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Abstract: What is the source of normativity in Hume's account of causal reasoning? In virtue of what are causal beliefs justified for Hume? To answer these questions, the literature appeals, almost invariably, to custom or some feature thereof. I argue, in contrast, that causal beliefs are justified for Hume because they issue from experience. Although he denies experience the title of justifying reason, for Hume experience has normative authority. I offer an interpretation of the source and nature of the normativity of experience in causal reasoning. I argue that the senses and memory have a special, positive status within the mind in virtue of their force and vivacity, which, on my reading, Hume identifies with a sense of presentness and a strong effect on the mind. Hume dignifies the system of memory and the senses with the title of reality because of these features. Causal beliefs are dignified as "realities" because they issue from reality. However, because the imagination can sometimes enhance the force and vivacity of ideas without the help of experience, Hume appeals to coherence and general rules as well.

Hume famously argues that "'tis impossible for us to satisfy ourselves by our reason" why we draw the causal inferences we do, supposing the unobserved to conform to the observed (T 1.3.6.11; SBN 91).[1] Nonetheless, it is evident that Hume endorses causal inferences when he claims that they allow us "to discover the real existence or the relation of objects" (T 1.3.2.2; SBN 73), that they "inform us of the existences

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and objects, which we do not see or feel" (T 1.3.2.3; SBN 74), and that they "bring us acquainted with such existences, as by their removal in time and place, lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory" (T 1.3.9.4; SBN 108). Moreover, despite his insistence on reason's failure to license causal inferences, Hume feels entitled to present us with his rules "by which to judge of causes and effects." These are rules "by which we ought to regulate our judgments concerning causes and effects" (T 1.3.13.11; SBN 149), rules "to direct our judgment, in philosophy" (T 1.3.15.11; SBN 175). Reason is impotent to justify causal inferences, and yet we should, Hume insists, follow his rules in order to reason *properly*. The question naturally arises: what is the source of normativity in Hume's account of causal reasoning?

This question arises only for some interpretations, not for all. In particular, it does not arise for those that deny the epistemological, normative character of Hume's treatment of causal reasoning. Don Garrett, for instance, maintains that Hume is concerned with "the *causation* of causal inferences—a question within cognitive psychology—rather than the *justification* of such inferences, which is a question in epistemology,"[2] and according to David Owen, Hume does not even put forward a skeptical argument against induction. Instead, Hume is engaged in a descriptive project of "faculty psychology" and merely denies that "probable reasoning is an activity of the faculty of reason."[3]

Interpreters impressed by the normative character of Hume's treatment of causal reasoning, on the other hand, have almost unanimously advanced accounts of justification that center on custom and its output. Louis Loeb's is the most developed, and it gives pride of place to *stability.* Loeb argues that causal beliefs are justified because they issue from custom, which usually generates stable beliefs.[4] Frederick Schmitt appeals to *adaptiveness* and *reliability*.[5] Helen Beebee's version also centers on *reliability*.[6] Edward Craig defends the view that beliefs produced by custom are the result of the *proper function* of the individual.[7] William Edward Morris argues that the normativity of causal beliefs derives from their *regularity*: illegitimate reasoning practices will be *irregular.*[8] Although I cannot discuss these interpretations within the scope of this paper, in what follows I outline two crucial differences between these accounts and the reading I put forward here.

First, I argue that *experience*, and not c*ustom*, plays the justifying role in Hume's account of causal reasoning. In this fundamental respect, my reading is aligned with the view of Norman Kemp Smith, who coins the phrase "normative experience."[9] Kemp Smith writes, "Hume's real position is not that custom (or habit) as such is king: it has no manner of right to lay claim to any such dignity. It is experience—and custom only in so far as it conforms to and is the outcome of experience—which is, and ought to be, the ultimate court of appeal" (*Philosophy of David Hume*, 382).

Hume's powerful arguments in *Treatise* 1.3.6 strip experience of its title as a justifying *reason.* Although Hume acknowledges that it is "by EXPERIENCE only,

that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another" (T 1.3.6.2; SBN 87), experience is not a *reason* for drawing causal inferences. Indeed, causal inferences follow "without a reason" (T 1.3.6.12; SBN 92). Hume stresses this point when he summarizes his arguments: "*even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience*" (T 1.3.12.20; SBN 139). But Kemp Smith rescues experience by subsuming it under the domain of *nature*. Experience's normative role in causal reasoning is not grounded in its status as a reason; rather, experience is endowed with normative standing in virtue of the fact that it belongs to a domain that has authority for us, namely nature. Causal beliefs are "natural beliefs" and these are "inevitable" and "irresistible" for us (Kemp Smith, *Philosophy of David Hume*, 87 and 455).

However, Kemp Smith's interpretation suffers from a number of significant problems.[10] First, there is little in Hume that suggests the account Kemp Smith is offering, and Hume himself never uses the term "natural belief." Moreover, if we refuse to bow down to nature simply because it is natural, all that remains of Kemp Smith's account are the features of irresistibility and inevitability, and these turn out to be inadequate as criteria for demarcating justified belief. Hume asserts that beliefs produced by "education" or indoctrination, for example, "take such deep root, that 'tis impossible for us, by all the powers of reason and experience, to eradicate them" (T 1.3.9.17; SBN 116). Beliefs that arise from indoctrination are thus irresistible and inevitable, but Hume does not therefore endorse them.

On my reading, in contrast, experience has normative authority for Hume not because experience is part of nature but because it has a special status within the mind, and causal beliefs are justified in virtue of the causal role experience plays within the psychological mechanism that is causal reasoning. My claim that experience justifies causal beliefs through its causal role in the formation of causal beliefs marks also my *second* point of contrast with accounts of justification that center on custom and its output, which in general regard the way Hume's treatment of causal reasoning weaves together psychology and epistemology to be problematic. Recently Loeb has voiced the following criticism: "In Part iii, the claim that causal inference is justified thus arises in tandem with the claim that causal inference results in belief. Yet, Hume does not give due recognition to the fact that these claims are different."[11] On my reading, however, the causation of causal beliefs is the source of their justification and thus the fact that psychology and epistemology are deeply intertwined in Hume's treatment of causal reasoning is integral to his attempt at justifying causal beliefs.

My basic thesis that experience plays a causal role in the formation of causal beliefs stands in direct opposition to a deeply entrenched idea in Hume scholarship in general, namely the idea that causal belief is, as Morris puts it, "the product of the imagination" ("Belief, Probability, and Normativity," 85). I identify this view

as the root of a fundamental and intractable puzzle in the literature concerning the normative character of Hume's discussion of the psychology of belief. Michael Williams articulates the puzzle clearly: "According to Hume's science of Man, all beliefs—reasonable or not—are to be traced to the 'imagination.' But if so, why aren't the superstitious or metaphysically inclined just psychologically different, rather than epistemically deficient? How do psychological differences in belief-formation underwrite normative distinctions?"[12] The imagination plays a crucial role in causal reasoning, but throughout the *Treatise*, Hume emphatically *rejects* many of the products of the imagination, referring to them derogatorily as "the mere offspring of the imagination" and as "fictions" (T 1.3.9.4; SBN 108). What is it about Hume's psychology of belief, Williams demands, that gives it "a normative edge"? ("Unity of Hume's Project," 269) In other words, if causal beliefs are the product of the imagination, then we are confronted with the following puzzle: wherein lies the difference between those products of the imagination sanctioned by Hume and those that are rejected by him?

I hold that causal beliefs are *not* "products of the imagination" for two reasons. First, in causal reasoning the imagination supplies an idea *in conformity* with past experience. Indeed, past experience determines which idea is supplied by the imagination. Second, and most importantly, in Hume's account of causal reasoning, the imagination supplies *only* an idea. However, for Hume a mere idea is not a belief; otherwise there would be no difference between conceiving something and believing it. In Hume's account of causal reasoning, the idea supplied by the imagination becomes a *belief* only when it acquires force and vivacity. And this force and vivacity does not issue from the imagination, but it derives instead from the senses and memory. As we shall see, causal beliefs, unlike any other enlivened ideas, derive their force and vivacity from what Hume identifies as "experience,"[13] or from what he also refers to as the system that comprises the objects of the memory and senses (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 108), or from what Hume entitles "reality" (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 108).

The interpretation I offer in this paper is anchored in the *Treatise*, but it also includes references to the appendix, the *Abstract*, and the first *Enquiry*.[14] In section 1, I discuss the concept of experience in Hume's *Treatise*, starting with an examination of the source of its positive value. Following Hume's characterization of the "phenomenon of [causal] belief" as "internal" (T 1.3.8.8; SBN 102), I distinguish between an *internal*, an *external*, and a *naïve* conception of experience. I defend the view that Hume's account of causal reasoning relies on an *internal* conception of experience, one that is non-committal with respect to the question of the existence of an external world or the correspondence between perceptions and external objects. Section 2 examines in detail the role of the senses and memory in causal reasoning and defends an interpretation of force and vivacity as a sense of presentness that strongly affects the operations of the mind. Section 3 takes

up the central question of the normativity of experience and the justification of causal beliefs. This section starts by examining a key passage in T 1.3.9 where Hume places the vivacity of memory and sense impressions and its effect on the mind at the center of his account of the system of perceptions that is *reality* for the mind. Causal beliefs, according to Hume, are dignified as "realities" because they are determined by the system of reality (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 108). I contrast causal beliefs with other enlivened ideas, unjustified beliefs, and fictions and show that only causal beliefs arise from experience or the (first) system of reality. Experience is the source of the force and vivacity of causal beliefs. In section 4, I discuss the problem of grounding the concept of experience on the features of force and vivacity alone, and I identify Hume's solution to this problem in the appendix to the *Treatise*. The solution appeals to coherence, specifically to the application of general rules, which leads me to consider the conditions under which the application of general rules terminates in justified causal belief. I end with some concluding remarks.

1. The Authority of Experience

That experience has, to cast it generally, a *positive value* in Hume's philosophy is indisputable. In the introduction to the *Treatise*, Hume announces his intention to ground all the sciences, including his own science of man, on "observation and experience" (T Intro 7; SBN xvi). Experience, he stresses, is our only "authority" (T Intro 10; SBN xviii). In the context of causal reasoning, he refers to experience as "reality" (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 107 and T 1.3.10.5; SBN 121), as "the true standard" (T 1.3.9.12; SBN 13), as justifying (T 1.3.9.12; SBN 13),[15] and as "truth" (1.3.10.5–6; SBN 121). That Hume deems observation and experience to be authoritative is most evidently manifested in his employment of the copy principle—the principle "*that all our ideas are copy'd from our impressions*" (T 1.3.1.7; SBN 72; see also T 1.1.1.7; SBN 4 and T 1.1.1.12; SBN 7)—and the associated criterion of meaning: words, to be significant, must stand for ideas (T Abstract 7; SBN 648–49 and EHU 2.9; SBN 22[16]). These normative demands rest on the core thesis that the senses and memory, or observation and experience, are and should be the final authority.

The positive normative status of the senses and memory in Hume's philosophy survives his own skeptical challenges. At the beginning of *Treatise* 1.4.2, Hume acknowledges that the senses cannot be the sole origin of our *belief* in continued and distinct existence. Instead, what emerges in the course of *Treatise* 1.4.2 is that certain processes and properties of the imagination are essential to this belief. However, Hume does not, as a result of these findings, resolve to dismiss or demote the senses. At the very end of *Treatise* 1.4.2, he admits that he has proceeded in the *Treatise* with an "implicit faith in the senses," and he stresses that the implicit faith in the senses is one that we *ought* to have (T 1.4.2.56; SBN 217). The implicit faith is only momentarily threatened, and Hume goes on in the *Treatise* as before.[17] In

Treatise 1.4.4, Hume spells out an unsolvable conflict between the senses and the application of his own rules for proper causal reasoning. But once again, what follows is not a rejection of the senses (or of any rule for judging causes and effects). Instead, the consequence is a condemnation of our views concerning *external objects* and the idea of *matter* (T 1.4.5.1; SBN 232). And in the rest of the *Treatise*, in the *Abstract*, and in the *Enquiry*, Hume continues to support and enforce the copy principle, its associated criterion of meaning, and the conceivability principle, or the principle that "*whatever the mind clearly conceives includes the idea of possible existence*" (T 1.2.2.8; SBN 32, Abstract 11; SBN 650, and EHU 2.4; SBN 18). Experience never ceases to be the authority.

In virtue of what is experience authoritative or the true standard? Why do the senses and memory enjoy a positive normative status? Answering these fundamental questions within the framework of Hume's philosophy is a surprisingly challenging task. This inquiry naturally instigates an examination into Hume's concept of experience, which reveals that Hume's account of causal reasoning depends only on what I shall refer to as an *internal* conception of experience. In an important passage I discuss shortly, Hume refers to the "phenomenon" of causal belief as "merely internal" (T 1.3.8.8; SBN 102). Hume's point is that the essential role that present impressions play in causal reasoning is independent of their relation or lack thereof to external objects. That is what I mean when I say that causal reasoning depends on an *internal* conception of experience: the role sense impressions and memories play in the formation of causal beliefs does not depend on their being related to an external, extra-mental world.

Experience is obviously authoritative for an empiricist, at least a "naïve" one, because in experience, and only in experience, we make contact with the external, natural world. Thus, ideas that purport to be about the external world—our ideas of space, time, necessary connections between bodies, and so on—must be answerable to the tribunal of experience, our only access to the external world. Experience, then, is the ultimate authority for any science whose conception of truth involves correspondence with an external natural world, or a science that assumes a "naïve" or pre-philosophical conception of experience. This last conception of experience finds support in the theory of perceptions Hume introduces in *Treatise* 1.1, which often appeals to ordinary, common facts about sense perception, memory and imagination. It is also bolstered by the naïve realist attitude Hume adopts, on and off, but throughout the *Treatise*.[18] However, it is impossible to ignore the many explicit texts that conflict sharply with both the "external" conception of experience (the view that sense impressions correspond or refer to objects in an extra-mental world) and the "naïve" conception of experience, which does not distinguish between perceptions and objects. I shall present some of these texts shortly. But regardless of the clashing texts, neither the external nor the naive conception of experience seems capable of accounting for Hume's endorsement of

casual beliefs. Beliefs about the future or the unobserved *cannot*, as Hume himself shows, be inferred either demonstratively or empirically from (our experience of) *nature*. And unless we resort to something like a *providential* conception of nature, there seems to be no way of defending the thesis that beliefs authored by nature are *as such* "better" than beliefs that are not so authored.[19]

The tension between the different conceptions of experience is on display already in the very first section of the *Treatise*. On the one hand, Hume aims to map *impressions* and *ideas* onto our ordinary distinction between feeling and thinking (T 1.1.1.1; SBN 1–2). Hume writes: "To give a child an idea of scarlet or orange, of sweet or bitter, I present the objects, or in other words, convey to him these impressions" (T 1.1.1.8; SBN 5). Sense impressions are conveyed by exposure to external objects, or objects that can be presented to us by others. On the other hand, it is clear that force and vivacity are meant to be essential to the distinction between impressions and ideas. Hume claims that "the difference" between impressions and ideas "consists in the degrees of force and vivacity" (T 1.1.1.1; SBN 1). But force and vivacity are *not* definitional features. In the *Enquiry*, Hume asserts that ideas "*never* can entirely reach the force and vivacity of the original sentiment" "*except* [when] the mind [is] disordered by disease or madness" (EHU 2.1; SBN 17, my emphases). In the *Treatise*, Hume acknowledges similar exceptions (T 1.1.1.1; SBN 2). Thus, it is simply not the case that *any* perception with high degree of force and vivacity is *ipso facto* an impression. *Impression* and *idea* are indeed meant to map onto our common distinction between sensing or feeling and thinking.

I suggest that we think of Hume's manner of proceeding in the following way: We start with what we ordinarily think of as sensing and feeling something, but then Hume instructs us to consider those objects in a new way: He asks us to focus our attention exclusively on the perceptions themselves, saying, "I here make use of these terms, *impression* and *idea*, in a sense different from what is usual. . . . By the term of *impression* I wou'd not be understood to express the manner, in which our lively perceptions are produc'd in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves; for which there is no particular name either in the *English* or any other language, that I know of" (T 1.1.1.1; SBN 2). Impressions are both old and new objects: they are sensations and feelings, *but* the term "impression" only captures their appearance. In the *Enquiry*, Hume points out that a "general term or appellation" for impressions is "not requisite for any, but philosophical purposes" (EHU 2.3; SBN 18). Impressions are phenomenological objects, accessible from an internal standpoint, *the standpoint of the soul*, from which we are unable to discern the causes of impressions precisely because impressions are its limit. This is what I take Hume to mean when he writes, "'Tis certain, that the mind, in its perceptions, must begin somewhere . . . there must be some impressions, which without any introduction make their appearance in the soul" (T 2.1.1.2; SBN 275). Thus, Hume claims that sense impressions arise in the soul "from unknown causes" (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 7),

but he also recognizes that "the examination of our sensations belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral" (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 8). The science of mind cannot go beyond impressions to explain either the origin of impressions or the origin of mind itself; however, anatomists, and natural philosophers in general, may indeed examine the origin of our sensations. And because Hume's science of mind makes it clear that the content of *ideas* is exhausted by the content of impressions, it simply *follows* that there *cannot* be an *idea* of *external* existence. Indeed, Hume unambiguously characterizes the notion of an *external* existence that is specifically distinct from our perceptions, as "absurd" (T 1.4.2.2; SBN 188).[20]

Hume explicitly denies that we can have a specifically distinct idea of external or extra-mental existence (T 1.2.6.8–9; SBN 67), thus committing himself to an internal standpoint, which Hume identifies as preparation for the subjects of *Treatise* 1.3 (T 1.2.6.1; SBN 66). In *Treatise* 1.3, the "internal approach" is radicalized. The detailed discussion in the next sections of the role the senses and memory play in causal reasoning makes this fact about *Treatise* 1.3 evident, but here I shall just highlight some general features of the pronounced internal posture in *Treatise* 1.3.

The features of force and vivacity are merely introduced without interpretation in *Treatise* 1.1. They do not appear at all in *Treatise* 1.2, but they resurface in *Treatise* 1.3 as absolutely indispensable for Hume's whole account of causal reasoning and belief. In contrast to the theory introduced in *Treatise* 1.1, in *Treatise* 1.3 Hume portrays the difference between different kinds of perceptions *solely* in terms of force and vivacity (T 1.3.5.4–5; SBN 628, ,T 1.3.5.6–7; SBN 85, and T 1.3.7.5; SBN 96). Hume expressly rejects the idea that we have to suppose that sense impressions represent something outside the mind in order to understand causal reasoning, emphasizing instead the coherence of perceptions: "We may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses" (T 1.3.5.2; SBN 84). The same attitude is manifest when Hume examines the *causes* of causal beliefs. He writes, "There enters nothing into this operation of the mind [the mechanism that generates causal beliefs] but a present impression, a lively idea, and a relation or association in the fancy betwixt the impression and idea" (T 1.3.8.7; SBN 101). And in the passage that immediately follows, Hume deliberately sets aside the "external" point of view, which he refers to as the standpoint of "natural philosophy." I quote the passage in full:

> In order to put this whole affair in a fuller light, let us consider [the question of the causes of belief] as a question in natural philosophy, which we must determine by experience and observation. I suppose there is an object, which is present to my senses, and that other, whose existence I infer by reasoning, may be thought to influence each other by their particular powers or qualities; yet as the phenomenon of belief, which we

> at present examine, is merely internal, these powers or qualities, being entirely unknown, can have no hand in producing it. 'Tis the present impression, which is to be consider'd as the true and real cause of the idea, and of the belief which attends it. (T 1.3.8.8; SBN 101–2)

This passage starts with a hypothetical external approach from which we characterize the cause of the causal belief as an *object*—an extra-mental object—that is present to the senses. In his response, Hume forces us to adopt an internal standpoint, pronouncing the phenomenon of causal belief "merely internal." From this internal point of view, the powers or qualities of extra-mental objects are "entirely unknown." The "true and real cause" of a causal belief, Hume maintains, is not the external object, but "the present impression."[21]

Hume's characterization of the present impression as the true and real cause of belief casts serious doubt on the thesis that causal beliefs are the product of the imagination. In the next section, I start with a detailed examination of the role of present impressions in causal reasoning, and I identify *force and vivacity* as the features in virtue of which present impressions play the causal role that they do in causal reasoning. I then discuss the role of *another* true and real cause of causal belief: memories. As we shall see, the true and real causes of causal beliefs are both the senses and memory, or *experience*.

2. The True and Real Causes of Causal Belief: Present Impressions and Memories

Hume insists throughout *Treatise* 1.3 that an object of the senses, or what he refers to in the context of causal reasoning as "the present impression," is an essential component of causal belief (T 1.3.8.7–8, 11; SBN 101–3). The present impression even figures in Hume's definition of belief, according to which a "belief may be most accurately defin'd, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION" (T 1.3.7.5; SBN 96). What exactly is the role of the present impression in belief, and why is it so important?

Barry Stroud argues that the present impression is necessary for belief because "[a]n actual belief in the unobserved arises only when we make a transition from something observed or perceived."[22] More recently, David Owen identifies Hume's "beliefs in unobserved existents," where "upon having an impression of something existing or occurring, one comes to believe in the existence or occurrence of something else," as the "central case of belief" in Hume (*Hume's Reason*, 163–64). What is important here is that Stroud identifies the present impression with the "observed or perceived," and Owen identifies the present impression with what is "perceived to exist or to occur." The following discussion supports and illustrates these interpretations.

Having arrived at the conclusion that a customary transition is necessary for belief, Hume explicitly raises the question of whether a present impression is absolutely necessary for belief (T 1.3.8.11; SBN 103). He designs a thought experiment in which we substitute the present impression with an *idea* to see if there is a transition to a belief. Thus, consider the difference between seeing me throw an apple up in the air, which is followed in your mind by the belief that it will fall, with merely *imagining* me throw an apple up in the air, which is *not* followed by the belief that an apple will fall. The observation, the present impression, seems necessary for the belief; the imagining or the idea imagined does not prompt belief. Hence, Hume concludes that the present impression is "absolutely requisite" for the production of belief (T 1.3.8.11; SBN 103).

But the present impression plays another crucial role in Hume's account of causal reasoning. It is the source of the force and vivacity necessary for causal belief. Hume exerts considerable effort to convince us of the plausibility of what is a new mechanism of transfer of force and vivacity in the *Treatise.* This mechanism is so significant that Hume establishes it as a novel, "general maxim in the science of human nature, *that when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity*" (T 1.3.8.2; SBN 98). The *first* part of this maxim refers to the known mechanism of association. A present impression transports the mind to ideas associated with it through resemblance, contiguity and causation. Hume presents similar examples in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*. The resemblance between an observed picture of a friend and my idea of my friend transports or shifts my consciousness to the idea of my friend. The relation of contiguity explains how as my driving brings me closer to home, my consciousness is transported to the idea of home. The *second* part of the maxim informs us of the new mechanism involving a transfer of force and vivacity from a present impression to an associated idea. What does the transfer accomplish? Hume explains that the "immediate presence" of certain objects "render [their related ideas] more present to us" (EHU 5.16; SBN 52). He remarks that whereas the "thinking of any object readily transports the mind to what is contiguous," it is only "the actual presence of an object, that transports it with a superior vivacity" (EHU 5.17; SBN 52 and T 1.3.8.5; SBN 100). This superior vivacity of the idea, he claims, renders the objects of the ideas more present to us. In his example of the associative relation of causation, Hume describes how "superstitious people are fond of relics of saints and holy men" which they use "to enliven their devotion" (EHU 5.18; SBN 53 and T 1.3.8.6; SBN 101). Through the relic of a saint we "learn the reality of his existence," and this reality strengthens devotion (EHU 5.18; SBN 53 and T 1.3.8.6; SBN 101).

These passages suggest something very important about the two roles we have discovered for the present impression in causal reasoning, namely that the second role as a *source* of vivacity, although distinct, depends crucially on the first role as

a *perceived or actual presence*. Hume indicates that the transfer of vivacity from "the actual presence of an object" renders the associated ideas (or their objects) more present or more real to us. This suggests that the vivacity of a present impression captures and conveys, phenomenologically, whatever it is that distinguishes seeing something from merely thinking about it. This suggestion is reinforced in the *Enquiry* where Hume explains that *ideas* might gain such force and vivacity "that we could *almost* say that we feel or see" the objects of memory or the imagination (EHU 2.1; SBN 17). In the same paragraph, Hume compares impressions with the effects of poetry, and he remarks that poetry "can never paint natural objects in such a manner as to make the description *be taken for the real* landscape" (EHU 2.1; SBN 17, my emphasis). The present impression, then, conveys a *sense of presentness* or a *sense of reality*, and when it transfers a share of its vivacity to an associated idea, it communicates to it this sense of reality or presentness.

Earlier in the *Treatise* where he lays out the elements of causal reasoning, Hume appears to identify the vivacity of the senses and memory with *belief*. The passage is intriguing and suggestive:

> Thus it appears that the *belief* or *assent*, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; and that this alone distinguishes them from the imagination. To believe is in this case to feel an immediate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in the memory. 'Tis merely the force and liveliness of the perception which constitutes the first act of the judgment, and lays the foundation of that reasoning, which we build upon it, when we trace the relation of cause and effect. (T 1.3.5.7; SBN 86)[23]

The interpretation of force and vivacity as a sense of presentness or a sense of reality explains the close relation between vivacity and belief. Indeed, in the passage quoted above, the relation seems to be one of identity, and we can see why. To feel something as present is to believe in it. To believe in something is to take it as real. These sense-beliefs (and memory-beliefs based on them) are, as the passage above indicates, the foundation of *causal beliefs*.

The interpretations in the literature of the features of force and vivacity can be divided into two general camps. One endorses a functional reading. Trudy Govier and Stephen Everson independently defend a reading that gives primacy to the feature of *force* rather than *vivacity*.[24] On this reading, the difference between perceptions is captured in terms of functional role. Thus, to have greater force and vivacity means to have a stronger effect on the mind. The main problem with this reading is that it ignores the fact that force and vivacity are features that appear to us; they are phenomenological features.

The other reading seeks to render appearance to consciousness central to the interpretation of force and vivacity. Wayne Waxman identifies vivacity with *reality* or *verisimilitude*,[25] and for Francis Dauer vivacity conveys a *sense of presentedness*.[26] For reasons noted above, I side with the latter view, but I shall continue employing my phrase "sense of presentness" to characterize the vivacity of the objects of the senses and memory in particular because it is closer to Hume's own language. Hume employs the phrases "the actual presence of an object" (EHU 5.17; SBN 52 and T 1.3.8.5; SBN 100), and he refers to the vivacity that an idea acquires through transfer as the "superior vivacity of the idea," which "renders [the objects of the ideas] more present to us" (T 1.3.8.4; SBN 100).[27]

Although Hume spends a great deal of time stressing the importance of the present impression for causal belief, it becomes rather clear that the present impression is not sufficient for causal belief. The transfer of force and vivacity from a present impression to an idea takes place in *all* cases of association. Hume is not very explicit about this, but we must distinguish the association of ideas through causation from causal reasoning. Hume's example, mentioned above, of superstitious people is an example of an association of ideas that does not generate belief in the unobserved or the future (T 1.3.8.6; SBN 101). In the *Enquiry*, Hume discusses the case where my seeing the son of a friend revives my idea of the friend through causal association but without generating belief (EHU 5.19; SBN 53). What Hume needs to explain, then, is the difference between associations triggered by a present impression where there is a transfer of force and vivacity to the associated ideas but no belief and causal reasoning, in which there is also an associated idea and a transfer of force and vivacity from a present impression to the associated idea but which results in belief. Hume is adamant that "belief arises only from causation" (T 1.3.9.2; SBN 107).[28] This strongly suggests that something besides the present impression is involved in cases of belief.

Kemp Smith argues that Hume does not have an account of what that something else is. He remarks that, somewhat ironically, Hume attempts to convince us of the plausibility of his new mechanism of transfer of force and vivacity by appealing to its widespread application, but then he is unable to explain what is distinctive about causal reasoning, such that it outputs *belief* (*Philosophy of David Hume*, 378–83). However, when Hume explicitly articulates this objection, the first thing he does is appeal to the role of memory (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 107–8). In the following discussion of the role of memory in causal reasoning, we shall see that Hume's answer to the question of the distinctive origin of causal belief was in place before he raised the objection in *Treatise* 1.3.9.

When Hume describes the role experience plays in causal reasoning, he includes memories—in particular, memories of constant conjunctions—as essential components of *experience*. He begins by describing experience:

> The nature of experience is this. We remember to have had frequent instances of the existence of one species of objects; and also remember, that the individuals of another species of objects have always attended them, and have existed in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them. . . . In all those instances, from which we learn the conjunction of particular causes and effects, both the causes and effects have been perceiv'd by the senses, and are remembered. (T 1.3.6.2; SBN 87)

He continues by pointing out that causal reasoning is different in this respect: "in all cases, wherein we reason concerning them, there is only one perceiv'd or remember'd, and the other is supply'd in conformity to our past experience" (T 1.3.6.2; SBN 87). This is a depiction of how we move from a position where we are not able to draw certain kinds of inferences to a position where we are able to do so. In the *Abstract*, Hume introduces the figure of *Adam* to illustrate the point that reason alone cannot generate causal inferences. Adam's reasoning capacities are fully in place; he only lacks experience. Because of this, the present impression of an apple falling does not give rise in Adam's mind to the belief that the apple will be on the ground shortly. Memories of constant conjunctions are absolutely essential to causal inferences and to beliefs in the unobserved.

The importance of memories of constant conjunctions, or past experience, for causal reasoning is evident to even the most superficial reader of Hume, but what is much less obvious is that in causal reasoning, and only in causal reasoning, memories of constant conjunctions or past experience are *necessary for the transfer of force and vivacity* from present impression to associated idea. Before we examine the evidence for and the significance of this claim, it is important to note the difference between what Hume calls "memory" and what he often refers to as "past experience."

Unlike the temporal present, which has only one manifestation in the mind, namely as a present impression, the presence of the past in the mind can take various forms. The past's *initial* manifestation in the mind is as a *memory*. Every past event that has an effect on the mind must first take the form of a memory. The memories that are relevant to the mechanism of causal reasoning that we are now considering are memories of *constant* conjunctions, but Hume suggests that when these constant conjunctions are indeed constant, these memories may become what we can call "imprinted." Such imprinted memories are what Hume often includes under the term "past experience." Imprinted memories are memories that play a role in the operation of causal reasoning without being consciously present to the mind. Hume illustrates this point with the case of a man "who stops short in his journey upon meeting a river" because he foresees the consequences—namely, that he will sink and suffocate. This man, call him *Moses*, has "knowledge of these consequences" thanks to "past experience," but

he does not reflect on the past to draw inferences and form beliefs (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 103–4). Instead, in Moses' mind, custom proceeds from "close connections": "the idea of sinking is so closely connected with that of water, and the idea of suffocating with that of sinking, that the mind makes the transition without the assistance of memory" (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 104). Whereas Adam's reasoning is reflective, involving the explicit appeal to memories of constant conjunctions, Moses' mind generates causal beliefs without calling these memories to consciousness. Hume remarks that in "the most establish'd and uniform conjunctions of causes and effects," such as "those of gravity, impulse, solidity, the mind never carries its view expressly to consider any past experience" (T 1.3.8.14; SBN 104). In such cases "custom operates before we have time for reflection" (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 104). And he notes, "past experience . . . may operate on our mind in such an insensible manner as never to be taken notice of, and may even in some measure be unknown to us" (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 103). Past experience, then, can include (conscious) memories and imprinted memories. From now on I shall employ the term "past experience" to refer to these two forms of memory.

Past experience is absolutely necessary for causal reasoning. That much is obvious. But what is less evident is that without past experience, the present impression does not transfer force and vivacity to the associated idea. Hume points out that although it is "the present impression, which is to be consider'd as the true and real cause of the [associated] idea, and of the belief [the force and vivacity] which attends it" (T 1.3.8.8; SBN 102) it is clear that "the present impression has not this effect by its own proper power and efficacy, and when consider'd alone, as a single perception, limited to the present moment" (T 1.3.8. 9; SBN 102). For the present impression to "cause" the idea and to transfer a share of its force and vivacity to the idea, we must have "observ'd the same impression in past instances, and have found it to be constantly conjoin'd with some other impression" (T 1.3.8.9; SBN 102). Past experience, Hume maintains, produces causal belief: "the belief, which attends the present impression . . . is produced by a number of past impressions and constant conjunctions" (T 1.3.8.10; SBN 102). Past experience both prompts the associated idea and is involved in the enlivenment of causal belief.

This is important because it reveals a difference between associations that enliven ideas but do not terminate in belief and causal reasoning, which does. Without past observations of constant conjunctions between *A*s and *B*s, or events of type *A* and *B*, the present impression of *A* does not transfer its force and vivacity to the idea of *B*. Of course, memory may also be involved in the other associations. But in causal reasoning what is necessary is that we have observed the relation in question, namely the constant conjunctions of the two objects (or, more accurately, kinds of object).

This is not the case with other relations, as Hume makes clear in the examples we discussed above from *Treatise* (1.3.8.4–6 SBN 99–101) and their *Enquiry*

versions, where ideas are enlivened by relations that took place in the historical past. To see why, consider the case where I am introduced to someone who *resembles* my cousin, and this leads me to think of my cousin. Clearly, I have a memory of my cousin, but I do not need to have observed the *resemblance* between these two people in the past, or the resemblance of any other people for that matter, in order for the present impression to transfer its vivacity to the idea of my cousin. And if the person I am introduced to resembles my idea of an imagined future colleague, then past observation is not necessary to enliven this imagined idea at all.[29] I shall return to a discussion of the difference between casual beliefs and ideas enlivened by association in section 3.

Hume identifies the mechanism that "proceeds from past repetition, without any new reasoning or conclusion" as custom. And he establishes it as "a certain truth, that all the belief, which follows upon any present impression, is deriv'd solely from that origin" (T 1.3.8.10; SBN 102). Causal beliefs follow from past repetition. The difference between associations where a present impression transfers force and vivacity to an idea *but* does not produce a belief and causal reasoning, where a present impression transfers force and vivacity *and* produces belief, lies solely in the role of past experience. Custom plays a role in causal beliefs but only insofar as it produces the transition from past experience to causal beliefs. In the next section, we refine the characterization of the relation between custom, experience, and causal belief. We shall see that causal beliefs are *necessarily* connected, through custom, to the *system* comprising the objects of the senses and memory. The main text we shall focus on, *Treatise* 1.3.9, also makes explicit the source of the normativity of experience and the justification of causal beliefs.

3. Experience and Causal Beliefs: Reality and Realities

The explicit question Hume poses at the outset of *Treatise* 1.3.9 concerns the distinct origin of causal beliefs as contrasted with other ideas that are enlivened by associations of resemblance and contiguity. In his reply, Hume does much more than address this question. He introduces a new way of thinking about the role of experience in determining causal beliefs. I quote his answer in full.

> 'Tis evident, that whatever is present to the memory, striking upon the mind with a vivacity, which resembles an immediate impression, must become of considerable moment in all the operations of the mind, and must easily distinguish itself above the mere fictions of the imagination. Of these impressions or ideas of the memory we form a kind of system comprehending whatever we remember to have been present, either to our internal perception or senses; and every particular of that system, join'd to the present impressions, we are pleas'd to call a *reality.* But the

> mind stops not here. For finding, that with this system of perceptions, there is another connected by custom, or if you will, by the relation of cause or effect, it proceeds to the consideration of their ideas; and as it feels that 'tis in a manner necessarily determin'd to view these particular ideas, and that the custom or relation, by which it is determin'd, admits not of the least change, it forms them into a new system, which it likewise dignifies with the title of *realities*. The first of these systems is the object of the memory and senses; the second of the judgment. (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 108)

This passage makes it clear that the senses, memory, and (causal) judgments have a special status within the mind. Memory and the senses form a system that is "reality" to the mind. Hume claims that the mind *likewise dignifies* the system of causal beliefs with the title of "realities," which suggests that both "realities" and "reality" are dignifying titles. But what is being recognized or acknowledged by these titles?

First, what is the source or nature of the special status of *memory* and *senses*? To answer this question Hume appeals to vivacity and its effect on the mind, that is, force. Elsewhere, Hume depicts the "native situation" of the mind as "indifference" (T 1.3.11.5; SBN 125), and he remarks that "images of everything . . . are always wandering in the mind" (T 1.3.10.2; SBN 119). Memories distinguish themselves from other images or "idle conceptions," in that memories have a vivacity "which resembles an immediate impression," and this vivacity "becomes of considerable moment in all the operations of the mind" (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 108). Memories thus distinguish themselves "above the mere fictions of the imagination" (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 108). Hume stresses the idea that because the force and vivacity of memory is "most conspicuous," "our confidence in the veracity of that faculty is the greatest imaginable, and equals in many respects the assurance of a demonstration" (T 1.3.13.19; SBN 153). And in his response to his own question concerning the "authority" of the system of causal reasoning, Hume appeals to the "belief, which attends our memory," which is "of the same nature with that, which is deriv'd from our [causal] judgments" (T 1.3.13.20, SBN 119). Hume had already, as we saw, identified the force and vivacity of the objects of memory and the senses with a belief. In an earlier passage he said, "To believe is in this case to feel an immediate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in the memory. 'Tis merely the force and liveliness of the perception which constitutes the first act of the judgment" (T 1.3.5.7; SBN 86).

All these texts converge on the following thesis: The senses and memory have a special status within the mind because of their force and vivacity. Thus, Hume explains, the mind collects memory perceptions "into a kind of system" which it joins to the present impressions and calls each a "reality" (T 1.3.9.3, SBN 108). "Reality" is the name of the components of the *system* of memory and sense

perceptions that are believed by the mind. And this system of perceptions called "reality" is *experience*—the experience necessary for causal beliefs to arise in the mind. To see this, recall the account of "the nature of experience" that Hume provides when he asserts "'Tis therefore by EXPERIENCE only, that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another" (T 1.3.6.2; SBN 87). The account articulates the role of memory and the present impression (or the first system of reality) as it generates the inference to the unobserved. I shall later argue, however, that this is not Hume's *final* conception of reality or experience; in the appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume recognizes the need to include the element of *coherence*.

Second, why are *causal beliefs* dignified with the title of "realities"? Hume explains that the mind discovers that the first system is connected to another system through custom, the mechanism that brings past experience to bear on the present and generates causal beliefs. Through custom, past experience "determines" which ideas arise from the imagination and acquire the force and vivacity necessary to be beliefs. The objects of causal beliefs, then, form a system that is dignified with the title of "realities" because causal beliefs are determined by the first system (the system of reality). This determination, I submit, consists of the combined effect of past experience and a present impression in the production of causal beliefs; in particular, causal beliefs acquire their constitutive force and vivacity from a present impression that is embedded in a system that contains remembered conjunctions.[30]

The discussion that follows Hume's account of the two systems in *Treatise* 1.3.9.3 (SBN 108) elaborates on the nature of the special status that the senses, memory, and causal beliefs enjoy within the mind. Hume first discusses ideas enlivened by other principles of association in relation to the two systems of realities, explicitly addressing the question of the difference between these ideas and causal beliefs. Surprisingly, Hume allows that some of these enlivened ideas might be included in the system of realities, but he manages to draw important distinctions between them and causal beliefs. In the remainder of *Treatise* 1.3.9 and in *Treatise* 1.3.10, Hume goes on to examine other beliefs, outlining the difference between unjustified beliefs and causal beliefs, and this discussion reinforces his claims about the special epistemic status of experience and causal beliefs. I start with ideas enlivened by association.

Hume distinguishes ideas enlivened by association into two groups: ideas that are included in the system of realities and those that are not. He offers the following example of the latter: "A poet, no doubt, will be the better able to form a strong description of the *Elysian* fields, that he prompts his imagination by the view of a beautiful meadow or garden" (T 1.3.9.5; SBN 109). Hume claims that in cases such as this, "the related object," or the object prompted by the imagination, "is but feign'd." What he means by "feign'd" is important. Clearly the idea of the Elysian fields is an imaginary idea, but the idea of the object we believe to exist in

causal reasoning is also supplied by the imagination. However, Hume claims that the idea of the Elysian fields is *feigned* because it is related to the present impression (the meadow) "arbitrarily, and of mere good-will and pleasure" (T 1.3.9.6; SBN 109). Such associated objects have an influence on the mind that is "very feeble and uncertain" (T 1.3.9.6; SBN 109). In contrast, casual beliefs are "fixt and unalterable," and "each impression draws along with it a precise idea, which takes its place in the imagination, as something solid and real, certain and invariable" (T 1.3.9.7; SBN 110). Causal beliefs are not arbitrarily associated; past experience plays an essential role in the determination of the new idea and the transfer of force and vivacity from a present impression to this idea. It is because causal beliefs are authored by experience that they take place in the mind as "something solid and real, certain and invariable" (T 1.3.9.7; SBN 110).

The enlivened ideas that do not arise from the relation of cause and effect but *are* still included in the system of realities involve, by contrast, objects that are not feigned: seeing a picture of a friend and thinking of the friend is such a case (T 1.3.8.3; SBN 99). And the example Hume offers of a man "whose memory presents him with a lively image of the *Red-Sea*" (*Treatise* 1.3.9.9; SBN 110) suggests that in these cases there is an association between a present impression and *a memory*. It makes sense, then, that Hume includes this kind of association within his systems of realities. In particular, Hume includes them in the *second* "system of realities" (T 1.3.9.5; SBN 109), and he distinguishes them from causal beliefs in various ways. Most importantly, these enlivened memories do not issue from the association of a past experience with a present impression; they are *not* determined by past experience in this way.[31]

I turn now to Hume's discussion of other kinds of beliefs and opinions. These are beliefs Hume disapproves of, and what is distinctive about these beliefs is that their vivacity issues not from experience or from reality but from other sources. When Hume discusses the effects of "education" or indoctrination, he writes, "All those opinions and notions of things, to which we have been accustom'd from our infancy, take such deep root, that 'tis impossible for us, by all the powers of reason and experience, to eradicate them" (T 1.3.9.17; SBN 116). He continues, "Here we must not be contented with saying, that the vividness of the idea produces the belief: We must maintain that they are individually the same. The frequent repetition of any idea infixes it in the imagination" (T 1.3.9.17; SBN 116). The process of indoctrination mimics the original process of repetition, or observation of *constant* conjunctions, that gives rise to causal beliefs. But it is importantly different. The *source* of the vivacity of indoctrinated beliefs is the sheer repetition of any idea. In contrast, the vivacity of causal beliefs arises from the system of the senses and memory, or from experience. Indoctrinated beliefs, as Hume stresses again later, are "not deriv'd from experience" (T 1.3.12.23; SBN 140).

Another case of unjustified belief is belief in the miraculous. Hume describes the process by which ideas of miracles become enlivened, noting that "[t]he first astonishment, which naturally attends miraculous relations [of quacks and projectors], spreads itself over the whole soul, and so vivifies and enlivens the idea, that it resembles the inferences we draw from experience" (T 1.3.10.4; SBN 120). While the enlivened ideas produced by tales of the miraculous resemble the inferences we draw from experience, the vivacity of the former ideas is the effect of *astonishment*. The vivacity of these ideas does not issue from experience or because of their relations to the system of memories and a present impression.

Hume also describes the difference between causal beliefs and the believed fictions of madness or folly:

> When the imagination, from any extraordinary ferment of the blood and spirits, acquires such a vivacity as disorders all its powers and faculties, there is no means of distinguishing betwixt truth and falshood, but every loose fiction or idea, having the same influence as the impressions of the memory, or the conclusions of the judgment is receiv'd on the same footing, and operates with equal force on the passions. A present impression and a customary transition are now no longer necessary to enliven our ideas. Every chimera of the brain is as vivid and intense as any of the inferences, which we formerly dignif'd with the name of conclusions concerning matters of fact, and sometimes as the present impressions of the senses. (T 1.3.10.9; SBN 123)

In the case of madness, the force and vivacity of ideas derive not from an essential connection with "the impressions of memory" or the present impression but from an "extraordinary ferment of the blood and spirits." In an episode of madness, we are unable to distinguish causal beliefs from "chimeras of the brain," and "there is no means of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood." By contrast, when ideas are enlivened by the system of the senses and memory, they signify truth or reality. I shall come back to a discussion of the fictions of madness in the next section.

The above explanation also illuminates the case Hume considers of the person who hears an articulate voice in the dark and "is tormented he knows not why, with the apprehension of spectres in the dark" (T 1.4.4.1; SBN 225–26). Hume contrasts this case with someone who hears the articulate voice and "concludes somebody to be near him" (T 1.4.4.1; SBN 225). Why does Hume judge the latter to reason "justly," but not the one who fears ghosts? Hume admits that we might think of the fear of ghosts prompted by a voice in the dark as a "natural" response, albeit only in the sense that a malady is also said to be natural. But a glaring problem with the specter-believer is that the idea of the ghost is not caused by experience or the system of *memories* and present impressions. It is, indeed, the *present impression* of

the articulate voice in the dark that prompts the fear of ghosts, but the memory of ghosts—in particular, the memory of a conjunction of articulate voices in the dark and ghosts—is conspicuously missing. Thus, the fear of ghosts does not issue from experience, or the system of memories and the senses.[32]

Hume also compares the fictions of poetry with causal beliefs: "Where the vivacity arises from a customary conjunction with a present impression; tho' the imagination may not, in appearance, be so much mov'd; yet there is always something more forcible and real in its actions, than in the fervours of poetry and eloquence. . . . [S]uch fictions are connected with nothing that is real" (T 1.3.10.10–11; SBN 631). The vivacity that arises from a customary conjunction endows the actions of the mind with more reality; in contrast, the fictions of poetry are not connected with the real. Once again, the key difference between the (mere) products of the imagination and causal beliefs lies in the *source* of their vivacity.

Referring to the imagination, Hume states in the appendix, "it is impossible, that that faculty can ever, of itself, reach belief" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629).[33] As we know, in causal reasoning the imagination supplies the idea of the object whose existence we believe in, so when Hume claims that the imagination is unable, of itself, to reach belief, he can only mean that the imagination cannot be the source of the force and vivacity requisite for causal belief. But Hume also claims that "the vivacity produc'd by the fancy is in many cases greater than that which arises from custom and experience" (T 1.3.10.8; SBN 123). The imagination cannot reach belief, but not because it has *insufficient* vivacity: in many cases, such as the fictions we discussed above, its products have greater degrees of vivacity than ideas produced by experience. The difference between beliefs produced by experience and beliefs produced by the imagination is not a greater degree of vivacity but the *source* of vivacity.

In the appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume admits to being unable to settle on a description of the phenomenology of casual belief, but when he turns to the *source* of "the firmness and strength of conception," he announces, "this I do not esteem a difficult task." He continues, "The transition from a present impression, always enlivens and strengthens any idea. When any object is presented, the idea of its usual attendant immediately strikes us, as something real and solid. 'Tis felt, rather than conceiv'd, and approaches the impression, from which it is deriv'd, in its force and influence" (T App. 9; SBN 627). Here Hume is referring to the process of causal reasoning, where the presence of an object elicits the idea of its "usual attendant." The *source* of the vivacity of causal belief is experience. Without experience there is no "usual attendant" and no transfer of vivacity.

In these texts Hume is not merely describing the various mechanisms that generate beliefs and opinions, he is evaluating them based on their origin. The source of the beliefs and opinions Hume disapproves of is not "truth" (T 1.3.10.9; SBN 123) or what is "real" (T 1.3.10.11; SBN 631) or "reality" (T 1.3.10.10; SBN 631)

as opposed to "fiction" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629). In contrast, causal beliefs, are "dignif'd with the name of conclusions concerning matters of fact" because of their connection with experience, which for the mind is "reality" (T 1.3.10.9; SBN 123).

4. Experience or Reality

In this paper, I have argued that causal beliefs are justified (in the sense of being dignified with the title of realities) because they arise from experience. Experience plays a normative role in Hume's philosophy in virtue of the fact that memories of constant conjunctions and impressions of the senses form a system that the mind dignifies with the title of *reality*, and it does this because memory and the senses convey a sense of presentness, because they are believed, and because they strongly affect all the operations of the mind. Because the normativity of experience appears to rest exclusively on the force and vivacity of the objects of memory and the senses, we must consider in this section an objection that arises from considerations involving the exceptions to the force and vivacity rule which Hume himself acknowledges both in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*. The answer to this challenge will lead us to consider other, non-paradigmatic cases of causal reasoning in which experience is not constant, or "uniform and of a piece" (T 1.3.12.6; SBN 133), and in which general rules and reflection on general rules play a central role.

When Macbeth exclaims, "Is this a dagger which I see before me?" the dagger seems very present and real to him, and this sense of presentness affects the operations of his mind. Does the dagger belong to Macbeth's system of reality? At the beginning of the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*, Hume acknowledges exceptions to the rule that high force and vivacity always correlate with what we ordinarily recognize as the objects of the senses (T 1.1.1.1 ; SBN 2 and EHU 2.1 ; SBN 17). The exceptions were cases of disease, dreams, and madness. Hume grants, as we have seen, that in an episode of madness "every loose fiction or idea, [has] the same influence as the impressions of the memory . . . and operates with equal force on the passions" (T 1.3.10.9; SBN 123). In madness, "[e]very chimera of the brain is as vivid and intense as any of the inferences, which we formerly dignif'd with the name of conclusions concerning matters of fact, and sometimes as the present impressions of the senses" (T 1.3.10.9; SBN 123).

What is *experience* to the mind? What is the mind's *reality*? If the mind's reality is defined by a sense of presentness or belief and its effect on the operations of the mind, then Hume would be committed to including Macbeth's dagger and many other undesirable items within people's systems of reality. The question, then, is whether the mind, from the *internal* point of view that matters to causal reasoning, possesses the resources for Macbeth to recognize that the dagger he seems to see does not belong in the system of reality. Can Hume make sense of the assertion that some very vivid and forceful perception, some belief that strongly affects

the operations of the mind, is *in fact* or *in reality* a mere idea or a fiction of the imagination, without appealing to an external or naïve conception of experience?

Although Hume insists that different kinds of perceptions differ in *feeling* this thesis cannot help us address the problem we are confronting. Comparing the faculties of the imagination and memory, Hume asserts: "those faculties are only distinguish'd by the different *feeling* of the ideas they present" (T 1.3.5.5; SBN 628). And he continues, "the ideas of the memory are more *strong* and *lively* than those of the fancy" (T 1.3.5.5; SBN 628), and the "*belief* or *assent*, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; . . . this alone distinguishes them from the imagination" (T 1.3.5.7; SBN 86). In the appendix, Hume insists that a causal belief "*feels* different from a fictitious idea, that the fancy alone presents to us" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629), which difference Hume explains as a "superior *force*, or *vivacity*" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629). He continues, remarking that a causal belief is "an act of the mind, which renders realities more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in thought" (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629). Although Hume is here comparing memories and causal beliefs with ideas or fictions of the imagination, nowhere in Book 1 or in the appendix does he take these ideas or fictions of the imagination to be what we call *hallucinations*—what Macbeth is experiencing. The only exception is the case of madness or folly. Otherwise, when Hume speaks of ideas or fictions of the imagination in *Treatise* 1.3 and the appendix, he refers to things like the "loose reveries of a castle-builder" (T Appendix 4; SBN 625) or "*simple conception*" (T Appendix 3; SBN 624 and T Appendix 8; SBN 627) or to reading a book "as a romance" as opposed to a "true history" (T 1.3.7.8; SBN 97). In all these cases, Hume appeals to the difference in feeling between belief and what we have no doubt is a mere idea of the imagination.

Before explaining how Hume deals with this objection, it is crucial that we describe the challenge case very carefully. First, we need to distinguish the case of Macbeth's dagger, an instance of a *transient* madness, from the case of permanent madness. If the question is: how does a completely mad person know that he is mad? How can he distinguish reality from fiction? The answer is that he cannot, and this is true regardless of what conception of experience we endorse. So, our problem concerns *fleeting* states of madness or folly (or fleeting states of disease). Here we might ask Hume: how can Macbeth realize that the dagger, which is very present to him and affects the operations of his mind, is not real?

The solution depends on the fact that in *Treatise* 1.3.9, what are dignified are not single perceptions, but systems. Hume explains that the mind collects memory perceptions (because of their vivacity) and joins them to present impressions and *then* dignifies each element of the system as a reality. *Reality* is the honorary title of items in a system. Strictly speaking, then, we do not "dignify" any *single* perception with the title of *reality*. While this does not answer the objection on its own,

it does lead to a more careful framing of the question: Since no perceptions are considered realities except insofar as they are members of a system, how does the mind know that "the memories" or "the present impressions" it collects into its system of reality are proper candidates for membership in that system?

Hume addresses this worry in the section of the appendix that he directs to be inserted immediately after his discussion of the fictions of madness or folly in *Treatise* 1.3, a fact that suggests that the difficulty we are considering is one that occupied Hume and that he deemed in need of clarification. The appendix begins with a statement of the terms of the problem: "We may observe this is common both to poetry and madness, that the vivacity they bestow on the ideas is not deriv'd from the particular situation or connexions of the objects of these ideas, but from the present temper and disposition of the person" (T 1.3.10.10; SBN 630). An idea enlivened by poetry, Hume emphasizes, "never has the same *feeling* with that which arises in the mind, when we reason, tho' even upon the lowest species of probability. . . . [T]he *feelings* of the passions are very different when excited by poetical fictions, from what they are when they arise from belief and reality" (T 1.3.10.10; SBN 630–31, emphases in original). Hume adds, however, that the difference in feeling between "poetical enthusiasm, and a serious conviction" "proceeds in some measure from reflection and *general rules*" (T 1.3.10.11; SBN 631). In particular, Hume says, "We observe, that the vigour of conception, which fictions receive from poetry and eloquence, is a circumstance merely accidental, of which every idea is equally susceptible; and that such fictions are connected with nothing that is real" (T 1.3.10.11; SBN 631). Hume continues:

> A like reflection on *general rules* keeps us from augmenting our belief upon every encrease of the force and vivacity of our ideas. Where an opinion admits of no doubt, or opposite probability, we attribute to it full conviction. . . . 'Tis thus the understanding corrects the appearances of the senses, and makes us imagine, that an object at twenty foot distance seems even to the eye as large as one of the same dimensions at ten. (T 1.3.10.12; SBN 632)

Hume does not assert that ideas enlivened by madness or folly differ in *feeling* from causal beliefs or memories or present impressions. On the contrary, he admits that within the state of temporary madness, fictions and loose ideas of the imagination feel real, so there is no way of distinguishing truth from falsehood merely by feeling. But if the madness is only temporary, Macbeth should be able at some point to reflect on general rules and determine that the dagger was merely a fiction of the imagination. In reflection, he realizes that "the vivacity [of his idea is] not deriv'd from the particular situation or connexions of the objects of these ideas, but from the [past] temper and disposition of [his] person" (T 1.3.10.10; SBN 630). He understands that the fiction "was merely accidental" and connected with

"nothing that is real" (T 1.3.10.11; SBN 631). After his episode of madness, Macbeth recognizes that his emotions were in total disarray due to obsession. The dagger is no longer present, and he knows from experience that bodies do not come in and out of existence because no object has ever before mysteriously appeared or disappeared before his very eyes.

The above response does not entail that every vivid and forceful perception is "inspected" by the mind with the application of general rules. It does entail, however, that there is always some sort of basic *assessment for coherence*; when new lively and forceful perceptions *cohere* with what is already in the mind, in particular with what is in the systems of realities, they are accepted as members of the system. Perhaps this is what Hume means in his rather cryptic comment that "[w]e may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses" (T 1.3.5.2; SBN 84). Hume does not, unfortunately, elaborate of how the mind assesses coherence and what exactly coherence means, and the examination of these complex questions is beyond the scope of this paper. But Hume does say more about general rules and their role in the formation of both justified and unjustified beliefs, and I conclude by commenting on these subjects briefly.

The kind of justified belief we have been considering in this paper is the paradigm case of a causal belief that arises from constant experience (either with reflection, although *not* with reflection *on general rules*, as in the case of Adam, or immediately and without reflection as in the case of Moses). But there is also belief that arises from observation of *frequent* conjunctions of objects, and Hume refers to these frequent conjunctions as "*imperfect* experience" (T 1.3.12.25; SBN 142). Hume also recognizes cases of probable reasoning from "*contrary* causes" and from analogy (T 1.3.12.25; SBN 142). These "kinds of probabilities," Hume says, are "receiv'd by philosophers, and allow'd to be reasonable foundations of belief and opinion" (T 1.3.13.1; SBN 143). These beliefs seem to be justified because they are *proportional to the evidence or experience*. They are justified in the same way that (perfect) causal beliefs are, by experience.

"Imperfect beliefs," Hume remarks, can arise "*directly* from habit" (T 1.3.12.7; SBN 133), and because they arise directly from "imperfect" experience, they are "naturally" proportional to the experience. Thus, Hume refers to a "hesitating belief" (1.3.12.6; SBN 132) or an "imperfect belief" (T 1.3.12.12; SBN 135). Justified beliefs can also arise from cases involving the operation of "*contrary* causes" (T 1.3.12.25; SBN 142) which might also involve "custom, and the appeal to *general rules*" (T 1.3.12.24; SBN 141).

General rules can also be involved in the formation of *unjustified* beliefs. Hume draws a distinction between the "rash" application of general rules by the vulgar and the reflective employment of general rules by "wise men" (T 1.3.13.7–12; SBN 146–50). Wise men follow Hume's rules for judging causes and effects (T 1.3.15; SBN

173–76). What is the mark of *rash* application of general rules, and what kinds of beliefs issue from rash application of general rules? We apply general rules rashly when we issue general judgments (or judgments about the *nature* of a thing) based on *too limited* a pool of observations. Hume's example of a rash application of general rules is *prejudice* (T 1.3.13.7; SBN 146). I apply general rules *rashly* when I judge, based on too limited observations that "An *Irishman* cannot have wit" (T 1.3.13.7; SBN 146). Unjustified belief, then, is belief that is not proportional to the evidence or to experience. I shall comment on the factor of "(too) limited observations" in a moment.

The corrective for rash application of general rules is "wise" application of general rules. This is the last kind of *justified* belief; it arises from reflecting on and following Hume's prescribed rules for judging causes and effects. Reflection on general rules to achieve justified belief about general judgments, or judgments concerning the nature of things, becomes necessary when experience is too complex—which is always: "There is no phenomenon in nature, but what is compounded and modify'd by so many different circumstances, that in order to arrive at the decisive point, we must carefully separate whatever is superfluous, and enquire by new experiments, if every particular circumstance of the first experiment was essential to it" (T 1.3.15.11; SBN 175). Hume's rules allow us to separate the essential (or the conjunctions that are *constant*) from the superfluous and to form a belief that is proportional to the evidence or experience.

My last point is perhaps obvious but nonetheless fundamental: experience (or the "evidence") is *always* limited. First, the psychological mechanism of causal reasoning works on a personal level, at the level of the mind, which is *limited* and *individual*. The *constant* experience or reality that generates causal beliefs is always more narrow than what is *possible* to experience. Because of these personal constraints, causal reasoning can give rise to *justified* beliefs, but it does not guarantee true belief. One can arrive at justified belief through exposure to relevant constant conjunctions but fail to achieve "true" belief if one's past experience happens not to be representative of the whole. This is perhaps why Hume speaks of "truth or what is taken for such" in the *Abstract* (T Abstract 22; SBN 654) and why in the *Enquiry* he refers to "realities, or what is taken for such" (EHU 5.12; SBN 49).

The culmination of Hume's discussion of casual reasoning in the *Treatise* is his section entitled "Rules by which to judge of causes and effects" (T 1.4.15; SBN 173–76). These rules can remedy some of the constraints of limited, personal experience. They allow us to move from justified belief *toward* the goal of science, namely justified true belief. Hume's rules are meant "to direct our judgment, in philosophy" (T 1.3.15.11; SBN 175). They impose the demand on philosophers and scientists to broaden the scope of their observations or the experience that informs causal belief. Their testimony, in turn, allows other minds to expand their systems of realities, to populate their world beyond their own personal experiences.

Of course, even wise men make mistakes, and there are always *future* observations that force adjustment of the systems of reality.

Thus we arrive at the fundamental difference between an internal conception of reality and the ordinary, external conception of reality. On the internal conception, our *truth* or *reality* is always provisional, resting on limited experience. On the external conception, truth or reality is complete and determinate in itself; it is merely our *experience* and our *beliefs* that are limited and provisional.

Conclusion

Kemp Smith was perhaps the first to argue that experience plays a normative role in Hume's account of causal reasoning. In this paper, I offer a novel interpretation of how experience plays a normative role in causal reasoning. I argue that the concept of experience that is operative in Hume's account of causal reasoning is non-committal with respect to the question of the relation between the senses and an external world. What is necessary for the justification of causal belief are sense-beliefs and memory-beliefs. Hume identifies the *force and vivacity of* the senses and memory as the source of the normative status of experience when he dignifies the system of the senses and memory with the title of reality. Sense and memory perceptions convey a sense of presentness to the mind and thus have a strong effect on the operations of the mind. However, other perceptions can also, under certain circumstances, convey a sense of presentness and strongly affect the mind. Hume then refines the concept of experience by appealing to the role of coherence. Sense and memory perceptions both have high force and vivacity and cohere with other perceptions that have high force and vivacity. The justification of causal beliefs always rests on their connection with sense and memory perceptions, or what is experience or reality to us. Causal beliefs are justified because experience determines the idea supplied by the imagination and experience is the source of their essential force and vivacity.

NOTES

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1 References to the *Treatise* are to David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), hereafter cited as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph numbers, and to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), hereafter cited as "SBN" followed by page number.

2 Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 94.

3 David Owen, *Hume's Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 147. Henry Allison also aligns himself with this reading. See Henry E. Allison, *Custom and Reason in Hume: A Kantian Reading of the First Book of the* Treatise (Oxford University Press, 2008). For an excellent discussion of this position and its problems, see Louis Loeb, "Psychology, Epistemology, and Skepticism in Hume's Argument about Induction," *Synthese* 152 (2006): 321–38.

4 Louis Loeb, *Stability and Justification in Hume's* Treatise (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

5 Frederick Schmitt, *Knowledge and Belief* (London: Routledge, 1992).

6 Helen Beebee, *Hume on Causation* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

7 Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 81, 68–72.

8 William Edward Morris, "Belief, Probability and Normativity," in *The Blackwell Guide to Hume's* Treatise, ed. Saul Traiger (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 77–95.

9 Norman Kemp Smith and Don Garrett, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, 5th edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 382.

10 For an excellent discussion of the problems with Kemp Smith's position, see Loeb, *Stability and Justification*, 20–25.

11 Louis Loeb, "Integrating Hume's Accounts of Belief and Justification," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63 (2001): 279–303, 281.

12 Michael Williams, "The Unity of Hume's Philosophical Project," *Hume Studies* 30 (2004): 265–96, 269.

13 I am relying here on Hume's characterization of "the nature of experience" in *Treatise* 1.3.6.1, a passage that I shall discuss later in the paper.

14 Although I comment briefly on some texts from *Treatise* 1.4 in connection with my discussion of the normativity of experience in Hume's overall philosophy, it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer an adequate discussion of the relation between *Treatise* 1.3 and *Treatise* 1.4.

15 The phrase is "beyond what experience will justify" (T 1.3.9.12; SBN 113).

16 References to the first *Enquiry* are to David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), hereafter cited in the text as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph, and to *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, revised by P. H. Nidditch, 3rd

ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page number.

17 Hume remarks, "I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment" (T 1.4.2.56; SBN 217), emphasis in original). And in the following paragraph, he once again emphasizes the momentary and tentative character of his skeptical state by referring to the feelings or opinions "at this present moment" (T 1.4.2.57; SBN 218). He then expressly indicates that he will continue with the examination of "systems both ancient and modern" "going upon [the] supposition [that] . . . there is both an external and internal world" (T 1.4.2.57; SBN 218).

18 Janet Broughton argues that in *Treatise* 1.1 Hume occupies an ordinary or common sense standpoint and that he identifies the different kinds of perceptions in the same way we all do. Janet Broughton, "What does the Scientist of Man Observe?" *Hume Studies* 18 (1992): 155–68 and Janet Broughton, "Explaining General Ideas," *Hume Studies* 26 (2000): 279–89. Marjorie Grene offers a helpful discussion of Hume's realist attitude throughout the *Treatise* in "The Objects of the *Treatise*," *Hume Studies* 20 (1994): 163–77.

19 Don Garrett briefly characterizes Kemp Smith's interpretation in this way in his introduction to the 2005 edition of Kemp Smith's book (*The Philosophy of David Hume*, xxxiv). H. O. Mounce recognizes the providential view of nature as part of Scottish naturalism but argues that Kemp Smith's interpretation is conflicted as it adheres to both Scottish naturalism and empiricism, which are, in Mounce's view, incompatible schools of thought. Mounce develops the Scottish naturalism of Hume without the empirical constraints in H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 1999).

20 I provide a fuller account of the internal/external distinction and an interpretation of the external and its continued presence in the *Treatise* despite Hume's explicit commitment to the internal point of view in my paper: "The Concept of Body in Hume's *Treatise*," *ProtoSociology* 30 (2013): 206–20.

21 The paragraph that follows *Treatise* 1.3.8.8 qualifies this claim by discussing the distinctive role of memory or past experience in the transfer of force and vivacity from present impression to idea.

22 Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 70.

23 Hume comments that impressions excite passions and that "belief is almost absolutely requisite to the exciting of passions" (T 1.3.10.4; SBN 120). Hume elsewhere refers to the "belief, which attends our memory" (T 1.3.13.20; SBN 154).

24 Trudy Govier, "Variations on Force and Vivacity in Hume," *Philosophical Quarterly* 86 (1972): 44–52. Stephen Everson, "The Difference Between Feeling and Thinking," *Mind* 97 (1988): 401–13.

25 Wayne Waxman, *Hume's Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 33–41.

26 Francis W. Dauer, "Force and Vivacity in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*," *Hume Studies* 25 (1999): 83–99.

27 Although I cannot defend this adequately here, I note that there is evidence that for Hume the sense of presentness grounds the element of force and the functional

reading canvassed above. For instance, Hume writes, "'Tis evident, that whatever is present to the memory, striking upon the mind with a vivacity, which resembles an immediate impression, must become of considerable moment in all the operations of the mind (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 107–108). Here the vivacity of memory has a considerable effect on the operations of the mind.

28 In the rest of the paper, I shall continue to employ the term "causal reasoning" to refer to the mechanism that generates causal beliefs.

29 An anonymous reviewer has objected that since all ideas for Hume ultimately derive from impressions, observation is, indeed, involved in all ideas, including the ideas of the imagination. But it seems rather odd to claim that because my idea of a unicorn is ultimately derived from simple, or simpler, impressions, my idea of a unicorn is based on observation. For there is a crucial sense in which my idea of a unicorn is not arrived at through observation: I have never observed a unicorn. The claim that unicorns are imaginary animals rests on the fact that no one has ever observed one.

30 Recently Tim Black put forward an interesting account of the justification of causal beliefs that centers on the role of the determination of the mind in Hume's account of the systems of realities. (Tim Black, "Hume's Epistemic Naturalism in the *Treatise*," *Hume Studies* 37 [2011], 211–242.) Here I can only note a few important points of disagreement between Black's account and mine. Black writes, "According to Hume, certain ideas count as realities precisely because the imagination, in enlivening those ideas, speaks with a peculiar kind of authority, which in any particular case is characterized by the mind's feeling determined, by a relation that feels unchangeable, to move to a particular idea when it encounters some element of the first system of realities" (Black, 215). Black is right, in my view, to say that liveliness confers authority on ideas. But he is wrong to attribute the source of the authority conferring liveliness to the imagination rather than to the first system of reality. Also, for Black the exact locus of justification is "being determined by a relation that feels unchangeable," which he identifies with the causal relation (see, for instance, Black, 231). However, as I noted earlier, beliefs determined by education or indoctrination also feel unchangeable, but Hume does not therefore endorse them. Finally, in Black's account it is unclear why being determined by a relation that feels unchangeable would be justifying at all.

31 The example I gave earlier of my encountering for the first time someone who resembles my cousin makes it clear that no past observations of constant conjunction are necessary for the present impression to transfer force and vivacity to the memory.

32 I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing up this case.

33 The kind of belief in question here is causal, justified belief.