

HUME STUDIES

VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 2

NOVEMBER 1992

Editors

Robert Muehlmann, *University of Western Ontario*
Fred Wilson, *University of Toronto*

Assistant Editor

Katherine Sommerville

Book Review Editor

John W. Davis, *York University*

Editorial Board

P. Árdal, *Queen's University*
J. Bricke, *University of Kansas*
R. Emerson, *University of Western Ontario*
L. Fields, *The University of Dundee*
A. Flew, *The University of Reading*
R. Glossop, *S. Illinois University, Edwardsville*
A. Hausman, *Southern Methodist University*
J. King, *The University of Northern Illinois*
R. Klibansky, *McGill University*
D. Livingston, *Emory University*
L. Marcil-Lacoste, *Université de Montréal*
J. McIntyre, *Cleveland State University*
T. Penelhum, *University of Calgary*
W. Robison, *Kalamazoo College*
D. Stove, *University of Sydney*
B. Stroud, *University of California, Berkeley*
T. Tanaka, *Kwansei Gakuin University*
S. Tweyman, *Glendon College, York University*

Hume Studies is supported by a grant from the Faculty of Arts,
University of Western Ontario.

Hume Studies

c/o Department of Philosophy
338 OSH
University of Utah
Salt Lake City UT 84112
U.S.A.

A Tribute to John Davis

Hume Studies was conceived by John Davis, who then worked hard to bring it into existence, and served as its founding editor. In these efforts he has served well the community of Hume scholars, and more generally the philosophical community. He deserves our thanks. This number of *Hume Studies* attempts to do that: these essays were written in his honour, to express our gratitude for his work over the years.

Thanks, John.

Fred Wilson

Robert Muehlmann

John Davis, Colleague

John Whitney Davis (b. February 11, 1921) began his teaching career at Emerson College (Boston) in 1949, received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Boston University in 1957 and was hired by The University of Western Ontario in that same year. Rapidly ascending the academic ladder, John became Head of the Philosophy Department in 1960—a position he occupied for three years—and was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1963. Throughout his teaching career (until his retirement from U.W.O. in 1986) Professor Davis was an especially active member of the Department, serving on numerous important committees at both the departmental and university levels, helping to organize colloquia, hosting visiting speakers, and contributing in a variety of other significant ways to the vitality and excellence of the Philosophy Department. Professor Davis taught philosophy both at the undergraduate and graduate levels and in the area of the history of ideas. Robert Butts (his successor as Head) once described him as having “extensive knowledge, enormous industry, and great insight.” This no doubt contributed much to his reputation as an exemplary teacher. His teaching range was by no means confined to the history of ideas, however. It was common knowledge in the Philosophy Department that John could teach any course on the philosophical syllabus; and he was often called upon to teach courses no one else had the expertise or desire to undertake. John’s main interest, however, is the British Empiricists and he worked for many years preparing books on both Berkeley and Hume. Although these books have yet to appear, several important articles on both philosophers have issued from this work and have been published in *Dialogue*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *Review of Metaphysics*, as well as in an anthology, *The Methodological Heritage of Newton* (edited jointly with Robert Butts). Yet most historians of philosophy will agree that the crowning achievement of John’s career has been his creation and editorship of *Hume Studies*. In 1974 Davis succeeded in convincing the University to provide ongoing financial assistance for a uniquely and narrowly focused journal. Journals devoted to single historical figures are risky ventures, so this initial success, in itself, was no mean feat. The first volume appeared in April, 1975 and from that *very* modest beginning *Hume Studies* has grown, under John’s guidance, to become a standard, if not *the* standard, of serious Hume Scholarship. John retired as editor with the April 1990 issue of *Hume Studies*. His brilliant tenure as founding editor is celebrated in this volume.

Robert Muehlmann

John Davis, Teacher: A Recollection

I first met John Davis in the late fifties when I was doing a two-year M.A. in philosophy at Western. John taught a graduate course in symbolic logic. It was both a philosophy course and a cross-listed course in the foundation of mathematics. There was, as a result, a mixture of philosophy and mathematics students in the course.

My most vivid memory of John was of an amazingly energetic and enthusiastic teacher who was anything but indifferent to his subject matter and to his students. I, if I may introduce a personal note, suffered from an extreme form of math anxiety--I couldn't even understand a truth-table. John was always extremely patient with me and it is thanks to him that I managed to scrape through.

Another vivid memory was of a man with a kind of Moorean passion for getting it right. When he didn't understand something, he let us know it. He was constitutionally incapable of intellectual pretence. I took away from my time with him the idea that philosophy was extremely difficult; but if one worked very hard, it was possible to get the right answer. And no relativist he, John was profoundly convinced that there was a right answer to get.

Robert A. Imlay