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Henry E. Allison. *Custom and Reason in Hume: A Kantian Reading of the First Book of the* Treatise. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008. Pp. xi + 412. ISBN 978-0-19-953288-9, cloth, $65.00.

After a lifetime of distinguished work on Kant (with important books on Lessing and Spinoza along the way), notable for its meticulous scholarship and deep sympathy with its subject, Henry Allison has now produced a detailed and impressive study of the first book of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Having subtitled his chief work on *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* "an interpretation and defense" (Yale University Press, 1983, revised edition 2004), he could not very well use the same subtitle for his work on Hume, for on some central matters no one could plausibly defend both Kant and Hume. Instead, he subtitles this work "a Kantian reading," but he gives a more accurate account of his intentions in the Introduction, where he says that his work "provides a critical analysis of Hume's views from an avowedly Kantian perspective. The result is both a defense and a critique of Hume" (1). Allison does indeed both criticize and defend Hume. What he criticizes is Hume's perceptual model of cognition, which he does in two steps. First he argues that Kant's conception of cognition as consisting in judgments that apply concepts to intuitions is superior to Hume's model of cognition as consisting in either current perceptual impressions or forceful, lively, and vivacious ideas thereof. And second he argues that the defects of the purely perceptual model of cognition can be recognized from internal difficulties in Hume's own attempts to explain our knowledge of space, of causal connections, and of external objects even without explicit appeal to Kant although in agreement with Kant's own criticisms of those aspects of Hume's theory of knowledge that he knew (basically, just Hume's treatment of causation). What Allison defends is Hume's "metascepticism." This is the view that rather than simply being saved from logically sound skeptical arguments by our natural dispositions to belief, on which such arguments have no effect, we should be just as skeptical of skeptical arguments as those arguments would have us be about the particular sorts of claims to knowledge they claim to cast into doubt, and for that reason adopt an attitude of philosophical "insouciance" toward skeptical arguments. The key difference between these two positions is that while the former is entirely descriptive, simply pointing out that our basic mechanisms of belief are insulated from argumentation altogether, the latter position is normative, telling us that we should hold skeptical arguments up to the same standards to which skepticism would hold up other arguments, and that if we do so we shall actually find skeptical arguments less than compelling. If I have any criticisms of Allison's work, they are that he spends more time than is necessary on the critique of Hume's perceptual model of cognition, which after all has long

had no serious defenders, that he does not present this critique as perspicuously as he might have, and that he does not develop his interesting conception of Hume's metaskepticism as fully as he might have.

Allison's critique of Hume's perceptual rather than judgmental (or in Allison's Kantian term "discursive") model of cognition is not as perspicuous as it might have been because Allison structures his book as a commentary, simply following Hume's order of discussion section by section, when he might better have ordered his book into two parts, the critique of the perceptual model of cognition followed by the defense of metaskepticism, and then brought Hume's various topics into this framework as relevant. As it is, Allison follows Hume's order of exposition in offering us chapters on (1) "Hume's Elements" (impressions and ideas, the Copy Principle and the Separability Principle); (2) "Hume's Theory of Space and Time"; (3) "Hume's Epistemological Divide" (Hume's fork, which Allison argues is not identical to Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments); (4) "'Whatever Begins to Exist Must Have a Cause of Existence': Hume's Analysis and Kant's Response"; (5) "Hume's Analysis of Inductive Inference" with an Appendix on Kant's view on induction and the uniformity of nature; (6) "Simple Conception, Existence, and Belief" (a comparison of Hume's rejection of the view that we have an idea of existence separate from our ideas of the properties of objects with Kant's critique of the notion that existence is a real predicate); (7) "Causation, Necessary Connection, and Power"; (8) "Hume on Scepticism Regarding Reason" and on (9) "Scepticism Regarding the Senses"; (10) "Hume's Therapeutic Natural History of Philosophy Compared with Kant's Philosophical Therapy"; (11) "Hume's Paralogisms"; and finally (12) "Hume's Philosophical Insouciance." This order of chapters reflects Hume's distribution of his own discussion over the four Parts of Book 1 of the *Treatise*, especially his division between his own model of cognition in Part 3 and his critique "Of the sceptical and other systems of philosophy" in Part 4, and then within Part 3 his division of the discussion of causation between sections 3 and 4 on the one hand and section 14 on the other. But given Allison's interest in not only criticizing Hume's perceptual model of cognition but also defending his metaskepticism, it would have been more perspicuous for him to have demonstrated Hume's difficulties in making sense of our concepts of causation, substance, external objects, and the self under the constraint of the Copy Principle in one part of his own work, and then to have discussed Hume's metaskepticism in a second part. Thus his book would have benefitted had he grouped together his current chapters 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 11 as Part I and then chapters 5, 8, 10, and 12 as Part II. The theme of the first group of the chapters would be that, contrary to what Hume hoped, we cannot derive our conception of a world of spatially and temporally extended and causally connected objects through which we as conscious beings move from sensory impressions of the properties of objects alone. Rather, we need an a priori

framework for the spatial and temporal organization of our impressions and a conceptual framework for our organization of our impressions of the properties of objects and our conception of ourselves within such a world. This, Kant and Allison following him would argue, we can derive from the logical structure of judgment, a resource that Hume entirely neglects. Here the critique of Hume is that even though Hume has no interest in casting doubt on our conception of our world and ourselves, but instead simply wishes to *explain* this conception by means of his new "science of man," his "science" does not have the resources necessary to explain these concepts, while Kant's discursive model of cognition does. In other words, Kant's "subjective deduction" of the categories (and his "metaphysical exposition" of space and time) can do what Hume's "science of man" cannot.

Apart from my complaint that by following Hume's own order of exposition Allison has missed the chance to show perspicuously that Hume's problems with the concepts of causation, of external objects, and of the self all arise from a common source, the neglect of the logical structure of judgments and the pure concepts of understanding that such logical structure makes available, I have no fundamental complaints with this aspect of Allison's book. (I have, however, never been persuaded that Kant's theory of the reflective judgment of purposiveness provides a compelling response to Hume's doubts about induction, as Allison argues.) My chief complaint with Allison's treatment of Hume's metaskepticism, which I think is the more novel part of his work, is only that it is not sufficiently developed. And here I also think that a fuller discussion of the comparison between Kant and Hume would have been welcome. Allison attributes to Hume the aim of "insulating his empirical science of human nature from . . . persistent, but unanswerable metaphysical questions" (293), a goal clearly comparable to Kant's in distinguishing "empirical realism" from "transcendental idealism." In particular, Allison holds that Hume tries to undercut skeptical arguments by showing that they always "ask one question too many" (313) and compares this to Kant's attempt to show that closure to metaphysical questions is rendered impossible at the phenomenal level but at least possible at the noumenal level, where we may think even if we cannot know the unconditioned which would answer such questions. Although for Allison Kant's strategy may be the more attractive because on his "methodological" rather than "ontological" interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism (recapped at 278–79) Kant's distinction of these levels is not itself metaphysically dubious, on my own interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal levels comes at a very high cost, namely genuine ignorance of the fundamental characteristics of the noumenal world. Thus, Hume's strategy for blocking "modern philosophy's Sisyphean quest for explanatory closure" without resort to any version of such a distinction of levels

might be an attractive alternative to Kant's. For this reason I would have enjoyed seeing it more fully explored and explained.

These qualms about the organization and weighting of the main parts of Allison's argument aside, his book offers penetrating discussions of all of the main topics in Humean epistemology and a valuable guide to much contemporary scholarship on Hume. It should be useful to every professional and graduate student scholar of Hume, and generate interesting further discussion of the ever fascinating topic of Hume's stance toward skepticism.

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