

# HUME'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL COMPATIBILISM

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As Don Garrett rightly notes, Hume's suggestion that our inductive beliefs are causally determined by custom is "disconcerting."<sup>1</sup> Barry Stroud helps us to see just why this is so:

The belief in the unobserved arises completely naturally, like any other phenomenon in nature. It arises by 'custom', as a result of repetitions in our experience. We do not decide to believe what we do; we are not free not to believe those things that are most fundamental for us.<sup>2</sup>

Hume's suggestion is disconcerting because it seems naturally to give way to the claim that we cannot be epistemically responsible for our inductive beliefs. Thus, given a modern, normative conception of epistemic value, we seem naturally to be led to a thoroughgoing skepticism about our inductive beliefs. And there are those who endorse this sort of traditional skeptical interpretation of Hume.<sup>3</sup>

Garrett also notes, however, that "a number of features of Hume's writings ... seem incompatible with the traditional skeptical interpretation."<sup>4</sup> For example, Hume wants in the *Treatise* to introduce an experimental method that is itself inductive, and Hume himself often relies on inductive inferences. Furthermore, and, I think, most significantly, Hume provides positive epistemic evaluations of those who hold certain inductive beliefs. Considerations like these push us toward a non-skeptical interpretation and away from the traditional skeptical one. And several recent commentators have endorsed a non-skeptical interpretation according to which Hume claims only that *reason* (narrowly construed, according to Garrett, as "rationalistic"

or “deductivistic”<sup>5</sup>) fails to confer epistemic value on inductive beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Such an interpretation is non-skeptical because it leaves open the possibility, consistent with Hume’s positive epistemic evaluation of some inductive beliefs, that something other than reason confers epistemic value on inductive beliefs.

Garrett himself accepts neither the traditional skeptical interpretation nor the non-skeptical interpretation.<sup>7</sup> Instead, he suggests that “[a]lthough Hume does more than simply attack a narrow rationalistic conception of reason’s role in inductive inference, at the same time he does less than pronounce all inductive inference to be completely lacking in evidentiary value.”<sup>8</sup> For Hume, then, what gives inductive inference, and the inductive beliefs it generates, its evidentiary value? Garrett seems to think that, for Hume, the evidentiary value of inductive inference derives from our “tendency to believe what is rendered ‘probable’ by a preponderance of past experience.”<sup>9</sup> And this tendency “depends not on the acceptance of an argument for [believing what is rendered probable] but on a deep cognitive instinct.”<sup>10</sup> We can, with Hume, call this instinct *custom*.

Garrett’s suggestion will disappoint us, however, if we expected the tale of evidentiary value to be told in *normative* terms. The suggestion will disappoint us if, for example, we think that inductive inferences have evidentiary value only when they reveal that we *should*—or at least that we *may*—hold those beliefs that are rendered probable by a preponderance of past experience. For it is difficult to see how any *obligation* to hold a belief—or even any *permission* to hold a belief—could depend on custom, that is, on our instinctive tendency to believe what is rendered probable. We seem here again to be confronted with the problem that led us toward the traditional skeptical interpretation in the first place: Since our inductive beliefs are causally determined by custom, it seems that we cannot be epistemically responsible for those beliefs.

This leads, given a normative conception of evidentiary value, to skepticism about our inductive beliefs.

Yet we can resist this push toward a skeptical interpretation of Hume. In this paper, I explain how Hume can both assign epistemic value to inductive beliefs, where we have a normative conception of such value, and maintain that our inductive beliefs are causally determined by custom. In doing so, I will in effect argue that Hume is a *compatibilist* about inductive belief: He maintains both that we are causally determined by custom to hold such beliefs, but that we can nevertheless be epistemically responsible for holding them.<sup>11</sup> Hume is therefore free to maintain that inductive inferences can reveal which beliefs we *ought* to hold, and that we deserve positive epistemic evaluations when we *do* hold those beliefs. He is also free to maintain that inductive inferences can reveal which beliefs we may *not* hold, and that we are epistemically blameworthy when we hold those beliefs.

## 2. DOXASTIC DETERMINISM AND EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

Hume says that

having found, in many instances, that any two kinds of objects—flame and heat, snow and cold—have always been conjoined together; if flame or snow be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold, and to *believe* that such a quality does exist, and will discover itself upon a nearer approach. This belief is the necessary result of placing the mind in such circumstances. It is an operation of the soul, when we are so situated, as unavoidable as to feel the passion of love, when we receive benefits; or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these operations are a species of natural

instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able either to produce or to prevent.<sup>12</sup>

Hume here expresses a view about inductive beliefs that I will call *doxastic determinism*.

According to this view, we *must* in certain circumstances hold certain inductive beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, saying that we are subject to epistemic evaluation for holding certain inductive beliefs seems, at least at the outset, incompatible with doxastic determinism, with saying that we *must* hold those beliefs. For if we are to be subject to epistemic evaluation for holding certain inductive beliefs, it seems that we must be free, at least to some extent, either to adopt or to reject those beliefs. If doxastic determinism is correct, however, it seems that we have no such freedom.

Perhaps we can claim, in a way that is more or less consistent with contemporary externalist epistemological theories, that Hume's causal explanation of our inductive beliefs provides an adequate account of their epistemic value. I think, however, that this is not what Hume has in mind. He wants instead to account for the epistemic value of inductive beliefs in normative terms. He says, for example, that "[i]f the cause be known only by the effect, we never *ought* to ascribe to it any qualities, beyond what are precisely requisite to produce the effect."<sup>14</sup> This seems to indicate that we ought not believe of such causes that they have any qualities beyond those necessary to produce their effects. For our purposes here, then, let's distinguish between providing a causal explanation of inductive beliefs and accounting for their epistemic value. We can say first that causal explanation is *descriptive*: To causally explain a belief is to describe how one comes to hold it. We can then characterize epistemic value in normative terms: To say whether a belief is epistemically valuable is not—at least not *only*—to describe how one comes to hold it, but also to say whether one ought to hold it.<sup>15</sup> An account of

the epistemic value of our inductive beliefs will therefore say something about whether we ought to hold those beliefs.

In making the distinction between providing a causal explanation of inductive beliefs and accounting for their epistemic value, we have made it harder for Hume to explain how our inductive beliefs can be both causally determined and subject to epistemic evaluation. For, if he is to maintain that some of our inductive beliefs are epistemically valuable, he must now explain why we ought to hold those beliefs and not simply how they are caused. Yet Hume appears quite willing to provide a normative account of the epistemic value of our inductive beliefs. In fact, the later sections of *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* are replete with claims that we ought to hold certain inductive beliefs on the basis of certain evidence. For example, Hume says,

The maxim, by which we commonly conduct ourselves in our reasonings, is, that the objects, of which we have no experience, resemble those, of which we have; that what we have found to be most usual is always most probable; and that where there is an opposition of arguments, we *ought* to give the preference to such as are founded on the greatest number of past observations.<sup>16</sup>

This suggests that when one belief stands opposed to another (or when several beliefs stand opposed to each other), we ought to hold the belief for which there is more (or for which there is the most) evidence. Given this, Hume goes on to claim that the evidence against a miracle “ought to destroy” any evidence for that miracle (*EHU*, p. 117), and thus that we ought never believe that a miracle has occurred.<sup>17</sup>

Hume also claims, as we have seen, that “[i]f the cause be known only by the effect, we never ought to ascribe to it any qualities, beyond what are precisely requisite to produce the

effect” (*EHU*, p. 136).<sup>18</sup> According to Hume, then, it is “allowable” to conclude, on the basis of observable effects, that their cause possesses whatever qualities are sufficient for their production (*EHU*, p. 139). We “ought to rest,” however, after drawing these conclusions (*EHU*, p. 139). Thus, based on the evidence that we have, namely, “the visible phenomena of the universe” (*EHU*, p. 139), we ought not conclude that the cause of the universe has any qualities over and above those that are sufficient for its creation. Hume goes on to claim that we ought not argue from this inferred cause to any conclusion that would extend the effects of that cause beyond those that we can observe (see *EHU*, p. 139). He then employs this principle in an argument for the claim that religious doctrines that are based on such conclusions “ought to have no influence” on the lives of people (*EHU*, p. 147).

But perhaps none of these passages is meant to suggest a normative view of epistemic value. One might claim that when Hume says that we ought not attribute to the creator of the universe any qualities over and above those that are sufficient for its creation, he means only to offer a practical recommendation about making such attributions. Perhaps Hume uses ‘ought’ as we do when we say, for example, that you ought to drink water if you want to quench your thirst. Here, ‘ought’ need have no normative force. We use it instead in order to recommend what we take to be the best or the most efficient way of quenching your thirst. Perhaps, then, Hume means only to recommend drawing conclusions on the basis of “the visible phenomena of the universe” (*EHU*, p. 139) as the best or most efficient way to go about attributing certain qualities to the cause of the universe. Yet just as our recommendation of water leaves open the possibility that, for example, we would recommend another beverage in a different situation, this leaves open the possibility that there are other, better ways to go about attributing certain qualities to the cause of the universe—perhaps in certain circumstances it would be better to infer from

something other than the observable phenomena, or to employ some method that involves no inference at all. This won't do, however—Hume means to leave open no such possibility. He claims instead that we ought *never* to attribute to the creator of the universe any qualities over and above those that are sufficient for its creation: “We can never be allowed to mount up from the universe, the effect, to Jupiter, the cause” (*EHU*, p. 137). This certainly seems to be a normative constraint and not simply a practical recommendation. We may therefore continue to maintain that Hume paints a normative picture of epistemic value.

We have now seen both that Hume subscribes to doxastic determinism and that he prefers a normative account of epistemic value. Yet these views seem incompatible. How is it, then, that Hume can simultaneously subscribe to both? We tackle this question in the next section.

### **3. EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY IS COMPATIBLE WITH DOXASTIC DETERMINISM**

Hume can maintain *both* that some of our inductive beliefs have epistemic value, where such value is conceived normatively, *and* that those beliefs are causally determined by custom (that is, that doxastic determinism is true). For Hume, saying that we ought not hold some inductive belief is *not* incompatible with our being doxastically determined to hold that belief.

Consider my inductive belief that the Lakers will lose their next game. I have evidence concerning that belief, and Hume suggests that this evidence comes in the form of past experiences. For Hume, whenever an impression is regularly followed either by another impression or by an idea, a customary transition is established from the first impression to the second impression or idea.<sup>19</sup> After it has been established, this customary transition helps to produce in us certain beliefs. Hume says,

Whenever any object is presented to the memory or senses, it immediately, by the

force of custom, carries the imagination to conceive that object, which is usually conjoined to it; and this conception is attended with a feeling or sentiment, different from the loose reveries of the fancy. In this consists the whole nature of belief. (*EHU*, p. 48)

In our example, though, my experiences have not been uniform. In most cases, my seeing the Lakers play has been followed by my seeing them win. In other cases, however, my seeing them play has been followed by my seeing them lose. Thus, the evidence provided by my past experiences of the Lakers includes both evidence *for* and evidence *against* the belief that the Lakers will lose their next game. Call this *my total evidence*.<sup>20</sup>

Now, in coming to hold a belief as to whether the Lakers will win their next game, I might consider all of my total evidence. Yet I need not do so; I might instead consider only some *part* of my total evidence, or perhaps *none* of it. Hume's claim that we must not overlook certain evidence (see *EHU*, p. 58) suggests that he agrees that I need not consider all of my total evidence. For it makes sense to warn us against overlooking certain evidence only if we *can* overlook it. Yet no matter whether I consider all of my total evidence or only part of it, Hume suggests that my holding a particular belief will be "the necessary result" (*EHU*, p. 46) of my considering whatever evidence I consider.<sup>21</sup> For example, I must hold a particular belief if the evidence that I consider includes more evidence for that belief than against it. So, when the evidence that I consider includes more evidence for than against the belief that the Lakers will lose, I must believe—that is, I am doxastically determined to believe—that the Lakers will lose.

Still, in that very circumstance, I may be blamed for believing that the Lakers will lose. Suppose that my total evidence includes a great deal of evidence against the belief that the Lakers will lose but only a small amount of evidence for that belief. Now, Hume claims that I

ought to hold whatever belief is representative of my total evidence: "...where there is an opposition of arguments, we ought to give the preference to such as are founded on the greatest number of past observations" (*EHU*, p. 117).<sup>22</sup> But suppose that instead of considering *all* of my total evidence, I consider only *part* of it, say, only the small amount of evidence that I have *for* the belief that the Lakers will lose. In this case, I believe—indeed I *must* believe—that the Lakers will lose. Furthermore, since that belief is not representative of my total evidence, that is, since most of my total evidence is evidence against that belief, it seems that I should be blamed for holding it.

Contrary to what we might expect, Hume *does* have room to blame me for holding this belief. Note that he claims that it is *up to me* whether I consider all or only part of my total evidence. He says, for example, that a wise man "weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments" (*EHU*, p. 111). "In all cases," Hume continues, "we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence" (*EHU*, p. 111).<sup>23</sup> And since I can either weigh the opposite experiments or not, it is up to me whether I consider all or only part of my total evidence. Thus, since whatever evidence I consider determines what I believe, I control (at least to some degree) what belief I hold, and I can therefore be blamed for holding it. In our example, it was up to me to consider all or only part of my total evidence for the belief that the Lakers will lose, and I considered only my evidence *for* that belief. Since it was up to me to consider only that evidence, and since that evidence determines what I believe, I control (at least to some degree) my believing that the Lakers will lose. But that belief is *not* representative of my total evidence. Hume can therefore blame me for believing that the Lakers will lose; he can say that I ought not hold that belief.

Moreover, since I have at least some measure of epistemic freedom—since I have the freedom to consider either all, only a part, or none of my evidence—this claim of epistemic blameworthiness is not out of place in Hume’s epistemology.<sup>24</sup>

We have now seen that even though Hume is a doxastic determinist, he may nevertheless maintain that we can be blamed for holding certain beliefs, namely, those that we hold on the basis of a consideration of an unrepresentative part of our evidence.<sup>25</sup> In addition, Hume may with no inconsistency provide positive epistemic evaluations of beliefs that result from a consideration of all of our evidence. In this way, then, we have shown that Hume’s doxastic determinism is compatible with the claim that we are epistemically responsible for holding certain inductive beliefs.<sup>26, 27</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume’s Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 92. Hume makes suggestions of this sort throughout Section V of David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); and in both I.iii.6 and I.iii.8 of David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). (Hereafter, I refer to Hume’s *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* as *EHU*, and to Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature* as *THN*.)

<sup>2</sup> Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London and New York: Routledge, 1977), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> A traditional skeptical interpretation of Hume is not uncommon among those who comment on his work. See, for example, D. C. Stove, *Probability and Hume’s Inductive Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); Richard Popkin, “David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism,” in *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1980), pp. 103-

132, especially p. 128; and Michael Williams, "Hume's Criterion of Significance," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 15 (1985): 273-304, especially pp. 278 and 284. Consider, too, Chapter 4 of Reid's seventh essay in Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), p. 738: Reid there claims that, in *THN*, I.iv.1, Hume claims

1st, that all that is called human knowledge, meaning demonstrative knowledge, is only probability; and 2dly, that this probability, when duly examined, vanishes by degrees, and leaves at last *no evidence at all*: so that in the issue, there is no ground to believe any one proposition rather than its contrary, and 'all those are certainly fools who reason or believe anything.'

<sup>4</sup> Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> See Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> For interpretations of this sort, see, for example, Tom L. Beauchamp and Alexander Rosenberg, *Hume and the Problem of Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); N. Scott Arnold, "Hume's Skepticism about Inductive Inferences," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 21 (1983): 31-55; Janet Broughton, "Hume's Skepticism about Causal Inferences," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 3-18; and Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Garrett explains why he objects to both the skeptical and the non-skeptical interpretations of Hume in *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, pp. 78-91. Unfortunately, we haven't the space here to rehearse those reasons.

<sup>8</sup> Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, p. 94. Although he does so without mentioning the alleged evidentiary value of inductive inference, Garrett seems to express a similar thought toward the end of *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*: He there claims that, for Hume, "[a]lthough skeptical sentiments may sometimes be produced anew by an intense consideration of skeptical arguments, we need not, and psychologically cannot, require ourselves to remain in such a state" (p. 241). Stroud arrives at a similar conclusion. He claims that "a Humean must find himself in conflict. As a theorist he discovers that the fundamental beliefs of human beings are false and have no counterparts in reality. But his theory also implies that those beliefs cannot be given up" (*Hume*, p. 248).

<sup>11</sup> It is well known, of course, that Hume is a compatibilist about the will, and perhaps Hume is an epistemological compatibilist simply in virtue of being a compatibilist about the will. This might be true, for example, if my coming to hold a belief is a species of action. I make no claims here, neither on Hume's behalf nor on my own, regarding this possibility. Moreover, I will not here be able to address the similarities and differences between Hume's compatibilism about the will and his epistemological compatibilism (but see *EHU*, pp. 90-1).

<sup>12</sup> *EHU*, pp. 46-7. Hume makes similar claims throughout Section V of *EHU*, and in both I.iii.6 and I.iii.8 of *THN*. See also *THN*, I.iii.13, p. 147; *THN*, I.iv.1, p. 183; and *THN*, Appendix, p. 624. Doxastic determinism applies to the memory as well as to the senses; see *EHU*, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> I should mention that there are those who disagree with the claim that Hume is a doxastic determinist. For example, J. A. Passmore (in “Hume and the Ethics of Belief,” in *David Hume: Bicentenary Papers*, G. P. Morice, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), pp. 77-92) claims that, for Hume, “belief lies in some measure under our control; we can deliberately prevent ourselves from believing, even when we are strongly tempted to believe” (p. 91).

<sup>14</sup> *EHU*, p. 136; italics added.

<sup>15</sup> Compare Richard Popkin, “Hume and Jurieu: Possible Calvinist Origins of Hume’s Theory of Belief,” in his *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1980), pp. 161-180. There, Popkin says that the optimistic side of Hume

is in contrast with the darker side of Hume’s thought when he starts worrying about whether he should believe what he does. In the concluding section of Book I of the *Treatise*, he seems almost to be developing a Pascalian kind of despair. If all beliefs are natural, then why accept some and not others? If they are just natural, are some right and others wrong? Hume’s skepticism about whether beliefs can be justified is at least as far-reaching as that of Jurieu or Bayle. (p. 176; underlining added)

Popkin here suggests that Hume’s skepticism about whether inductive beliefs can be justified stems from the failure of such beliefs to satisfy certain normative constraints on epistemic value.

<sup>16</sup> *EHU*, p. 117; italics added.

<sup>17</sup> Compare *EHU*, p. 118: Hume there says that the many detected forgeries of miracles, prophecies, and supernatural events “ought reasonably to beget a suspicion against all relations of this kind [i.e., relations between reports of miracles and the (actual) occurrence of miracles].”

<sup>18</sup> Compare what Hume says later: we “can never be *allowed* to ascribe to the cause any qualities, but what are exactly sufficient to produce the effect” (*EHU*, p. 136; italics added).

<sup>19</sup> See *EHU*, p. 48; *THN*, I.iii.9, pp. 115-6.

<sup>20</sup> I have, of course, considerably simplified things here. More goes into my total evidence than just my experiences of the Lakers’ wins and my experiences of their loses. My evidence will also include, for example, past experiences associated with how they have performed on the road and at home, past experiences associated with how they have performed against good teams and against poorer teams, past experiences associated with how they have performed when certain of their players are injured and when those players are healthy, and so on. My simplifying things does not, however, affect the argument.

<sup>21</sup> See especially *EHU*, p. 58: “Being determined by custom to transfer the past to the future, in all our inferences; where the past has been entirely regular and uniform, we expect the event with the greatest assurance, and leave no room for any contrary supposition. But where different effects have been found to follow from causes, which are to *appearance* exactly similar, all these various effects must occur to the mind in transferring the past to the future, and enter into our consideration, when we determine the probability of the event. Though we give the preference to that which has been found most usual, and believe that this effect will exist, we must not overlook the other effects, but must assign to each of them a particular weight and authority, in proportion as we have found it to be more or less frequent.” See also *THN*, I.iii.12; and *THN*, I.iii.13, p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> Compare *EHU*, p. 129; and *THN*, I.iii.12, p. 131.

<sup>23</sup> See also *EHU*, pp. 58, 112, 116, 129; and *THN*, I.iii.12.

<sup>24</sup> This part of Hume’s epistemology is analogous, or perhaps even parallel, to a part of Hume’s ethics (see *EHU*, pp. 90-1). For Hume, actions are regularly and uniformly connected to motives. However, I can be blamed for my actions in spite of the fact that, given certain of my motives, I must have acted in that way. For, since I have some measure of control over my motives (see *EHU*, p. 86; *EHU*, p. 99; *THN*, I.iv.6, p. 261; *THN*, II.iii.2, p. 412; *THN*, III.ii.1, p. 479), and since my motives determine my actions, I have some measure of control over my actions (at least to the extent that I can control my motives). Thus, normative claims are not out of place in Hume’s discussion of actions. (Notice that the necessary connection between motives and actions has an epistemological analogue, namely, the necessary connection between evidence and belief. These two notions of necessary connection play similar roles: We need one to establish moral blameworthiness and the other to establish epistemic blameworthiness. See *THN*, II.iii.2, p. 411; *THN*, III.iii.1, p. 575; *EHU*, pp. 97-9 for Hume on the need for, and the role of, the necessary connection between motives and actions.)

<sup>25</sup> Hume can also find us epistemically blameworthy for holding *any* belief that results from our considering only a part of our evidence, even if that belief is the one we would hold after considering *all* of our evidence. He says, “But as ’tis frequently found, that one observation is contrary to another, and that causes and effects follow not in the same order, of which we have had experience, *we are oblig’d to vary our reasoning on account of this uncertainty, and take into consideration the contrariety of events*” (*THN*, I.iii.12, p. 131; italics added). And since we have this epistemic obligation, Hume can blame us for holding any belief that results from our considering only a part of our evidence. Furthermore, since considering only a part of our evidence can—and likely often does—lead us to hold a belief we shouldn’t, it makes sense to say that we are obliged to consider all of our evidence.

<sup>26</sup> We must, at this point, make a concession. We have said that we have control over our beliefs to the extent that we have control over which evidence we consider. Yet for some beliefs—those that “are founded on an infallible experience”—we do not consider any evidence before coming to hold those beliefs (see Hume’s example at *THN*, I.iii.8, pp. 103-4). In these cases, since we consider no evidence, it seems that we have no control over what we believe. Thus, normative

claims seem out of place in Hume's discussion of those beliefs that "are founded on an infallible experience."

Yet even if this is the case, it does not pose problems for the argument of this paper. In showing that, for Hume, there are cases in which we ought to hold certain inductive beliefs, we have shown enough to establish the claim that, for Hume, it is *not* the case that we are not subject to epistemic evaluation for holding inductive beliefs. Furthermore, Hume might be concerned with the epistemic evaluation of inductive beliefs only in those cases in which we have some measure of control over whether we hold them. If this is the case, then since we *do* have control over whether we hold *some* inductive beliefs, normative claims are right at home in Hume's epistemology.

<sup>27</sup> For helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper, I would like to thank Lex Newman, Al Casullo, and an audience at Syracuse University.

Epistemology largely came to the fore in philosophy during the early modern period, which historians of philosophy traditionally divide up into a dispute between empiricists—the natural world which corresponds to our folk psychological concept of belief (Paul Churchland) and formal epistemologists who aim to replace our bivalent notion of belief ("either I have a belief or I don't have a belief") with the more permissive, probabilistic notion of credence ("there is an entire spectrum of degrees of belief, not a. Compatibilism" also known as "soft determinism" and championed by Hume, is a theory which holds that free will and determinism are compatible. According to Hume, free will should not be understood as an absolute ability to have chosen differently under exactly the same inner and outer circumstances. While a decision making process exists in Hume's determinism, this process is governed by a causal chain of events. The Problem of Induction: Hume's ProblemThe Regularity Theory of CausationHume and Cognitive ScienceHume and Naturalized EpistemologyHume as anti-MetaphysicianReferencesFurther Reading. Discover the world's research. 19+ million members. Although the main focus of Hume's career was in the humanities, his work also has an observable role in the historical development of natural sciences after his time. Clear examples and definition of Epistemology. Epistemology is the study of knowledge. It raises questions like "What is truth?" Since this branch of philosophy is so ancient, very little is known about the early history of epistemology. It's likely that cavemen, gathered around their fires, looked up at the stars and asked what they might be made of (an ontological question) and how human beings could find out (an epistemological question).