

## HUME ON EDUCATION

BY

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**Abstract:** Hume claims that education is 'disclaimed by philosophy, as a fallacious ground of assent to any opinion' (T 1.3.10.1) and that it is 'never . . . recogniz'd by philosophers' (T 1.3.9.19). He is usually taken to be referring here to indoctrination. I argue, however, that his main concern is with association and those philosophers who emphasize the epistemic dangers of the imagination. These include Locke, Hutcheson and Descartes, but not Hume himself. Hume praises education, highlighting its role in the formation of general rules, and in fostering social conditions that encourage the growth of knowledge and moral virtue.

Hume claims in the *Treatise* that 'education . . . [is] disclaim'd by philosophy, as a fallacious ground of assent to any opinion' (T 1.3.10.1) and that it is 'never . . . recogniz'd by philosophers' (T 1.3.9.19).<sup>1</sup> These, on the face of it, are odd claims. Surely education is a good way of acquiring beliefs. This paper offers a new interpretation of these intriguing claims.

It has been suggested that by 'education' Hume is only referring here to indoctrination or to the blind acceptance of testimony. Beauchamp characterizes it as 'instruction by acculturation or habituation' (2007, 146); M.A. Stewart aligns education to 'the habitual inculcation of second-hand opinion to the point where it blocks true learning from experience' (1994, 190); Michael Williams to 'the production of beliefs by verbal indoctrination' (2004, 273); and Owen (2000, 331) to 'brainwashing'. I do not think, however, that Hume had such a narrow conception in mind. I claim that he is concerned with the wider category of where repetition leads to belief in educational contexts; this includes cases of indoctrination, but also pedagogical techniques that are not usually taken as problematic. More importantly, Hume's motivation for these claims does not primarily concern *education*, but rather, his associationist account of the mind. Education is dismissed by certain philosophers because it is grounded in repetition and in associationist psychology. For Hume, though, this is not a good reason to denigrate education. Association is also the source of all epistemically appropriate

forms of reasoning concerning matters of fact and it is not therefore a good reason, by itself, to dismiss education. His aim here is wide, cutting, if you like, across party lines—rationalists are in his sights, so too are empiricists and naturalists with which Hume shares much else. The ‘philosophers’ to which he refers include Locke, Hobbes, Bacon, Hutcheson, Malebranche, and Descartes, but not Hume himself. I argue that Hume’s comments concerning education are intended as an implicit criticism of those who highlight the negative aspects of associationism.

In §1 I consider the role of repetition in Hume’s epistemology. §2 turns to Locke’s account of association. §3 compares my interpretation of Hume on education with that of Louis Loeb. §4 considers whether Hume aligns himself with the ‘philosophers’ and with the ‘philosophical’, and in §5 I turn to the positive claims Hume makes with respect to the role that education plays in the formation of general rules and in fostering social conditions that encourage the growth of knowledge and moral virtue.

### *1. Repetition and the epistemic dangers of association*

In Hume’s associationist account of the mind, repetition plays an enlivening role.

Suppose, that a mere idea alone . . . shou’d frequently make its appearance in the mind, this idea must by degrees acquire a facility and force; and both by its firm hold and easy introduction distinguish itself from any new and unusual idea. (T 1.3.9.16)

The effect of such repetition may be epistemically problematic, as is shown by Hume’s comments concerning hypochondriacs and habitual liars: ‘we may feel sickness and pain from the mere force of imagination, and make a malady real by often thinking of it’ (T 2.1.11.7), and ‘liars, by the frequent repetition of their lies, come at last to remember them’ (T 1.3.9.19). The subversive role of repetition would seem to extend to education, at least to certain forms of education such as rote learning or indoctrination, those which are divorced from experience, where we do not know the track record of the educator and where there is the possibility that learners could be imprinted with almost any beliefs. We saw above that various writers take such forms of education to be Hume’s target.

A little later in the *Treatise*, in a discussion of causal reasoning, Hume qualifies his account of the role of repetition in education. He says that ‘a person, who wou’d *voluntarily* repeat any idea in his mind, tho’ supported by one past experience, wou’d be no more inclin’d to believe the existence of its object, than if he had contented himself with one survey of it’ (T 1.3.12.23). Mere repetition is thus not enough for the (allegedly dubious) title of ‘education’; what is required is ‘a long tract of time, along with a very frequent and *undesign’d* repetition’ (T 1.3.12.23). Daily chanting of doctrines, claims or commitments may not lead to belief, but if one is immersed long enough in an educational regime then certain claims will be encountered regularly enough for them to acquire the vivacity necessary for belief.

The epistemic worries here would seem to be daunting since ‘upon examination we shall find more than one half of those opinions, that prevail among mankind, to be owing to education’ (T 1.3.9.19).<sup>2</sup> The problem is not only that beliefs can be acquired in the absence of experiential evidence, but that such repetition can also override beliefs that are acquired in an epistemically virtuous way through causal reasoning: ‘the principles, which are thus implicitly embrac’d, over-ballance those, which are owing to abstract reasoning [that is, demonstrative reasoning] or experience’ (T 1.3.9.19).<sup>3</sup>

It is a common theme in early modern philosophy that the imagination is a source of error which is prone to being misled by repetition. A key source of error lies in the mind ‘associating’ phenomena that have frequently accompanied each other even though there is no good reason to take them to be related. Bacon, for example, notes that certain ‘idols’ hinder us in our investigation of nature. The ‘idols of the den’, for example:

are those of each individual; for everybody (in addition to the errors common to the race of man) has his own individual den or cavern, which intercepts and corrupts the light of nature, either from his peculiar and singular disposition, or from his education and intercourse with others, or from his reading, and the authority acquired by those whom he reverences and admires[.] (1960, I, 42)<sup>4</sup>

Bacon argues that we should attempt to avoid such distracting psychological influences by reasoning inductively.<sup>5</sup>

Such emphasis on the misleading nature of the imagination is widespread and appears in Descartes, Hobbes, Malebranche, Locke, and Hutcheson. Descartes and

Hobbes anchor associations in mechanistic, physiological accounts of the brain. Descartes, in *The Passions of the Soul*, surmises that:

when the soul wills to remember something, this volition makes the gland, inclining successively to different sides, drive the spirits toward different places in the brain, until they come upon the one where the traces are which the object we will remember has left there. These traces are nothing but this: the pores of the brain, through which the spirits have previously made their way because of the presence of this object have thereby acquired a greater facility than the others for being opened again in the same way by spirits approaching them. (1989, art. 42; 41)

For Descartes, then, the body—or the physiology of the brain—is the source of epistemic error. He calls such associations ‘prejudices’ (a term to which we will return below).<sup>6</sup> For him, such distractions are avoided not, as with Bacon, through careful inductive reasoning, but through apprehension of clear and distinct ideas. It is, however, Locke who has the clearest focus on association, devoting a chapter of his *Essay* to what he calls the ‘principles of association’ and their malign influence.

## **2. Locke and association**

Locke wrote widely on education. His *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693) is, as Yolton puts it, ‘a training and educational programme for the development of a moral person . . . *Some Thoughts* gives parents a very specific manual on how to guide and mould their children into moral, social persons’ (1998, p. 173). Locke provides many specific suggestions: education should take place within the family and not in schools, there is no place for corporal punishment and less time should be spent in learning languages such as Greek and Latin.

In his *Essay*, though, we seem to see a distrust of education. To make sense of this we should draw a distinction between, on the one hand, the social role of education and, on the other, the pedagogical methods used to establish this role and the cognitive mechanisms underlying belief acquisition in cases of education. Locke (and, as we shall see in §5, Hume) has much to say about the beneficial role of education in society, but he also notes the pernicious effects of certain cognitive mechanisms upon which

education relies. He first notes that '[t]here is scarce any one that does not observe something that seems odd to him, and is in it self really Extravagant in the Opinions, Reasonings, and Actions of other Men' (II.xxxiii.1; p. 394). And: '[t]his sort of Unreasonableness is usually imputed to Education and Prejudice, and for the most part truly enough . . . Education is often rightly assigned for the Cause, and Prejudice is a good general Name for the thing it self' (II.xxxiii.3; pp. 394–5). He notes, though, that this 'reaches not the bottom of the Disease, nor shews distinctly enough whence it rises, or wherein it lies' (II.xxxiii.3; pp. 394–5). The 'bottom of the Disease' lies in association.

Locke notes that some ideas 'that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Mens Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it' (II.xxxiii.5; p. 395). Association thus plays a role in Locke's account of the mind, with the emphasis being on the misleading effects of such associations. Customary associations lead us astray and Locke provides various examples of when this is the case (II.xxxiii.7–16; pp. 396–400).

The *Ideas of Goblins* and *Sprights* have really no more to do with Darkness than Light; yet let but a foolish Maid inculcate these often in the Mind of a Child, and raise them there together, possibly he shall never be able to separate them again so long as he lives, but Darkness shall ever afterwards bring with it those frightful *Ideas*, and they shall be so joined that he can no more bear the one than the other. (II.xxxiii.10; pp. 397–8)

Thus:

those who have Children, or the charge of their Education, would think it worth their while diligently to watch, and carefully to prevent the undue Connexion of *Ideas* in the Minds of young People. This is the time most susceptible of lasting impressions (II.xxxiii.8; p. 397).

Hume would endorse certain aspects of Locke's warning. '[R]esemblance [Hume says] is the most fertile source of error; and indeed there are few mistakes in reasoning, which do not borrow largely from that origin' (T 1.2.5.21). The principle of association by the relation of resemblance leads the mind to associate ideas of things that resemble each other.

Resembling ideas are not only related together, but the actions of the mind, which we employ in considering them, are so little different, that we are not able to distinguish them. This last circumstance is of great consequence; and we may in general observe, that wherever the actions of the mind in forming any two ideas are the same or resembling, we are very apt to confound these ideas, and take the one for the other (T 1.2.5.21).

It is important to note, though, that the imagination for Hume is not primarily a source of error. Quite the contrary—the principle of association by the relation of causation is the source of all judgements concerning matters of fact. This was a new, radical claim. As Christopher Bernard says, ‘Hume’s suggestion that imagination is responsible for all our correct judgements about matters of fact would have astonished his predecessors’ (1994, p. 226).<sup>7</sup> The key distinction for Hume is between different features of the imagination: those that mislead such as the principle of association by the relation of resemblance, and that which for him constitutes reason, that is, the principle of association by the relation of causation.

Hume’s positive view of the imagination can be seen as developing from a debate concerning the moral sentiments. Jacqueline Taylor notes the influence of John Gay’s ‘Dissertation concerning the Fundamental Principles of Virtue or Morality’ (1731). Gay is an early critic of Hutcheson. For Hutcheson (2002) we have an innate, God-given moral sense, and this sense can be confused by associations. Hutcheson calls the moral sense ‘natural’ and ‘original’ whereas associations are ‘unnatural’, ‘prejudicial’, or ‘fantastick’.<sup>8</sup> Gay agrees with Hutcheson that morality is grounded in sentiments, but our capacity to feel these in the presence of virtuous and vicious actions is not innate; it is something we learn through association.

Though it be necessary in order to solve the principal actions of human life to suppose a moral sense . . . and also publick affections; yet I deny that this moral sense, or these public affections, are innate or implanted in us. They are acquired from our own observation or the imitation of others. (Gay, 1964, iv; p. 285)

According to Gay, certain actions become associated with pleasure and pain and we come to see virtuous acts as those that lead to pleasure—association thus playing a

positive epistemic role with respect to morality. Hume extends the role of association to all reasoning concerning matters of fact.

Locke distinguishes between the understanding and the error-prone imagination. The understanding is a quasi-perceptual faculty, with reasoning seen in perceptual terms: '*Knowledge* then seems to me to be nothing but *the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas*' (IV.i.2; p. 525). We directly perceive the evidential connections between ideas, and in order to avoid the negative effects of association, methods of study should be designed that enable students to apprehend ideas and the connections between them clearly and distinctly.

Above we saw that Hutcheson takes associations to be 'unnatural', and Locke also contrasts the 'natural' connections of ideas discoverable by reason with the non-natural or 'artificial' association of ideas. The former 'have a natural Correspondence and Connexion one with another: It's the Office and Excellence of our Reason to trace these', whereas the latter are 'wholly owing to Chance and Custom' (II.xxxiii.5; p. 395). Thus, it is easy to align both Locke and Hutcheson with Hume's 'philosophers' who do not 'recognize' education because it 'is an artificial and not a natural cause' (T 1.3.9.19). I take it that Hume is here alluding to the view of Hutcheson and Locke that association is not natural and thus artificial, and that this is also the case with respect to education given that it is grounded in association.<sup>9</sup>

I claim, then, that Hume's targets are those philosophers who decry associationism in favour of forms of reasoning they claim are superior. Locke, as we have seen, takes reasoning to be quasi-perceptual. Hutcheson takes moral thinking to be grounded in an innate God-given moral sense. Good causal reasoning for Descartes involves a priori consideration of the causal adequacy principle: the claim that a cause must have at least as much reality as the effect. All such forms of reasoning stand in contrast to misleading associations. Hume, however, collapses any such distinction, and such forms of reasoning—those of Descartes, Locke and Hutcheson, among others—are replaced by an associationist conception of cognition.

Education grounded in association is 'never . . . recogniz'd by philosophers; *tho'* in reality it be built almost on the same foundation of custom and repetition as our experience or reasonings from cause and effect' (T 1.3.9.19; my emphasis). The 'tho'' is important here. It should make us sit up. The words following it are not merely noting a surprising thing in common between education and causal reasoning—that is, their

source in association; they are, rather, suggesting that philosophers who do not recognize education because of its associative origin should look again at causal reasoning—and this, they will find to their surprise, is associative too. Their criterion for distinguishing good and bad forms of reasoning thus collapses. The comments concerning education are not merely there to offer further examples of where repetition has a negative effect, along with the beliefs of habitual liars and hypochondriacs. The few words on education at *Treatise* 1.3.9–10 are part of Hume’s associationist manifesto. As we shall see in the next section, though, this interpretation is at odds with that of Loeb.

### ***3. Loeb’s interpretation of Hume on education***

Loeb claims that the ‘philosophers’ that ‘disclaim’ and do not ‘recognize’ education are the natural philosophers, empiricists such as Locke and Hume himself (2002, p. 17). I agree that Locke should be included in this category, but he is named by Loeb for a different reason—for his sharing with Hume the naturalistic or empiricist approach—rather than for his rejection of associationism. Loeb claims that Hume says merely ‘philosophers’, without revealing his membership of this group and without explicitly endorsing the claims about education, because he would prefer to keep these claims at ‘arm’s length’, aware that his sceptical arguments later in the *Treatise* will lead to the wholesale loss of justification for all beliefs, those due to education and those due to causal reasoning.

This is not a persuasive interpretation. First, as discussed above, the Lockean reading of ‘natural’ is persuasive, thus suggesting that Hume is not allying himself to Locke in this context.

Second, Loeb takes Hume’s brevity with respect to education to indicate worries with his associationist psychology. This, I shall argue, is not a plausible interpretation of why Hume’s remarks on education are so sketchy. Loeb takes Hume to ground normativity and the claim that causal reasoning is in some sense justified in stability. Beliefs acquired through causal reasoning are stable, whereas the teachings of education are often inconsistent and thus unstable and unjustified. He argues, though, that Hume



cannot account for this difference in stability in associationist terms, and in order not to draw attention to this hole in his theory Hume moves quickly on.

One reason for the instability of beliefs arising from education is that they are ‘contrary . . . to themselves’ (T 1.3.9.19); different authorities may put forward opposing views on a certain subject. Loeb, however, claims that an analogous situation is also the case with respect to causal reasoning and the probability judgements arising from such reasoning. Even though this is the case, the imagination is capable of arriving at a unified (probability) judgement or a stable withholding of judgement (if the evidence amounts to ‘proof against proof’, as Hume puts it in the *Enquiry* (EHU 10.11)). Experiences cancel each other out leaving one with a belief in the probable occurrence of a certain effect. My ginger cat may have had many litters with the same tomcat: three quarters of the kittens born are ginger, one quarter black. There is no problem of instability here. I come to believe that the chance of the next kitten being ginger is three in four. This, however, is not the case with respect to education where instability can remain. Loeb concludes that ‘Hume has no explanation of why we do not, in the fashion of the probability of causes, extract a single judgement from the contrary pronouncements of education. . . . We can speculate that Hume had some awareness of his difficulties and that this explains the brevity of his treatment of the epistemic status of education’ (2002, pp. 244–5).

I do not find this a persuasive claim as it would involve a good deal of disingenuousness on Hume’s part. He may have such doubts later—with associationism playing a less prominent role in his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*—but in the *Abstract* of the *Treatise* Hume was very proud of his associationism, saying: ‘[i]f any thing can intitle the author to so glorious a name of that of an *inventor*, ’tis the use he makes of the principle of association of ideas, which enters into most of his philosophy’ (T Abs. 35).<sup>10</sup> If Loeb is right, then Hume is aware that this ‘invention’ is not up to scratch and his pride would thus in some measure be feigned. It is more plausible, I think, that Hume is sincere here and that his comments concerning education are in fact an argument *for* associationism, and not claims that cannot be accounted for by such psychology.

A third reason why Loeb’s interpretation is not persuasive is that Hume does have the resources with which to explain the difference in stability between beliefs derived respectively from causal reasoning and education. There are two kinds of cases. Firstly, those in which different sources of education provide logically incompatible

claims. Instability would arise, for example, if I were exposed to the dogmas of two distinct cat cults, one claiming that ginger queens always have ginger kittens, the other that they always have black kittens. Such contrary maxims lead to instability—one cannot come to a coherent judgement that respects both claims—whereas this is not the case in the previous example where I come to make a probability judgement based on the relative frequencies of kittens I have seen. Loeb highlights this difference between the two cases and suggests that it indicates the explanatory paucity of associationism.

Given, though, that the claims of the cat cults contradict each other, it is for Hume inconceivable that both cults are correct. In the *Treatise* he talks of philosophical relations that ‘depend entirely on . . . ideas’ (T 1.3.1.1), and one can apprehend that two ideas are contrary to each other by intuition. In the *Enquiry* he discusses such truths ‘discoverable by the mere operation of thought’ in terms of relations of ideas (EHU 4.1). It is a relation of ideas that it cannot be so that *all the kittens will be ginger* and that *all the kittens will be black*. Hume therefore does have an explanation for the difference in stability between cat-cult beliefs, ones that Loeb would class as falling under the term ‘education’, and those derived from the observation of kittens. Contradictions in the former indicate, by a relation of ideas, that they cannot both be true; inconsistencies in the latter, however, are only apparent as diverse experiences can be subsumed under probability judgements grounded in association.

There is also a second kind of case that does not involve contradiction, but where teachings are in conflict over the empirical facts. The UK cat club may claim that 20% of cats worldwide are underweight whereas the US cat club says 60%. In such cases, though, it seems that one could perhaps ‘extract a single judgement’, in this case taking 40% to be closer to the correct figure. Further, Hume’s general rules could be applied here to regulate one’s thinking, either leading one to discount one of the sources or put lesser or greater weight on its claims. (I shall say more about general rules in the next section.)

Lastly, Loeb’s claim concerning why Hume keeps the normative judgement concerning education at arm’s length is an odd one. Sure, Hume is aware—at this point in the *Treatise*—that his sceptical arguments are about to undercut any such distinction since the justification for all beliefs will be undermined. But—on many interpretations—he is also aware that his sceptical, naturalistic ‘solution’ will reinstate this distinction and so the arm’s length is not required. Loeb himself argues for a non-sceptical interpretation of Hume, saying: ‘there is substantial evidence . . . that he takes

the relation of cause and effect to produce justified belief' (2001, p. 148). As key evidence for this he cites Hume's claims that causal inference is 'just' (T 1.4.2.54), and that '[o]ne who concludes somebody to be near him, when he hears an articulate voice in the dark, reasons justly and naturally tho' that conclusion be deriv'd from nothing but custom' (T 1.4.4.1).<sup>11</sup>

Loeb's original stability account appears in his 1995 paper and 2002 book. Since then, however, he has developed this approach. In Loeb (2004) he draws a distinction between stability accounts that consider whether one's beliefs are stable and thus justified under intense reflection, and those that focus on actual reflection. Intense reflection involves 'the sorts of sophisticated reflection that generates Pyrrhonian doubt' (2004, p. 358); actual reflection involves the kinds of interrogations of one's beliefs that are pursued in common life. In Loeb (2002) he had assumed the former and claimed that such reflection undermines all justification and therefore also collapses the distinction between good forms of reasoning (causal) and bad (education). It is such reflection that causes Hume to distance himself from his pre-theoretical commitment to causal reasoning over education. In his 2004, though, he admits to 'overlook[ing] important alternatives to peak reflection accounts' (p. 361) such as those involving actual reflection. Further, he says 'my book . . . overstate[s] the extent to which Hume reaches a destructive result' (2004, p. 339). In the introduction to his 2010, he confirms that he must 'backtrack' from his earlier 'error' and that 'a stability theory ought not presuppose any privilege either for the intense reflection of a fully reflective subject or for the peak reflectiveness of actual subjects' (2010, p. 18). Without the destructive force of intense reflection it may appear that the distancing claim is not now required and that Loeb could drop it from his account (even though he has not explicitly done so).

This, however, does not appear to be the case. Loeb's distancing claim is compatible with his revised reading of stability (2004/2010) and, as we see below, he does not abandon this claim in his recent work. According to the revised account Hume's pre-theoretical commitments are justified in the (unreflective) context of T 1.3.<sup>12</sup> In T 1.4, however, intense reflection does occur, and under such scrutiny Hume's beliefs are not justified, even if they are during unreflective periods of his life. The 2002 claim was that distancing is required since Hume *foresees* the effect of the scepticism to come in T 1.4, and such scepticism still awaits Hume in Loeb's revised account. That Loeb could or does remain wedded to the distancing claim is supported by his 2012 in

which he says ‘I aspire to remain neutral on whether a [pre-theoretical] distinction holds in Hume’s final view; though the developments in 1.4.7 are relevant to how we read Part 3, they are beyond the scope of this paper’ (2012, p. 316). More explicitly he allows that his 2002 suggestion could still be correct, saying ‘[i]t is also possible that Hume distances himself from his epistemic distinctions in light of the dangerous dilemma in 1.4.7 (§1). See my *Stability and Justification* [2002]. . . for this approach’ (2012, p. 319n15).

Thus, I am not persuaded by Loeb’s interpretation for four reasons. First, it is plausible that Hume is taking aim at Locke’s reading of ‘natural’. Second, Hume is proud of his associationism and not frustrated by its failures. Third, Hume does have the resources to explain the relative stability of beliefs based on education and causal reasoning. Fourth, given Hume’s non-sceptical account of causal reasoning there is no good reason for him to keep the claim concerning education at arm’s length. Loeb thus misinterprets the tone of Hume’s comments. At T 1.3.9.19 Hume does not distance himself from the normative distinction between causal reasoning and education because it will turn out that as a philosopher he will be unable to maintain such a distinction. Rather, his reluctance to include himself with the ‘philosophers’ is a subtle declaration that the philosophers to which he is referring are mistaken concerning the nature of good reasoning,

#### ***4. Hume, philosophers and the philosophical***

Hume often distances himself from the views of ‘philosophers’, when, for example, those views lead to what he calls ‘melancholy and delirium’ arising from metaphysical reflection (T 1.4.7.9), and where he considers ‘sages’ who look down with indifference on human affairs (EPM 7.16) or come ‘to despise the world’ (H 6.219–20). In the *History of England* ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophers’ are not in general words of approval.<sup>13</sup> Hobbes’ philosophy is a ‘lively instance [of] how precarious all reputations, founded on reasoning and philosophy!’ (H 6.153). Philosophy is often aligned with theology (H 2.71, 2.518n, 4.209, 5.211) and to ‘the dreaming and captious philosophy of the schools’ (H 3.229), with theologians or ‘despicable philosopher[s]’ (H 5.155) ‘infected with superstition and sophistry’ (H 2.521).<sup>14</sup>

Hume does, however, align himself with the ‘true philosopher’ or ‘mitigated sceptic’. There is a distinctive intellectual journey associated with such a thinker. The vulgar adopt a ‘common and careless way of thinking’ (T 1.4.3.9) and take themselves, for example, to be really *seeing* the cue ball causing the red ball to go into the pocket during a game of billiards. Philosophers do not take such appearances at face value and construct all kinds of philosophical systems to account for them: causal adequacy principles of which we can have a priori knowledge (Descartes); a God that intervenes on all such occasions (Malebranche); a distinction between appearances and the substances lying behind (Locke). This for Hume is false philosophy. His sceptical arguments aim to show that all such systems are unfounded, a ‘confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions’ (T 1.4.2.56). The true philosopher does not rest in this newfound wisdom, confident that his findings are superior to the pretensions of his false namesakes. He cannot, since such scepticism is unliveable. Rather, he ‘return[s] back to the situation of the vulgar’ (T 1.4.3.9), now, as he says in the first *Enquiry*, with a ‘methodized and corrected’ way of thinking (EHU 12.25). Corrected, in that his encounter with scepticism has left him more careful in his everyday reasoning and more vigilant of his, sure to return, (false) philosophizing tendencies.<sup>15, 16</sup> However, when talking of education the ‘philosophers’ to which Hume refers would not seem to be true philosophers in this sense—those who have followed the path sketched. Loeb cites Locke as an ally, and I have suggested a motley collection of thinkers who disparage association, but none of these are true philosophers in Hume’s sense. Philosophy and philosophers are discussed in various places in Hume’s works, but these terms refer to different enterprises and to different kinds of thinkers dependent on the context; they are sometimes looked at favourably, and sometimes not. I suggest that in the context of Hume’s comments concerning education he is not thinking of the philosophers favourably.

There is, however, a distinct use of ‘philosophical’ that needs to be considered, one that Loeb takes as supporting his interpretation that Hume is one of the philosophers that disclaims education. Hume distinguishes between philosophical and unphilosophical probability. The former consists of ‘kinds of probability . . . receiv’d by philosophers, and allow’d to be reasonable foundations of belief and opinion’; the latter ‘have not had the good fortune to obtain the same sanction’ (T 1.3.13.1). Loeb claims that ‘Hume assumes the same posture towards’ this distinction between philosophical and unphilosophical probability as he does towards ‘other

epistemological distinctions' such as those relating to education (1995, p. 195). He endorses both philosophical probability and the disclaiming of education. My interpretation needs to explain this distinction, consider how it relates to education and whether or not Hume takes 'philosophical' in this context to express his approval of such reasoning.

First, let us turn to unphilosophical probability. Loeb takes Hume to mean by this, cases in which vivacity does not track the credibility of belief, where, for example, we are more likely to hold beliefs based on recent memories or experiences, or where we are less likely to hold beliefs that are the result of long chains of reasoning. These are the first three of the forms of unphilosophical probability discussed by Hume.

The fourth form of unphilosophical probability introduces consideration of general rules, of which there are two kinds. We sometimes draw rash generalizations and apply misguided general rules. Having never met a witty Irishman (Hume's example) we may infer that no Irishman is witty. Such prejudices, however, can be corrected by general rules of an epistemically superior kind.<sup>17</sup> These are second order judgements about the reliability of the various forms of reasoning in which we engage, what Kemp Smith calls 'wider and more reliable forms of custom' (1941, p. 95). Such a generalization concerning the Irish would lead to conflict when one meets a witty Irishman or when one considers, for example, that Irish authors have written humorous books. One thus holds back from this kind of generalization, perhaps demanding more evidence, and thus regulating one's biases. Unphilosophical probability is therefore seen as prejudiced and of standing in need of correction by general rules or more philosophical ways of thinking. Loeb holds that the same is true of education. In contrast, in §5 I argue that it is through education that we acquire and refine general rules to guide our thinking.

There are, however, two problems with this reading of the distinction between philosophical and unphilosophical probability. First, there are various places where Hume approves of overgeneralization (misguided general rules): unphilosophical probability is not always to be resisted. Overgeneralization leads to our preference for 1001 pounds over 1000 even though the passions associated with these sums are indistinguishable in terms of vivacity (T 1.3.12.24); it enables us to feel compassion for a 'person of merit' even though they themselves do not feel sorrow (T 2.2.7.5); grief for a person murdered in their sleep even though they are not aware of the danger (T 2.2.7.6); and disapproval towards our own acts of injustice: 'And tho' this . . .

[disapproval of injustice] in the present case, be deriv'd only from contemplating the actions of others, yet we fail not to extend it even to our own actions. The *general rule* reaches beyond those instances, from which it arose' (T 3.2.2.24). It also explains '[v]irtue in rags', '[w]here a character is, in every respect, fitted to be beneficial to society, the imagination passes easily from the cause to the effect, without considering that there are still some circumstances wanting to render the cause a compleat one. *General rules* create a species of probability, which sometimes influences the judgment, and always the imagination' (T 3.3.1.19–20). In such cases Hume does not criticize us for overgeneralizing.<sup>18</sup>

Second, Loeb assumes causal reasoning and the following of general rules are both applications of philosophical probability; Hume thus aligning himself with the philosophical. As we have seen, various philosophers have distinguished between epistemically successful forms of reasoning and cognitive processes that mislead; Locke, for example, takes the former to involve the apprehension of connections between ideas, the latter consisting in the associative imagination. I have claimed that Hume's comments concerning education are aimed at this distinction. Further—contra Loeb—Hume's take on philosophical and unphilosophical probability is also part of the same strategy to undermine this picture. For Hume, all empirical reasoning is associative and thus unphilosophical. Philosophical probability is a myth. Our mental life does not involve, for example, a quasi-perceptual ability to discern the rational connections between ideas; it is, rather, a fluid, self-regulating set of associative processes. Hume is explicit about this: 'The following of general rules is a very unphilosophical species of probability; and yet 'tis only by following them that we can correct this, and all other unphilosophical probabilities' (T 1.3.13.12).

Hume is not therefore one of the philosophers to which he refers in the early passages on education, nor does he endorse philosophical as opposed to unphilosophical probability.<sup>19</sup> Further, education is not his real interest in this section; it is, rather, associationism. The kinds of thinking involved in education are forms of unphilosophical probability, but so are all forms of thinking concerning matters of fact, and whether education is to be trusted is an empirical question and one I will argue below that should be answered positively. If one adopts such an interpretation it is easy to hear the sardonic tone of the claim that unphilosophical probabilities have not had 'the good fortune' to be sanctioned by philosophers.<sup>20</sup>

### *5. Education, society and knowledge*

Hume stresses the epistemic and social importance of ‘education’, and in this final section I shall discuss how education is involved in the learning of general rules, how it is crucial to the wider social relations that play a role in fostering the growth of knowledge, and its importance with respect to morality.

In the previous section it was argued that, for Hume, all reasoning concerning matters of fact is unphilosophical and that our mental life consists in a fluid, self-regulating set of associative processes. Education plays a crucial role in this self-regulation. There are various ways that ideas can gain enough vivacity to become beliefs: through causal inference, through the effects of contiguity and resemblance,<sup>21</sup> through the eloquence and literary skill of poets and writers of fiction (T 1.3.10.7–11), from associated passions, through sympathy,<sup>22</sup> and through the kind of repetition involved in indoctrination.<sup>23</sup> Epistemic tensions can arise as a result of there being various competing sources of belief: when travelling by air, for example, I may believe that the plane is going to fall from the sky, with the vivacity of this belief derived from my fear of flying; however, I also believe—via inductive inference—that flying is the statistically safest form of travel and that it’s very unlikely that the flight will have problems.<sup>24</sup> Such tensions, though, are resolvable since certain ways of acquiring beliefs are better than others. One way of determining what should be believed in cases where there are such tensions involves the formulation of general rules. (Earlier we saw how general rules help us to avoid prejudicial beliefs concerning national character traits, such as those concerning the wit of the Irish.)<sup>25</sup> Lorne Falkenstein (1997) discusses how, according to Hume, we come to form second order beliefs about the reliability of the various sources of belief, and how such metabeliefs lead us to mitigate or abandon beliefs based on unreliable methods, or at least lead us to feel that such beliefs are not appropriate.<sup>26</sup> We form general rules that some methods of acquiring beliefs are more reliable than others: ‘Thus, we might reflect that statistically guided causal inference is more reliable than instinctive causal inference from the most recent and lurid examples, and form a general rule to that effect’ (Falkenstein, 1997, p. 47).

Education plays a role in the formation of general rules in various ways.<sup>27</sup> First, education moulds the kind of society in which knowledge thrives; education is required for the ‘higher Parts of Learning’, that is, philosophy, poetry, and the arts and sciences



(E 549).<sup>28</sup> It encourages the kind of curiosity that leads to the interrogation of one's methods of belief acquisition: 'curiosity, or the love of knowledge . . . requires youth, leisure, education, genius, and example, to make it govern any person' (E 113).<sup>29</sup> In 'Of the Rise of Arts and Sciences' Hume observes that education fosters the kind of civility that is necessary for learned conversation, that it curbs dogmatism and arrogance (E 126); that civilized monarchies, the 'most acceptable to people of condition and education', are also the most congenial to civil discourse (E 126–7); and that civility is encouraged by gallantry, the latter itself refined and polished by education (E 131). Further, education plays a wider role in our social relations. It fosters friendship; studies in the arts 'draw off the mind from the hurry of business and interest; cherish reflection; dispose to tranquility; and produce an agreeable melancholy, which, of all dispositions of the mind, is the best suited to love and friendship' (E 7).<sup>30</sup> Taylor (2015) takes Hume to have a 'social theoretical account of human nature' (p. 30) in which 'our passionate education includes . . . a process of learning appropriate ways of expressing the passions, as well as who can do so and under what circumstances' (p. 31). We feel pride, for example, through sympathizing with the opinions of others concerning our successes and place in society, and through 'the process of being educated in the ways of a given community' (ibid. p. 55). In this way I may come to feel pride in my profession, wealth and family, learn how to express this pride appropriately, and, in turn, come to see myself as the person that I am (T 2.1.5.5–6).<sup>31</sup>

Second, education can encourage epistemically beneficial forms of skepticism. In §4 we saw that the skepticism of the 'true philosopher' leads to the epiphany that 'corrected and methodized' everyday reasoning should be pursued, and we can now see the correction involved here in terms of the application of general rules. There is a naturalistic explanation for this: 'For Hume, an encounter with skeptical arguments diminishes the vivacity of all of our ideas, but certain beliefs (those originating from causes that we consider to be legitimate) are better able to recover from the blow' (Falkenstein, 1997, p. 31).<sup>32</sup> As skepticism dims or extinguishes the products of the various mechanisms of belief acquisition, the force or vivacity derived from the principle of association by the relation of causation can shine through.<sup>33</sup> Thus,

The person who has once felt the force of the sceptical arguments . . . will be naturally compelled to follow the rules by which to judge of causes and effects, even before having had the benefit of studying them in the book.

This is a circumstance that has an evident pedagogical implication—an implication that Hume appears to have taken seriously to heart. (ibid., p. 62)

Of course, education does not often involve the kind of skeptical considerations raised by Hume in the *Treatise*. Children are not usually introduced to doubts concerning the existence of the external world or their own selves, but education in the arts and sciences can involve recognition of the limits of our knowledge of the natural world and of our mental life. Education, for example, can alert us to how we are easily swayed in our beliefs by eloquent writing; due skepticism, then, can reduce the vivacity of ideas acquired from this source, allowing beliefs acquired dispassionately from causal reasoning and the application of general rules to have more influence.<sup>34</sup>

Education involves the adoption of general rules, and general rules also enable us to distinguish between epistemically virtuous forms of education and those that should be avoided. The important distinction for Hume is between education and the prejudices of education: we should ‘preserv[e] a proper impartiality in our judgments, . . . weaning our mind from all those prejudices, which we may have imbibed from education or rash opinion’ (EHU 12.4). For Hume, the wise or those with ‘good sense’ are those who reason well—not in terms of system-building, ‘abstract reasoning’—but in terms of good causal reasoning supplemented by the application of general rules. He suggests certain ‘rules by which to judge of causes and effects’ (T 1.3.15), and Garrett (2014, p. 292) notes that ‘Hume sometimes praises under the name of “education” . . . a certain amount of ordinary inference from first-hand experience and acceptance of expert testimony based on a probable judgment about the credibility of the testifier’. It is not, however, wise to let one’s beliefs be swayed by the passions, by, for example, the wonder associated with belief in the occurrence of miraculous events. ‘A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence’ (EHU 10.4).<sup>35, 36</sup>

There are, however, arenas of education that do not abide by the canons of good causal reasoning and that have throughout history been psychologically and socially corrosive—one such being religious instruction. Sessions (2002) calls Hume’s *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* ‘a case study in religious education’, the three protagonists having differing ideas as to the education of their students and of Pamphilus. Demea, says Sessions, ‘wants to teach his students how to submit unconditionally to authority, to surrender their own capacities for discernment and judgement’ (2002, p. 226). He aims ‘to season their minds with early piety . . . and by

continual precept and instruction . . . imprint deeply on their tender minds an habitual reverence for all the principles of religion' (DNR 1.2; p. 130). This, for Hume, is not a virtuous goal. Religious education should therefore be disclaimed by philosophy, but not education in general.

Education is therefore involved in the adoption of general rules and in fostering conditions suitable for the civilized growth of knowledge. Lastly, education is required for the cultivation of moral virtue.

[Parents] are induc'd to inculcate on their children, from their earliest infancy, the principles of probity, and teach them to regard the observance of those rules, by which society is maintain'd, as worthy and honourable, and their violation as base and infamous. (T 3.2.2.26)

Hume's discussion of moral education should be seen in the context of a wider early modern debate with respect to morality.<sup>37</sup> On one side there are those who take there to be objective moral truths, accessible either, as Hutcheson claims, by our innate sense of morality, or as Clarke claims, through reason. On the other side are those, such as Mandeville and Hobbes, who adopt the 'selfish hypothesis' (EPM App. 2.6) and who take us to be driven purely by self-interest.<sup>38</sup> Hume takes a middle path, rejecting the fundamental role of reason with respect to morality, but avoiding the selfish hypothesis through the central role played by sympathy in our moral thinking. Education involves teaching children how certain rules and institutions lead to a society in which people's actions are useful and agreeable to each other: 'the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature, but arises artificially, tho' necessarily from education, and human conventions' (T 3.2.1.17).<sup>39</sup> Moral education must therefore be aimed at tutoring our sympathetic reactions, and learning which kinds of actions enhance the amount of pleasure and utility in society. Such sympathy can be assisted by the 'artifice of politicians' and by 'private education and instruction' (T 3.2.2.25–26); these can highlight exemplars of virtue, improve our knowledge of the harm done by vicious actions and the pleasure wrought by virtuous ones, and aid us in identifying obstacles to sympathy. Moral education thus has a positive effect on our sympathetic mechanisms.

Further, education and 'speculative studies' help cultivate our sympathetic responses: 'a serious attention to the sciences and liberal arts softens and humanises the temper, and cherishes those fine emotions, in which true virtue and honour consists' (E

170).<sup>40</sup> A person ‘of taste and learning . . . feels more fully a moral distinction in characters and manners; nor is his sense of this kind diminished, but, on the contrary, it is much increased, by speculation’ (ibid.). Hume also claims that history is the best kind of speculative study for this purpose and thus an excellent source of moral education. In our everyday lives it is difficult to judge the actions of others in isolation from the effects those actions have on us and from our current mood and temper. Conversely, the philosopher, who ‘contemplates characters and manners in the closet’: for them, ‘the general abstract view of the objects leaves the mind so cold and unmoved, that the sentiments of nature have no room to play, and he scarce feels the difference between vice and virtue’ (E 568).<sup>41</sup> ‘History,’ in contrast, ‘keeps in a just medium betwixt these extremes, and places the objects in their true point of view’ (ibid.). History teaches us how to adopt the general point of view; historical education therefore expands our range of sympathy, providing deeper understanding of the passions and motives of others.<sup>42</sup>

William E. Morris claims that ‘*education*, [is] a term Hume almost always uses as a pejorative’ (2000, p. 314). This is not the case. As said, in the *Treatise* education with respect to morality is praised and in the first *Enquiry* it is noteworthy that miracles have never been reported by those with a good education (EHU 10.15). Hume also explicitly mentions ‘education’ close to 100 times in his *History*, mostly in the ordinary sense concerning the teaching of the children of both Kings and commoners. It is sometimes prefixed with ‘good’, ‘excellent’, ‘better’ or ‘liberal’; occasionally ‘bad’ or ‘rude’. It refers to moral education and education in the broader sense involving the imparting of factual knowledge. It is usually a term of approbation. King Alfred is praised for being a great sovereign, legislator, warrior, politician, and educator (H 1.80). A good education can involve ‘calm and elegant occupations of learning’ (although it did not in Cromwell) (H 6.55); it can ‘tame’ ‘barbarism and ignorance’ (although not in the Irish) (H 1.339); and it can instill ‘genius and capacity’ (H 2.404). Wisdom is fostered by education (H 6.343) and ‘virtue which is nothing but a more enlarged and more cultivated reason, never flourishes to any degree, nor is founded on steady principles of honour, except where a good education becomes general (H 1.179). The connection with knowledge is also clear: ‘Even superstition, though more prevalent among ignorant nations, is but a poor supply for the defects in knowledge and education’ (H 1.179-80); conversely, ‘ignorance and low education’ (H 6.109) are equated.

In various places Hume does note the influence of early education on one's religious views, cases that can be considered indoctrination. It was, for example, the education of the Duke of Anjou that 'had zealously attached him to that communion [Catholicism]' (H 4.194).<sup>43</sup> But the context makes it clear that these are cases of warped education and not widespread features of education in general. Elsewhere he allows that the clergy can have a positive role in education (H 1.90) and that religion can be checked by 'knowledge and a liberal education' (H 1.207). 'Education'—contra Morris—is therefore mostly used in the ordinary sense and not in the restricted sense that commentators take Hume to be using in the early discussion of education in the *Treatise* (1.3.9–10).

I noted in §2 the distinction in Locke between the social role of education and the cognitive mechanisms underlying it. In Books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise* and subsequent works, Hume focuses on its positive social role, whereas in Book 1 he is concerned with the mechanisms involved.<sup>44</sup> These are associative mechanisms—not quasi-perceptual, as with Locke—and I have argued that Hume's comments at T 1.3.9–10 are not intended to undermine education itself, but rather, to highlight the role of association in reasoning and subtly to criticize those who take associationist psychology merely to underlie epistemic deficiencies. There are, according to Hume, forms of education that are worthy and that should be seen as good foundations of belief. Education provides the right social conditions for the cultivation of knowledge, and it enables us to acquire the general rules and virtues necessary for wisdom and morality. I have thus suggested how certain forms of education can be integrated into Hume's account of epistemology, the mind and our place in society.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the *Treatise of Human Nature* are taken from the 2007 Clarendon edition, edited by D.F. Norton and M.J. Norton, hereafter abbreviated as 'T'. The Clarendon editions of *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1998) and *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (2007), both edited by T.L. Beauchamp, are respectively cited as 'EPM' and 'EHU'; Liberty Fund editions of *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, edited by E.F. Miller (1998), and *The History of England: from*

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*the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* (1985), are denoted by ‘E’ and ‘H’, and the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, edited by N. Kemp Smith (1947), as ‘DNR’.

<sup>2</sup> This would be a considerable exaggeration if Hume were only talking about cases of indoctrination. ‘Half’, though, would seem to be a reasonably plausible estimate of the proportion of beliefs we acquire through our various stages of education (home, school, university) as opposed to those we acquire through direct experience.

<sup>3</sup> This claim echoes Locke’s discussion of association in his *Essay*. Locke claims that to attempt to see through misleading associations with reason is akin to attempting to ‘preach Ease to one on the Rack, and hope to allay, by rational Discourses, the Pain of his Joints tearing asunder’ (II.xxxiii.13; p. 398). (All quotations from Locke’s *Essay* are taken from the P. H. Nidditch edition (Oxford, 1975), with original book, chapter and section numbers included.)

<sup>4</sup> Idols of the Tribe are epistemic weaknesses common to human nature such as wishful thinking and the susceptibility of our senses to deception. Idols of the Marketplace are problems stemming from misunderstanding certain words and concepts, and Idols of the Theatre are those based on the blind following of philosophical systems or traditions.

<sup>5</sup> Hume, as we shall see below, takes induction to be associative too.

<sup>6</sup> See also Hobbes, 2002, I.iii (20–25).

<sup>7</sup> That Hume widens the scope of associationism in this way is a point also stressed by Loeb (2002, p. 58; 2012, p. 325), Wright (1983, pp. 153–4; 2009, p. 50), Laird (1932, p. 41), Aaron (1937, p. 141), Baier (1993, p. 38), Yolton (1993, pp. 21–2), Aarsleff (1994, p. 269), and Taylor (2015, pp. 62–3).

<sup>8</sup> See Gill (1996, p. 25; 2006, pp. 187–94) for discussion of Hutcheson on association. He also discusses Hutcheson’s theological view of human nature (2006, pp. 214–25), in which ‘[a]nything that flows directly from our original principles is aligned to what is natural, true, and real, while anything that results from association (anything that is the way it is because mental associations have altered an original principle) is unnatural, prejudicial, or fantastick’ (ibid., p. 217). Taylor also provides extensive discussion of Hume’s rejection of the teleological account of human nature (2015, chapter 1).

<sup>9</sup> In a letter of 1739 Hume questions Hutcheson’s sense of ‘natural’: ‘I cannot agree to your Sense of *Natural*. Tis founded on final Causes; which is a Consideration, that appears to me pretty uncertain & unphilosophical. For pray, what is the End of Man? Is

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he created for Happiness or for Virtue? For this Life or for the next? For himself or for his Maker? Your Definition of *Natural* depends upon solving these Questions, which are endless, & quite wide of my Purpose' (Hume, 1932, I, p. 33).

<sup>10</sup> We should perhaps be a little cautious here, given that this trumpeting of associationism is taken from the *Abstract*, aimed at advertising the *Treatise* and reviving its fortunes.

<sup>11</sup> See also Loeb (2014, pp. 260–1).

<sup>12</sup> That this is so is revealed in Loeb's response to Schmitt (2004): 'What is clear is that in my book I ought to have advanced an interpretation satisfying requirement (U), rather than the peak reflection account' (2004, p. 362). Requirement (U) is taken from Schmitt's reply to Loeb's 2002 position, and states 'whether an *unreflective belief of a reflective person* is justified should turn on whether the mechanism that produces it yields stable beliefs during the *unreflective moments* of that person's life' (Schmitt, 2004, p. 309; Loeb's emphasis).

<sup>13</sup> I assume here that there is important continuity and interplay between Hume's work in philosophy and history. See Norton and Popkin 1965.

<sup>14</sup> At times 'philosophy' is seen in a positive light. This is so with respect to Hume's mention of ancient philosophy (H 3.224, 5.304), and 'a philosophical mind' (H 5.459, 6.142) can be amused by the 'gloomy enthusiast', with 'principles of sound philosophy . . . exempt from superstition' (H 3.191). The 'philosophical precision' of scholars is praised (H 5.573, 6.153), as is 'the mildness and humanity of an accomplished philosopher' (H 2.40). Respect is also shown to 'natural philosophy' and to the 'philosophical conversations' of the Royal Society (H 6.541–2).

<sup>15</sup> There is therefore a role for scepticism in education: 'Proper impartiality' is fostered by 'this species of scepticism' (EHU 12.4), reining in judgments that are not close to daily experience. I return to the relation between education and skepticism in §5 below.

<sup>16</sup> See Livingston (1998) for extensive discussion of this conception of true philosophy, especially chapter 2.

<sup>17</sup> Hume talks of the 'first influence' of general rules, that involving prejudice and overgeneralization, and the corrected 'second influence' of such rules on those who are wise (T 1.3.13.12). In what follows 'general rules' will refer to the latter kind of generalization.

<sup>18</sup> Gill (2006, p. 223) stresses this point.

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<sup>19</sup> Although see n9 for an example of where Hume criticizes Hutcheson for being ‘unphilosophical’ (in a different sense).

<sup>20</sup> Morris interprets Hume’s use of the term ‘philosophers’ in a similar way to me. As we shall see below, however, he differs in his reading of Hume’s attitude to ‘education’. He also has a rather forced interpretation of Hume’s footnote concerning the two senses in which the imagination is discussed (T 1.3.10.19n22). He takes Hume’s ‘nothing could be more contrary to true philosophy’ to be referring to the distinction between probable reasoning and the imagination. I agree that Hume’s aim is to undermine this distinction, but in this footnote I take him merely to be saying that ambiguity is contrary to ‘true philosophy’ or clear thinking, with the rest of the footnote going on to delineate the two senses of ‘imagination’.

<sup>21</sup> See Falkenstein (1997, pp. 37–8; 2012, pp. 115–16).

<sup>22</sup> See Vitz (2015) and O’Brien (2010).

<sup>23</sup> See Falkenstein (1997, pp. 32–42) for a detailed inventory of the various mechanisms that Hume sees as underlying the acquisition of belief.

<sup>24</sup> This is an updated version of Hume’s example of being suspended in a cage over a precipice (T 1.3.13.10).

<sup>25</sup> It is the ‘vulgar’ and uneducated who ‘carry all *national characters* to extremes; and having once established it as a principle, that any people are knavish, or cowardly, or ignorant, they will admit of no exception, but comprehend every individual under the same censure’ (‘Of National Characters’, E 197).

<sup>26</sup> Also see Hearn (1970; 1976): ‘Human nature, Hume believes, is subject to certain natural propensities which, if allowed to go unchecked, result in erroneous belief and action. We are able, however, to become reflectively aware of these propensities of our nature and to form rules for the correction of those errors to which they expose us.’ (1976, p. 59)

<sup>27</sup> Falkenstein (1997) does not endorse this claim. He follows the usual interpretation discussed in §1 that aligns ‘education’ with indoctrination. He also sees the repetition involved in such ‘education’ as non-associative, in that vivacity transfer occurs through mere repetition and does not have its source in associated passions or impressions. I use ‘association’ in a wider sense.

<sup>28</sup> From the essay ‘Of the Middle Station of Life’.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’.



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<sup>30</sup> ‘Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion’. Although ‘[o]ne that has well digested his knowledge both of books and men, has little enjoyment but in the company of a few select companions’—‘solid’ friends rather than ‘bottle companion[s]’ (E 8). And, all the better if such company is mixed, since without the influence of women ‘[n]othing can keep them from excessive dulness but hard drinking.’ (E 626; variant reading, not in all editions of the *Essays*). Baier (1989; 1993, pp. 46–7) and Taylor (2015, p. 187) discuss the civilizing effect of women on men and whether this amounts to mere gallantry and studied deference, or whether it reflects Hume’s commitment to the equality of the sexes. The evidence is in some regards mixed, but careful reading, according to Baier, reveals the dominant strain to be the latter.

<sup>31</sup> Hume draws a wide range of social factors into his “natural history” of learning’ (Baier, 1993, p. 45) with urbanization, commercial forces, law, and the desire for luxury goods leading to a civilized and educated society—with ‘*industry, knowledge and humanity* . . . linked by an indissoluble chain’ (E 271; ‘Of Refinement in the Arts’). See Baier, 1993; Taylor, 2015, pp. 188–9.

<sup>32</sup> McCormick (2005) endorses Falkenstein’s (1997) account of the role of general rules in the correction of belief, but argues that his account does not provide enough to explain ‘why we should be wise’; her claim is that ‘Hume’s preference and recommendation for following reason is *politically* motivated. The point is that the *world* will be a better place if more people choose reason as their guide’ (McCormick, 2005, pp. 12–13).

<sup>33</sup> An auditory rather than a visual metaphor also captures this point: as the volume is turned down, the cacophony of noise is reduced and the steady pulse of causal reasoning is heard more clearly.

<sup>34</sup> Falkenstein (1997, pp. 53–62) discusses the role played by the kinds of skeptical arguments presented in the *Treatise*; Norton (1994, pp. 131–2), however, suggests the point has wider application: ‘Whether . . . she . . . has been affected by considerations of exactly the type that constitute philosophical doubt is unimportant. The point is, rather, that Hume saw that we would benefit from the kind of philosophical activity that adds an appreciation of our limitations to the conditions in which belief is formed’ (ibid., p. 131). It is this latter claim that I develop here.

<sup>35</sup> There is an extensive literature concerning whether or not Hume’s account of causal reasoning is normative or merely descriptive, and, if the former, how such an account can be licensed in the face of his sceptical arguments. Normative accounts include those

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based on unavoidability or irresistibility (Kemp Smith 1941; Millican 2012), reflexivity (Baier 1991, pp. 99–100; 1993, p. 39), reliability (Dauer 1980, Costa 1981, Schmitt 2014, Beebee 2011), proper function (Wolterstorff 1996, p. 166n6; Craig 1987, p. 81), virtue and moral approval (Owen 1999; McCormick 2005) and, as we have seen, stability (Loeb 2002). Here is not the place to assess such accounts, except to say that my interpretation puts constraints on which account of normativity should be adopted. Education, I claim, can be a good source of belief and so a plausible interpretation of Hume on normativity must allow for this.

<sup>36</sup> Hume's account of trust in testimony is usually seen as taken from the discussion of miracles in EHU (10); see, for example, Coady (1992, p. 79). Testimony is grounded in inductive inference and we should only trust those who have been reliable in the past. I do not have space here to provide a fuller treatment of the associative mechanisms involved in the various kinds of testimony associated with education, except to suggest that these may not be exhausted by those involved in inductive inference. We saw above, in Taylor's thoughts concerning how pride involves sympathizing with the opinions of others, and in n22, how sympathy can be involved in belief acquisition and it would be useful to consider the role of sympathy in education (see O'Brien 2010). This is consonant with Baier's (1991; 1993) emphasis on the role of social factors in Hume's epistemology, with reason involving 'a natural capacity . . . that we essentially share with those who learn from experience in the way we do, sharing expressive body language, sharing or able to share a language, sharing or able to share our sentiments, sharing or able to share intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards, and sharing or aspiring to share in the setting of those standards.' (1993, p. 47)

<sup>37</sup> See Russell (2008, Ch. 17).

<sup>38</sup> Hume also takes Locke as a proponent of the selfish hypothesis (EPM App. 2.3) and of the contract theory of government ('Of the Original Contract'; E 486–7). The latter is disparagingly called a 'philosophical or speculative system of principles' (E 465) and a 'philosophical notion' (E 472). This could be taken as further evidence that Hume is happy to distance himself from the views of Locke when the latter undertakes 'philosophy' in the negative sense.

<sup>39</sup> See Whelan (1985, pp. 276–92) for discussion of Hume on moral education.

<sup>40</sup> 'The Sceptic'.

<sup>41</sup> 'Of the Study of History'.

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<sup>42</sup> To assess the character of another and whether their actions are virtuous we must sympathize with the ‘narrow circle’ of those who are affected by their actions. In doing so we adopt the common or general point of view. See O’Brien 2012.

<sup>43</sup> See also H 3.190, 3.211, 3.212, 4.187, 5.131 and 6.513.

<sup>44</sup> The term ‘education’ is used in the context of moral education at T 2.1.7.2; 3.2.1.9, 17; 3.2.2.5, 9, 26; 3.2.5.12; 3.2.6.11; 3.2.8.7; 3.2.12.2, 3, 4, 7; 3.3.1.11, and with respect to the standard schooling of children at 2.1.11.14 and 2.3.1.5.

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