

## Philosophy Paper 101: History of Philosophy from Descartes to Kant

### 7. *Hume on Causation*

Explain the background, procedure and point of Hume's investigation into the idea of necessary connexion, considering in particular whether or not he is a believer in genuine necessary causes in nature.

#### READING

David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (any reasonable edition will do), I iii 1-6, 14-15.

David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (any reasonable edition will do), Sections II, VII, VIII

*Perhaps the best three readings for getting into this topic initially are:*

Edward Craig, "The Idea of Necessary Connexion", in Millican (2002), chapter 7, pp. 211-29

Harold W. Noonan, *Hume on Knowledge* (Routledge, 1999), chapter 3

Barry Stroud, *Hume* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), chapter 4

*Craig gives a fairly detailed commentary on Hume's argument in Section VII of the Enquiry, which is almost equally applicable to Treatise I iii 14 (note here that the intermediate sections of the Enquiry and the Treatise, listed earlier, are also relevant, in order to understand Hume's theory of belief). Noonan and Stroud provide general philosophical discussion of the topic of causation alongside less textually focused commentary, particularly valuable in an area where, again, Hume's writings are of powerful and enduring significance.*

*Craig gestures towards the "New Hume" interpretation, but it is presented most forcefully by:*

Galen Strawson, "David Hume: Objects and Power", in Peter Millican (ed.), *Reading Hume on Human Understanding* (OUP, 2002), chapter 8, pp. 231-57, and also in Rupert Read and Ken Richman (eds), *The New Hume Debate* (Routledge, 2000)

*I attempt to refute this interpretation in a paper that discusses Hume's argument in some detail, and also its connections with his theories of induction and "liberty" (i.e. free will):*

Peter Millican, "Against the New Hume", in Rupert Read and Ken Richman (eds), *The New Hume Debate* (Routledge, revised edition 2007), pp. 211-52

*What I consider the killer blow, concerned with the interpretation of Hume's argument on "liberty and necessity", is also outlined on pp. 190-3 of:*

Peter Millican, "Humes Old and New: Four Fashionable Falsehoods, and One Unfashionable Truth", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 81* (2007), pp. 163-99

*More suggestions for reading are given in my Critical Survey of the Literature in the 2002 collection, §7.3 (pp. 443-6), which gives a brief overview of some other papers in the Read and Richman collection. Blackburn's paper isn't mentioned there, because it's reprinted in my own collection, and is well worth reading. You might also be interested in looking over comments that I make on the debate in my Editor's Introduction (pp. 11-18).*