What if there is no strong evidence that God exists? Is belief in God when faced with a lack of evidence illegitimate and improper? Evidentialism answers yes. According to Evidentialism, it is impermissible to believe any proposition lacking adequate evidence. And, if any thesis enjoys the status of a dogma among philosophers, it is Evidentialism. Presenting a direct challenge to Evidentialism are pragmatic arguments for theism, which are designed to support belief in the absence of adequate evidence. Pascal's Wager is the most prominent theistic pragmatic argument, and issues in epistemology, the ethics of belief, and decision theory, as well as philosophical theology, all intersect at the Wager. This book explores various theistic pragmatic arguments and the objections employed against them. It presents a new version of the Wager, the so-called ‘Jamesian Wager’, and argues that this survives the objections hurled against theistic pragmatic arguments and provides strong support for theistic belief. Objections found in Voltaire, Hume, and Nietzsche against the Wager are scrutinized, as are objections issued by Richard Swinburne, Richard Gale, and other contemporary philosophers. The ethics of belief, the many-gods objection, the problem of infinite utilities, and the propriety of a hope-based acceptance are also examined.

Spectator Theory

D. D. Raphael

in The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy
Explanation of moral judgement in terms of the feelings of spectators is found in Hutcheson and Hume as well as in Adam Smith. Smith's theory marks an advance on the other two.

**Spectres of False Divinity**

Thomas Holden

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2010
Item type: book

This book presents an historical and critical interpretation of Hume's rejection of the existence of a deity with moral attributes. It argues that in Hume's view no first cause or designer responsible for the ordered universe could possibly have moral attributes; nor could the existence (or non-existence) of such a being have any real implications for human practice or conduct. Hume's case for this ‘moral atheism’ is a central plank of both his naturalistic agenda in metaphysics and his secularizing program in moral theory. It complements his wider critique of traditional theism, and threatens to rule out any religion that would make claims on moral practice. This book situates Hume's commitment to moral atheism in its historical and philosophical context, offers a systematic interpretation of his case for divine amorality, and shows how Hume can endorse moral atheism while maintaining his sceptical attitude toward traditional forms of cosmological and theological speculation.

**Coleridge and Scepticism**

Ben Brice

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: January 2008
Item type: book

Coleridge tended to view objects in the natural world as if they were capable of articulating truths about his own poetic psyche. He also regarded such objects as if they were capable of illustrating and embodying truths about a transcendent spiritual realm. After 1805, he posited a series of analogical ‘likenesses’ connecting the rational principles that inform human cognition with the rational principles that he believed informed the teleological structure of the natural world. Although he intuitively felt that nature had been constructed as a ‘mirror’ of the human mind, and that both mind and nature were ‘mirrors’ of a transcendent spiritual realm, he never found an explanation of such experiences that was fully immune to his own sceptical doubts. This book examines the nature of these doubts, and offers a new
explanatory account of why Coleridge was unable to affirm his religious intuitions. The book situates his work within two important intellectual traditions. The first — a tradition of epistemological ‘piety’ or ‘modesty’ — informs the work of key precursors such as Kant, Hume, Locke, Boyle, and Calvin, and relates to Protestant critiques of natural reason. The second — a tradition of theological voluntarism — emphasizes the omnipotence and transcendence of God, as well as the arbitrary relationship subsisting between God and the created world. It is argued that Coleridge's familiarity with both of these interrelated intellectual traditions undermined his confidence in his ability to read the symbolic language of God in nature.

Probability and Hume's Inductive Scepticism
D.C. Stove

This book aims to discuss probability and David Hume's inductive scepticism. For the sceptical view which he took of inductive inference, Hume only ever gave one argument. That argument is the sole subject-matter of this book. The book is divided into three parts. Part one presents some remarks on probability. Part two identifies Hume's argument for inductive scepticism. Finally, the third part evaluates Hume's argument for inductive scepticism.

A System of Social Science
Andrew Stewart Skinner

The second edition of this guide to Adam Smith's system of thought has been fully updated to reflect recent developments in Smith scholarship and the author's experience of teaching Smith to a student audience. The material from the first edition has been extensively rewritten, and four new chapters have been added, covering Smith's essays on the exercise of human understanding, and his relationship to Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Sir James Steuart. The book places Smith's system of social, and moral, science firmly within the context of contemporary British and Continental intellectual history, dealing in particular detail with the founders of the Scottish Enlightenment and with the French Physiocrats. The essays explore Smith's own reception among his peers.
and successors. The chapters in this volume have been developed from a lecture course on ‘The Age and Ideas of Adam Smith’, taught to senior undergraduate and graduate students in political economy.

**Moral Sentimentalism**

Michael Slote

Published in print: 2009 Published Online: February 2010

There has been a great deal of interest in moral sentimentalism in recent years, but most of that interest has been exclusively either in metaethical questions about the meaning of moral terms or in normative issues about benevolence, caring, and compassion and their place in the moral life. This book seeks to deal with both sorts of issues and to do so primarily in terms of the notion of empathy. Hume tried to do something like this more than two centuries ago, though he didn't have the word empathy and used the term sympathy instead. But Hume misconstrued the phenomenology of moral approval and disapproval, and the nascent theories of moral meaning he grounded in approval and disapproval allow for (much) less objectivity than moral judgments seem to possess. The present book uses a semi-Kripkean reference-fixing view of terms like right and wrong to show how moral claims can be objectively valid a priori and yet at the same time action-guiding and motivating — something that Kantian ethics seeks to provide, but sentimentalism turns out to be more capable of giving us. In addition to dealing with semantic issues, this book shows how sentimentalist forms of moral education and moral learning are possible; and in its later chapters, it also focuses on normative issues of public morality: discussing respect, autonomy, justice, and objectivity itself in strictly sentimentalist care-ethical terms and demonstrating that such an approach can be thoroughly feminist in its implications and goals. Rationalism now dominates the scene in moral philosophy, but there are signs of change, and this book works to encourage those possibilities.

**Hume's Skeptical Crisis**

Robert J. Fogelin

Published in print: 2009 Published Online: September 2009

This work is a narrative study of the interactions between Hume's naturalism and his skepticism as they unfold in the Treatise of Human
Nature and the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. More specifically, it examines the way in which the relationship between Hume's naturalism and skepticism shifts dramatically as he delves more deeply into the operations of the human understanding. At first, Hume's skeptical arguments largely play a subservient role of eliminating intellectualist competitors to his naturalistic account of belief formation. This is true, with one minor exception, in the first three parts of book 1 of the Treatise. The situation changes radically in part 4 of book 1, where Hume's investigation of human faculties reveals them to be capricious and unreliable. Hume finds the situation so dire that he comes to question whether anyone, himself included, possesses mental faculties capable of producing a science of human nature. This is Hume's skeptical crisis. The remainder of the book examines Hume's various efforts to extract himself from this difficulty, ending, in the Enquiry, with the claim that a suitable mitigated, or moderate, form of skepticism can arise by bringing radical Pyrrhonian doubts into a proper balance with common instinctive beliefs.

**Manifest Activity**

Gideon Yaffe

Published in print: 2004 Published Online: August 2004

Publisher: Oxford University Press


Item type: book

Manifest Activity examines Thomas Reid's efforts to provide answers to a host of traditional philosophical questions concerning the nature of the will, the powers of human beings, motivation, and the relation between human action and natural change. The concept of ‘active power’ stands at the centre of Reid's philosophy of action. He holds that actions are all and only the events of which some creature is the ‘efficient cause’, and he thinks a creature is the efficient cause of an event just in case it has the power to bring that event about and exerts it. Reid's conception both of human actions and changes in nature is deeply teleological. He holds that to exert a power is to direct an event towards an end, and he holds that all changes, whether actions or events in nature, flow from the exertion of power. The book explains the details of this view, Reid's reasons for holding it, and its implications to our understanding of action, agency, and our relation to the natural world.

**Natural Law and the Theory of Property**

Stephen Buckle

Published in print: 1993 Published Online: October 2011

Publisher: Oxford University Press
In this book, the author provides a historical perspective on the political philosophies of Locke and Hume, arguing that there are continuities in the development of 17th- and 18th-century political theory that have often gone unrecognized. The book begins with a detailed exposition of Grotius's and Pufendorf's modern natural law theories, focusing on their accounts of the nature of natural law, human sociability, the development of forms of property, and the question of slavery. It then shows that Locke's political theory takes up and develops these basic themes of natural law. The author argues further that, rather than being a departure from this tradition, the moral sense theory of Hutcheson and Hume represents an attempt — which is not entirely successful — to underpin the natural law theory with an adequate moral psychology.

Powers
George Molnar

Stephen Mumford (ed.)

This book sees that the solution to a number of the problems of contemporary philosophy lies in the development of an alternative to Hume's metaphysics. This alternative would have real causal powers at its centre. This book sets about developing a thorough account of powers that might persuade those who remain, perhaps unknowingly, in the grip of Hume's assumptions. This book shows both that the notion of a power is central and that it could serve to dispel a number of long-standing philosophical problems. This book's account of powers is as realistic as any that has appeared so far, and shows that dispositions are as real as any other properties. Specifically, they do not depend on their manifestations for their existence; nevertheless, they are directed towards such manifestations. The book thus appropriates the notion of intentionality from Brentano and argues that it is the essential characteristic of powers. It offers a persuasive case for the existence of some basic and ungrounded powers, thus ruling out the reducibility of the dispositional to the non-dispositional. However, the book does allow that there are non-power properties as well as power properties. In this respect, the book's final position is dualistic.
With the rise of the novel in the mid-18th century came the rise of sentimentalism. While the fondness for sentiment embarrassed later literary critics, it originally legitimized a morally suspect phenomenon: the novel. This book describes that legitimation, yet it looks beyond the narrowly literary to the lives and expressed philosophies of some of the major writers of the age, showing the language of feeling to be a resource of philosophers like David Hume and Adam Smith, as much as novelists like Samuel Richardson and Laurence Sterne.

Introduction: Object and Plan of the Book
D. C. STOVE

This chapter presents the main results of the evaluation of David Hume's argument for inductive scepticism. The sceptical conclusion of Hume's argument is false. It rests on a certain identifiable premiss which is false. However, not all of the conclusions are hostile to Hume's argument. Its true premisses suffice to prove an important negative conclusion, though not a sceptical one, about inductive inferences. And what has historically been learnt from Hume's argument is of very great importance, even though it is partly opposite to what Hume intended to teach. The identification of this argument involves the identification of Hume's sceptical conclusion, as well as some of his premisses, as being statements of logical probability. Hume's scepticism about induction is quite interesting enough, even considered in itself, to justify the present inquiry.

Reasons and Experience
Alan Millar
There is a tendency in current philosophical thought to treat sensory experiences as a peculiar species of propositional attitude. This book argues against this view. While allowing that experiences may in some sense bear propositional content, it presents a view of sensory experiences as a species of psychological state. The book applies the resulting analytical framework to a discussion of justified belief, dealing, firstly, with how beliefs may derive justification from other beliefs, and secondly, with how current sensory experiences may contribute to the justification of a person's beliefs. A key theme in the book's general approach is that justified belief results from the competent exercise of conceptual capacities, some of which involve an ability to respond appropriately to current experience. In working out this approach the book develops a view of concepts and their mastery; explores the role of groundless beliefs drawing on suggestions of Wittgenstein; illuminates aspects of the thought of Locke, Hume, Quine, and Goldman; and finally offers a response to a sophisticated variety of scepticism.

**Hume Variations**

Jerry A. Fodor

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: October 2011

This book looks to David Hume for help in advancing our understanding of the mind. The book claims his Treatise of Human Nature as the foundational document of cognitive science: it launched the project of constructing an empirical psychology on the basis of a representational theory of mind. Going back to this work after more than 250 years we find that Hume is remarkably perceptive about the components and structure that a theory of mind requires. Careful study of the Treatise helps us to see what's amiss with much 20th-century philosophy of mind, and to get on the right track. Hume says in the Treatise that his main project is to construct a theory of human nature and, in particular, a theory of the mind. This book examines his account of cognition and how it is grounded in his ‘theory of ideas'. It discusses such key topics as the distinction between ‘simple' and ‘complex' ideas, the thesis that an idea is some kind of picture, and the roles that ‘association’ and ‘imagination’ play in cognitive processes. It argues that the theory of ideas, as Hume develops it, is both historically and ideologically continuous with the representational theory of mind as it is now widely endorsed by cognitive scientists. This view of Hume is explicitly opposed to recent discussions by critics who hold that the theory of ideas is the Achilles heel of his philosophy and that he would surely have abandoned it if only he had read Wittgenstein carefully.
This chapter shows that for Hume, contexts in which radically skeptical doubts emerge and contexts in which our beliefs are generated by natural instincts are not discrete, isolated domains. Each influences the other. Without the powerful force of natural belief, nothing can stop reason's inevitable slide into forlorn skepticism. Without the humbling force of skeptical doubts, nothing prevents our thoughts from going beyond their natural limits into the land of illusions. It is only through the pursuit of abstruse philosophy that we can gain a proper understanding of our cognitive limitations, an understanding that will allow us, in Hume's words, “to live at ease ever after.”

Reflective Knowledge
Ernest Sosa

This book argues for a reflective virtue epistemology based on a kind of virtuous circularity that may be found explicitly or just below the surface in the epistemological writings of Descartes, Moore, and now Davidson, who also relies crucially on an assumption of virtuous circularity. Along the way various lines of objection are explored. Part I of this book considers historical alternatives to the view developed in Part II. It begins with G. E. Moore's legendary proof, and the epistemology that lies behind it. That leads to classical foundationalism, a more general position encompassing the indirect realism advocated by Moore. Next the book turns to the quietist naturalism found in David Hume, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and P. F. Strawson. After that comes Thomas Reid's common sense alternative. A quite different option is the subtle and complex epistemology developed by Wilfrid Sellars over the course of a long career. Finally, Part I concludes with a study of Donald Davidson's distinctive form of epistemology naturalized (as the book argues). The second part of the book presents an alternative beyond the historical positions of Part I, one that defends a virtue epistemology combined
with epistemic circularity. This alternative retains elements of the earlier approaches, while discarding what was found wanting in them.

The Puzzle of Experience

J. J. Valberg

Published in print: 1992 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: book

If we reason in a certain way about our experience, we are driven to the conclusion that what is present to us — the object of our experience — is something that exists only in so far as it is present, hence that it is not part of the world. If, on the other hand, we simply open up to our experience, all we find is the world. This book sets out both to explain why we are entangled in this puzzle and to consider ways of solving it. In examining the puzzle, and possible solutions to it, this book discusses relevant views of Hume, Kant, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Strawson, as well as ideas from the recent philosophy of perception. Finally, it describes and analyses a manifestation of the puzzle outside philosophy, in everyday experience.

. Afterword

Michael C. Banner

in The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief

Published in print: 1992 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses a number of proposed analogies and propositions made in relation to theistic and scientific reasoning. The arguments presented in this book, along with remarks by Hume and Wittgenstein, are also included in the discussion.

Mind and Morality

John Bricke

Published in print: 2000 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: book

This is a philosophical study of the theory of mind and morality that David Hume developed in his Treatise of Human Nature and other...
writings. The chief elements in this theory of mind are Hume's accounts of reasons for action and of the complex interrelations of desire, volition, and affection. On this basis, the book lays out and defends Hume's thoroughgoing non-cognitivist theory of moral judgement, and shows that cognitivist and standard sentimentalist readings of Hume are unsatisfactory, as are the usual interpretations of his views on the connections between morality, justice, and convention.