looks as if Hume gave up all pretence of conciliation in the latter.

66. Other relevant publications at this time include J.H. Beattie (1796) and William Agutter (1800)

67. "Mr Hume: I am desirous to put an end to this conversation. There may be a philosophical as well as a religious madness. The man who directing his labours towards the good of mankind, happily unites philosophy and religion, is one of the most illustrious and venerable objects in nature. Such a man becomes a dupe neither of fanaticism, superstition, or

scepticism. He ought to be more revered by mankind than the Delphic oracle was by the antients; men of such sublime and enlarged minds are the only true guardians of the interests of the human race. Posterity will review your character with a high degree of abhorrence on account of your vices, and the pernicious tendency of my metaphysical system will considerably lessen their admiration of my virtues and genius." [v2, 87]

68. "The Story of LaRoche" unfolds as follows. While visiting a French village, Hume came to the assistance of a sick elderly man and his beautiful daughter, taking them into his home and tending to the elderly gentleman. This gentleman turns out to be a Swiss Protestant clergyman, and the question of Hume's being an "unbeliever" becomes a central issue in the story. As the clergyman's daughter vows to her sickly father, "he [Hume] shall be a Christian before he dies." (MacKenzie 1803: p.177) Eventually, the party leaves France for Switzerland, by which time the clergyman and his daughter are quite pleased with Hume. For "they really loved their landlord - not perhaps the less for his infidelity." (MacKenzie 1803: p.178) Hume was a very pleasant companion who "talked of everything but philosophy or religion", and who shared his learning "without the least shadow of dogmatism." (MacKenzie 1803: p.179) Hume was equally charmed by the clergyman and his daughter. He left their pleasant company with regret. When he was later called back to attend the wedding of the daughter, he returned to discover, to his shock and surprise, a funeral procession in her honour. For, the clergyman's daughter, it seems, had died of heartbreak shortly before her wedding day, on account of the unexpected death of her betrothed in a duel. During the funeral service, the clergy La Roche says, "Tis only from the belief of the goodness and wisdom of a Supreme Being, that our calamities can be borne in that manner which becomes a man. Human wisdom is here of little use; for, in proportion as it bestows comfort, it represses feeling, without which we may cease to be hurt by calamity, but we shall also cease to enjoy happiness." (MacKenzie 1803: p.190) La Roche continues with the reminder that "For we are not as those who die without hope...live as she lived; that when your death cometh, it may be the death of the righteous, and your latter end like his." (MacKenzie 1803: p.191) Hume was moved by this speech, saying to the clergyman "I rejoice that such consolation is yours." La

Roche replies that “if there are any who doubt our faith, let them think of what importance religion is to calamity, and forbear to weaken its force; if they cannot restore our happiness, let them not take away the solace of our affliction.” (MacKenzie 1803: p.192) Following this moving speech, “Mr -’s heart was smitten; - and I have heard him, long after, confess that there were moments when the remembrance overcame him even to weakness; when, amidst all the pleasures of philosophical discovery, and the pride of literary fame, he recalled to his mind the venerable figure of the good La Roche, and wished that he had never doubted.” (MacKenzie 1803: p.192) The moral of the story is that the legendary Hume was far from an unfeeling believer; for, he too had been overcome by the sentiment that leads to faith.

69. Despite his linking of Hume’s philosophy with he destruction of the nation, Monboddo did otherwise attempt to maintain a reasonably objective tone in addressing Hume’s philosophy. The same cannot be said for all of Hume’s scholarly critics. By 1783, Hume’s most shocking works, his essays on suicide and immortality, had become available to the general public and their authorship was generally known. The negative response to Hume’s essays on suicide and immortality grew ugly in tone, as can be seen in the following 1783 commentary in *The Critical Review*:

> The principles, which Mr Hume attempts to support, are mean and malignant, having a tendency to loosen the bands of society, to subvert the foundation of religion, to debase human nature, to extinguish all noble emulation, to cast a gloom over the whole creation, and to frustrate our sublimest views and expectations.
>
> Supposing, what is contrary to the sentiments of the wisest men in all ages, that the author’s arguments are conclusive, what shall we gain but the wretched prospect of annihilation? On the other hand, supposing them to be fallacious, suicide may be attended with such tremendous consequences, as we cannot at present either forsee or conceive. (Anonymous 2001: p.305)

70. Another sort of answer that Monboddo dismissed has been to argue that perception of objects is accompanied by belief in existence. Such an answer “is more philosophical”; nevertheless, “this belief is a matter

of fact, which cannot be easily granted without proof." (Burnet 1779: p.416) Monboddo rejects this strategy as well, saying that he has "no conception of what is called a natural or instinctive belief." (Burnet 1779: pp.416-7)

71. Reid cites the theories of Kames and Gerard for fuller accounts of the relations of objects than can be found in Hume's account of resemblance, contiguity, and causation. (Reid 1863c: p.386)

72. Reid attributes to Hume the view that we have no impression, and hence, no idea of necessary connection.

73. See Gleig's article "Metaphysics" in the 1792 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* and Richter's "On Mr Hume's Account of the Origin of the Idea of Necessary Connection" in *Monthly Magazine*(1797).

74. The comments are only significant because it appears that the vast majority of read papers were published. The Professors were obviously asked to give reasons for not including their papers in the publication.

75. This is Playfair remembering, in 1806, an earlier remark.

76. Existing social tensions at home and abroad were further complicated by rapid economic and social change; in particular by the land reform movement and the Industrial Revolution.

77. Select Society.

78. Willich openly condemns Scotland's tradition of persecution, saying that "men of candour and discernment look upon it as disgraceful, not only to sacred offices, but to the rank in society of men of letters." (Willich 1799: pp.v-vi)

79. F.G. Born's translation of Kant's *Critique* into Latin, the language of instruction at most universities, made Kant's work more accessible to English readers, most of whom had little or no knowledge of German. In addition, some of the early articles on Kant's Critique that had first appeared in Germany were being reprinted in British journals such as the *Monthly Review*. Interest in the now famous Kant was growing, and between 1794 and 1796, Frederich Auguste Nitsch was invited to give a

series of lectures on Kant's philosophy in London. As a former student of Kant's, his aim was ostensibly to give an introduction to Kant's principles concerning man, the world, and the Deity. Less explicit, but no less important, was Nitsch's own ambition to proselytize Kant's philosophical system in the English speaking world, a plan that Kant himself supported. (Nitsch 1796) Nitsch's book was a direct outgrowth of his London lecture series on Kant. On pp.52-3, Nitsch discusses the materialists, idealists, spiritualists, eclectics and skeptics, with a view to illustrating that Kant shows:

> ...that Philosophers have not yet succeeded in determining accurately and in a universally evident manner, what we are to understand by the faculty of sense, and that it is still uncertain whether or not this faculty can furnish such materials as can admit of being modified into ideas of immaterial existences, different from the operations of the human mind.

> ...that is extremely doubtful whether or not this faculty [of sense] can form any solid judgments concerning immaterial existences.

> ...that the incorrect and ambiguous descriptions of sense and intellect have produced as incorrect and ambiguous descriptions of reason, and that therefore we have no certain authority for assigning to this faculty, a power of penetrating into the invisible regions of immaterial objects.

> ...that it is to sense, intellect, and reason, that we are indebted for all our knowledge, and that the limits of what can be known by man are still unsettled.

Nitsch's summary of Kant's accomplishments are misleading, mainly as a result of his attempt to fit Kant's philosophy into categories already familiar to his British audience.

80. At this time, Edinburgh was considered to be one of the great centers of learning in Europe. Many young men, including Willich, went to Edinburgh to pursue studies in medicine, law and the humanities.

81. I need to clarify the authorship of (Willich 1799). There are issues relating to Willich's authorship of one or both works attributed to him.

82. Willich's *Elements* was criticized as a mere piece of book-making, and a large chunk of the work does appear to be a synopsis of Schultz's German language summary of the first *Critique*. However, Willich's concise summaries of Kant's texts were better than any other writing on Kant then available in the English language. Willich's descriptions of Kant's corpus would have been very useful to the English reader of his day, and they were arguably the only clear English texts available prior to 1800 that actually summarized the Kantian system. (Willich 1798) Three philological essays by Adelung were translated from German and appended to the back of the work. This may seem an odd sort of appendix, but perhaps not so odd given the context in which Willich's *Elements* was written and published. The inclusion of the philological essays might simply be a consequence of Willich's having introduced Kant studies through German language classes. The selection of philological essays is also intriguing. One of the early complaints against the critical philosophy was that Kant's representation terminology was too difficult, cumbersome, and awkward. Of the philological essays included by Willich, one concerns the history of the English language, and it sets the language in a less than favourable light. So, the inclusion of the philological essays might have been intended to deter objectors to Kant's terminology. Adelung's first essay on the history of the English language also surveys important contributions to English literature and philosophy, including contributions of eminent women.

83. In 1709, the Town Council had declared that the office of Professor of Divinity could not be held in conjunction with a ministerial charge, because the academic post held "in conjunction with the ministerial charge is too great a burden for one person." (Morgan 1937: pp.167-8) It was resolved that "the said office be supplyed in such way and manner as may tend most to the advancement of learning" and that "the person to be elected shall have no ministeriall charge but shall dedicat himself

to the said office allenarly." (Morgan 1937: pp.167-8) The precedent was later reinforced by an Act of the Town Council dated 2 November 1720. The Act is quoted in Morgan:

> Town Council is "fully satisfied and convinced not only from the nature of the things and from the universall practise of all well governed Colledges and citys that the office of a Minister and Professor cannot be discharged in a suitable manner by one person at one and the same tyme, and haveing likewise observed that the few instances of contrary practises in their said Colledge have rather arisen from necessity then choice, Do hereby Statute and Ordain that hencefurth and in all tyme comeing no person who is a Minister of the Gospel and in the actuall exercise of his ministry in this city shall be by us or our successors in office elected and admitted Professor of Divinity or History in the said Colledge unless previous to his admission he demit his miniteriall charge not to be reassumed during his continuance in his office of professor, And all future Commissions to the saids Professors shall bear a clause by which they shall be voided and become null in the event of any Professor becoming a Minister of this city, And doe hereby declare they will not directly or indirectly consent to nor concurr in the lieting or calling of any person to be a Minister of this city who is at the same tyme a Professor of Divinity or History in their said Colledge unless he previously resign and demitt his Professorship, Declaring alwayes, as it is hereby declaired, that nothing herein contained shall be construed to extend to the office of Principall of their said Colledge.(Morgan 1937: pp.171-2)

Presumably, these innovation were sometimes overlooked. As the letters written by Dugald Stewart and John Playfair to the Lord Provost, George Baird attest, there was a continuing concern over the problem of professors holding ministerial charges in 1805.

84. Playfair had known Leslie from his student days at St. Andrews. Leslie used to visit him at his parish in Liff, Forfarshire. (Napier 1836: p.8)

85. Greyfriar's Presbytery, the parish united to The University of Edin-

burgh, was the only Presbytery eligible to exercise the right of *avisamentum*. This limitation seems to have been ignored in the Leslie affair.

86. Note xvi begins on p. 521. It is a note to p. 136 of the main text. Neither Leslie's digressions on Newton, nor those on etymology, had attracted much attention in 1804. However, once Leslie had become a candidate for the Mathematical Chair at the University of Edinburgh, his footnote turned into a magnet for controversy.

87. See Appendix A.

88. See Appendix B.

89. A member of Council asked the Ministers about the existence of Leslie's letter, at which point the letter was acknowledged. Dr Henry Grieve spoke to the matter, saying that "such a letter did not anyways alter their opinion." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.92)

90. See Appendix C. It is not far-fetched to suppose that the *avisamentum* in the Leslie case bears some connection to the one submitted against Hume. Dr Henry Grieve is the link between the two episodes.

91. In the letters, the following remarks regarding Leslie's character and qualifications are typical: Hutton described Leslie as "a most ingenious & valuable man who has for many years been intimately known to me as a profound Mathematician and Philosopher." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.140) Laurie said that he was "Descended of Parents remarkable only for the piety, the innocence and simplicity of their lives, and having passed the most of his time in Study and seclusion from the World, it is easily perceived that our Fife Philosopher has not the polished appearance of some modish men of Letters: But though his manners are not courtly or conciliating, and though some allowance must be made for a slight degree of irritation on certain occasions, probably the effect of repeated disappointment, and disgust at seeing persons preferred whose talents were confessedly inferior to his, still he possesses a most friendly & obliging disposition." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: pp.147-48) Out of concern that Leslie should not suffer unjustly, his Minister from Largo, Spense Oliphant, writes to say that he "has had the advantage of a Christian education" and also "the powerful in-

struction - that arises from the practice of Religion" and that when in Largo "he paid a becoming respect to religion." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.150) "If great abilities, highly improved - if an unstained moral character - and a tender discharge of every filial duty recommend to confidence and esteem, these belong to him. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.152) Sir William Erskine , having resided near Leslie in the county for about 20 years, and having and had constant communication with him there and in London, described his character as "in every respect irreproachable and befitting the important situation" in the University. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.153) In addition, Erskine writes that Leslie's "abilities and Talents must gain him the respect of all who know him." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.153) Leslie was also tutor to the Wedgwoods, spoke on behalf of Leslie's 'irreproachable' conduct", especially during the period in which he tutored them. He is "indefatigable in the experimental enquiries" they said, and has published and introduced new instruments for quantitative measurement. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.155) They praised the "zeal with which he conveys of his instruction" and say that they look upon him as "a man of great and very original talents, and possessing industry, perserverence and acuteness in the highest degree." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.156)

92. Playfair says of Leslie that he has "zeal and ingenuity" and that he has conducted himself as a "correct and irreproachable man" and has "not only drawn the attention of all men of Science, but has met with the highest and most honourable marks of approbation which any Public Body in this Country can confer." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.157) Stewart says that he retains "the most favourable opinion of his talents and character." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.158) He says that "from Mr Leslie's earliest years, his moral character has been not only blameless but exemplary and that the most intimate friends he has had in both parts of the Island have been often distinguished no less by their Loyalty to Government than by their literary attainments." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805a: p.159)

93. The pursuers and defenders were described as follows: The Ministers of Edinburgh Against The Magistrates and Town Council and Senatus Academicus of Edinburgh University. (Ministers of Edinburgh 1805:

p.1) On 27 March 1805, Lord Armdale considered the Bill, heard the agents for the parties, John MacRitchie and Robert Sym, and returned his verdict that the Ministers of Edinburgh "have not, by said Charter any right of negative or interdict upon the Magistrates power of representation." He did, however, invite answers to the Bill, inviting both parties to discussion questions regarding their respective rights and interests. (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805b: pp.154-5)

94. The recording of this mundane fact is found in the minutes for 29 March 1805, p. 64 of the *Excerpts From the Records of the Town Council of Edinburgh Respecting the Magistrates Rights of Patronage of the College and Controul of the Principal and Professors, 1703-1808* Edinburgh University Library archives (Da 21): "Professors Ferguson and Leslie appointed to the Mathematics chair under the usual terms." The next entry, on p. 65, is for 17 July of the same year: "Long memorial from the Town to shew that the Ministers of Edinburgh have no right to interfere in the election of Professors." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1808)

95. On 7 May 1805, Rev. Muckersey, Minister of West Calder, wrote that, "several steps in this business have not been conducted in a regular manner, nor consistently with the forms of this church." Moreover, the "reference to the Assembly was carried in the Synod" even though Leslie had given a candid explanation. Indeed, even if Leslie was wrong in his doctrine of causation, "in confining it to physics alone, it may be charitably and fairly believed that he had no intention of subverting the principles of religion or of disseminating pernicious or atheistical opinions." For these reasons, he dissents, and "takes instruments &c. (Church of Scotland 1805a: p.1) On 17 May 1805, the petition of Sir Henry Moncrief Wellwood & Dr Andrew Hunter was also registered, asking for leave to complain to the venerable Assembly for the reasons already lodged and others before the case of Leslie is judged.

96. 1805b and 1826d (Town Council of Edinburgh 1805b: pp.185,190) and (Commission 1826b: pp.4,8-10)

97. The Commission text quoted here is an extract from the letter to Lord Craig relative to Council's 17 May 1805 Memorial. It gives a number of clues regarding the decision on the Sist. Other details are summed up in the 17 July Council minutes.

98. See Appendix D.

99. Although the Ministers of Edinburgh did not make the Confession of Faith into a central issue in the case of Mr Leslie, the dispute was tied at one point to this tradition in university appointments. Leslie had in fact actually agreed to avow the Confession of Faith. In any event, there was some discussion concerning the neglect of the Westminster Confession of Faith. As one Minister complained, Dugald Stewart "makes no secret of his thinking it very wrong and injurious to the interests of Literature, that Professors should be required, in any way, to express their adherence to the standards of a National Church." (Inglis 1805: pp.32-3) "It is well known", he continues, "that, by the laws relating to Universities, both in England and Scotland, men of talents must, sometimes, be excluded from offices, for which they are well qualified in respect of literature. There have been learned Presbyterians, who would have done honour to an English University, as well as eminent Episcopelians, who would have adorned our seats of learning in Scotland." (Inglis 1805: pp.33-4) Moreover, "The Clergy, connected with *Oxford* or *Cambridge*, would probably feel not a little *surprised*, were any man to propose officiating as a Professor in one of those Universities, without subscribing the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England." (Inglis 1805: pp.35-6) In fact, at about the time o the Leslie episode, the Presbytery had met to discuss the Westminster Confession of Faith. As the Ministers of Edinburgh claimed, "for many years past the members of the University of Edinburgh have not been in the use of complying with those Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, by which they are expressly required to acknowledge, profess and subscribe, before this Presbytery, the Confession of Faith." (Stewart 1805: p.133)

100. Hume, of course, suffered a similar defamation. (Mossner 1968) In defence of Leslie's character, see Mackintosh's memoirs, Napier, Playfair, Chalmers, Horner (*Edinburgh Review* No. 13, Art. 7)

101. Leslie's footnote includes a rather long comparative analysis of the word 'cause' as it is used in different languages. "Derivations are not safely inferred from solitary instances; they must be drawn from the comparison of whole classes of words, and the uniform analogy of different languages." (Leslie 1804: p.522) Leslie characterizes various languages

as more or less advanced in connection with their senses and uses of the term ‘cause’. He argues that the various words for ‘cause’ in German, Greek, Latin, French and English merely signify antecedence or priority. (Leslie 1804: pp.522-3) Leslie considers various other related expressions, conjunctions and prepositions, and argues that “When they signify precedence, conjunction, or proximity, they are fit to express causation.” (Leslie 1804: p.524) Leslie considers whether we can properly ascribe more to the term ‘cause’. “But in conceiving the relation that subsists between cause and effect, do we not *feel* something more than the mere invariable succession of events? I will admit the fact, but I maintain that, like many other spontaneous impressions, it is a fallacious sentiment, which experience and reflection gradually correct, yet never entirely eradicate. It is a vestige of that extended sympathy which connects us with the material world: It is the shade of that propensity of our nature to bestow life and action on all the objects around us; to clothe them with our own passions and habits, and to discover the image of ourselves reflected from every side.” (Leslie 1804: p.525) Indeed, “In early periods of society, every object was viewed as animate”, Leslie writes. (Leslie 1804: p.526) It is the more mythic and poetic imagination that gives such anthropomorphic interpretation to the feeling of succession, and this forms the basis of figurative language regarding causation. Here, as the Ministers point out, Leslie is arguing that we only see a sequence of events; we do not see any actual connection or casual power. There is no “vinculum” binding the first of a series to one that follows. Indeed, sophisticated languages, Leslie maintains, use the word ‘cause’ to mean nothing more than antecedence in the succession of events. Leslie’s point, apparently, is that we would do well to stick with the latter construction, and abandon the unsophisticated senses. The end result of this analysis, the Ministers claim, is that we can never reason from the universe, the effect, to the cause, or God. (Leslie 1804: p.334)

102. The reference is to the Synod or General Assembly.

103. The full force of Erskine’s pun is perhaps impossible to feel unless one also keeps in mind that Leslie’s footnote on Hume was followed by a long etymological analysis of the word ‘cause’.

104. Erskine offer this amusing parody of academic metaphysical analysis:

> Supposing I should go to a gentleman of professional habits, - the deacon of the tailors, - for information on this subject, and, laying hold of one of the buttons of his coat, should say to him, "Pray, Sir, what is this little incumbrance here? It is surely no part of the coat, for it is made of metal, and the coat of cloth." Would he not answer, "O Sir, it certainly is a part of the coat, and a very important part too; do you not perceive, sir, that it is a button?" "A button, say you! - well, deacon, what are these unsightly rents just opposite, which spoil the smooth and entire appearance of the coat? these surely can form no part of it." - "Why, my dear sir, these are very necessary things, they are the button-holes, they will make your coat sit closely and pleasantly upon you." This, I suppose, would be the information I should receive, and I have no doubt you would admit it to be correct. - Now, Sir, I apprehend that notes are the buttons of publications. But, after all, the subject is not worth the thing I have been talking about. (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.205)

105. Long after the Hume and Leslie affairs had come to their conclusions, the derision persisted. The Reverend Sydney Smith, frequent guest among the "motley company of lawyers, statesmen, critics" at Holland House, persisted in the ridiculing of "Scotch atheists". In a state of "high glee", as one observer noted, Sydney Smith announced to Mr Ward and Mr Allen that "the best way to keep a merry Christmas was to roast a Scotch atheist, as the most intolerant and arrogant of all two legged animals." Allen was not pleased, and "kept clasping his hands together till his fingers cracked" so that Sydney Smith called out "See! there's one beginning to crackle already." (Bell 1980: p.49) This description of Sydney Smith's humour is in a letter from Lady Bessborough to Lord Granville Leveson Gower. Decades later, the Oxford Movement would involve similar persecutions, so the mockery of Scotland was perhaps a bit premature. The latter persecutions involved a W.G. Ward, but the Mr Ward referred to by Lady Bessborough is most likely J.W. Ward, also known as Lord Dudley. The reference to Mr Allen is a reference to John Allen, the personal physician and close companion of Lord and

Lady Holland. Allen had lectured in the sciences at the University of Edinburgh at the turn of the nineteenth century, and was considered to hold radical views. See (Jacyna 1994: p.43) As this incident shows, Scotland's persecutions had become a matter of national ridicule.

106. As an aside: The following monumental inscription was for the wife of Hume's favourite nephew and heritor, David Hume:

 Behold I come quickly
 Thanks be to God which
 giveth us the victory, through
 our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

 One wonders whether there is an indirect reply here to Hume's concluding remarks in his *Dialogues on Natural Religion.* Hume gives the victory to Cleanthes, who represents the Ministers of Edinburgh, but he is likely being sarcastic. Hume had specifically asked that his tomb not be given a monumental inscription. Could someone have been putting in their two cents near to his grave? Look into this.

107. One might wonder how a predominantly philosophical debate could have engaged the larger community in Edinburgh. Part of the reason for widespread interest was undoubtedly an attraction for the spectacle of Leslie's persecution. But the philosophical discussion itself extended to university administrators, ministers, lawyers, media contributors, "tradesmen and their wives", and so on. As one observer remarked, "The honest tradesman, and his wife, may now be expected to be found poring over the unprofitable metaphysics of Mr Hume, to the exclusion of the 'Spectator' and the 'Rambler'; or, when it shall appear, studying "A Logical Exhibition of Mr Leslie's Heresy, by the Ministers of Edinburgh". (Church of Scotland 1805b: p.234) While this level of public involvement in a philosophical debate might seem strange to the contemporary reader, it is well to keep in mind that the kind of education received in eighteenth century Scotland was quite different from that received today. In those days, every school child was exposed to classical literature through language and religious studies. A solid foundation in the humanities was required of all university students, and professionals, merchants, and members of the gentry spent much of their leisure

time in the study of classical literature and philosophy. A culture of letters predominated quite generally in British society, and especially in Scotland, where a single literary magazine such as the *Edinburgh Review* might sell as many as ten thousand copies per month. For this reason, lawyers such as Henry Erskine were able to craft puns on the etymology of abstract terms such as 'metaphysics' - puns that the majority of today's university educated would fail to grasp. A fair appreciation and understanding of matters philosophical and theological were thus within the reach of many otherwise citizens, and even working class men and women could follow the issues in the news. Consequently, the Church of Scotland's General Assembly debates attracted a full house. This level of appreciation for philosophy and literature, particularly in the fashionable circles of eighteenth century Edinburgh, could not be matched today.

108. Book II, Aphorism XI.

109. Book II, Aphorism XII.

110. Book II, Aphorism XIII.

111. Book II, Aphorism XX.

112. The correct theory of heat, the theory that heat is the kinetic energy of atoms, was not yet known to scientists. The aether hypothesis was not decisively falsified until the twentieth century when the Michelson-Morley experiment showed that the round trip velocity of light is the same in all directions on the earth's surface, and hence, that the motion of light is not affected by any 'aether'. The Michelson-Morley result is clearly inconsistent with the aether hypothesis, according to which light should travel slower in the direction of the earth's motion than it does in a direction perpendicular to the earth's motion.

113. The text is taken from an the 1798 edition of Lavoisier translated by Robert Kerr and published in Edinburgh. Lavoisier describes ether as "a very volatile and inflammable liquor, having a considerably smaller specific gravity than water, or even the spirit of wine." (Lavoisier 1952: p.11 n1) He classifies the caloric as a chemical element (Lavoisier 1952: p.53), and leaves open the possibility that caloric is a modification of

light or vice versa. (Lavoisier 1952: p.10)

114. This hypothesis sounds somewhat Baconian.

115. Bacon emphasized that we must use correct methods for collecting and analyzing data, which, in his view was impeded by assuming the truth of traditional prejudices and errors. Bacon's method in the *Novum Organon* takes seriously the principle of 'Ockham's razor'. Newton's "Rules of Reasoning" makes a similar methodological point.(Note that Bacon's text to this effect quoted in (Stewart 1805: p.52).)

116. Leslie presents the following experimental result as one that discredits the caloric theory: "If successive rings of pasteboard be fashioned into the twisted form of a cornucopia, and its wide mouth presented at some distance to the fire, a strong heat will, in spite of the gradual inflection of the tube, be accumulated at its narrow end." (Leslie 1813: p.22) (Anonymous 1815: p.341)

    The experiment is supposed to present a difficult case for the caloric theory because the cornucopia shaped instrument would, in principle, impede the transmission of caloric in right lines from the wide to the narrow end. Yet, contrary to what would be expected on the caloric theory, the evidence shows that the far end of the instrument accumulates a "strong heat." (Leslie 1813: p. 22) (Anonymous 1815: p.342) Leslie claims that the evidence leaves us with a model of heat radiation as an undulation of waves in the manner typical of fluids:

    > The portions of heat are not transported by the streaming of the heated air, for they suffer no derangement from the most violent agitation of their medium. The air must therefore, without changing its place, disseminate the impressions that it receives of heat, by a sort of undulatory commotion, or a series of alternating pulsations, like those by which it transmits the impulse of sound. The portion of air next the hot surface, suddenly acquiring heat from its vicinity, expands proportionally, and begins the chain of pulsations. In again contracting, this aerial shell surrenders its surplus heat to the one immediately before it, and which is now in the act of expansion; and thus the tide of heat rolls onwards, and spreads

> itself on all sides. These vibratory impressions are not strictly darted in radiating lines, but each successive pulse, as in the case of sound, presses to join an equal diffusion. (Leslie 1813; Anonymous 1815: p.22)

Leslie's experimental results also led him to reject the theory that there exists an invisible aether which is a medium for physical motion:

> What then is this calorific and frigorific fluid after which we are inquiring? It is incapable of permeating solid substances. It cannot pass through tin, nor glass, nor paper. It is not light, it has no relation to aether, it bears no analogy to fluids, real or imaginary, of magnetism and electricity. But why have recourse to invisible agents?
> Quod petis hic est.
> It is merely the ambient air. (Keir 1807: p.23)

117. See Appendix E.

118. Having defended the first three propositions, Brown rejects the fourth and fifth. He rejects the fourth on the grounds that our ideas are not loose and unconnected, as Hume supposes. Past experience suggests certain ideas to the mind, leading us to believe, that, were all the circumstances to forever be the same, the resulting product would also be the same. (Brown 1805: p.17) Hence, for the chemist, "The exact similarity of circumstances being supposed, his conviction, after one experiment, would be, in every respect, as great as after a thousand repetitions." (Brown 1805: p.17) Indeed, we are all generally capable of drawing conclusions about cause and effect after only a single trial. The boy who is stung by a bee, Brown maintains, does not wait for a second or third application before he fears the sting. The causal belief has thus already formed after a single trial; "Whether his belief be consistent with reason, is not the inquiry." (Brown 1805: p.19) The point is, he has formed the causal belief. In sum, "the experience of customary succession is not necessary to the belief of future similarity of sequence." (Brown 1805: p.24) Finally, in rejecting the fifth proposition, which concerns the psychological mechanism that leads to causal

belief, Brown argues that neither frequency of conjunction nor vividness can account for causal belief formation. (Brown 1805: pp.28-30) For example, we can have intense sentiments annexed to consecutive ideas wherein no causal belief is formed. To wit, the romantic memory of a loved one that "is a cause not of less, but of more, lively conception" than those in which causal beliefs are formed: (Brown 1805: p.28) "How many are there, who during a long life spent in a foreign country, have lost, in their pictures of remembrance, almost every trace of the friends of their youth! Yet the faint conceptions that arise are dear to them still, not as fictions, but as realities; and it is not from any fading of memory that they tremble, when they fear, that the friends for whom they are anxious exist no more. The very wildness and wonderfulness of romance, as it excites peculiar emotion, is a cause not of less, but of more, lively conception; and when we are interested in our knight, the tower and the giant rise before us in stronger colours, than the host and his inn on a modern highway." (Brown 1805: p.28) Hence, Brown rejects Hume's claims that the belief in causal connection depend on frequency of conjunction and vivacity of impression.

119. Stewart apologetically notes that he here appeals to the authority of many English divines, "but which, I am sure, will not, on that account, meet with the less respect from any one party connected with the established Church of Scotland." (Stewart 1805: p.56)

120. Stewart's reference is to Dr Samuel Clarke, who exchanged letters with Leibniz through Caroline, Princess of Wales. There is a curious connection in letter from Issac D'Israeli to John Murray. The letter refers to an "important expedition" made by the printer John Murray to Edinburgh in 1805: "I have repeatedly felt a secret satisfaction at the spirit with which, by Clarke's communications, I heard you pursued your expedition." (Smiles 1891: pp.54,66).

121. In one biting remark, he points out that the Church of Scotland had recourse to the same mistaken supposition, when it declared that "it may very well discharge all such acts wherein there is no necessary connexion inter causum et effectum as it pleases, under the pain of Witchcraft." (Stewart 1805: p.94n) Stewart here refers to Book III, Title IV. "Of Witches and Charmers" in Collections and Observations Methodized,

Concerning the Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland. By Walter Stewart, Esq, of Perdivan.

122. On the frontspiece to the work, Brown makes a characteristically sarcastic reference to the Leslie affair, by way of a general remark on footnotes:

> "From the considerable length of the many notes, the Author regrets, that, if read in their present situation, during the first perusal of the work, they destroy that continuity of argument, which it was his greatest wish to preserve. He would have placed them at the close of the Volume, had he known their extent in sufficient time; but those of greatest length, which relate to Mr. Hume's original Treatise of Human Nature, were not written till a very large part of the work had passed through the press. He must therefore leave it to the kindness of his Readers to rectify the error, and must request them to follow the continued text, without interrupting and suspending the argument, by attention to the Notes. These being rather discussions of subjects connected with the general argument, than necessary elucidations of it, may be afterwards read, as if *appended*." (Brown 1806b)

123. Brown writes that, "A PHILOSOPHER, of great and deserved scientific celebrity, recently appointed to the chair of mathematics in the university of Edinburgh, has been opposed, for is approbation of Mr. Hume's Essay on necessary connection, by a body of men, who, from the general literary profession, may be presumed to be at once well acquainted with the nature of heresy, and charitably sparing in the imputation of it. On a reference from them, this subject, unquestionably of the greatest importance, is about to come for decision before the highest ecclesiastical court in Scotland." (Brown 1806b: p.6)

124. In his 1806 *Short Criticism*, Brown is uncharacteristically modest, perhaps even sensitive, on the subject of his 1805 *Observations*; "Whatever, therefore, may be the general sentiment, as to my own peculiar views of the subject" he writes, "I shall have attained my wish, if... I have succeeded in shewing, that the evidences for the most important of all truths remain unshaken." (Brown 1806c: p.36) Brown writes,

> Such is the simple view of causation, which in a former work, I have exhibited and supported at length. To the argument of that work I look with peculiar satisfaction, not so much from any importance which I attach to it, in its relation to the progress of science, as from its relation to an object still more intimately connected with human happiness ... Whatever, therefore, may be the general sentiment, as to my own peculiar views of the subject of this momentous question, I shall have attained my wish, if, in the discussions into which I have been led, I have succeeded in shewing, that the evidences for the most important of all truths remain unshaken, whether we adhere to the received distinction of efficient and physical causes, or adopt that simpler notion of causation, which I have endeavoured to illustrate.(Brown 1806c: pp.35-6)

125. The investigation may require something different from analysis and synthesis to introspect on the contents of our own minds. (Brown 1806b: p.18) In introspection, we discover ideas mixed into compounds whose elements are not detected by us. For, "man, though conscious of every aggregate conception, as one existing compound, is not conscious of all its elemental parts." (Brown 1806b: p.23) Nevertheless, the analysis of such compounds is amenable to scientific treatment.

126. This then, is the approach that Brown projects for a later analysis of causation. (Brown 1806b: p.35) Such an investigation is important, he says, because the analysis of causation stands at the foundation of all the other sciences. "The question is not in this, as in many other speculations, one which terminates in itself, but is connected with every other inquiry, in the physics both of matter and mind." (Brown 1806b: p.35) Indeed, for this reason, it is imperative to dispel the mysteries surrounding causation. For, "As long as any mysterious connection is supposed between phenomena, the mind of man must, from its very nature, be curious to investigate that mysterious tie; nor will the simple assurance, that the discovery is impossible, be sufficient to destroy the curiosity, and thus to prevent the investigation that seeks to gratify it." (Brown 1806b: pp.35-6)

127. Brown 1806c explains that for Inglis, there are nothing but efficient

causes (or metaphysical) and all efficient causation is necessary connection. [43 ff.] In effect, Inglis accuses Leslie of "*denying all such efficiency of causes as implies efficiency in causes*[58].

128. In his last publication of 1806, *An Examination of Some Remarks in the Reply of Dr John Inglis to Professor Playfair*, Brown explains that his motive in publishing on causation was not to profit from the exposure, but to defend the cause of liberal science. (Brown 1806a: p.14) Brown expresses his anger at being "disqualified as an antagonist, by opinions substantially and radically opposite to those of both parties" and defends his own criticisms of Inglis. (Brown 1806a: p.16)

129. As one observer pointed out, it was regrettable to many that theology and philosophy had been brought into the debate in the first place, since it had blown the Leslie affair quite out of proportion, tying it in an unfortunate way to matters "purely Ecclesiastical." (Brown 1806d: p.45)

130. William Keir's Preface opens with the following reference to the Leslie episode and the footnote controversy: "The following Observation upon Mr Leslie's Inquiry into the Nature of Heat, and upon Mr Malthus's Essay on population, were originally intended to have been given as a note upon the proposed Inquiry into the Origin of Government and Law." (Keir 1807: p.iii)

131. Keir was a physician at St. Thomas's Hospital in London. He received his medical degree from Edinburgh in 1778, and his dissertation was on chemical attraction. He also had a paper published on deglutition in the *Medical Communications* for 1784-90 of the Society for Promoting Medical Knowledge. Apart from his interest in chemistry and the possibility of an acquaintance with Leslie through Edinburgh University, the question of why Keir would have taken an interest in this debate is a good one. [It is possible that Keir's antagonism towards Leslie related to previous their acquaintance. At another level, Keir may have been other grounds for his interest in the affair. Keir may have been the son of James Keir. The latter was philosophically connected with Priestley and his doctrines and would have been upset about attacks on aether theory and the materialist implications of empiricism. Priestley's 1777 *Disquisitions Relative to Matter and Spirit* discussed Hume's doctrine.

Priestley held, contra Hume, that we do have an abstract idea of power that is based on an impression corresponding to something real in sensation. In addition, invariable experiences speak in favor of a real and sufficient cause in the conjunction of events, and this leads to knowledge of the causal axiom. Through experience then, the causal axiom is "indelibly impressed" on our minds. Priestley also addresses various puzzles raised by Hume. He argues that Hume's three psychological principles of association of resemblance, contiguity and causality can all be explained by the joint impressions that we form of objects and that Hume's scepticism goes too far in trying to cast doubt on acknowledged facts. (Priestley 1777)]

132. As a small concession, Keir says that he does not believe that Leslie had any such atheistical a view in mind when he wrote his book, not the deliberate and wicked intention of overturning the established religion and government. (Keir 1807: p.55-6)

133. Keir elaborates that to claim that the population increases faster than the means of subsistence unless checked by famine, pestilence, and so on, is to suggest that God is the author of evil. (Keir 1807: p.88)

134. In contrast to this, Hume's "Of the Liberty of the Press" had defended the freedom of press in England as an enlightened measure whereby "the learning, wit, and genius of the nation may be employed on the side of freedom." (Hume 1985b: p.12) Keir evidently does share Hume's confidence in free speech.

135. See Appendix F.

136. The earlier title (c. 1816) is mentioned in a letter from Baron de Staël to John Murray discussing the possible publication of the work. The two were unable to reach a financial agreement, and Murray did not publish the work. It was published as (de Staël 1818). The English edition was published in 1818 by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy.

137. Whately writes, "But some sensible readers have complained of the difficulty of determining what they are to believe. Of the existence of Buonaparte, indeed, they remained fully convinced; nor, if it were left doubtful, would any important results ensue; but if they can give no

satisfactory reason for their conviction, how can they know, it is asked, that they may not be mistaken as to other points of greater consequence, on which they are no less fully convinced, but on which all men are not agreed?" (Whately 1837: p.iii)

138. In the original "Summons", John Gibson Lockhart is named along with William Blackwood. (Macbean 1820: p.1) Indeed, it had at first been rumored that John Gibson Lockhart, son-in-law to Walter Scott, had penned the original attacks on Leslie for *Blackwood's.* (Scott 1890: pp.21-7) Lockhart does seem to have had some part in the Leslie slanders, and with the Leslie trial pending, Walter Scott urged his son-in-law to cease writing for Blackwood's. In 1825, Lockhart accepted John Murray's offer to take up the editorship of his British Quarterly Review. At this stage, Murray apparently still did not know of Lockhart's role in the Leslie slanders. John Murray had himself severed his own ties to Blackwood's in the year preceding the Leslie trial, specifically because he was unhappy about the personal attacks appearing in the journal. But others connected with the Quarterly and its circle did know of Lockhart's role. Walter Scott acknowledged that the appointment was a controversial one, and several individuals, including Southey and Barrow, wrote letters to Scott to express their concerns about Lockhart's earlier slanders. D'Israeli was sent to Scotland to solicit some reassurance for Scott's friends in London. But as Scott remarked, "I have no idea of telling all and sundry that my son-in-law is not a slanderer, or a silly thoughtless lad, although he was six or seven years ago engaged in some light satires. It turns out that it was Heber who, after Lockhart's appointment in 1825, informed Murray of Lockhart's connection to the earlier Leslie episode. These reports were said to have had "startled Murray" whom Byron referred to as "the most timorous of all God's booksellers." Lockhart, however, denied the authorship, and the matter was dropped during the trial.

139. Also in National Archives of Scotland. Page 3 of the *Issues in Causa.*

140. Hence, as with the 1805-06 controversy, the Blackwood's affair began with a note that Leslie had written to a scientific text. The theistic overtone are probably not coincidental either. Nor is it likely to be coincidence that that *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* No. XXXV included

a note about Leslie's erroneous use of the word 'cause'. (Paterson 1885: p.128)

141. The attacks on Leslie had been penned in a pretended letter to 'Christopher North', which was John Wilson's pseudonym. It was widely held that John Wilson was the sole author of the attacks; however, John Gibson Lockhart may have been connected with some of the personal attacks as well. The latter seems to have been successfully suppressed, perhaps out of respect for Walter Scott. John Murray, the London-based publisher, was also indirectly connected with the trial's events. Murray had originally been Blackwood's partner and London publisher for the magazine. but he stopped representing Blackwood's in January 1819, after Blackwood refused to quit the personal attacks on public personalities. NB: In December 1819, it was reported that, Mr Murray and Mr Stewart were no longer on good terms, the reason is likely the connection between Murray, Blackwood and Wilson. "Mr Stewart is now resolved upon leaving him [Mr Murray] about Christmas ... Mr S. is decidedly of opinion that the person you heard of as most likely to succeed [John Wilson?], is by no means equal to the situation, and Mr S. intends to tell Mr Murray as much. Mr M. and Mr S. are not so cordial as they were a few weeks ago, but this is no matter of surprise. I have still some hopes from that quarter, but I confess that they are not very sanguine." (Goldie 1819) Much to the chagrin of Stewart and others, John Wilson did in fact succeeded to the Chair in Moral Philosophy in 1820. A candidate of real genius who lost out was Charles Babbage. He was likely Dugald Stewart's preferred candidate.

142. As the local antics make evident, the absurdity of the situation, particularly in view of the history associated with Edinburgh's university appointments, led to mockery. One newspaper advertisement states that on 16 December 1820, "under the patronage of Queen Caroline", is to be hosted, the "Grand Exhibition of the New Heathen Mythology." Stars included, among others, James Moncrieff, Francis Jeffrey, John Murray, Henry Cockburn and John Leslie, who is singled out for the role of the female goddess Venus. (Collection 1957) The advertisement ends with the exclamation "Vivat Regina!" This is surely a sardonic reference to Queen Caroline's ongoing public trial for adultery, an indignity that she had to endure, but that was met with considerable sympathy on the

part of her many supporters. (Lean 1970: p.117) [The main objective of the trial seems to have been to deprive Queen Caroline of her title as Queen. Public support for the Queen was massive, and the trial was eventually "postponed." Caroline was denied entry to the Coronation ceremony, and died ten days later of opium and magnesia poisoning.] Such absurd entertainments do not appear to have been unusual. See (Cockburn 1932). On page 20, Henry Cockburn describes another outrageous scene in a letter to his friend Thomas Dick-Lauder, dated 15 February 1822: "Oh! what a glorious - what a God-like bouze had we on the opening of Williams' Exhibition in the rooms. Jeffrey. Murray, Keay, Rutherfurd, Pillans, Lambton, G. Jos. Bell, Maitland, Cunninghame, Williams, Horner and myself - twelve in all - being the nine muses and three graces; dined surrounded by Greek scenes, with two fireplaces - two lustres - nobody but ourselves in the house - and had we not a right of it? Geo.Jos. was appointed that day to succeed Hume as Professor of Scotch law - and had you but seen the two professors, Pillans and he engaged, with Jeff piping as a little Pan, with a Pyrrhic dance!"

143. (Bennet 1822: p.1) points to specific numbers and pages of the magazine. Especially at No. 35, pp. 502-3; No. 40, p 355; No 44, pp., 190, 208, 209, 222. The "Summons" read that Blackwood and others,

> had recourse to the most false and abominable libels against him; and, in particular, have been in the practice of publishing in a work entitled "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine," the most foul and atrocious calumnies against his private and public character, as a man, and as a Professor: That, activated by this motive, and by a profligate and wanton disregard of his feelings and reputation, one or other, or both of them, have, in various parts of that work ... represented, and held him out to the public, as a person distinguished by "*insolence*," "*ignorance*," "*impudence*," and "*impertinence*;" as being an "*enfant perdu*;" as being "*actuated by a hostility to the language of revelation, simply because it was so*;" as "*going out of his path to cast an ignorant sarcasm on the language of the Bible*," as "being *an object of suspicion to those who hold the Scriptures in honour, or impiety in detestation*;" as being an imposter and dishonest; as being one of the public teachers of Edinburgh, by whom

strangers, who come to the University here, have "*their religious principles perverted," and their reverence for holy things sneered away*," and as being one to whom the application of these terms and statements was but his *due*. (Bennet 1822: pp.1-2)

144. In 1805, Leslie received recognition from the Royal Society of London for his work on heat. As the trial unfolds, we learn that there has in fact been an ongoing persecution of Leslie, involving charges that several of his scientific achievements were plagiarized. A document entitled "Commission in Leslie Vs Blackwood" [1822] relates to the charge. It shows that Blackwood commissioned for the recovery of a book receipt from the librarians of the university. A later document shows that the receipt was produced, along with a copy of the volume in question. The evidence showed only that Leslie borrowed the 1777 Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. (Lord Commissioners 1822) Hence, Leslie was charged with a "monstrous plagiarism of his theory of heat." See (Bennet 1822: pp.35,48). But, as Macvey Napier points out in his memoir of Leslie, though Leslie's experimentalism drew on previously known facts due to Nairne, Leslie's contributions were the result of a new understanding of the facts, and novel discoveries made upon that new understanding. This, as Napier points out, is the norm in scientific discovery. See (Napier 1836: pp.27-30).

145. Napier notes the following: "At a later period, when his name had attained a high degree of celebrity, he, like most of the other sons of genius, was made to feel that fame brings with it pains as well as pleasures; for it was now rumoured that the Differential Thermometer, instead of being an invention of his own, - perfected as he had himself recorded, in the course of a series of experiments on the evaporation of ice, which the severe winter of 1794-5 afforded him an opportunity of performing, - was in reality a plagiarism, if not from Van Helmont, who died in 1644, at any rate, from John Christopher Sturmius, who died some sixty years later." Napier vehemently denies that this could be so. (Napier 1836: p.15). He goes on to add that Leslie was further accused of stealing the discovery of the process of "Artificial Congelation" from a 1777 paper by Nairne, published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of London*. (Napier 1836: p.28) In Leslie's trial, however, it was noted that Nairne had failed to carry out steps crucial to Leslie's process of congelation.

For example, "Nairne put ether into the receiver of the air-pump; *but he applied no sulphuric acid*, and he used no absorbent powder. At the bottom of his receiver, he found two or three globules of ice ... But there being no absorbent powder there, there were no means of *carrying on* the congelation ... (Bennet 1822: p.52) Now, I ask this plain question, and which I hold to be decisive of this case. Did any body else do the thing before it was done by Mr Leslie? Did any one, before this, freeze water *ad infinitum*? (Bennet 1822: p.53)

146. Further attacks on Leslie had followed in various numbers of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, including Nos. XXXV, XL and XLIV, at which point the personal nature of the attacks against Leslie became more pronounced. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was intended as a rival to the *Edinburgh Review*. Both publications became notorious for their outrageous attacks on the public personalities of Edinburgh. In promoting gossip and libel, the authors and publishers showed a reckless disregard for reputation and the practice of spreading nasty and often false rumors came to be increasingly disliked in Edinburgh.

147. The libel of Leslie was part and parcel of the fictionalizing of his person. What of the true character of Leslie? Macvey Napier's biographical notice begins by pointing out a tendency, described by Johnson, to distort the reputations of men of great and eminent character. This, says Johnson, is due to an imbalance between "the public view" and "the part that lies hid in domesticity." Napier makes some effort to "prevent this mutilation of character" by supplying details of the part of Leslie's character that was "hid in domesticity." According to Napier, Leslie was a man with a "vigorous and inventive genius" and with "extensive and varied knowledge" such that few have excelled him in "profundity of understanding." (Napier 1836: p.47) Leslie, however, was not without personal shortcomings. He was "not overcharitable in his views of human virtue", and his "care of fortune" went beyond what is "seemly in a philosopher." (Napier 1836: p.51) Yet, "his infirmities were far more than compensated by his many good qualities; - by his equanimity, his cheerfulness, his simplicity of character, his straightforwardness, his perfect freedom from affectation, and his unconquerable good nature." He was, Napier concludes, "a warm and good friend." (Napier 1836: p.51)

148. MacIlvaine, *Evidences of Christianity* 1832, L. XI

149. The personal stories of figures such as Hume and Leslie contain elements that are properly 'tragic' in the classical Greek sense. As scholars, both men achieved a level of greatness, and their struggles were intimately bound up with these efforts. In this respect, their struggles and frailties in dealing with the controversies that arose around their empiricist ideologies took on tragic dimensions.

> Plays are of two kinds, called *Tragedy* and *Comedy*; the one represents the actions of common life, and compositions of this nature have been the most liable to abuse; because wit and ridicule are sometimes found to be petulant, and the familiarity of this style is more easily mixed with indecencies: But the perfection of Comedy consists in exposing to just ridicule the follies and absurd vices of ordinary men; where it fails in this purpose, the abuse is manifest, and will be condemned by every judicious audience. Tragedy, on the other hand, is serious, grave and majestic; it represents the actions of great men, and their conduct chiefly on great and interesting occasions, their struggles in difficult and distressing situations, where the sentiments they express raise admiration or pity, and where the very faults they commit become so many warnings to the spectator. Every Tragedy therefore contains a story, and may convey instruction in the same manner with a parable or fable; it differs only in form and not in the effect.(Ferguson 1757: pp.6-7)

150. Far from diminishing the doctrines of religion, Brown thinks, this knowledge can only "make those great doctrines at once more intelligible and more sublime". (Brown 1818: p.xiii) Brown maintains that his view is consistent with the supposition of Divine power, simply because Divine power eludes our sensibilities. (Brown 1818: pp.77-81) To suppose that God's efficient causation is witnessed in the direct operations of the world is to entertain a mistaken notion of God's power. (Brown 1818: p.85ff.) Occasionalist distinctions between physical and occasional causes in the physical world introduces a new order of physical causation for which there is no evidence. (Brown 1818: p.92) On Brown's view, we may freely suppose that whatever efficient causes we do observe in nature

are due, ultimately, to the causal efficacy or power of God. However, the metaphysical supposition of a "universal spiritual efficiency" in "the sequences of physical causes" is merely an "awkward and complicated modification" of Berkeley's system. (Brown 1818: p.95) The bottom line, for Brown, is that humans are limited to physical observations in formulating correct notions of power.

151. Contra Reid, Brown argues that there is no empirically meaningful sense of an "active power" defined as "a quality in the cause, which enables it to produce the effect." (Brown 1818: p.141) We have a clear conception of the antecedents and consequents, but fall into error when we think that we have perceived more, e.g. some bond or mysterious union existing in the things themselves. (Brown 1818: p.160)

152. See Appendix G.

153. Experience is in every case necessary for our belief in the future sequences of phenomena. (Brown 1818: p.240) For, "there is nothing in the sensible qualities of objects, which marks a direct relation to any other change than those which the names of the very qualities themselves express, so as to make the future an object of direct *perception*, there is nothing also in *reasoning* which can evolve to us any new physical relation." (Brown 1818: pp.244-5)

154. See Appendix H.

155. Brown's own position is that the empiricist theory of ideas is flawed. It misconstrues the perception of external things in terms of a dichotomy between inner sensations and external causes. This dichotomy leaves a gap between sensation and the external world that makes empiricism vulnerable to Berkeley and Hume's critiques. However, the account is in error because any perception that is 'extra-sensory' must nonetheless be tied to perceptions that are sensory, such as secondary qualities. Hence, if perceived at all, primary qualities must be perceived through a form of sensation - a form of sensation that differs in kind, presumably, from sensations of secondary qualities. In other words, primary qualities must really be some kind of sensation. As such, Brown thinks, knowledge of the external world is based on an immediate and irresistible beliefs arising from sensation. Brown's account links physiology, psy-

chology, and belief formation in some detail. Beliefs in external causes, he proposes, arise in connection with feelings of resistance associated with muscular contractions. When feelings of resistance intrude on familiar muscular sensations, they make us aware of external objects. On Brown's reckoning, it is these feelings of resistance, rather than ideas of primary qualities, that lead to belief in independent, external causes. For, it is by association with feelings of resistance that there arise in us certain feelings of extension, and in consequence, the irresistible belief that some of our sensations have an external reference. Contra the empiricist theory of ideas then, the foundation for our belief in external existence is in sensible effects that directly compel us to form certain beliefs. (Grave 1960: pp.182-3) Hence, the explanation of causal belief is ultimately grounded in the different feelings that arise in conscious experience. Since some of the feelings that arise in us lead irresistibly and intuitively to the belief that there is an external world of causes producing effects in us, we are compelled to form beliefs about external causes. (Porter 1961: pp.192-3)

156. The main difference between the two views is that for Brown, there is an immediate, intuitive impression of power; whereas for Hume, the impression arises only following habituation.

157. Brown holds that mind produces change in matter by means of motions of the body, and that matter produces change in mind by producing sensations - which he does equate with motion. This is part of his critique of Reid's "active powers" view. Herschel must be finding fault with Brown's attack on Reid and the dual-causation view.

158. Recall Brown's five propositions:

    1. The relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered *a priori*.
    2. Even after experience, the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered by reason.
    3. The relation of cause and effect is an object of belief alone.
    4. The relation of cause and effect is believed to exist between objects, only after their customary conjunction is known to us.

5. When two objects have been frequently observed in succession, the mind passes readily from the idea of one to the idea of the other; from this transition, and from the greater vividness of the idea thus more readily suggested, there arises a belief of the relation of cause and effect between them.(Brown 1805: pp.2,9,15,24)

159. In other words, Shepherd's view is that probable knowledge of empirical hypotheses follows upon the discovery of what is given in experience. However, certain knowledge follows upon an additional deductive proof. This proof shows that nothing other than what the hypothesis predicts could follow under exactly similar circumstances except if the causal axiom and the causal principle were violated. These have elsewhere been philosophically justified, so their violation would be lead to contradiction.

160. Add a discussion of J.S. Mill.

161. Cain holds that, "For knowledge can and does truly express to the intellect the existence, nature and properties of objects. It can and does disclose that in an object which is necessary and immutable, i.e., its essence." [320]

162. Recall that Hume reports in his *A Letter from a Gentleman*, the original charges against him were: (1) "Universal Scepticism",(2) "Principles leading to downright Atheism, by denying the Doctrine of Causes and Effects",(3) "Errors concerning the very Being and Existence of a God",(4) "Errors concerning God's being the first Cause, and prime Mover of the Universe", (5) "denying the Immateriality of the Soul, and the Consequences flowing from this Denial", and (6) "sapping the Foundations of Morality, by denying the natural and essential Differences betwixt Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Justice and Injustice; making the Differences only artificial, and to arise from human Conventions and Compacts". (Hume 1967: p.xxiii)

163. Like Reid before him, Stewart takes Hume to be less of an original thinker than he professed to be. Stewart maintained that the main tenets of Hume's doctrine were not at all original; he locates them in a work published two years prior to the *Treatise* entitled *The Proce-*

dure, Extent, and Limits of the Human Understanding, attributed to Dr Browne, Bishop of Cork. (Stewart 1854: pp.441-2n1)

164. It should be noted that Brown's approach was not universally rejected. The political economist, James Mill, even claimed to have adapted Brown's theory and extended it to his own end.

165. This is a famous remark made by the King of France in response to a request for a charter for the University of Leyden.

166. See Carlile's *Address &c.*.

167. The issues that first emerged at Edinburgh University around religion and academic freedom, would eventually take hold at London and the Oxford toward the middle of the nineteenth century. Reform was highly controversial in the established universities. As for the University of London, an 1860 cartoon depicts it as "The Battle Field of Sciences and the Churches."

168. As the wheels of institutional change were thus beginning to spin, conscientious individuals began to refuse positions, citing the requirement of religious tests. In 1838, Archibald Tait, (later Archbishop of Canterbury), declined the offer of a Greek professorship at Glascow, on the grounds that he was unable to avow support for the doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith. Later, in 1843, David Brewster, Principal of St. Andrews, was "threatened with expulsion from his office as a Free Church seceder". (Fraser 1864: pp.122-3) Fraser writes that "He was then Principal at St. Andrews, threatened with expulsion from his office as a Free Church seceder - the Church Establishment claiming exclusive possession of the university chairs." (Fraser 1864: pp.122-3) In response to the latter, the College Committee transmitted a memorial to the Town Council from the faculty, who protested the application against Brewster. Should the application succeed, the University of Edinburgh, they argued, would, by parity of reasoning, "'be soon deprived of some of its brightest ornaments and distinguished Professors." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1843: p.14) The professors explained the basis for their fear as follows, "If matters be allowed to remain on their present footing so far well - the law may stand on the Statute book and none will perhaps trouble themselves about it, but if a different course be

pursued the memorialists do not hesitate to state their firm belief that The Universities of Scotland will receive a blow from which they will not speedily recover." (Town Council of Edinburgh 1843: p.18)

In Edinburgh, one of those who took up the public cause against religious tests of various forms in the university was the conservative religious dissenter, Professor Blackie. Blackie wrote in his 1843 *On Subscription to Articles of Faith: A Plea for the Liberties of the Scottish Universities* that, "To continue insist upon these methods of exclusion is 'to stereotype hatred and bitterness'." (Blackie 1843: p.15) "Thirty-three chapters of human opinion" he writes with reference to the Confession of Faith, are "assumed to be identical with divine science. What does the Atheist or the Infidel say to this?" (Blackie 1843: p.18)

While Blackie is blunt, sarcastic, and somewhat stereotyping in his own answer, he nonetheless makes a point about the futility of the exclusionary religious tests:

> Atheists and Infidels are of three kinds. The first is the loud, eager, blustering, preaching Infidel; of him there is no danger that he will be admitted into any university; public opinion acting upon public patronage, prevents this. There remains, then, the class of quiet and concealed Infidels, sceptics, Rationalists, Latitudinarians, and what not; and they are subdivided into two kinds, - the modest, the inquiring, and the conscientious: these your Test infallibly keeps out; the bold, the unprincipled, and the unscrupulous: these sign your parchments, laugh in their sleeves, spit over your shoulder, and march on their way. (Blackie 1843: p.18)

As Blackie explains, "To professors as well as to students liberty is dear. It is an instinct of humanity, an impulse of life. Therefore, also, I would use no religious compulsion with the professors." (Blackie 1843: p.27) "It is the duty of professors of Colleges, and of principals especially, to maintain the independence of the Universities against the Church, and all other bodies naturally disposed to encroach." (Blackie 1843: p.34)

169. Pillans' motion was not an immediate success, but the motion that did

eventually pass years later was basically its duplicate. While, in 1844, there were no impediments at the level of the Town Council, there were a few vocal and influential opponents within the Senate. Hence, finalizing the changes to the university's official policies was relatively slow, not only because of the tie to the Act of Parliament, but also due to resistance of a powerful minority. Writing again in 1846, Blackie now says that it is by "the obnoxious Test Act" that "the churchmen of the Establishment, with brave clerical assurance, not content with lording it over the inferior pedagogues, claim a right of private property in every scientific chair of every University in Scotland, and in the inmost conscience of each individual professor." (Blackie 1846: p.15)

170. The 1858 Universities (Scotland) Act further re-defined the governance of the university in terms that omitted religious advice and requirements. (Parliament of Great Britain 1858) According to this document: The University Courts were constituted as the legal authority for decision making on university matters; The powers of Senatus Academicus were defined to include the superintendence and regulation of teaching and discipline in the university; and, The right of nomination of professors was transferred from the Town Council to Seven Curators, with four nominated by the Town Council and the remainder nominated by the University. The Act served as the new legal document defining a new foundation for the Universities in Scotland. Notably, there was no mention of any religious requirement in the 1858 Act of Parliament. With this omission, the religious tests and conditions relating to university governance and patronage had effectively been removed at the Parliamentary level. In 1889, the University became a Corporation.

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