Dear Friends of the Department,

Greetings from Ann Arbor! It has been a busy and exciting year here in the Philosophy Department and I would like to bring you up to date on some noteworthy developments.

Faculty news. Our faculty remains among the most accomplished and productive in the world. This year’s list of faculty achievements is particularly striking. Ken Walton’s contributions to the philosophy of art were the subject of no less than three international conferences this year: at the Universities of Leeds, Nottingham, and Kent. Ken was also nominated (along with Liz Anderson!) for the presidency of the American Philosophical Association Central Division, a very high honor – we still await the results. Be on the lookout for the two volumes of Ken’s essays that are forthcoming from Oxford University Press. The first, Marvelous Images: Values and the Arts, is due out in early 2008, while the second, In Other Shoes: Music, Metaphor, Empathy, Existence, should appear in 2009. Ed Curley’s long and distinguished career as a historian of modern philosophy of was honored at a major conference on Spinoza, held here in Ann Arbor. The international cast of speakers included Steven Nadler (Wisconsin), Michael Griffin (Central European University), Michael Della Rocca (Yale), Don Garrett (NYU), Dan Garber (Princeton), Charlie Huenemann (Utah State), Michael Rosenthal (Washington), and Susan James (London) – a virtual who’s who of Spinoza experts. Ed finished the conference by commenting on all the talks, and by suggesting new lines of research for scholars in the area. Louis Loeb was awarded the American Philosophical Association’s prestigious Patrick Romanell Prize for work on philosophical naturalism. Louis gave the Romanell lecture at the Pacific Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association in San Francisco. An edited version of his lecture, originally published in the APA Proceedings, is included in this newsletter. In recognition of his seminal contributions to moral philosophy and to the history of philosophy, Steve Darwall was elevated to the rank of Distinguished University Professor. This is the most significant honor that the University bestows on members of its faculty, going only to those who have achieved an uncommonly high level of distinction and influence in their fields. Steve joins Allan Gibbard and Larry Sklar at this rank. Larry, who is currently serving as President of the Philosophy of Science Association, won a LSA Humanities Award. Allan was honored as the Erskine Visiting Fellow at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Ian Proops received an LSA Excellence in Education award, thus continuing the Department’s tradition of commitment to its Undergraduate Program.
The Department saw two changes this year. As mentioned in last year’s newsletter, we welcome Sarah Buss, a distinguished moral philosopher and action theorist, who began as an Associate Professor with Tenure this fall. We also bid a fond farewell to Peter Ludlow, who accepted a position at the University of Toronto. During his five years here Peter, a specialist in philosophy of language and linguistics, served as our mainstay in semantics while also making a name for himself as a public intellectual through his work on philosophy and the internet. We wish him all the best in his new position.

Undergraduate News. Our undergraduate program remains vibrant and popular. As of July 2007 we had one-hundred and thirty six majors and sixty three minors enrolled in our program. The high number of students choosing a minor in philosophy reflects both the intrinsic appeal of the subject and the ease of combining it with majors or minors in other academic areas. Pre-law students, for example, often opt for our popular minor in “Moral and Political Philosophy” as a way of preparing themselves for the complex ethical and political questions they will face in their careers as attorneys. This year we add a new minor in “Epistemology and Philosophy of Science”; so students now have a choice of five different ways of completing a minor.

This year’s William K. Frankena Prize for excellence in the undergraduate concentration went to two exceptionally talented recipients: Jennifer Ford and Adam Rigoni. Jennifer is currently working at the Ann Arbor Learning Community, but will soon be moving to Japan to teach for English as a foreign language. Adam is enrolled in Michigan’s law school. The Haller prize, which is awarded for exceptional papers written in an upper-level philosophy course, was awarded to Joseph Vlasi for his essay “Just Three Simple Concepts: the Noumenon, Transcendental Object, and Thing in Itself in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason.”

Gollop wrote a dissertation, for which I was the supervisor, entitled The Challenge of Temptation: Desire, Emotion and Stability. She has accepted a position as an Assistant Professor at Southern Methodist University. Rob Gressis wrote a dissertation under Steve Darwall entitled Kant’s Theory of Radical Evil: An Interpretation and Defense. Rob will hold a Post-Doctoral appointment at Notre Dame’s Center for the Philosophy of Religion for the next two years. Pat Lewtas wrote a dissertation under Eric Lormand and Jessica Wilson entitled Panpsychism: An Exploration and Defence. He has accepted an appointment at the American University of Beirut. Alex Hughes wrote a dissertation under Eric Lormand and Peter Ludlow entitled Seeing and EXPERIENCING: the Revelation of Particulars in Visual Experience. Next year he will be a Visiting Assistant Professor at Illinois Wesleyan University. Chris Dodsworth wrote a dissertation under Liz Anderson entitled A Theory of Moral Obligation. He is currently a visiting scholar at the Notre Dame Center for Philosophy of Religion.

Events. As usual, we had a busy schedule of events this past year. Liz Anderson delivered her inaugural lecture as the John Rawls Collegiate Professor in Philosophy and Women’s Studies. Her talk “The Imperative of Integration: Race and Education” was a fascinating, empirically informed, and surprising discussion of what white elites have to gain from racial integration.

This year’s Tanner Lecture on Human Values was delivered by Samantha Power, author of the Pulitzer prize-winning "A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide," and Professor at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Power’s lecture “Human Rights: The Risk of Politics” provided an absorbing examination of the capacity for ordinary Americans to exert political pressure on their government to protect international human rights. The ensuing Tanner Symposium featured comments from the philosopher Allen Buchanan (Duke), the political scientist Michael Barnett (Minnesota) and the lawyer Steve Ratner (Michigan). University President, Mary Sue Coleman, attended all the events and took an active part in the festivities.

Michigan Philosophy News

For the twenty-eighth year, our graduate students organized a spectacular Spring Colloquium. The theme was “National and International Distributive Justice.” The featured speakers were Debra Satz (Stanford), Jennifer Rubenstein (Princeton), and Thomas Pogge (Columbia). Three of our Ph.D. students working in ethics and political philosophy—Eleni Mantis, David Wiens and Wendy Tng—provided insightful criticism and commentary. We are especially grateful to Eleni for her efforts in organizing this stimulating and successful event.

The Department also hosted talks by Anthony Appiah (Princeton), Rachel Barney (Toronto), Karen Bennett (Princeton), Bernard Berofsky (Columbia), Michael Della Rocca (Yale), Thomas Kelly (Princeton), Jill North (Yale), Mathias Rase (Harvard), Keiran Settia (Pittsburgh), Russ Shafer—Landau (Wisconsin), Kyle Stanford (University of California, Irvine).

I encourage you to read Louis Loeb’s lucid and captivating essay “The Naturalism of Hume and Reid,” which follows this letter. While reading it, many of you will surely be reminded of the great clarity and insight that Louis always brings to his lectures, and of the intellectual flair that makes him one of the University’s most popular and successful teachers. You will also be able to see the fine qualities of mind that have made Louis one of the most influential of contemporary historians of philosophy.

I wish you the best for the coming year!

Sincerely,

James M. Joyce,
Chair
THE NATURALISMS OF HUME AND REID*

1. SOME PUZZLES

Consider the following picture in the rough. Some beliefs arise from our very constitution, from instinct; these beliefs, often irresistible, are justified even in the absence of arguments or reasons in their behalf. I think it fair to say that Thomas Reid, on the received view of his philosophy, held a position of this sort; when Reid defended the legitimacy of the beliefs of “common sense,” he had in view beliefs resulting from unavoidable and universal instinctive mechanisms, the faculties associated with his “first principles.” I think it also fair to say that David Hume, on what is today the received interpretation of his philosophy, held a position of this sort. In his 1905 articles “The Naturalism of Hume,” Norman Kemp Smith introduced the term ‘natural beliefs’ as a label for irresistible, instinctive beliefs, arising from “the particular fabric and constitution of the human species,” in Hume’s system. Kemp Smith consolidated his account in his 1941 book; his naturalistic interpretation has been the dominant force in the Hume literature ever since.

But wait. Reid was one of Hume’s severest critics, and advanced his theory of common sense beliefs as a constructive response to Hume’s skepticism. If the received interpretations of Hume and Reid, respectively, are so much as the right track, Hume himself had proposed a constructive alternative to skepticism, one that downgrades the role of argument, emphasizing in its place the irresistibility of instinctive beliefs that originate in human nature. Common sense in Reid and natural belief in Hume seem very much a piece. If so, what are we to make of Reid’s own conception of his relationship to Hume? It might seem that Reid either was deeply confused in this regard, or badly misread Hume, or both.

Is it at all plausible that Reid could have misread Hume? The Treatise presents severe difficulties for any interpreter. A work of apparently conflicting strands – at once empiricist, skeptical, and naturalistic –, there is the problem of seeing how they fit together. Add to this that Hume scatters his most suggestive epistemological remarks, which are often incidental to one or another associationist or psychological discussion. Beyond these factors, the interpretation Kemp Smith attacked, the Reid–Beattie interpretation, originated in Hume’s own time. Hume parades reductive metaphysical doctrines – about body, the mind, personal identity, and necessary connection. He denies the necessity of the principle that every new existent or modification of existence has a cause. Late eighteenth century figures regarded these positions as “skeptical.” Hume seeks to demolish the argument from design and the possibility of testimonial evidence for miracles. Whereas twentieth century positivist readers welcomed Hume’s attacks on metaphysics, a substantial self or soul, and arguments for God, Hume’s applications of his doctrines to religion were a call to arms for his contemporaries.

What is more, Reid’s arsenal included a large-scale historical theory, of which Hume was but a part. In Reid’s figure-by-figure survey of “the way of ideas” and related views, the chapter on Hume is shorter than those on Arnauld and Leibniz, and far shorter than those on Malebranche, Descartes, Locke, and especially Berkeley, who receives the longest discussion by a good margin. Although he reads stretches of Hume with care, Reid was not engaged in sympathetic interpretation. His investment in the story of the Cartesian or common way of ideas could easily have led him to distort Hume’s views, if not by misconstruing particular passages, by reading Hume selectively. As a general rule, commentators on Reid have found it convenient to adopt his conception of Hume’s philosophy. This is understandable, where the project is to consider Reid’s historical position through his own eyes. Yet, an investigation of how Reid could misinterpret Hume might yield additional insight.

2. INDUCTION AND MEMORY

One entrée into Reid’s affinity with Hume is by way of their treatments of induction. Reid, unlike Hume, frequently uses “induction” and “inductive principle,” and appeals to an “inductive principle” (IHM 198, 199, 200). Hume writes of inference or reasoning about causes and effects, and tends to assimilate inductive inference to causal inference. This opened the door to one of Reid’s criticisms of Hume on causation, that night following day, though inductively supported, is not genuinely causal (EIP 87). There is another difference: Reid conceives regularities as a language of nature, where the conjointed objects are signs of one another (IHM 190, 196, 200). It remains that both figures discuss a principle of the uniformity of nature, variously described, with Reid at times adopting Hume’s first Enquiry formulation (EHU 37) in terms of the future resembling the past (IHM 196). Both are sensitive to a distinction between accidental and nonaccidental regularities (THIN 4, 104-5, 146-50, 175; and IHM 41, 199-200; EIP 350, 374, 561). Both investigate the epistemology of induction. I distinguish three prongs in Reid’s views on this topic.

First, Reid takes it that the inductive principle, the belief “in the continuance of the present course of nature” (IHM 196), cannot be founded in argument or derived from antecedent reasoning (IHM 196, 198; EIP 490). This claim is basic Humean doctrine. In section IV of the first Enquiry, and in Treatise III.i.6, Hume famously advances a “negative argument” (EHU 34), that inductive inference cannot be founded either on demonstrative or probable argument. Reid thus credited Hume with showing that induction “is not grounded upon any antecedent reasoning” (EIP 490), not “founded either upon knowledge or probability” (IHM 197).

Second, Reid attributes inductive beliefs to human nature – “the principle [that the future will be like the past] . . . is made a part of our constitution” (EIP 489); “It is an instinctive prescience of the operations of nature” (IHM 198). This instinctive principle is “universal among mankind” (EIP 490). Of course, we do not believe that fire will be followed by smoke, absent relevant experience. Particular inductive beliefs are “the result of experience and habit” (IHM 38). Presumably, some applications of the inductive principle, as with other common sense beliefs (cf. IHM 172 and EIP 42, 96, 264, 514-15, 551), are irresistible. Similarly, “we are under a necessity of assenting to [first principles]” (IHM 71), which are “necessary for our subsistence and preservation” (EIP 375).

These positive claims, as applied to induction, are also Humean doctrine. Inductive inference is due to custom or habit, an instinctive principle. Hume declares in the Treatise, with inference based on custom in view, that “reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls” (THIN 179). This passage and related texts lie at the core of Kemp Smith interpretation. Further, in Treatise III.l.3, the operation of custom “cannot be prevented by [reflection]” (THIN 147). In Liv.4, causal inference founded in custom is Hume’s example of “principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal,” “unavoidable to mankind” (THIN 225). These principles “are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin”; they are, as with Reid, “necessary . . . in the conduct of life” (THIN 225 – cf. EHU 108). The emphasis on such features as irresistibility, taken to be the effects of a universal, unavoidable instinct, the constitution of human nature, are to be found in Reid and Hume alike.

It is worth pausing to consider whether Reid was aware of these common, constructive doctrines. It is surprisingly difficult to show that he was. One might think that Reid could hardly have missed these points in Hume. The arrangement of the Treatise is relevant here. Hume’s explicit state-
mments that causal inference is instinctive and irre-
appropriate in lii.16 (THN 179) and liv.4 (THN 225). Reid never cites these sections, which are far removed from the negative argument of lii.6. I do not find passages where Reid recognizes the irreversibility of inductive beliefs in Hume. Beginning with the discussion of custom and repetition in lii.8, Hume implicitly develops an associationist explanation of the irreversibility of these causal inferences that amount to proofs, because based on perfect habits. The sections on probability—lii.11-13—conclude Hume’s position. (See, for example, THN 124, 130-31, 134-35, 142-143, 147, 153-54.) Reid does not refer to Hume’s views in this stretch of Part iii. Since Reid had no patience for Hume’s associationism, he might not have tracked this line of argument. (In § 5, I revisit the question of Reid’s recognition of irreversibility in Hume.)

I turn to the third element in Reid’s views on induction. When Reid writes that the belief in the continuance of nature is a “first principle, in the sense in which I use that word” (EIP 490), he is making the epistemic claim that inductive beliefs are evident and at least probable. We “distinguish evidence into different kinds” (EIP 229) corresponding to the different first principles, though the evidence they provide is a matter of degree (cf. EIP 228, 456, 481). Inductive inference provides evidence, but cannot be found in argument; its justification must be traced to the fact that it results from a universal, unavoidable, instinctive principle. For Reid, the negative claim that the inductive principle is not founded in argument does not impugn the epistemic foundations of inductive belief.

Does Reid diverge from Hume at this juncture? He does, if the skeptical interpretation of Hume on induction is correct. This interpretation locates skepticism in the negative argument of Treatise lii.6 and first Enquiry IV: Hume maintains that inductive inference is not justified because it cannot be supported by (non-question-begging) argument. On the opposing Kemp Smith interpretation, causal beliefs are based on “natural” beliefs. Much Hume scholarship since the 1940’s has been given over to a struggle be-
tween skeptical and naturalistic interpretations, with Hume’s position on induction a main front. Literature in the 1970’s and 80’s established the non-skeptical reading as decisively as possible in the face of complex textual data.

Consider the Treatise, beginning with the context for the negative argument in lii.6. As early as lii.2 and lii.4, Hume advances a causal theory of reasoning about the unobserved: “the mind in its reasonings from causes or effects carries its view beyond those objects, which it sees or remembers” (THN 82 – cf. EHU 26, 146). In lii.6, Hume examines “the nature of [the] inference” (THN 88 – cf. EHU 32) from what we sense or remember to an unobserved cause or effect. Hume writes within the course of the negative argument itself: “cause and effect…[i]s the only [connexion or relation of objects], on which we can found a just inference from one object to another” (THN 89). Though Hume finds that the inference is not founded in argument, his commitment to causal inference survives unscathed. Early in lii.8, he attributes causal inference to custom (THN 102-3 – cf. EHU 43). Later in the section, a person who stops his journey at a riverbank foresees the consequences of his proceeding forward, and his knowledge of these consequences is conveyed to him by past experience” (THN 103, emphasis added). In lii.9, the discussion of the two systems of beliefs or “realities” (THN 108, Hume’s emphasis) constitutes an extended restate-
ment of the causal theory of knowledge. Hume writes that “The first of these systems is the object of the memory and senses” (THN 108). The second system of beliefs is “connected by Custom, or if you will, by the relation of cause or effect” (THN 108): “‘Tis this latter principle, which people the world, and brings us acquainted with such existences, as by their removal in time and place, lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory” (THN 108, emphasis added – cf. EHU 35).

In addition, the skeptical problem of induction implies that all inductive inferences are on a par, equally justified. This interpretation would imply, some causal inferences, for example inference to the belief that the sun will rise, constitute “proofs” (THN 124). In lii.12, Hume provides an inventory of “degree[s] of evidence” (THN 153 – cf. 130-31 and EHU 110, 117) that includes proofs and also probability, good inductive arguments that fall short of proofs (THN 130-31, 142 – cf. EHU 56-59). In lii.13, Hume contrasts “unphilosophical probability” (THN 143) with beliefs legitimately based on the senses, memory, and causal inference; within this section, some causal inferences are “just and conclusive” (THN 144). In lii.15, Hume provides eight “Rules by which to judge of causes and effects,” all the LOGIC I think proper to employ in my reasoning” (THN 175). There is no accounting for this extensive textual data on the hypothesis that Hume is a skeptic about induction.

Reid quotes the Treatise in some two dozen contexts in the Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man—but never any section of Part iii later than lii.7. Reid does not discuss or allude to the fore-
knowledge in the riverbank passage in lii.8, the two systems of realities in lii.9, the admission of inductive proofs in lii.11, the degrees of inductive evidence in lii.12, the distinction between philosophic and unphilosophical probability in lii.13, or the rules to judge of causes and effects in lii.15. (Reid endorses Newtonian, methodological rules—without mentioning Hume’s rules—as “maxims of common sense” at lli.12.) Nor does Reid take up a now famous passage in Liv.4: “One who concludes somebody to be near him, when he hears an articulate voice in the dark, reasons justly and naturally; tho’ that conclusion be deriv’d from nothing but custom” (THN 225). This in the paragraph that cites causal inference as an example of the “permanent, irresistible, and universal principle of the unobservable”.

How could it be that Hume’s epistemic endor-
ses of causal inference withstand his negative claim that induction is not founded in argument? In the first Enquiry as well as the Treatise, Hume’s approval of causal inference is in place prior to the negative argument. In both works, Hume interposes the claim that causal inference is due to custom, to instinc, after the negative argument and before the above expressions of his continuing commitment to the positive epistemic status of causal inference. The obvious interpretive hy-
thesis is that Hume’s view is akin to Reid’s: causal inference, albeit not founded on argument, is justified, with its justification tracing to features of custom’s operation or origin in human nature. Kemp Smith’s work identified the irresistible and instinctual character of custom as a salient candidate for playing this role in Hume’s epistemology.

It is instructive to consider Reid’s treatment of Hume on memory against this background. Reid is confident that the way of ideas leads to skepticism about the past. “For since ideas are things present, how can we, from our having a certain idea present in our mind, conclude that an event really happened ten or twenty years ago corresponding to it?” (EIP 290). Reid attributes this worry to Hume: “It does not appear to have occurred either to Locke or to Berkeley, that their system has the same tendency to overturn the testimony of memory as the testimony of the senses. Mr. Hume saw far better than both” (EIP 290). In another passage, Reid is more circumspect: “Mr. Hume has not, as far as I remember, directly called in question the testimony of memory; but he has laid down the premises by which its authority is overturned, leaving it to his reader to draw the conclusion” (EIP 475). Hume never does call memory into question, though Reid does not pause to ask why not. The question is pressing, given Reid’s contention that Hume proceeds with the “aim of establishing universal skepticism” (EIP 290).

Hume writes in Treatise lii.5: “it be a peculiar property of the memory to preserve the original order and position of its ideas” (THN 85) —hardly skeptical in tone. This should be unsurprising. The causal theory of knowledge of the unobservable emerges in lii.2 and lii.4. Causal inference could not extend our knowledge beyond the ob-
erved unless the senses and memory are sources of knowledge. Hume’s causal theory of knowledge presumes the positive epistemic standing of memory.

Reid suggests that the way of ideas saddles Hume with the view that the evidence of memory must be supported by argument (EIP 289-90, 475-76). In fact, Hume, like Reid, gives an infinite re-
Reid, belief based on memory is often irresistible, and is a source of evidence and knowledge, even absent supporting argument.

3. THE PROPER OBJECT OF EPISTEMOLOGY

The similarity of Reid’s and Hume’s views about memory and induction are symptomatic of a deeper agreement about epistemology as an enterprise – less anachronistically, about one objective of a theory of the human mind. Reid’s criteria for discerning first principles include “the consent... of the learned and unlearned” (EIP 464); beliefs about the unobserved held by both the “simple rustic” and the philosopher “are built on the very same ground” (EIP 561). It is also a mark of first principles that beliefs “appear so early in the minds of men, that they cannot be the effect of education, or of false reasoning” (EIP 467). Thus, “children and idiots have [the] belief [that the future will be like the past] as soon as they know that fire will burn them. It must therefore be the effect of instinct, not of reason” (IHM 196). So too with animals; inductive inference “is the effect of a principle of our nature, common to us with the brutes” (IHM 50).

Reid collates these points: “The language of nature is the universal study, and the students are of different classes. Brutes, idiots, and children, employ themselves in this study” (IHM 200). Similarly, “Perception... implies no exercise of reason; and is common to men, children, idiots, and brutes” (IHM 173). With respect to first principles, “There is no searching for evidence, no weighing of arguments; the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another” (EIP 452) – not if we are to account for the knowledge of children and animals.

All these themes appear in Hume. In Liv.2, Hume notes that “whatever convincing arguments philosophers may fancy they can produce to establish the belief of objects independent of the mind, ‘tis obvious these arguments are known but to very few, and that ‘tis not by them, that children, peasants, and the greatest part of mankind are induc’d” (THN 193) to believe in body. He writes in Treatise Liv.16, “Of the reason of animals”:

Beasts... can never by any arguments form a general conclusion, that those objects, of which they have had no experience, resemble those of which they have. ‘Tis therefore by means of custom alone, that experience operates upon them. All this was sufficiently evident with respect to man. But with respect to beasts there cannot be the least suspicion of mistake. (THN 178)

It was evident with respect to man, to two causes. First, in Liv.6.6, belief in uniformity cannot be founded on argument. Second, in Liv.6.6 and Liv.8, “custom operates before we have time for reflection,” without “a moment’s delay,” “without reflecting on it” (THN 104); “the imagination of itself supplies the place of... reflection” (THN 93).

Hume observes:

When any hypothesis... is advanced to explain a mental operation, which is common to men and beasts, we must apply the same hypothesis to both. The common defect of those systems, which philosophers have employ’d to account for the actions of the mind, is, that they suppose such a subtility and refinement of thoughts, as not only exceeds the capacity of more animals, but even of children and the common people in our own species. (THN 177)

Hume, like Reid, insists on the continuity in human and animal understanding.

This theme is prominent in three of the twelve sections of the first Enquiry, even though it is a much truncated work. (In the Treatise, Hume withholds discussion of the understanding of animals until Liv.16.) Hume writes in the final paragraph of section IV: “It is certain that the most ignorant and stupid and stupid peasants – nay infants, nay even brute beasts... exhibit a similar effect from a cause, which is similar in its sensible qualities and appearances”; “this conclusion” does not arise “by any process of argument” (EUH 39). In the final paragraph of section V: “reason... appears not, in any degree, during the first years of infancy”; “causal inference results from ‘an instinct’ that ‘nature’ has “implanted in us” (EUH 55).

Section IX, “Of the reason of animals,” reiterates and consolidates these points:

It is impossible, that this inference of the animal can be founded on any process of argument or reasoning... For if there be in reality any arguments of this nature, they are in practice far too abstruse for the observation of such imperfect understandings... Animals, therefore, are not guided in these inferences by reasoning: Neither are children: neither are the generality of mankind, in their ordinary actions and conclusions (HII 106).

Then, in the final paragraph of the section: “experimental reasoning itself, which we possess in common with beasts, and on which the whole conduct of life depends, is nothing but a species of instinct” (EUH 108).

Reid does not cite or allude to either of Hume’s sections on the reason of animals. Hume and Reid nonetheless agree that an explanation of the knowledge of reflective adults must also explain that of nonreflective adults, children, and brutes. A number of basic cognitive processes – memory and inductive inference among them – are common to humans and animals. This constraint exerts pressure in the direction of broadly externalist theories of knowledge. Reid and Hume do not merely maintain that we can have knowledge even though no argument is available; were argument or reflection required, they both insist, we could not explain the knowledge of more humble creatures. Theories of empirical knowledge that demand even the capacity to produce arguments, to elaborate reasons, are non-starters. Classical foundationalist theories are ruled out of court. (Hume had targeted foundationalism, though Reid went about the critique more self-consciously and systematically.) The most obvious alternative is the class of externalist theories in which knowledge is the result of the operation of belief-forming mechanisms that are suitably instinctual, or adaptive and properly functioning, or reliable, and so forth. Reid shows no recognition of this anti-foundationalist alignment with Hume.

4. EPISTEMIC REDUCTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

Let me turn to some differences between the naturalisms of Reid and Hume, of interest in themselves, and that might have contributed to Reid’s blind spot. I have mentioned Hume’s reductionism (§1). Reid faults this tendency in Hume’s metaphysics, where “bodies... are nothing but ideas in
the mind,” and “what we call a mind is nothing but a train of ideas” (EIP 173). Hume’s metaphysics is an offense to substance, but also to dualism. In psychology, there is Hume’s reduction of mental processes to association. In epistemology, there is the reduction of knowledge, beyond the senses and memory, to causal inference: “By means of [the] relation [of cause and effect] alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses” (EIHU 26 – cf. THN 73-74).

Hume pursues the epistemic reduction in a variety of contexts. For example, “our faith [in human testimony] arises from the very same origin as our inferences from causes to effects, and from effects to causes” (THN 113). For Reid, “a disposition . . . to believe what [others] tell us” is an “original principle” (HIM 194). Or consider other minds. In the Treatise, sympathy converts a belief that another person is experiencing a specific feeling into the feeling itself (THN 316-20, 385-86). How do we acquire the initial belief? Hume writes that it is “the relation of cause and effect, by which we are convic’d of the reality of the passion, with which we sympathize” (THN 320). Causal inferences about the experiences of others, based on observed conjunctions in one’s own case, are a precondition for the operation of sympathy. (This is another juncture where Reid and Hume diverge, without a shared cause without causal inference.) For Reid, knowledge of the consciences of others depends upon “another first principle . . . That certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind” (EIP 484). Similarly, the burden of Section XI of the first Enquiry is that any cogent argument for the existence of God must be based on causal inference (EIHU 135-36). For Reid, belief in a designing author of the universe relies neither on a general inductive principle, nor on the first principles of contingent truths that apply to other minds. He invokes an additional, “metaphysical” (EIP 503) first principle, a “necessary truth” (EIP 507): “effects which have all the marks and tokens of design must proceed from a designing cause” (EIP 507). Though Reid grants that “we ought not to multiply [original principles] without necessity,” he maintains that the first principles “are more in number than is commonly thought” (EIP 349). Reid does not find his reliance on a good dozen first principles troubling (EIP 493).

In Reid’s view, “The evidence of sense, the evidence of memory, and the evidence of the necessary relations of things, are all distinct and original kinds of evidence, equally grounded on our constitution; none of them depends upon, or can be resolved into, another” (HIM 32). This generalizes: “I am not able to find any common nature to which [the different kinds of evidence] may all be reduced” – except that “they are all fitted by Nature to produce belief in the human mind” (EIP 229). This is a stipulative claim about what is to count as a first principle. Reid is open to the possibility that “we find some more general principle into which a putative first principle “may be resolved” (HIM 61). Desearée and Locke’s attempts to identify a common nature – clear and distinct perception, the perception of the agreement and disagreement of ideas – are nevertheless wrongheaded (EIP 229).

Reid might have added to his list Hume’s reduction of knowledge, beyond the senses and memory, to causal inference, had he recognized this aspect of Hume’s position as an instance of a more general phenomenon.

First principles cannot be resolved into one another epistemically. Nor can they be explained psychologically. According to Reid, Hume is “far from conceiving [our belief in continuance] to be an original principle of the mind” (HIM 197). Reid’s ground for this claim is that Hume “endeavor[s] to account for [continuance] from his favourite hypothesis of the conception of God” and “then supposes that God must be based on causal inference (EIHU 135-36). For Reid, belief in a designing author of the universe relies neither on a general inductive principle, nor on the first principles of contingent truths that apply to other minds. He invokes an additional, “metaphysical” (EIP 503) first principle, a “necessary truth” (EIP 507): “effects which have all the marks and tokens of design must proceed from a designing cause” (EIP 507). Though Reid
have a continued and independent existence (THN 194-210) — the discussion of coherence and
constancy also collapses into a primitive instinct: "It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural
instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses; and that, without any reasoning, or even
almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our
perception" (EHU 151).

This stunning turnabout sweeps away Hume’s attempt to ground the belief in body in
causal inference. In explaining the belief in the
Treatise, the only resources Hume allows himself
are beliefs about impressions. He interprets the
Part iii formula that all knowledge is based on "the
senses" (THN 73, 74, 108), memory, and causal
inference, to mean that all knowledge is based on
sense impressions, memory, and causal inference
(THU 191, 193). The inputs to causal inference are
beliefs, based on introspection or consciousness,
about internal impressions, together with beliefs
based on memory about past impressions. In cases
of coherence — as in viewing a fire burning down
impressions — "have a regular dependence on each
other" (THN 195); the belief in body "arises . . .
from custom in an indirect and oblique manner"
(THN 197), and hence is due to "a kind of reasoning
from causation" (THN 195). Hume’s epistemic
reductionism is at work in his treatment of
coherence. In the first Enquiry, where there is no
explanaton of the belief in body, constancy and
coherence alike drop out of the picture. The belief in
body is an original, unaccountable instinct, organize
with — in no way reducible to — custom or
causal inference. This could be Reid (cf. EIP 476-
71). Hume falls back, in Reid’s terminology, on
first principles for concepts of coherence, causal
inference, and perception of body — thus taking a
step in the direction of Reid’s tolerance of multiple
first principles.

Hume’s uncompromising reductionism in the
Treatise might have contributed to Reid’s failure to
appreciate their common ground. Taking the inputs
to causal inference to be beliefs about impresions,
conscious states, has a classical foundationalist
flavor. If one follows this interpretative lead, and
further observes that Hume has no arguments on
offer to ground memory or causal inference, the
skeptical reading is inevitable; Hume is a foundationalist who fails to secure knowledge on his own
terms. As we have seen (§ 2), however, Hume ad
mits causal inference and memory as sources of
evidence and knowledge on externalist grounds.

The Treatise’s insistence on impressions as a start-
ing point, to the exclusion of perception, is less a
product of foundationalism than of Hume’s aspira-
tion to reduce perceptual knowledge itself to causal
inference. This is a special case of an epistemic
reductionism that extends to other minds, testi-
mony, and the like — an idealism of causal
inference, not foundationalism.

Does the increased reliance on primitive instinct
in the Enquiries reflect a desire to prune the
psychological and philosophical complexity of the
Treatise, or changes in Hume’s view? And if
changes in view, were they forced upon him? Diff-
icult questions. There is no question that the first
Enquiry is read as a self-contained work, treats per-
ception of body as primitive, thus taking a step in
the direction of Reid’s proliferation of first prin-
ciples. Perhaps these were among the features of
the work Hume had in view when, late in life, he
declared the Enquiries “a compleat Answer to Dr.
Reid and to that bigoted silly Fellow, Beattie” (L
DH II, 301). Reid himself would quote approxi-
mingly the entire paragraph of the first Enquiry
where Hume attributes belief in body to natural
instinct (EIP 173).

5. Conflicts within the Cognitive Faculties

I turn to another dimension of comparison —
besides their attitudes toward reductionism and
psychological explanation — along which it is in-
structive to compare the naturalisms of Hume and
Reid. Reid maintains that the intellectual faculties,
when used properly, do not conflict: "Common
sense and reason have both one author; that Al
mighty author, in all whose other works we observe a
consistency, uniformity, and beauty . . . there

must therefore be some order and consistency in the
human faculties, as well as in other parts of his
workmanship" (HIM 68). Though this is a juncture
where Reid’s providentialism guides his epistemolog-
ical construction, as with other claims about the
epistemic status of first principles, he need not rely
on premises about God. The argument can be un-
derstood as inductive: because consistency and uni-
formity are observed in other parts of nature, they
are to be expected in the human faculties.

The claim that the intellectual faculties do not conflict has a corollary: that the faculties, when
properly used, are co-equal or coordinate: “The
first principles of every kind of reasoning are given
us by nature, and are of equal authority with the
faculty of reason itself, which is also the gift of Na-
ture” (HIM 172). Reid asks, again applying the
consistency of the faculties to reason: “Why . . .
should I believe the faculty of reason more than
that of perception; they came both out of the same
shop, and were made by the same artist. . . ?” (HIM
169). Thus, “When Reason is properly employed,
she will confirm the documents of Nature” (HIM 202).

The claim that the faculties are consistent is of
considerable importance to Reid, and in marked
contrast to Hume. Consider the belief in secondary
qualities. Hume held that we instinctively believe
that bodies possess properties that resemble sen-
sory experiences of color and other secondary
qualities (EIHU 78n.1 — cf. THN 167, 238-39), and
that this belief conflicts with reflection (THN 226-
27) — in violation of Reid’s strictures in regard to
the consistency of the faculties. Hume has no
fear that reflection has things right. Similarly, for
Descartes, a spontaneous impulse or inclination to
believe in resembling secondary qualities conflicts
with clear and distinct perception. Descartes of
course gives the verdict to clear and distinct per-
cussion.

The problem for Reid is to show that the con-
ict does not arise. He argues that there is no re-
semblance between color experiences and the prop-
erties of objects (EIP 85-95). Were the unlearned
more or less universally, and at a young age, to be-
vlieve there is a resemblance, a conflict among fac-
ulties would be in the offering. Reid’s solution is
to attribute to the common person a causal or disposi-
tional account of color: “By the constitution of our
nature, we are led to . . . the conception and belief
of some unknown quality in the body, which occa-
sions the idea”; “it is his quality, that we give the
name of colour” (HIM 56). Because the color appearance and its unknown cause “go to-
tgether in the imagination, and are . . . closely
united,” they “are apt to be mistaken for one and
the same thing” (HIM 86-87). The belief that color
experiences resemble properties of objects is a con-
fused accretion to an instinctive belief. By the
lights of Descartes and Hume, Reid needs to rede-
scribe — to distort — the content of the common
belief in color. In a 1762 letter, Hume puts this
disagreement on the record (CTR 18-19).

The case of the belief in secondary qualities is
pallid compared to other conflicts between reason
and instinct Hume claims to expose. In the first
Enquiry, Hume writes not only that the belief in
external body is instinctive (EHU 151), but that it
 carriers with it the supposition that “the very im-
ages, presented by the senses, . . . be the external
objects” (EHU 151). Instinctively, we are not only
realists, but direct realists. Reid welcomed these
acknowledgments (EIP 173-74), but not the devel-
ements to follow. Hume argues that direct real-
ism "is soon destroyed by the slightest philoso-
phy” (EIHU 152) — the “diminishing table” argu-
ment — so that there is a conflict between instinct
and “the obvious dictates of reason” (EHU 152).
This conflict is distinctive to the first Enquiry; in
the Treatise, the vulgar do not distinguish impres-
sions and external objects (THN 193, 202). In
both the first Enquiry and the Treatise, realism in any
form succumbs to a Berkeleyan argument. Color and
other secondary qualities exist only in the mind; we
cannot conceive of an object possessing extension
and shape separate or abstracted from all sensible
secondary qualities; material objects are therefore
impossible (THN 226-31; EHU 154-55). Realism
Unsurprisingly, Reid is quite exercised by Hume’s arguments for conflict and subversion. He berates “the ignoble attempts of our modern sceptics to depreciate the human understanding, and to dissipit men in the search of truth, by representing the human faculties as fit for nothing, but to lead us into absurdities and contradictions” (HIM 77).

On the contrary, Reid frequently alludes to the problem of how to arrive at a “natural understanding” — at EHU 158. This provides an additional sense in which this work is an answer to Reid. See § 4.) Reid found the undermining arguments disfiguring, so much so that he concludes the project has in common with Hume — to provide a naturalistic account of the knowledge of all animals, however reflective. Let me offer a subsidiary speculation in regard to the import of Reid’s antithesis for the undermining arguments. Reid quotes Hume’s comment in LIv.1 (THN 183) that “Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel” (EIP 571). Similarly, he quotes the paragraph (THN 269) that follows Hume’s comment that he is “ready to reject all belief and reasoning”: “since reason is incapable of dispelling those clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium” (EIP 562). Reid comments: “This was surely a very kind and friendly interposition of Nature. But what pity it was, that Nature so kind in curing this delirium, should be so cruel as to cause it. Doth the same fountain send forth sweet waters and bitter?” (EIP 563). Reid is quick to latch on to Hume’s claims of irresistibility and unavoidable quality. (Non-human animals are immune to reflection’s conundrums, and achieve stability on the cheap.) The crises and their repercussions are part of the subject matter of the science of human nature, as in the closing pages of Liv.7.

In the Treatise, instability in our doxastic lives is one of Hume’s major preoccupations, quite apart from the contexts where the undermining arguments are in play. In Book I, reflection on some belief-forming mechanisms undermines their use (§ 4). In an important strand in Part III of Book I, Hume takes belief to be an infixed and hence a steady disposition (cf. THU 86, 109, 118-119, 225, 453, 624, 626, 629). In Liii, association by relations other than cause and effect is “fluctuating and uncertain,” and “is impossible it can ever operate with any considerable degree of force and constancy” (THN 109). In Liv.2, conflicts with regard to the belief in body involve “combat” (THN 205) and “struggle” between opposing principles “attack’d” by “enemies” which seek to “destroy” (THN 215) one another.

Reid, however, on the contrary, is one of the key figures in the undermining argument for the subversion of belief. Yet, there is little evidence that Reid takes note of the numerous passages that commit Hume to the irresistibility of demonstration, memory, and causal inference. (See § 2.) Bear in mind that, apart from one explicit passage in Part iv of Book I, these claims need to be extracted from an assortment of sections in Part iii. There is room for the suggestion that Reid has some tendency to regard the role of irresistibility and unavoidability in Hume as little more than an expedient to extricate us from absurdities and contradictions, not as a component in an independently motivated naturalistic epistemology.

6. CONFLICT AND STABILITY

Reid is also aware that Hume does not always portray instinct as a savior. For Hume, he notes, we are “born under a necessity of believing contradictions” (EIP 562). Hume does construe the Berkian argument against realism as giving rise to a “direct and total opposition,” a “manifest contradiction,” specifically between perceptual belief in body and causal inference (THN 231, 266). These “two operations,” moreover, are “equally natural and necessary in the human mind” (THN 266). Since there is no way to “adjust those principles together,” philosophers “successively assent to both” (THN 266). In this context, instinctive mechanisms are a source of seemingly ineliminable instability — part of the problem, not the solution. Thus, a difficulty for the picture of the role of irresistibility in Hume have attributed to Reid, and also for the Kemp Smith interpretation, in which Hume approves irresistible beliefs. Reid writes that Hume “has shewn that [principles commonly received] overturn all knowledge, and at last overturn themselves, and leave the mind in perfect suspension” (EIP 462). This is well off the mark. For Hume, reflection on the antinomies and the subversion of the understanding generates instability in belief — psychological crises, not Pyrrhonian tranquility.

A. THE IMPACT ON PHILOSOPHICAL DISCIPLINES. The works of Reid and his contemporaries have had a profound impact on the development of epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind. Their critique of Hume’s skepticism challenged the orthodox views of the time and paved the way for the development of modern philosophy. The emphasis on the role of instinct in human cognition and the rejection of the Cartesian dualism of mind and body led to a new understanding of the nature of human knowledge and the role of experience in the formation of beliefs. Their works also influenced the development of psychology, as they emphasized the importance of introspection and the role of mental states in cognitive processes. Overall, the works of Reid and his contemporaries paved the way for a more nuanced and complex understanding of human nature and the nature of knowledge.
lead us wrong” (EIP 528) — often taking us in the direction of extravagant “hypotheses and systems” (HIM 41). He and Hume share the Newtonian objective of reigning in judgments that do not adhere closely to “daily . . . experience” (EIH 162; cf. HIM 125 and EIP 49, 535). How can we achieve the “proper regulation and restraint” (EIP 528) in our reasoning? Hume offers a prescription: though intense reflection gives rise to crises that are temporarily destabilizing, in the longer term a small tincture of skepticism (EIH 161) restraints the imagination from “running, without control” (EIH 162). Our faculties lead us into contradiction but are not “fit for nothing”; the undermining arguments Reid abhors serve a virtuous psychological and epistemic function. That Hume would offer this speculation is another symptom of the centrality of stability in his philosophy.

Louis E. Loeb

I am indebted to Matthew Davidson, whose questions about an earlier paper prompted me to consider the present topic. Thanks also to Stephen Darwall and Frederick Schmitt for help and encouragement.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


Section 3. For Reid’s opposition to classical foundationalism, see Wolterstorff, “Reid and Hume.” For a relativist interpre-
In July, Chris Dodsworth defended his dissertation, "A Theory of Moral Obligation", chaired by Liz Anderson, with Steve Darwall, Ed Curley, and Mika LaVaque-Manty (Political Science) on the committee. Chris advances a novel theory of the normativity of moral obligations in which obligations are grounded, not in rational agency or some other attribute of persons, but rather in the intimate personal relations one has with others. Chris argues that an important subset of obligations are grounded in a person’s relation to God. Unlike many Christians, he eschews a Divine Command Theory of moral obligation, arguing instead that these obligations are fundamentally grounded in the relationship of love between God and human beings. Next year Chris will be a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame.

In October, Matthew Silverstein defended his dissertation "Normative Authority and the Foundations of Ethics", which was written under the supervision of Peter Railton, Steve Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Mika LaVaque-Manty. Matthew’s work is centered around the project of halting the seemingly endless regress of ethical justification. After rejecting various traditional internalist and externalist strategies, Matthew defends a reductive account of reasons for action based in part on David Velleman’s theory of action. This constitutivistic account forstands open-question worries by constraining reasons in terms of their practical force. Matthew is thrilled to have returned to Amherst College (his alma mater) this fall as a visiting assistant professor and postdoctoral fellow.

In July, Soraya Gollop defended her dissertation, "The Challenge of Temptation: Desire, Emotion, and Stability" with Jim Joyce as chair and Liz Anderson, Peter Railton, and Mika LaVaque-Manty as members of the committee. Soraya argued that desires contribute to rational choice and deliberation not only via their strength, but also by way of their stability and emotional components. Desires are often presented as simple states whose contribution to action, choice, and deliberation are understood in terms of their motivational strengths and their objects. However, such a view has no resources for explaining how it can be rational to resist temptation. Taking the stability and emotional aspects of desires seriously allows us to explain why it can be irrational to give in to temptation, an explanation which is not available to the widespread group of views that treat desires as more motivating forces. Soraya is delighted to be joining Southern Methodist University as an Assistant Professor.

In August, Pat Lewtas defended his dissertation, "Psychoysis: An Exploration and Defense," written under the supervision of Eric Lormand and Jessica Wilson (University of Toronto), with Victor Caston, and Bob Pachella (Psychology) filling out the committee. Pat, who specializes in the philosophy of mind, investigated and defended a solution to the mind-body problem according to which people are conscious because some of their most basic physical constituents have some degree of consciousness. Pat is delighted to be joining the American University of Beirut as an Assistant Professor.
In July, Robert Gressis defended his dissertation, "Kant’s Theory of Evil: An Interpretation and Defense", under the supervision of Stephen Darwall, Ian Proops, Michelle Kosch (Cornell University) and Mika LaVaque-Manty. Rob contends that Kant’s theory of evil has been fundamentally misinterpreted as committing Kant to outrageous claims about the extent of evil (e.g., that everyone is evil) as well as its nature (viz., that evil consists merely in subordinating one’s moral obligations to personal pleasure). Robert shows that other scholars have missed the main goal of Kant’s theory, which is to argue for the possibility of willfully immoral actions (as opposed to immoral actions resulting either from ignorance or weakness). Moreover, instead of offering a simple-minded account of evil action as amounting merely to the unbridled pursuit of pleasure, Robert demonstrates that Kant had a sophisticated account of evil action as stemming from the entertaining of fantasies about one’s moral status in relation to others or in relation to the moral law itself. In the upcoming year, Robert will be enjoy a Fellowship at Notre Dame’s Center for the Philosophy of Religion.

Alex Hughes’ dissertation, written under the supervision of Eric Lormand, with Peter Ludlow and Ken Walton as committee members, was defended in August. The thesis offers a defense and extension of Grice’s causal account of the seeing relation. It extends the Gricean account by arguing that seeing is constituted by a process-relative counterfactual dependence of visual experiences on seen objects. A process-relative counterfactual theory of perception has the virtue preserving what is attractive about counterfactual theories, while avoiding the many counterexamples that have been given against accounts that extend Grice’s account by invoking counterfactual dependence. The thesis defends the basis of the Gricean account by defending the possibility of veridical hallucination. Alex argues that if veridical hallucination is possible, then a certain kind of externalism must be true of visual experience. In particular, which content a visual experience possesses must depend on whether or not it is part of an episode of perception. Alex begins a two-year visiting assistant professorship at Illinois Wesleyan University this fall.

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