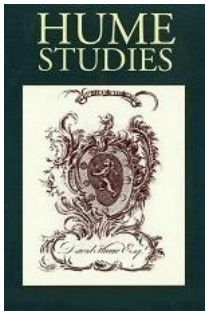

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Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to contribute to the understanding of Hume's account of the faculty of reason and to examine some implications for interpreting the broader arc of his philosophy. I argue that Hume develops his thinking about reason dialectically in Book 1 of the *Treatise* by creating a reflective dynamic between two different concepts of reason. The first concept of reason (reason1) is a narrow faculty that operates on ideas via intuition and demonstration. The second concept (reason2) is a broader imagination-dependent faculty that augments reason1 with the activity of probable reasoning. The dialectic between reason1 and reason2 leads Hume to skepticism, which is compounded by the fact that reason2 self-subverts if not constrained. Hume resolves these matters in the conclusion to Book 1 by conditionally committing to apply reason2 to matters of common life and social interest in a diffidently skeptical manner.

1. Introduction[1]

The purpose of this essay is to contribute to the understanding of Hume's account of the faculty of reason and to examine some implications for interpreting the broader arc of his philosophy. My argument concerning these matters is twofold. First, I argue that Hume develops his thinking about reason dialectically in Book 1 of the *Treatise* by creating a reflective dynamic between two different concepts of reason. Hume's first concept of reason—hereafter denoted as "reason1"—is a

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perception-based inferential faculty in the tradition of Locke. The activities of reason1 are intuition and demonstration. Intuition entails the perception of the coherence of the relationship between ideas; demonstration entails inferences from intuitive relations to other ideas by way of intuitive connections. Hume's second concept of reason—hereafter denoted as "reason2"—augments reason1 with the principles of the imagination that facilitate probable reasoning, our main belief-forming mechanism. The emergence of reason2 in Hume is a result of his reflection on the relationship between reason1 and probable reasoning. Second, I argue that the dual account of reason helps shed light on the nature of the subjects and spirit of Hume's post-Book 1 philosophy. The dialectical nature of the reason1-reason2 relationship initially "raises a specter of skepticism for Hume," as Don Garrett puts it (*Cognition and Commitment*, 95). That specter is compounded in T 1.4.1 (SBN 180–187) where Hume shows that even his practical conception of reason2 is not self-sustaining but self-subverting when not held in check. The combination of the reason1-reason2 dynamic *and* the skeptical potentialities of an unchecked use of reason2 leads Hume to characterize his true philosophy as a systematic yet diffidently skeptical investigation into matters of common or active life. Within that philosophy, Hume sees that a just deployment of reason lies between skeptical paralysis and dogmatism. This characterization comes forth clearly in the famous conclusion to Book 1 and also reprises in the first essay in his *First Enquiry*.

2. Literature Review

The claim that Hume has multiple concepts of reason in his work is not an original one and finds wide support in the secondary literature going back at least to Norman Kemp Smith (*Philosophy of David Hume*, 99–102). But despite the general support, there is not a consensus as to what exactly the different concepts of reason in Hume are, how they relate to one another, and what the implications of their relation are for his philosophy.

Barbara Winters argues that a univocal reading of reason in Hume, at least in the *Treatise*, is textually implausible given that it generates a large number of apparent contradictions both between Book 1 and Books 2 and 3, and within Book 1 ("Hume on Reason," 21–25). She reads two conceptions of reason in Hume: traditional reason and naturalistic reason. Traditional reason is a conception of reason that she associates with Cartesian rationalism. It is a faculty that proceeds on the basis of "indisputable arguments with undoubtable premises" (27). Winters says that Hume rejects this traditional conception of reason on explanatory grounds: "if reason were like this it would not determine our beliefs about the unobserved or the continued and distinct existence of objects" (28). Traditional reason is supplanted by a more modest and experiential kind of reason that adult

human-beings share with both children and animals: naturalistic reason. Naturalistic reason entails a "transition between ideas, resulting in belief, which occurs immediately and directly as the result of certain operations of the imagination" ("Hume on Reason," 32). Tom Beauchamp and Alexander Rosenberg corroborate Winters's analysis in *Hume and the Problem of Causation*. In their treatment of Hume's famous argument about probable reasoning in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94), they argue that Hume uses the word "reason" in a restricted, rationalistic sense; his broader sense of reason relates to "the sagacious reasoning from matters of fact," which seems to correspond to Winters's naturalistic conception of reason (*Problem of Causation*, 41). Annette Baier takes a similar line, saying that the concept of reason deployed early on in the *Treatise*, especially in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94) and its surrounding sections, is a rationalist reason of the demonstrative sciences, which is again replaced by naturalistic reason (*Progress of Sentiments*, 61). Baier reads the *Treatise* as a whole as partly a story of the transforming and development of naturalistic reason. By the end of the work she says, "reason joins the virtues, and may even be put high on the list" (280).

My interpretation of Hume on reason has some broad parallels to these readings, especially to Winters and Baier. Like them, I see Hume deploying what I call reason1—which does, however, differ in some respects from Winter's traditional reason and Baier's sense of the rationalistic reason of the demonstrative sciences—up through the latter chapters of part 3 of Book 1. When Hume says that probable reasoning is not a matter of reason, I too see him as claiming that it is not a matter of a reason1. And what I call reason2 broadly corresponds to Winter's naturalistic reason, which, especially as Baier argues, takes shape progressively through part 3 of Book 1.

But my reading deviates in two important respects. First, I agree with Garrett that the active concept of reason early on in Book 1, and especially in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94), is not a concept "that Hume intends to denigrate or abuse" (*Cognition and Commitment*, 92). Reason1 is not merely a rationalist foil, as it sometimes appears to be in Winters and Baier, and especially in Beauchamp and Rosenberg, but an orthodox conception of reason in line with Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that Hume takes seriously and works with on its own terms. Understanding it as such forces one to reconsider the weight of Hume's conclusion in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94) that probable reasoning cannot be explained by the faculty of reason1. In drawing this conclusion, Hume is departing from tradition and the widely-accepted Lockean conception of reason and exploring new grounds. His conclusion is not neatly written off by the substitution of a superior explanatory mechanism (reason2) but contributes to his skepticism, which culminates in the dramatic conclusion to Book 1. Contrary to Beauchamp and Rosenberg, I think that Hume *is* searching, in the wake of the conclusion of T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94) and his departure from tradition, for both an explanation and a justification for the

practice of probable inference (see *Problem of Causation*, 59). In referencing the analysis of T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94) in the conclusion of Book 1, for instance, Hume says,

> Can I be sure, that in **leaving all establish'd opinions** [e.g., regarding the Lockean conception of reason] I am following truth; and by what criterion I shall distinguish her, even if fortune shou'd at last guide me on her foot-steps? After the most accurate and exact of my reasonings, I can give **no reason** [i.e., no justification] why I shou'd strongly assent to it; and feel nothing but a *strong* propensity to consider objects *strongly* in that view, under which they appear to me. (T 1.4.7.3; SBN 265; italics original, boldface added)

Second, and relatedly, I do not think that these readings sufficiently account for the skepticism attached to and associated with Hume's formulation and use of the broader concept of reason2. I again see the skepticism that Hume associates with reason2 as a function both of reason2's dialectical relation to reason1 and its tendency to self-subvert when unconstrained. Winters hints at some skepticism that she associates with her concept of naturalistic reason, saying that "not only does the [naturalistic] reasoning human beings use have no connection with good arguments, but even this kind of reason is unable to cause action without the assistance of the passions" ("Hume on Reason," 33–34). But the implications are undeveloped in her article. In Baier's excellent interpretation of the dialectic of T 1.4.7, she rightly notes that in Hume's transformed philosophy after Book 1, which is in part driven by his analysis of reason2 and its associated skepticism, "ontology is subordinate to moral and practical questions" (*Progress of Sentiments*, 23). But she underestimates the impact of Hume's conclusion that "in all incidents of life we ought still to preserve our scepticism" (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270) on his subsequent manner of inquiring into moral and practical subject matters. Baier reads Hume in this conclusion as intimating a meta-skepticism or true skepticism by which the philosopher stands at a disinterested distance from all inquiry (see *Progress of Sentiments*, 57–59). I read it as a stronger indication of Hume's commitment both to the proper objects of reason2 *and* to the constrained and modest manner in which reasoning2, even from a disinterested perspective, should take place. This has especially important implications for the character of Hume's social and political philosophy in Book 3 of the *Treatise* and beyond (see Frederick Whelan, *Order and Artifice*, especially 60–67).

My own reading and idea of the dual account of reason is indebted to David Owen's analysis in *Hume's Reason*. I follow the general framework of Owen's interpretation: (1) Hume discovers that probable reasoning cannot be accounted for by reason1; (2) the broader Humean concept of reason2 is dependent upon the faculty of imagination, encompassing principles of mental association whereby

the connectedness of ideas to present impressions is a matter of enlivened perception; and (3) that Hume's grounds for using reason2 is parallel to his grounds for preferring virtue over vice—the general and systematic deployment of reason2 is useful and agreeable relative to the relevant belief-forming alternatives (Owen, *Hume's Reason*, 222). But whereas Owen tends to read Hume as mostly providing an explanatory account of the mechanisms of probable reasoning and belief formation, I read Hume as also concerned with issues of epistemology and belief justification. Hume's assertion, for example, that "probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation" and that " 'tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy" (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103) is not mere psychological analysis; it figures into his progression of skepticism throughout Book 1, which contributes to the ethos associated with his deployment of reason2. Towards the end of part 3, after unearthing the sensory nature of probable reasoning, Hume draws the issue of justification forward, emphasizing the "imperfection of every vulgar hypothesis on this subject" and "the little light which philosophy can afford us in such sublime and such curious speculations." (T 1.3.12.20; SBN 139). He continues,

> Let men be once perswaded of these two principles, that there is nothing in any object, consider'd in itself, which can afford us a reason [i.e., an argument or a justification] for drawing a conclusion beyond it; and, that 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; I say, let men be once fully convinc'd of these two principles, and this will throw them so loose from all common systems, that they will make no difficulty of receiving any, which may appear the most extraordinary. (T 1.3.12.20; SBN 139; italics original)

I depart from Owen on the issue of Hume's use of the term "evidence." Whereas Owen, along with Garrett, reads "evidence" in Hume as often meaning "evidentness" or "clarity," I interpret it in a number of key instances to mean "justification." The meaning of the term comes to bear on important passages, especially in T 1.4.1 (SBN 180–187) and T 1.4.7 (SBN 263–274). For instance, in T 1.4.7, in recapping his analysis in T 1.4.1, Hume says, "the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles. . .leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268). Owen reads this assertion as a claim that the systematic and reflexive deployment of reason2 leads the mind to lose conviction in its beliefs, not as a claim against the justification of those beliefs (*Hume's Reason*, 185). But such an interpretation seems difficult to square with Hume's subsequent disposition to "reject all belief and reasoning," which has an important epistemo-

logical dimension (T 1.4.7.8; SBN 268). There are, moreover, passages throughout Book 1—and elsewhere in Hume's work—where I think Hume clearly uses "evidence" to mean justification. One such usage even occurs in the introduction to the work: "Principles taken upon trust, consequences lamely deduced from them, want of coherence in the parts and of *evidence* in the whole, these are every where to be met with in the systems of the most eminent philosophers, and seem to have drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself" (T Intro.1; SBN xiii; italics added). I return to these matters below in the context of T 1.4.1 (SBN 180–187).

Finally, I draw significantly on the work of Donald Livingston. I agree with Livingston that in Hume, "philosophical insight is gained by working through the contrarieties of thought which structure a drama of inquiry" (*Philosophy of Common Life*, 35). Hume uses dialectic throughout his work to get the reader to see a dynamic relationship between various intellectual faculties and natural beliefs, forcing a confrontation in different moments with conflicting perspectives, and yielding a reflective philosophical disposition: "It is through a confrontation with this incoherence in thought that philosophical reflection is driven to the transcendental perspective of true philosophy" (*Philosophy of Common Life*, 20). Livingston notes that "the *Treatise* has something of the character of a dialogue is the way in which faculties such as reason, the imagination, the senses, and the passions are treated as characters holding conflicting philosophical positions" (*Philosophy of Common Life*, 41). My reading extends Livingston's interpretation—even *within* the faculty of reason there is, as it were, a drama between characters. The dual account of reason in Hume places the dialectic between reason1 and reason2 towards the center of a certain confrontation with incoherence and traces out its implications for Hume's forward-looking philosophical disposition and conception of sound reasoning.

3. Reason1

The best interpretation of reason1, which seems to be supported by Hume's uses of the word "reason" qua faculty until around T 1.3.11 (SBN 124–130), is simply of an inferential faculty that perceives coherent relationships between ideas and links them together to form truthful and knowledge-yielding demonstrations. Reason1's capacity to perceive coherent relations between ideas—the building block upon which its wider inferential capabilities rest—is the capacity of intuition. The concept of intuition in Hume comes from Locke, who formulates it as the mind's "native Faculty to perceive the Coherence, or Incoherence of its Ideas" (ECHU 4.17.2). Intuition immediately yields knowledge (as opposed to probability). Locke says that the mind in its act of intuition "perceives Truth, as the Eye doth light, only by being directed toward it" (ECHU 4.2.1). The concept of intuition stems from the basic psychological assumption that ideas—perceptions stripped of the vivacity of the impressions from which they are copied—can be directly

compared and differentiated in the mind. Hume identifies three types of relations by which such comparisons occur: resemblance, contrariety, and degrees in quality: "When any objects resemble each other, the resemblance will at first strike the eye [note the parallel to Locke's language at ECHU 4.2.1], or rather the mind; and seldom requires a second examination. The case is the same with contrariety, and with degrees of any quality" (T 1.3.1.2; SBN 70; italics original). Hume says that intuitions in these relations of ideas are pronounced "at first sight, without any enquiry or reasoning" (T 1.3.1.2; SBN 70).

The wider inferences of reason1 build up from intuitions to demonstrations, which also yield truth and certain knowledge. Hume's conception of demonstration also comes from Locke. Demonstrations show "the Agreement, or Disagreement of two *Ideas*, by the intervention of one or more Proofs, which have a constant, immutable [i.e., intuitive], and visible connection with one another" (ECHU 4.15.1; italics original). "Proofs" in Locke are the intuitive intermediate ideas by which intuitions are connected (see ECHU 4.2.2). A demonstration forms a chain of intuitions, where each is bound to the next by a perception of intuitive connection.

In illustrating the concept of demonstration, Locke gives the example of a triangle (ECHU 4.15.1). We can intuit the relationship of ideas that comprises our conception of triangle—a closed figure with three straight sides. We can intuit the relationship of ideas that form our conception of a right angle as the angle made by perpendicular straight lights. Given the idea of a triangle and a right angle, we can demonstrate—intuitively perceive the connection between a number of intermediate ideas—that the sum of the angles in a triangle equals the sum of two right angles. Such a demonstration is certain by perception. Its conclusion is implicit in its constitutive ideas. As Hume puts it in the *First Enquiry*, demonstrations are "discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is any where existent in the universe" (EHU 4.1; SBN 25).

The narrow nature of reason1 fits the subject of the first two parts of Book 1 of the *Treatise*. In part 1 of Book 1, Hume lays out his model of the cognitive relationship between mental perceptions, impressions, and ideas, and explicitly introduces several intellectual faculties, for example, memory and imagination (he notably does not introduce or define "reason"). In part 2 of Book 1, he uses his model, particularly his principle that ideas are always copied from impressions, to treat the ideas of space, time, and infinite divisibility. His treatment of mathematical ideas and apparent proofs is largely comprised of the deconstruction of some "pretended demonstrations," for example, of the ideas of infinite divisibility and extension (T 1.2.2.10; SBN 33). In part 2 of Book 1, in the treatment of some supposed mathematical demonstrations, we find one of the first significant passages explicitly concerned with the faculty of reason1:

> 'Tis not in demonstrations as in probabilities, that difficulties can take place, and one argument counterballance another. A demonstration, if just, admits of no opposite difficulty; and if not just, 'tis a mere sophism, and consequently can never be of difficulty . . . . To talk therefore of objections and replies, and ballancing of arguments in such a question as this, is to confess, either that human reason [reason1] is nothing but a play of words, or that the person himself, who talks so, has not a capacity equal to such subjects. (T 1.2.2.6; SBN 31–32)

Several important things come across here. First, Hume here associates "reason" with the activity of demonstration, supporting a reason1 reading and emphasizing its Lockean affinity. Second, he shows that the conclusions of just or true demonstrations—demonstrations properly constructed of intuitively-connected intuitions—are not subject to question. Such conclusions force themselves as truth upon the mind upon perception of the relevant ideas. Hume elaborates this point later in part 3 of Book 1, noting that assent to the conclusion of a just demonstration is involuntary, just as perception of an intuition forces itself on the mind like light to the eye. He says, "the person who assents [to a demonstration], not only conceives the ideas according to the proposition, but is *necessarily* determin'd to conceive them in that particular manner, either immediately or by the interposition of ideas. Whatever is absurd is unintelligible; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive any thing contrary to a demonstration" (T 1.3.7.3; SBN 95; italics added). Third, Hume says that a demonstration that is not just, that is, is not true, is a "mere sophism." Logical relationships derived from false premises have nothing to do with Lockean/Humean demonstration. Reason1 is not a matter of formal logic and deduction but is concerned with the ideas being related in and of themselves, whether or not they are true or false. Put differently, it is the terms of a sentence, not its structure, that are paramount (see Owen, *Hume's Reason*, 87). Such an understanding is an important historical point and cautions against framing or analyzing the relation of ideas in Hume as a species of modern deductive reasoning. Finally, Hume says that any difficulties one might have concerning the conclusion of a true demonstration simply means that she has yet to properly perceive the relevant ideas. As the matter of geometric or arithmetic demonstrations make clear, the realization of the truth of a demonstration is not automatic like that of intuition in that the relationship between ideas must be properly understood. As Locke says, "*This Knowledge by intervening Proofs*, though it be certain, yet the evidence of it is *not* altogether *so clear* and bright, nor the assent so ready *as* in *intuitive* Knowledge" (ECHU 4.2.4; italics original).

4. Reason1 and Probable Reasoning

In addition to operating on the relation of ideas by way of demonstrative reasoning, the Lockean faculty of reason operates upon matters of experience, or matters of fact, by way of probable reasoning. The mechanism of probable reasoning is the same in kind as that of demonstrative reasoning. The warrant of both also derives from mental perception: "For as Reason perceives the necessary, and indubitable connexion of all the *Ideas* or Proofs one to another, in each step of any Demonstration that produces Knowledge: so it likewise perceives the probable connexion of all the *Ideas* or Proofs, one to another, in every step of a Discourse, to which it will think Assent is due" (ECHU 4.17.2; italics original). Like demonstrative reasoning, probable reasoning in Locke is comprised of a chain of ideas where the connection between each idea is perceived. The difference is that unlike demonstrations, the links between ideas in probable inferences are "not constant and immutable," that is, they are not intuitive (ECHU 4.15.1). The credibility of probable inference in Locke hinges on the perceived "conformity of any thing with our own Knowledge, Observation, and Experience, and with the Testimony of others" (ECHU 4.15.4).

Hume grants that probable inferences based upon experience are a common practice of reasoning, that is, of deliberation and conscious inference, and that people use experiences as reasons or arguments for doing things. But he explicitly does not see these practices as deriving from the faculty of reason1. Hume's reason1 is only Lockean inasmuch as it conforms to Locke's thinking on demonstrative reasoning; it is non-Lockean in that it cannot account for the practice of probable reasoning (see Owen, *Hume's Reason*, 175; also Millican, "Hume on Reason and Induction," 145). From a strict reason1-perspective, Hume sees that probable reasoning is not reasonable in that: "*there is nothing in any object, consider'd in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it;* and, *that 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; italics original).

The substance of Hume's thinking on the relation of reason1 and probable reasoning first appears in his famous section, "Of the inference from the impression to the idea" (T 1.3.6; SBN 86–94). Lines of probable reasoning, in Lockean terms, again hinge on the *perceived* "conformity of any thing with our own Knowledge, Observation, and Experience, and with the Testimony of others" (ECHU 4.15.4). But Hume points out that perceiving a connection between a past idea and a present impression always tacitly includes a third idea: the idea of the connectedness and uniform procedure of the past and present. This third idea cannot be verified by perception because we can readily perceive its opposite. We can "at least conceive a change in the course of nature" (T 1.3.6.5; SBN 89). If we can perceive an idea contrary to *x*, then *x* is non-intuitive and non-demonstrable and therefore not a

matter of reason1. If the idea that the future resembles the past *was* a matter of reason1, we would not be able to conceive of the future not resembling the past by the very construction of those ideas. Since we can at least conceive, for example, of the sun not rising tomorrow, probable reasoning is not a relation of ideas. Probable reasoning, therefore, is not a matter of reason1.

This argument textually coincides with a conscientious use of the word "reason," perhaps reflecting Hume's conceptual and semantic transition from reason1 to the looser, yet more practical concept of reason2. Hume appears careful in the early sections of Book 1 part 3 about his use of the word—he does not refer to reason qua faculty at all in the first four sections of part 3. Yet in the course of T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94) Hume uses "reason" in direct reference to the faculty of reason1 six times. These six comments about reason1 are the most direct and candid comments about the faculty reason up to this point in the *Treatise*. The statements fall into three groups of sentences:

[1] The next question is whether experience produces the idea [that the future resembles the past] by means of the understanding or of the imagination; whether we are determin'd by **reason** to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perception. If **reason** determin'd us, it wou'd proceed upon that principle, *that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.* (T 1.3.6.4; SBN 89; italics original, boldface added)

[2] Thus not only our **reason** fails us in the discovery of the *ultimate connexion* of causes and effects, but even after experience has inform'd us of their *constant conjunction*, 'tis impossible for us to satisfy ourselves by our **reason**, why we shou'd extend that experience beyond those particular instances, which have fallen under our observation. (T 1.3.6.11; SBN 91–92; italics original, boldface added)

[3] **Reason** can never shew us the connexion of one object with another, 'tho aided by experience, and the observation of their constant conjunction in past instances. When the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determined by **reason**, but by certain principles, which associate together the idea of these objects, and unite them in the imagination. (T 1.3.6.12; SBN 92; boldface added)

Read together, these passages form a tight psychological and epistemological analysis of reason1, figuring into, as Robert Fogelin puts it, a "complex dialecti-

cal development that allows Hume to . . .prepare the way for the triumph of the imagination [which entails an expansion of reason1 to reason2] as the primary faculty for the fixation of belief" (*Hume's Skepticism*, 39). Hume argues in these three passages: (1) If reason1 could explain the mechanisms of probable reasoning or justify our beliefs in its conclusions, it would do so based on the proposition that the future resembles the past. (2) The proposition that the future resembles the past cannot be justified by reason1 as there are no demonstrative arguments to prove the uniformity of experience. (3) Probable reasoning must be explained and justified on the basis of something other than reason1, on some instinctive principles of association ("'tis impossible to satisfy ourselves by our reason [reason1] why we should extend that experience").

Upon the discovery of the inability of reason1 to account for probable reasoning and our more general belief-forming mechanisms, Hume moves to offer an alternative psychological explanation of how probable reasoning proceeds, and to provide for an alternative source of norms for discourse (see Baier, *Progress of Sentiments*, 59). His first step, of course, is the location of probable reasoning in the province of customary and instinctive association. Hume tells us that the proposition that the future resembles the past is an engrained mental custom. The mind is psychologically determined, both by constitution and repeated practice, to associate past ideas in the memory with present impressions; it feels and believes the uniformity of experience to be true. From these observations, Hume concludes,

> Thus probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of a principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103)

The sensory nature of probable reasoning operates subconsciously, "in such an insensible manner as never to be taken notice of" and that "may even in some measure be unknown to us" (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 103). In illustrating the manner by which sensations form interpretive principles and dispositions, Hume gives the example of a man who comes upon a river. The man's view of the river is formed by the subconscious interaction of his past impressions: "The idea of sinking is so closely connected with that of water, the idea of suffocating with that of sinking, that the mind makes the transition without the assistance of memory. The custom operates before we have time for reflection" (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 104). Hume concludes these deliberations with a curious observation in a footnote, where he says that our belief in the credibility of probable reasoning is similar in kind to our belief in other "whimsies and prejudices" of the imagination: "In general we

may observe, that as our assent to probable reasonings is founded on the vivacity of ideas, it resembles many of those whimsies and prejudices, which are rejected under the opprobrious character of being the offspring of the imagination" (T 1.3.9.19n22; SBN 117).

Understanding Hume's perspectives on the workings of probable reasoning makes it clear that it cannot be a proper activity of the faculty of reason1. Such understanding also helps us see why Hume might be hesitant to locate it within the proper province of "reason." If the objective of reason is the discovery of truth—indeed, Hume says later that "our reason must be consider'd as a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect" (T 1.4.1.1; SBN 180)—what role, if any, should sensation play? Can an operation that resembles other "whimsies and prejudices" of the imagination, to which we assent merely on the basis of lively perception and feelings, be part of the proper activities of the truth-seeking faculty of reason? At the very least, the soundness of a faculty including such an operation initially appears weak relative to reason1.

5. The Transition to Reason2

Early in the *Treatise*, Hume's semantics convey that he deploys "reason" qua mental faculty in reference to reason1. But a broader survey of Hume's use of "reason" makes it clear that such a narrow reading cannot be sustained. Whereas in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94) Hume says that "reason" can never show us the connection between one object and another, he says the opposite in T 2.3.3.3 (SBN 414): "Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us." He reiterates this point again in Book 3: "reason, in a strict and philosophical sense, can have an influence on our conduct . . . when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects, so as to afford us means of exerting any passion" (T 3.1.1.12; SBN 459). Hume seems perfectly comfortable including probable reasoning concerning matters of fact within the province of "reason" later in the *Treatise*, even though he explicitly says earlier that probable reasoning is not determined by the faculty of reason.

The best way to resolve the tension between Hume's statements on reason is to read him as employing different conceptions of the faculty of reason. Other interpretations encounter too many textual difficulties to solve and attribute to him a considerable amount of carelessness. Interestingly, Hume even acknowledges his polysemous semantics regarding mental faculties and operations in part 3 of Book 1: "'tis very difficult to talk of the operations of the mind with perfect propriety and exactness; because common language has seldom made any very nice distinctions among them, but has generally call'd by the same term all such as nearly resemble each other. And as this is a source almost inevitable of obscurity and confusion in

the author; so it may frequently give rise to doubts and objections in the reader, which otherwise he wou'd never have dream'd of" (T 1.3.8.15; SBN 105). If Hume acknowledged and explicitly pointed to his inconsistent use of terms, yet decided neither to present clear and consistent definitions of the terms nor edit his writing for consistency, it is not unreasonable to assume that the multiple meanings of terms might be a deliberate part of his program and "of the way he does philosophy" (Livingston, *Philosophy of Common Life*, 35).

There is further textual evidence that shows Hume admitting to employing two different concepts of reason, even suggesting a conscious transition from reason1 to reason2. At the beginning of T 1.3.11 (SBN 124–130) he says,

> Those philosophers [including Locke], who have divided human reason into *knowledge* and *probability*, and have defin'd the first to be *that evidence, which arsise from the comparison of ideas*, are oblig'd to comprehend all our arguments from causes or effects under the general term of *probability*. But tho' every one be free to use his term in what sense he pleases; and accordingly in the precedent part of this discourse, I have follow'd **this method of expression**; 'tis however certain, that in common discourse we readily affirm, that many arguments from causation exceed probability, and may be receiv'd as a superior kind of evidence. (T 1.3.11.2; SBN 124; italics original, bold added)

This passage is read by Garrett as an admission by Hume that "he has been following the common Lockean usage" of "reason" (*Cognition and Commitment*, 85). Garrett asserts that Hume univocally uses "reason" throughout his work in reference to the Lockean faculty. But perhaps Hume is saying here that he has been using the term "reason" in "what sense he pleases," that is, in an uncommon, distinctive sense that is different from Locke and other philosophers. That sense is reason1, distinct from Lockean reason in that it excludes the activity of probable reasoning from its domain. The interpretation here hinges on what Hume means when he says "I have follow'd this method of expression." If "this" is meant to refer to (1) the method of expression that Locke and other philosophers have used, then Garrett is correct and Hume is saying that he has been using "reason" (or maybe intends to use "reason") like Locke and his other intellectual predecessors. But if "this" is meant to refer to (2) the free-to-use method of expression, as it were, then my interpretation stands. As a matter of sentence structure, reading "this" as a reference to (2) seems a more natural reading. The "this" more readily reads as reference to the first clause in the sentence—"But tho' every one be free to use his term in what sense he pleases"—than as a reference back to the first sentence in the paragraph. As a broader interpretive matter, the second reading better squares with the fact that Hume's use of "reason" up until T 1.3.11 (SBN 124–130) seems

limited to the narrow scope of reason1. Interpretation (2) better aligns with the fact that at T 1.3.11.1 (SBN 124) Hume has in fact not yet once said that probable reasoning falls under the province of "reason"—he says just the opposite in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94).

But regardless of how one interprets these curious sentences in T 1.3.11.2, the last sentence clearly shows Hume pivoting towards a broader concept of reason and abstracting from some of the epistemological problems of probable reasoning. He says: " 'tis however certain, that in common discourse we readily affirm, that many arguments from causation exceed probability, and may be receiv'd as a superior kind of evidence" (T 1.3.11.2; SBN 124). This move is a step towards developing some cognitive norms of reasoning within the context of an externally-unverifiable acceptance of probable reasoning (see Graciela de Pierris, "Hume's Pyrrhonian Skepticism," 377–380). Once Hume recognizes that natural belief in the uniformity of experience and causal dependence is central to the framework in which all of our reasonings about matters of fact take shape (see Kemp Smith, *Philosophy of David Hume*, 124), he resolves to hold such beliefs as a given ground upon which subsequent propositions about matters of fact might be assessed. It is such resolve that enables him to speak of certain "arguments, which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are *entirely free from doubt and uncertainty*" (T 1.3.11.2; SBN 124; italics added). Put differently, in recognition of the stringent limitations of reason1, and against the conclusion that there is no way of discerning better and worse, true and false, outside of the purview of reason1, Hume resolves to formulate an alternative way of knowing within the domain of common life. That way of knowing crystalizes as the broader faculty of reason2. The sections that follow T 1.3.11 continue in this direction by cementing the semantic transition to reason2 and moving its constitutive principles into the fold of "the more general and authentic operations of the understanding" (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150). Hume continues to try to sketch some general rules in service of discerning better and worse reasoning2 (T 1.3.15; SBN 173–176).

What could explain the timing of Hume's transition to reason2 around T 1.3.11? The answer is in part a practical one: if he had continued with his narrow reason1, it would be difficult for him to defend or posit the practical superiority of probable reasoning over the other rejected "whimsies and prejudices" of the imagination that probable reasoning resembles (see T 1.3.9.19n22; SBN 117). Peter Millican describes this position: "Having thus done away with the Lockean understanding of reason's essential nature and its implied warrant based on mental perception, Hume is anxious to avoid the consequence that probable reasoning is on all fours with the 'whimsies and prejudices' that are the imagination's more typical offspring" ("Hume on Reason and Induction," 147). After pointing out that probable reasoning is not a matter of reason1, Hume somehow needs to practically defend probable reasoning against some relevant alternatives, particularly total

skepticism and religious superstition. Total skepticism is psychologically unstable and impractical—"nature has determin'd us to judge as well as breath and feel" (T 1.4.1.7; SBN 183). And religious superstition (understood as an unreflective faith in the supernatural) as a cognitive norm historically leads to political instability, violence, and bad social practice (see T 1.4.7.13; SBN 271–272).

Part of Hume's practical defense of his resolve to embrace probable reasoning is his quiet semantic shift from reason1 to reason2 in and of itself. Granting the title of "reason" to probable reasoning does more to authorize its use than any epistemological argument could achieve. As the word "charity" better inculcates the precept "Be charitable, than any pretended legislator or prophet" (Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 229), so the word "reason" better inculcates the precept "be reasonable" than any philosopher. But if Hume comes to employ "reason" in a broader sense to convey something about the superior credibility of probable reasoning, why he would bother confining himself to the semantics of reason1 in the first place? He sought to make the conceptual point that reason1 and probable reasoning proceed on the basis of different mental functions. It is custom that forms the basis of probable reasoning and our propositions of cause and effect. There is, however, a deeper point.

Again, as Livingston contends, philosophical understanding in Hume is found by examining the structure of contrarieties that form a drama of inquiry (*Philosophy of Common Life*, 35). Hume conveys an understanding of the proper use and scope of "reason" not by simply elaborating the formulation of reason, but by dialectically juxtaposing two concepts of reason: reason1 and reason2. Hume's account pushes the reader to consider what it means to "reason" soundly or justly from a higher perspective given the tension between two views of "reason's" operation. One way to express the juxtaposition is with the following contrarieties: (1) Reason1 shows us that the practice of probable reasoning is not reasonable. (2) The mind unavoidably relies on, and believes in, probable reasoning, considering such reliance and belief to be "reasonable." Simply apprehending (1) will lead either to skepticism or to a substitution into superstition. It will lead to a neglect of reason2, which will result in a melancholy paralysis or a thoughtless folding to whimsy. On the other hand, viewing (2) without apprehending (1) might lead to unreflective probable reasoning without understanding the true nature of its authority: practical necessity and feeling. This might lead to an overreliance on and an abuse of reason to justify, for example, religious intolerance, unsound moral doctrine, or political persecution. As Hume says later in the *Treatise*: "Nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination [which probable reasoning resembles, at least in kind], and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267). It is only by holding (1) and (2) in balance, by recognizing the hold that each position has, that one can come to a proper understanding of the delicate matter of "reason" and can begin to reason justly.

6. Reason2

As a conceptual matter, reason2 equals reason1 plus probable reasoning, which entails a set of facilitating principles of the imagination. In the second half of the footnote where Hume says that "assent to all probable reasonings is founded on the vivacity of ideas," and as such "resembles many of those whimsies and prejudices, which are rejected under the opprobrious character of being the offspring of the imagination," he elaborates:

> By this expression it appears that the word, *imagination*, is commonly us'd in two different senses; and tho' nothing be more contrary to true philosophy, than this inaccuracy, yet in the following reasonings I have often been oblig'd to fall into it. When I oppose the imagination to memory, I mean the faculty, by which we form our fainter ideas. When I oppose it to reason [reason2], I mean the same faculty, excluding only our demonstrative and probable reasonings. When I oppose it to neither, 'tis indifferent whether it be taken in the larger or more limited sense, or at least the context will sufficiently explain the meaning. (T 1.3.9.19n22; SBN 117–118; italics original)

It is interesting to note here Hume's admission of equivocation on "imagination," which further bolsters the case for reading multiple meanings into his talk of other mental faculties (Millican, "Hume on Reason and Induction," 146). But more importantly, Hume's remarks also tells that reason2 is dependent upon imagination in its broader sense. The imagination as a faint-idea forming and relating faculty is opposed to memory but overlaps with reason2. Reason2 depends on the imagination in that its probable reasoning component operates on the basis of settled imaginary principles. The relation between the two faculties is illustrated in Figure 1.

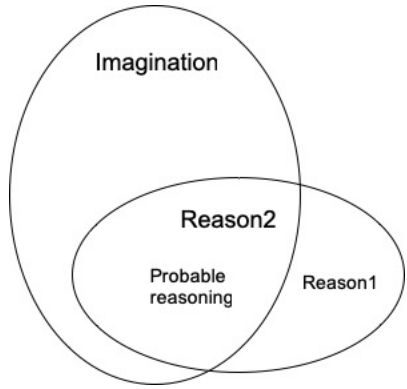

Figure 1: Reason2 and the Imagination

In T 1.3.8, Hume speaks of probable reasoning as a species of sensation. In discussing the relation of reason2 to the imagination, he breaks down the components of that sensation. The imagination facilitates a heightened perception of matters of fact and provides conviction of their relation to other matters of fact by "the force and settled order" of association by cause and effect, resemblance, and contiguity (T 1.3.9.3; SBN 107–108). Later in the Book 1 Hume distinguishes these operations from other less stable principles of the imagination: "I must distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from cause to effect . . . . And the principles which are changeable, weak, and irregular" (T 1.4.4.1; SBN 225).

Independent of a conscious assent to the credibility of probable reasoning, the imagination automatically organizes ideas into cause and effect relationships. This practice interrelates with perceived relations of contiguity and resemblance. Although the idea of cause and effect and the mental move from "that particular impression to that particular idea" happens "without any choice or hesitation," (T 1.3.9.8; SBN 110), the particular path of association of causes with effects is determined by the relations of resemblance and contiguity. Thus, "resemblance, when conjoin'd with causation, fortifies our reasonings" (T 1.3.9.13; SBN 113). Together the interpretive guidance of these relations forms the settled principles of the imagination by which the mind "paints the universe" (T 1.3.9.4; SBN 108). Within this painted universe, reason2 is the faculty that works on various ideas and constructs the mind's "system of realities" or set of beliefs through the process of probable reasoning (T 1.3.9.5; SBN 109; see also Owen, *Hume's Reason*, 197).

Reason2 is built upon Hume's resolve to take the natural belief in the credibility of the imagination-empowered transition from impressions to ideas on faith. As such, he pragmatically considers reason2's basic operations as "entirely free from doubt and uncertainty" (T 1.3.11.2; SBN 124). Such certainty is in a manner orthogonal to reason1 in that it abstracts from, or assumes away, the problems pointed to in T 1.3.6 (SBN 86–94); it is different in kind than the certainty of reason1. Hume later makes this explicit in his personal correspondence. In a letter to John Stewart, he says, "*That Caesar existed, that there is such an Island as Sicily*; for these Propositions, I affirm, we have no demonstrative nor intuitive Proof. Would you infer that I deny their Truth, or even their Certainty? There are many different kinds of Certainty; and some of them as satisfactory to the Mind, tho' perhaps not so regular, as the demonstrative kind" (quoted in Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 260; italics original).

Hume finishes part 3 of Book 1 by considering reason2 analogically. He compares the imagination-dependent reason2 to animal reason. In putting reason2 on level with the reason of animals (in kind, not in degree), Hume shows that reason2 is not obviously, as Locke has it, "That Faculty, whereby Man is supposed to be distinguished from Beasts" (ECHU 4.17.1). He underlines the sentimental

makeup of much of our thought life. His analogical analysis of reason2 culminates in the first direct definition of "reason" in the *Treatise*: "To consider the matter aright, reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities, according to their particular situations and relations" (T 1.3.16.9; SBN 179). The words "instinct" and "unintelligible" loom in the definition. Reason2 is an instinct in that it presupposes some natural beliefs, which are structured by settled principles of the imagination. It is relied on automatically rather than reflectively. It is unintelligible in that it cannot be understood by reason1, nor verified without reference to itself.

7. The Self-subversion of Reason2

The location of the first explicit definition of "reason" in the text is significant. Its place at the end of the final section of part 3 signals a conclusion to a line of inquiry regarding the relationship between reason1 and probable reasoning. It shows Hume resolving to move forward towards the goals of the *Treatise* with the practical faculty of reason2. This is important for the light that it sheds on the subsequent section of the text, the first section of part 4, "Of scepticism with regard to reason" (T 1.4.1; SBN 180–187).

Baier argues that Hume uses "reason" in T 1.4.1 in reference to the reason of rationalist philosophy, and that his argument comprises a *reductio ad absurdum* (*Progress of Sentiments*, 184). On her reading, his apparently skeptical conclusions do not apply to his own naturalistic philosophical program. But I think it is clear here that Hume uses "reason" in T 1.4.1 in reference to reason2. First, after just having defined "reason" for the first time as reason2—again, the first definition of "reason" in the *Treatise*—an immediate pivot back to the semantics of reason1 or any other conception of "reason" is unlikely. Second, Hume does not confine his analysis in T 1.4.1 to intuition and demonstration, but deals openly with the kind of reasoning "which we employ in common life" (T 1.4.1.3; SBN 181). Finally, there is no indication that Hume shirks off the conclusions of T 1.4.1 as he might if its arguments were directed at a rationalist construct. Both in T 1.4.1 and after, he takes his arguments to heart. In the conclusion to Book 1, for instance, he reaffirms his conclusion from T 1.4.1 that "the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles . . . leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267).

Understanding "reason" in T 1.4.1 as reason2 is important. It means that we must grapple with T 1.4.1 to properly understand Hume's thinking on reason and its implications. As William Morris argues, "if we are ever to understand Hume's view of the role of reason, it stands to reason that we should first figure out how

to integrate 'Of scepticism with regard to reason' into the picture" ("Scepticism About Reason," 58).

The basic structure of Hume's argument in T 1.4.1 is well-known. As Owen points out, it consists of three parts: two negative arguments and a positive argument (see *Hume's Reason*, chap. 8). The first negative argument comes from the basic point that our understanding is fallible: there is a probability that we might make mistakes even in our demonstrative reasoning (see T 1.2.2.6; SBN 31–32). Thus "knowledge degenerates into probability" (T 1.4.1.1; SBN 180). The second negative argument extends the fallibility point to our probability estimates: we might incorrectly estimate the probability of making mistakes. Accordingly, "we ought always to correct the first judgment . . . by another judgment, deriv'd from the nature of the understanding" (T 1.4.1.3; SBN 181). The third positive argument is that the logic of the second argument will inevitably lead to iterative probability estimates, yielding "at last a total extinction of belief and evidence" (T 1.4.1.6; SBN 183). As the iterations continue, the probability of the conclusions of both demonstrative reasoning and probable reasoning go to zero. Kevin Meeker has called this Hume's "iterative probability argument."

Although the formal validity of Hume's argument has recently been questioned from the perspective of modern probability theory (see Atkinson and Peijnenberg, "Till at Last There Remain Nothing"), it is agreed that Hume takes his conclusions seriously. What is not agreed is what Hume's conclusions precisely are. What does Hume mean by "a total extinction of belief and evidence"? Owen and Garrett maintain that Hume's argument is about the psychology of how beliefs, upon the repeated and reflexive application of probable reasoning, cease to be beliefs. On this view, Hume is not concerned with the epistemological justification of beliefs or reason2's operations of reasoning. Meeker argues, to the contrary, that Hume's argument is about belief justification. He sees Hume's conclusion as an unresolved philosophical puzzle as to why beliefs continue to obtain despite their lack of epistemological grounding: "Hume makes a perfectly general argument from our fallibility that leaves him perplexed in the end" ("Iterative Probability Argument," 238). I agree more with Meeker for two reasons. First, I find it difficult to interpret the language of T 1.4.1 as not pertaining to justification. Second, I find that reading Hume as concerned with justification better coheres with the progression of Book 1 and with the dialectical development of reason2 therein.

As a textual matter, Owen and Garrett's position largely hangs on what Hume means by "evidence." They argue that "evidence" in T 1.4.1 means "evidentness." Thus, when Hume says that the iterative probability argument tends to diminish the "original evidence" of a belief (T 1.4.1.8; SBN 183–184), they take him to mean that it diminishes the liveliness of our conception and confidence in that belief, not the epistemological justification of the belief itself. I find this reading hard to square with the text. Although Hume does seem to use "evidence" to mean

"evidentness" in many places, I do not think he uses it so in T 1.4.1. Consider the five instances of the term in T 1.4.1:

[1] knowledge resolves itself into probability, and becomes at last of the same nature with that **evidence**, which we employ in common life. (T 1.4.1.4; SBN 181; boldface added)

[2] But this decision . . . being founded only on probability, must weaken still further our first **evidence**. (T 1.4.1.5; SBN 182; boldface added)

[3] a total distinction of belief and **evidence** (T 1.4.5; SBN 182; boldface added)

[4] continually diminishing the original **evidence**, at last reduce it to nothing, and utterly subvert all belief and opinion. (T 1.4.1.8; SBN 184; boldface added).

[5] these new probabilities . . . diminish the original **evidence**. (T 1.4.1.9; SBN 184; boldface added)

The first and third uses appear to plainly be in reference to justification. It makes little sense to speak of the (1) "evidentness" which we employ in common life. And it seems unnatural to read (3) "belief and evidence" as meaning "belief and evidentness." A more natural reading is "belief [i.e., the lively conception] and justification of that belief." The other uses—(2), (4), and (5)—are more difficult to interpret independently. But taken as a whole, particularly in the broader context of Hume's argument, I maintain that the justification reading of "evidence" makes the most sense.

Reading "evidence as "justification" is corroborated by Hume's use of "evidence" in some other passages. As quoted above, the use of "evidence" in T Intro 1 (SBN 13) seems to pertain to justification ("want of coherence in the parts, and of evidence in the whole"). Elsewhere Hume distinguishes between "belief" and "evidence": "Every link of the chain wou'd in that case hang upon another; but there wou'd be not any thing fix'd to one end of it, capable of sustaining the whole; and consequently there wou'd be *no belief nor evidence*" (T 1.3.4.2; SBN 83; italics added). In the context of T 1.3.4.2 (SBN 83), Hume is best understood here as saying "there is no belief due to breaks in the association of ideas, nor is there justification for such beliefs." Hume also uses "evidence" as "justification" in the *Enquiries*: "It may, therefore, be a subject worthy of curiosity, to enquire what is the nature of that *evidence* which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses" (EHU 4.3; SBN 26; italics added). Here is one of the clearest instances of "evidence" as "justification": "a wise man,

therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence [i.e., the justifications for that belief]" (EHU 10.4; SBN 110).

The most important clue to understanding T 1.4.1, however, is the conclusion T 1.4.1 itself. In the concluding paragraphs of the section, Hume underlines the epistemological nature of his probability argument and hints as to the broader place of that argument in the text:

> Reason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority. Her enemy, therefore, is oblig'd to take shelter under her protection, and by making use of rational arguments to prove the fallaciousness and imbecility of reason, produces, in a manner, a patent under her hand and seal. This patent has at first an authority, proportion'd to the present and immediate authority of reason, from which it is derived. But as it is suppos'd to be contradictory to reason, it gradually diminished the force of that governing power, and its own at the same time; till at last the both vanish away into nothing, by a regular and just diminution. (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 186–187)

Hume here draws attention to a thought-provoking contradiction. The skeptical argument about justification in T 1.4.1 proceeds by using reason2 via the iterative probability argument to destroy the credibility of reason2. Once reason2 is destroyed, that destruction renders invalid any conclusions arrived at by reason2. But this then implies that the conclusion that reason2 is invalid—a conclusion arrived at by reason2—is itself not valid! Hume's argument therefore "diminishes the force of that governing power [reason2] and its own [i.e., the authority of the argument itself] at the same time" (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 187). The result, as Owen correctly argues, leads to a suspension of judgment, not a dogmatic belief that none of our beliefs could ever be justified (*Hume's Reason*, 184). But the reason for the suspension of belief would seem to be epistemological, not psychological: reason2 and the conclusions of the iterative probability argument are mutually dependent; it appears logically inconsistent to cling to one without the other. Hume's recap of his argument from T 1.4.1 at the beginning of T 1.4.2 supports such a reading: "Thus the sceptic still continues to reason and believe, even tho' he asserts, that he cannot defend his reason by reason" (T 1.4.2.1; SBN 187). It is not merely the conviction or evidentness of belief that Hume sees falling away in the wake of T 1.4.1 but the conviction of the warrant of reason2 itself.

The resolution of the contradiction resembles the resolution of the tension between reason1 and probable reasoning. Just as "probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation" (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103), so "nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments [regarding reason2] in time" (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 104). In both cases, "*belief is more properly an act of the sensitive than the cogitative part of our na-*

tures" (T 1.4.1.7; SBN 183; italics original). The parallel is important, showcasing the continuity of purpose through Book 1 and the dialectical manner by which Hume develops his perspective on reason.

Speaking of part 4 of Book 1, Livingston argues that "in raising first-order philosophical questions, Hume also has his eye on the second-order question about the nature of philosophy" (*Melancholy and Delirium*, 17). This is apparent in T 1.4.1. Immediately after resolving at the end of part 3 to commit to reason2, despite the fact that such commitment is reason1-unreasonable, Hume presents further problems with that commitment on reason2's own turf. The reflexive application of reason2 to its own conclusions implies a lack of evidence for those conclusions by the iterative probability argument. Thus, the dialectic of reason1 and reason2 is followed by an *internal* dialectic of reason2 whereby reason2 opposes *itself*. The whole process contributes to a "disturbing circle of philosophical understanding" that paves the road towards Hume's "true philosophy" (Livingston, *Melancholy and Delirium*, 19). That process, and the way Hume comes to salvage reason2 in the conclusion to Book 1, guide the spirit by which reason2 is to be deployed in Hume's forward-looking philosophical projects.

8. Hume's Conclusion

The conclusion to Book 1 (T 1.4.7; SBN 263–274) is almost certainly the richest and most provocative moment in all of Hume's writing. Here Hume turns to face the brewing drama of skepticism implicit throughout Book 1. He boldly and dramatically confronts the logical incoherence discovered in his own thinking and in the exercise of isolated speculative thought. He uses his recognition of that incoherence to reflect upon the meaning of philosophical activity and the trajectory of his science of man.

T 1.4.7 marks a kind of resolution to the dialectics of "reason" present throughout Book 1 and shows Hume resolving to move forward with the positive tasks of philosophy. At the most fundamental level, the dynamics of the resolution derive from Hume's discovery that the human activity of philosophical reflection operates within a framework of custom. It is simply not possible to disentangle one's philosophizing from a diverse backdrop of beliefs and norms, organizing concepts, and presupposed ideas. But it is not simply this understanding alone that drives the dynamic of T 1.4.7—it is Hume's *reflection* upon this understanding that is paramount. As Livingston says, "the philosopher's recognition that he is a participant in custom is itself a philosophical act" (*Melancholy and Delirium*, 37). In terms of reason, Hume observes that reason2 operates within a general framework of natural beliefs. Reason2 is accepted and committed to on the basis of custom and psychological constitution despite the problems with its probable reasoning component from a reason1 view. This commitment also proves psycho-

logically robust to the internal challenges reason2 faces on its own terms (that is, the skeptical arguments of T 1.4.1). But reflecting on these matters leads Hume to an important question: on what philosophical grounds can the superiority of reason2 be maintained relative to other customary and instinctive ways of knowing?

Hume begins to address these matters in T 1.4.7 by commenting on his perplexed and melancholy disposition. He speaks of "the wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of the faculties [e.g., reason2]," and of "the impossibility of amending or correcting these faculties" (T 1.4.7.1; SBN 264). He reviews his analysis of probable reasoning: "Experience is a principle, which instructs me in the several conjunctions of objects for the past. Habit is another principle, which determines me to expect the same for the future" (T 1.4.7.3; SBN 265). He recalls the imagination-dependent nature of reason2 and its reason1-unreasonableness: "Without this quality, by which the mind enlivens some ideas beyond others (which seemingly is so trivial, and so little founded on reason [reason1]) we cou'd never assent to any argument" (T 1.4.7.3; SBN 265). He continues down this road, reiterating that the deficiency in ideas and philosophical formulations in Book 1 seem to be overcome "merely from an illusion of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267).

The crucial turn comes when he asks, "how far we ought to yield to these illusions" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267)? Some illusions are necessary: reason2, unexplainable in the traditional terms of reason1, itself is largely constituted by them (association by cause and effect, resemblance, contiguity together "paint the universe" and lead to belief). But clearly it is undesirable and philosophically implausible to say that one should yield to *all* illusions of the imagination. Such yielding would all but destroy reason2, putting it on par with superstition. As Hume says, "nothing is more dangerous to reason [reason2] than the flights of the imagination" (T 1.4.7.6; SBN 267). A natural response might be to confine oneself to illusions of the imagination only insofar as necessary to explain reason2. This would take care of the reason1-reason2 problem, enabling one to confidently move forward and apply reason2. But then the problem of T 1.4.1 reemerges: "even this resolution [to accept illusion only insofar as necessary to explain reason2], if steadily executed, wou'd be dangerous, and attended with the most fatal consequences. For I have already shewn that the understanding, when it acts alone…entirely subverts itself" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 267). An additional illusion, so to speak, is needed to secure one's commitment to reason2 from itself. The trick then is to figure out how to discriminate between *that* additional illusion and the host of other potential illusions and their interpretive dispositions. Thinking on these matters, Hume claims that we are forced to choose between "a false reason and none at all" (T 1.4.7.7; SBN 268) an observation that launches him into a seeming existential crisis.

The initial resolution of this crisis is well-known. Although "reason [reason2] is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose,

and cures [him] of this philosophical melancholy and delirium" (T 1.4.7.9; SBN 269). This resolution is followed by an account of the evolution of Hume's philosophical disposition. Neither total skepticism nor a blind submission to nature is psychologically stable or philosophically satisfactory. Although the memory of his melancholy inclines him to abandon philosophy and "throw all [his] books and papers into the fire," his curiosity leads him once more to "seclude [himself] from the commerce and society of men" and philosophize. But skepticism resurfaces, and he again questions the "reasonableness" of his philosophical inclination, wondering how useful such an inclination is, either for himself or "for the service of mankind." Once more, however, he tacks back towards philosophy on account of its agreeableness: "if I must be a fool . . . my follies shall at least be natural and agreeable." These deliberations conclude with a new conditional commitment to reason2: "where reason [reason2] is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. Where it does not, it never can have any title to operate upon us" (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270).

Hume's commitment to reason2 is followed immediately by an account of the conditions of that commitment, that is, the things which appear to be useful and agreeable objects of inquiry that naturally arouse his curiosity. These objects are practical matters of morals, politics, and aesthetics: the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, the passions, and the principles of beauty and deformity. Directing reason2 in such a way represents a paradigmatic shift in perspective from isolated philosophical speculation to a systematic consideration of practical matters of social affairs. Later in the *First Enquiry* he reiterates such a shift and its connection to the dialectics of reason2:

> Those who have a propensity to philosophy, will still continue their researches; because they reflect, that, besides the immediate pleasure, attending such an occupation, philosophical decisions are nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected. But they will never be tempted to go beyond common life, so long as they consider the imperfection of those faculties which they employ, their narrow reach, and their inaccurate operations. (EHU 12.25; SBN 162)

After following Hume through these developments, his philosophical argument for reason2 over total skepticism and superstition and dogmatism is clear: reason2 appears to be more useful and agreeable to the philosopher and to others. In other words, as Owen puts it, "Hume's preference for philosophy over superstition, for reason over bigotry, and for scepticism over dogmatism . . . is the same as his, and our, preference for virtue over vice" (*Hume's Reason*, 222; see also Ridge, "Epistemology Moralized"). To briefly underline the textual case for this position, consider Hume's language of usefulness and agreeableness throughout the section. On

usefulness: In considering the point of philosophy, Hume wonders how it "serve[s] either for the service of mankind, or for [his] own private interest" (T 1.4.7.10; SBN 270). In deliberating between the merits of superstition and reason2, he says, "we ought to prefer that which is safest and most agreeable" (T 1.4.7.13; SBN 271). He argues for reason2 on usefulness grounds: "Superstition . . . is often able to disturb us in the conduct of our lives and actions. Philosophy, on the contrary, if just, can present us only with mild and moderate sentiments. . . . Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous" (T 1.4.7.13; SBN 272). On agreeableness: He speaks of his inclination to "natural and agreeable" inquiry in T 1.4.7.10 (SBN 272). His commitment to reason2 in T 1.4.7.11 (SBN 270) is conditional on the objects of inquiry being "lively" and mixed with some "propensity" is agreeable to the philosopher. And the very origin of philosophy and the deployment of reason2 is pleasure (T 1.4.7.12; see also T 2.3.10; SBN 270–271; SBN 448–454). He recognizes the problems with reason2 even after his commitment—"we can never have steady principles, nor any sentiments, which will suit common practice and experience" (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 272). But he nonetheless feels that it is more useful and agreeable than the alternatives.

Together, Hume's commitment to reason2 despite the problems in its formulation and associated reasons for skepticism and his effectively moral argument for the superiority of philosophy have implications for his view of the proper spirit of the philosopher. Hume's acceptance of reason2 is conditional. He conceives of the proper objects of philosophy to be practical moral, political, and aesthetic matters. But even within that conditional acceptance, a certain amount of skepticism remains. Just prior to his commitment to reason2, for example, he says, "in all the incidents of life we ought still to preserve our scepticism" (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270) In the conclusion to the *First Enquiry*, Hume reiterates this point, emphasizing a healthy doubt that should accompany all reasoners: "in general, there is a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty, which, in all kinds of scrutiny and decision, ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner" (EHU 12.24; SBN 162). Although he thinks it reasonable to apply reason2 to social and practical matters—in that from a social perspective other people seem to think such application reasonable—the problems with that faculty still call for hesitation, modest, and reserve.

At a higher level, Hume thinks a recognition of the imperfections of reason2 recommends philosophical humility and a checking of one's aspirations. Hume expresses his own limited aspirations at the end of Book 1, which contrast with the opening remarks in the introduction to the *Treatise* about the ambitious scope of the science of man: "For my part, my only is, that I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculations of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctly those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction" (T 1.4.7.14; SBN 273). The checking of aspirations later proves to have important implications for

his social and political theory. Namely, one should tread lightly when using reason2 to reconsider constitutional matters or matters of policy both because the effects of alterations are difficult to predict *and* because reason2, as it were, has its own constitutional problems.[2]

9. Concluding Remarks

I have argued in this paper that Hume develops his thinking on "reason" dialectically throughout Book 1 of the *Treatise*. He does so by largely developing a dynamic between two concepts of reason. Reason1, which corresponds to Lockean demonstrative reasoning, is incapable of explaining or justifying the more practical kind of reasoning employed in common life, probable reasoning. Probable reasoning is dependent upon principles or illusions of the imagination and is nothing but a "species of sensation" (T 1.3.8.12; SBN 103). Although it gives him reasons for skepticism, he semantically transitions to use "reason" in reference to the imagination-dependent faculty of reason2, which operates on ideas via demonstrative and probable reasoning. He defines reason2 to be but "a wonderful and unintelligible instinct" in the soul (T 1.3.16.9; SBN 179). After this initial commitment to reason2, however, new problems emerge. In T 1.4.1, Hume finds that reason2 has self-subverting tendencies—the systematic application of reason2, upon the basic observation of human fallibility, reduces evidence of its own credibility. In T 1.4.7, Hume reflects on the incoherence internal to reason2 but nonetheless resolves to conditionally commit to philosophy and the deployment of reason2 to matters of interest from the vantage of common life. In doing so, he emphasizes the philosophical justification of reason2 to be on par with that for virtue over vice and speaks to implications for attitude and aspiration in philosophy. This account of Hume on reason emphasizes the dialectical nature of his thinking and suggests important methodological connections between his epistemology and the topics and manner of his subsequent inquiries.

NOTES

1 List of abbreviations: References to the *Treatise* are to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Norton and Norton, hereafter cited in the text as "T" followed by Book, part, section, and paragraph number, and to Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, cited in the text as "SBN" followed by the page number. References to the *Enquiry* are to Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Beauchamp, hereafter cited in the text as "EHU" followed by section and paragraph number, and to Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Selby-Bigge, rev. by Nidditch, hereafter cited in the text as "SBN" followed by page numbers. References to *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* are to Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Nidditch, hereafter cited in the text as ECHU, followed by book, chapter, and section.

2 See my recent study on connections between Hume's account of reason and his method in political economy (Matson, "Reason and Political Economy in Hume").

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