



Hume and the phenomenology of agency

Joshua M. Wood

To cite this article: Joshua M. Wood (2014) Hume and the phenomenology of agency, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, 44:3-4, 496-517, DOI: [10.1080/00455091.2014.985943](https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.2014.985943)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.2014.985943>



Published online: 02 Dec 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 173



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Hume and the phenomenology of agency

Joshua M. Wood*

*Department of Philosophy, Wellesley College, 106 Central St. Founders Hall 322,
Wellesley, MA 02481, USA*

(Received 27 September 2013; accepted 24 October 2014)

Some philosophers argue that Hume, given his theory of causation, is committed to an implausibly thin account of what it is like to act voluntarily. Others suggest, on the basis of his argument against free will, that Hume takes no more than an illusory feature of action to distinguish the experience of performing an act from the experience of merely observing an act. In this paper, I argue that Hume is committed to neither an unduly parsimonious nor a sceptical account of the phenomenology of agency.

Keywords: Hume; action; phenomenology; causation; freedom; naturalism

1. Introduction

It is often held, and for a variety of reasons, that Hume advances an account of human agency that is implausible.¹ However, I want to focus on a specific criticism that is recurrent in the literature. It is that Hume, given his theory of causation, is committed to an account of human action that, if not altogether incompatible with the perspective of an agent, is starkly unrepresentative of what it is like to act voluntarily. Bayne, who aptly expresses the relevant concern, states that the “Humean sceptic ‘looks inside’ and fails to find anything to which [expressions like] ‘the experience of acting,’ or ‘the experience of being an agent’ might correspond” (2008, 184). If this alone is true of Hume’s position, then his account of human agency is deeply unsatisfactory.

There is a related problem concerning the phenomenology of agency, which has less to do with the constraints imposed by Hume’s theory of causation than it does with the scepticism that may seem to taint his view. It is sometimes held that Hume’s argument against free will, which includes the claim that the “*sensation or experience... of the liberty of indifference*” is “*false,*” forces him to the conclusion that what is qualitatively unique about the experience of performing an act is strictly illusory (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408).² This is problematic for Hume because, even if it can be shown that his theory of causation does not necessarily preclude the familiar experience of what it is like to act voluntarily, it may still be true that he adopts an oddly sceptical attitude towards it.

*Email: jwood5@wellesley.edu

This paper attempts to resist these treatments of Hume. In addition to discussing features of agentic experience that he explicitly acknowledges, I emphasize an important distinction in Hume that is largely misunderstood. This is his distinction between what we experience “in reflecting on [or observing] human actions” and what we experience “in performing the actions themselves” (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408). I will attempt to demonstrate both how this distinction fits within Hume’s theory of causation and how this distinction prevents his theory from entailing an unduly parsimonious account of the phenomenology of agency. I will also argue that Hume’s claim that the “*sensation or experience* [of] liberty” is “*false*” does not commit him to a sceptical view of what it is like to act voluntarily.

2. Adequacy and agentic experience

I shall take it that an account of agentic experience is tenable, or at least does not suffer from undue parsimony, just in case it endorses the following claim.

THE QUALITY CLAIM: there is a qualitative difference between what it is like to act voluntarily and what it is like to either act involuntarily or bear witness to some event or happening in the world.

This claim is frequently endorsed in contemporary discussions of the phenomenology of agency.³ I believe this particular claim can help us articulate more sharply the problems regarding agentic experience that have been attributed to Hume.

2.1. The quality claim

The quality claim holds that there is something qualitatively unique about the experience of performing a voluntary act. But this claim does not single out just any experience. For even if it were true, for example, that voluntary action was ordinarily accompanied by a ringing in the ears and involuntary action was not, this type of difference would be irrelevant to the present issue. The quality claim picks out what Velleman refers to as “the agent’s participation” (2000, 127) or what Strawson refers to as our being “an agent in [a] definite participatory way” (1986, 235). Although there are numerous expressions that might be used to identify the peculiar sense that we have of our own agency, I will refer to it as the “experience of doing” or the “experience of actively bringing about some state of affairs.”⁴ In any case, the relevant experience is one that directly contrasts with the characteristic feel of passively bearing witness to some event or happening, even those that, as in cases of involuntary action, include a change in our thoughts or a movement in our limbs. The quality claim, therefore, should be taken to assert that voluntary action is qualitatively unique specifically in virtue of the experience of actively bringing about some state of affairs.

An exhaustive account of the phenomenology of agency would include every experience that fills out the perspective of an agent. If it were the case that we

ordinarily experienced a ringing in the ears when acting voluntarily, then it would be appropriate to include this in an account of agentic experience. So I want to avoid equating the experience of doing with agentic experience as a whole. The experience of doing is one among other experiences that are germane to the phenomenology of agency.⁵ But, unlike other experiences associated with voluntary action, the experience of doing is essential for a plausible or minimally acceptable account of agentic experience. An account of agentic experience that fails to list, say, the resistance of a shirtsleeve or the visual experience of the arm rising in cases of voluntary arm movement does not automatically become untenable. Rather this account is incomplete. Because these are merely instances in which we feel ourselves passively bearing witness to one or another circumstance, their absence from an account of agentic experience does not necessarily jeopardize its plausibility. By contrast, an account of agentic experience simply in virtue of either precluding or neglecting the experience of actively bringing about some state of affairs *does* automatically become untenable. For an account of human agency that fails to endorse the quality claim is one according to which we experience our own acts in the very same way in which we passively bear witness to circumstances, events or happenings in the world.

2.2. *The relevant problem*

Hornsby develops a criticism of Hume that is representative of a concern raised by several other commentators. She insists that his theory of causation is an essentially naturalist view in that, among other things, it adopts an “external perspective” with respect to causal relations (2004, 176). As Hornsby explains, this is “a picture of the world in which all events and states of affairs are seen as caused either by other events and states or by nothing at all” (174). It is in these terms that a naturalist must articulate an account of human agency. And it is here that the problem arises: “If you try to imagine your actions as part of the flux of events in this picture, then you will find yourself alienated from them” (174). She concludes that, “Hume’s is then a view of ourselves as agents from which we are bound to feel estranged [and] alienated” (177).

This criticism is intended to pick out a certain unattractive feature of what, on Hume’s account, it is like to act voluntarily. Hornsby does not argue for the view that agentic experience *as such* is incompatible with Hume’s theory of causation, but rather for the view that, according to Hume, our own actions are experienced, as it were, remotely or at a remove. A problem of this sort is also suggested by Mayr. He takes Hume to hold a theory of causation that, with its adoption of an external standpoint and its emphasis on grounding causal claims in our experience of constant conjunctions, is unable to fully accommodate the experience an agent has of her own acts. Hume, Mayr suggests, is committed to a view on which an action, even from the perspective of the agent herself, must be categorized among “things that just ‘befall’ us, and with regard to which we can be purely passive – such as toothaches” (2011, 6).⁶

This line of criticism is compatible with the fact that Hume acknowledges certain features of the phenomenology of agency. Therefore, the problem attributed to Hume, as I understand it, is that he, despite recognizing *some* features of agentic experience, cannot possibly incorporate the feeling of actively bringing about some state of affairs that would permit him to endorse the quality claim.

3. The beginnings of a Humean picture

Hume does not develop a rigorous account of the phenomenology of agency. To appreciate what he has to say on this topic we must assemble together his occasional references to agentic experience in the *Treatise* (1739) and *Enquiry* (1748). Hume speaks of the kinaesthetic “sensation of motion,” the feeling of “*nisus* or strong endeavour,” and what he refers to as the “impression of will.” Here, I want to demonstrate that, although Hume identifies at least these three features of agentic experience, this does not mitigate the concern that he offers an impoverished account of what it is like to act voluntarily.

3.1. The “sensation of motion” and “*nisus* or strong endeavour”

Hume discusses the “sensation of motion” when arguing for the claim that this particular experience cannot possibly yield an idea of a vacuum (T 1.2.5.20; SBN 59). The sensation of motion that Hume has in mind is typically referred to as either proprioception of kinaesthesia. This experience is most easily defined as a combination of sensory cues pertaining to movement and position all of which stem from nerve receptors in the skin, muscles and joints.⁷ The sensation of motion, Hume argues, “may give [us] the idea of time,” since its “parts . . . are successive to each other” (T 1.2.5.6; SBN 56). However, this experience, despite “the imaginary distance” a limb may be felt to traverse (T 1.2.5.13; SBN 58), is “not dispos’d in such a manner, as is necessary to convey the idea of space or extension” (T 1.2.5.6; SBN 56). From this, Hume concludes that the sensation of motion “can never give us the idea of extension without matter, or of a vacuum” (T 1.2.5.7; SBN 56). The argument that Hume devises does not depend on denying that we have such kinaesthetic sensations. Rather his argument incorporates what is, for Hume, an uncontroversial feature of ordinary experience.

Hume refers to the feeling of effort as the experience of “*nisus* or strong endeavour” and the “sentiment of an endeavour to overcome resistance” (EHU 7.15n13; SBN 67n1). This is an experience of exertion such as we might feel when pushing a stalled car or when doing long division in our heads. His reference to effort occurs in the context of arguing against a certain view of the idea of causal power. According to Hume, some philosophers take the idea of causal power to stem from our experience of exertion. However, the experience of effort, among other concerns raised by Hume, fails to explain the sheer scope of our causal claims:

we attribute power to a vast number of objects, where we never can suppose this resistance or exertion of force to take place; to the Supreme Being, who never meets with any resistance; to the mind in its command over its ideas and limbs, in common thinking and motion, where the effect follows immediately upon the will, without any exertion or summoning up of force; to inanimate matter, which is not capable of this sentiment. (EHU 7.15n13; SBN 67n1)

Hume, in advancing this argument, neither denies that we have an experience of effort nor suggests that the feeling of exertion is in any way illusory.

Both the sensation of motion and the feeling of effort belong in an account of agentic experience. But neither of these experiences can justify an endorsement of the quality claim. This is readily seen in the case of kinaesthesia. For even involuntary and anarchic acts are felt kinaesthetically. Anarchic acts, unlike involuntary spasms, can be intricate and deliberate. For example, they have been reported to take the form of undoing a shirt button or changing the channel on the television. However, anarchic acts are highly unusual in that, despite their potential resemblance to ordinary voluntary acts, the subject has no sense of performing them.⁸ If the sensations of motion stemming from the skin, muscles and joints were responsible for the sense we have of our own agency, then instances of involuntary and anarchic acts would feel like actions we *perform* rather than like movements in a limb that simply occur. However, this is evidently not the case.

Let us turn now to the experience of effort. If the feeling of effort is responsible for the sense we have of our own agency, then effortless voluntary acts should feel like events to which we bear witness and not like actions that we *perform*. Equally, effortful involuntary acts should feel like actions we perform, perhaps in proportion to their degree of exertion, rather than like events to which we passively bear witness. However, consideration of the experience of effort bears out neither implication. Effortless voluntary acts, such as the idle movement of a finger, do not ordinarily lose the quality of being actively performed.⁹ The same goes for voluntary acts conducted with anaesthetized limbs. Such actions would no doubt feel unusual, because several familiar features of agentic experience would be absent. But it is conceivable that someone whose arm is anaesthetized might retain the peculiar sense of actively moving this limb.¹⁰ Consider, furthermore, a case in which someone kicks, with an unencumbered leg, in response to a reflex hammer. If his knee is struck with the reflex hammer a second time, after having attached a weight to the ankle, then the leg will kick, though perhaps not to an equal height, with a sensation of heft that was not there before. Yet the introduction of effort will not make the kick feel any more voluntary than the initial reflex kick.¹¹ The point I want to make here is that the feeling of effort, whether it is present or absent, does not necessarily impact the sense that we have of our own agency. Therefore, we should distinguish between the experience of effort which attends certain acts and the experience of doing which is characteristic of the experience of voluntary action more generally.

The sensation of motion and the experience of effort are familiar features of voluntary action and have a rightful place in an account of agentive experience. However, even if it were the case that we experienced kinaesthesia and effort in every instance of voluntary action and in no instances of involuntary action, this would not change the way in which these experiences contribute to the phenomenology of agency. They are, qualitatively speaking, analogous to a ringing in the ears in that they neither constitute nor are sufficient for the experience of doing. It cannot be denied that these experiences may serve to inform us about certain features of our actions. But the sensations of movement and exertion, rather than being experiences in virtue of which we have a sense of our own agency, are circumstances of action to which we merely bear witness.

3.2. *The “impression of will”*

It is clear what Hume has in mind when he speaks of the “sensation of motion” and the experience of “*nisus* or strong endeavour.” It is less evident what Hume means by an “impression of will.” He describes it as “*the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind*” (T 2.3.1.2; SBN 399). Hume adds that this “impression [is] impossible to define” (T 2.3.1.2; SBN 399). This may be true. But he also takes his meaning here to be either obvious to his reader or at least confirmable by means of introspection.¹² The impression of will, so far as Hume is concerned, is like the familiar experiences of “pride and humility, love and hatred” in that “needless” description risks introducing “perplexity” where there is none (T 2.3.1.2; SBN 399). Therefore, Hume regards the impression of will as an ordinary feature of experience.

We can establish that Hume distinguishes the impression of will from both kinaesthesia and the feeling of effort. Involuntary and anarchic acts, or those cases of action in which there is no volitional contribution, can still be felt kinaesthetically. Therefore, the impression of will is not equivalent to the sensation of movement. And Hume himself holds, as we have seen, that some voluntary actions are carried out effortlessly, or “without any exertion or summoning up of force” (EHU 7.15n13; SBN 67n1). If Hume does not distinguish between the feeling of effort and the impression of will, then he must maintain both that cases of effortless voluntary action are cases in which we have no experience of even willing the act and that cases of effortful involuntary acts are cases in which we do have an impression of will. But Hume subscribes to neither view. He clearly rejects the claim that our experience of an effortful involuntary act involves an impression of will simply in virtue of the presence of exertion. And cases of effortless voluntary action, including cases of induced insensibility, are cases in which Hume takes it to be possible to discover the experience of willing an act. Consider Hume’s discussion of paralysis and amputation in the *Enquiry*. There he devises a case involving a “man, suddenly struck with a palsy in the leg or arm, or who had newly lost those members” (EHU 7.13; SBN 66). Hume believes that someone can

experience volition in the attempt to move a paralysed or amputated limb in a way that is similar to someone “in perfect health” (EHU 7.13; SBN 66).

Although neither the sensation of motion nor the feeling of effort is sufficient to justify an endorsement of the quality claim, perhaps the impression of will, which is distinguishable from these two experiences, can serve in this capacity. A prevalent view among commentators is that, for Hume, the impression of will is tantamount to an experience that is strictly antecedent to the performance of an act. An impression of will, understood in this way, does not overlap with any part of the experience of carrying out a voluntary act. As Baldwin observes, “The Humean account . . . makes it seem that I raise my arm just by engaging in an appropriate mental act and then waiting for the result of that act” (1995, 114).¹³ If we understand Hume’s impression of will as the experience of a strictly antecedent volition, then this will provide him with a convenient way to distinguish between instances of voluntary and involuntary actions. A voluntary act, according to Hume, can be distinguished from an involuntarily act in virtue of the fact that actions we take to be voluntary are preceded by willing and actions we take to be involuntary do not have this antecedent.¹⁴ Note, however, that this distinction does not itself justify an endorsement of the quality claim. Consider that someone who acts voluntarily but who is limited to a consideration of the act itself will be incapable of discerning whether this act is carried out voluntarily or involuntarily. Imagine a person who sometimes has trouble remembering what has occurred only a moment ago. If she forgets that she has experienced an antecedent volition, then, given the above criterion, she will have cause to wonder, as she carries out the act, whether she is performing it voluntarily or involuntarily. For, on this interpretation of the impression of will, all that distinguishes these kinds of actions is the presence or absence of an experience *preceding* them. Therefore, the impression of will, as it is commonly interpreted, is incapable of lending the felt quality of actively bringing about some state of affairs to the experience of voluntary action.

4. A more complete Humean picture

In his argument against free will, found in both the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*, Hume draws a distinction between what we experience “in reflecting on [or observing] human actions” and what we experience “in performing the actions themselves” (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408). Here, I explain how Hume situates this distinction within his theory of causation. And I argue that Hume draws this distinction in a way that is especially significant for his account of the phenomenology of agency.

4.1. Theoretical background

Hume draws the distinction between the performance and observation of an act in the course of explaining the confusion he takes to underlie a certain argument for free will. It was often argued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the experience of voluntary action directly evidences our possession of free will.

For example, Descartes, in his *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), advances the following view:

We have such close awareness of the freedom and indifference which is in us, that there is nothing we can grasp more evidently or more perfectly . . . [This is] something . . . of which we have an intimate grasp and which we experience within ourselves. (1985, 206)

I will refer to this type of argument for free will as the “argument from experience.” I want to focus on Hume’s attempt to explain, in the terms provided by his theory of causation, why defenders of free will find this argument compelling.

Hume begins by recapitulating a central tenet of his theory of causation. This is his distinction between two internal experiences that shape our *judgements* about causal relations. He writes:

The necessity of any action, whether of matter or of the mind, is not properly a quality in the agent, but in any thinking or intelligent being, who may consider the action, and consists in the determination of his thought to infer its existence from some preceding objects. (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408)

Once we have had sufficient experience of one object preceding the occurrence of another, the mind, upon encountering the first object, habitually anticipates the subsequent appearance of the second object. The “inference” arising in such cases, which amounts to the mental transition from the experience of one object to the thought of the other, is strictly the result of an ingrained association (T 1.3.14.21; SBN 165). This is why he sometimes refers to causal inferences as a “customary transition of the imagination” (T 1.3.13.3; SBN 144) or a “habitual determination of the mind” (T 1.3.12.7; SBN 133). Such inferences, according to Hume, are conducted involuntarily.¹⁵ Whenever the mind is influenced by custom in this way, we take the objects under consideration to be causally related. By contrast, when we fail to deem two objects to be causally related – or, what is the same, take these objects to be related, as Hume says, by “liberty or chance” – it is “nothing but the want of that determination, and a certain looseness, which we feel in passing or not passing from the idea of one to that of the other” (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408). The relation of chance is also defined in terms of what is felt by the imagination. In such cases, according to Hume, “the imagination [is left] perfectly indifferent, either to consider the existence or non-existence of that object, which is regarded as contingent” (T 1.3.11.4; SBN 125). In other words, we find ourselves, in the absence of a customary association, without any inclination to identify a causal relation between two objects or events.

This brings us to the respect in which Hume takes the associative facet of his theory of causation to explain the motivation behind the argument from experience. Having stated how the above two experiences impact our judgements about causal relations, Hume writes:

Now we may observe, that tho’ in reflecting on human actions we seldom feel such a looseness or indifference, yet it very commonly happens, that in performing the actions themselves we are sensible of something like it. (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408)¹⁶

Hume grants that an ordinary person has had sufficient experience of human action to have built up an array of associations between antecedent motives and subsequent acts. He holds that action is regularly accompanied by certain psychological antecedents and that action admits of constant conjunctions in the same way and to the same degree as other natural events. Moreover, he takes this view to be uncontroversial: “this regular conjunction has been universally acknowledged among mankind, and has never been the subject of dispute, either in philosophy or common life” (EHU 8.16; SBN 88).¹⁷ It is this assumption that underlies Hume’s claim, in the above passage, that we “seldom feel such a looseness or indifference” when *reflecting* on or *observing* action. What we experience when reflecting on or observing an act is the customary association that leads us to identify a causal relation between a certain psychological antecedent and a subsequent act.

However, according to Hume, when we turn our attention to what it is like to *perform* a voluntary act, we find that our experience is not characterized by the feeling of determination. Rather, as Hume says, this experience is characterized by “looseness or indifference,” or, to be precise, by “something like” these. His explanation is meant to bring out the resemblance between the experience of performing an action and, what is for Hume, the experience on the basis of which we deem two objects to be related by “liberty or chance.” According to Hume, it is because these experiences are so similar that defenders of free will have unwittingly taken reflection on the experience of voluntary action to constitute a window onto the causal status of the will. The “resemblance” between these experiences, Hume explains, “has been employ’d as a demonstrative or even an intuitive proof of human liberty” (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408).

4.2. “Something like” the experience of “looseness or indifference”

What is significant about Hume’s distinction between the observation and the performance of an act is that he draws this distinction by isolating a fourth feature of his account of the phenomenology of agency. Hume is not any more specific about this experience than that, in performing an act, one has “something like” an experience of “looseness or indifference.” For the sake of convenience, I will refer to this as the “experience of looseness.” I want to avoid the incautious presumption that this experience is equivalent to the experience of doing because their equivalence cannot be firmly established. Therefore, the conclusion for which I argue here is the comparatively modest thesis that the experience of looseness demarcates a theoretical space within which it is possible for Hume to endorse the quality claim.

There are two aspects of the experience of looseness that make room for the possibility of endorsing the quality claim within a Humean framework. The first aspect concerns Hume’s characterization of this experience. He likens it to an experience, the feeling of “looseness or indifference,” that he explicitly distinguishes from the experience of being passively carried along an associative

track. Therefore, Hume clearly intends to differentiate the experience of looseness from a feeling of passivity.

The second aspect concerns Hume's implicit distinction between the experience of looseness and the neighbouring experiences of kinaesthesia, exertion and the impression of will. First, the experience of looseness is evidently distinct from kinaesthesia. For the experience of looseness will be absent and the sensation of motion will remain when the movement of a limb is coerced or imposed on us. Second, Hume maintains that the experience of looseness will still be discoverable in those cases in which a voluntary act is not characterized by effort and will be missing in those cases of effortful involuntary action in which a movement is characterized by exertion. Finally, if we adopt a common reading of Hume according to which the impression of will picks out an experience that is strictly antecedent to action, then we can easily distinguish the impression of will from the experience of looseness. For Hume, who takes us to be acquainted with the experience of looseness in the course of performing an act, does not relegate the experience of looseness to the antecedents of action. What we learn from this analysis of the experience of looseness is that it is neither reducible to nor its phenomenological significance explicable in terms of the kinaesthetic sensation of motion, the experience of effort or the impression of will. The experience of looseness, on Hume's account, is something more than these three features of agentive experience.

Hume may not explicitly identify the experience of actively bringing about some state of affairs. But what I hope to have shown, in explicating the above two aspects of the experience of looseness, is that the particular way in which Hume draws the distinction between the observation and performance of an act reveals, at the very least, that his theory of causation is not necessarily *incompatible* with an adequate account of agentive experience. This puts pressure on critics of Hume to state a principled reason for the claim that he *could not* integrate the experience of doing into his account of the phenomenology of agency in the same way as he incorporates the experience of looseness. Critics of Hume must demonstrate that the manner in which he distinguishes between the performance and observation of an act ultimately conflicts with his theory of causation.

5. Causal judgement and Hume's associative framework

Stroud offers precisely the type of argument that critics of Hume need. He argues that Hume's attempt to integrate the experience of performing an act directly contradicts his theory of causation. Here, my aim is to show that, contrary to what Stroud suggests, there is no principled conflict between Hume's theory of causation and the experience of looseness he associates with the perspective of an agent.

5.1. Awareness of our own personal history

According to Stroud, the distinction between the performance and observation of an act is a distinction for which "Hume does not give a satisfactory explanation"

(1977, 147). Stroud, in an attempt to clarify Hume's view, begins by dismissing what he takes to be a possible explanation:

Why do we experience this 'looseness or indifference' in the case of our own actions? It cannot be because we lack experience of, and hence know nothing of, the conjunctions between wants and beliefs of certain kinds and actions of certain kinds. (146)

Stroud is right insofar as this reflects Hume's view. Hume, as noted above, maintains that, being sufficiently familiar with our own personal histories, we are regularly influenced by the constant conjunction of motives and actions in our own case: "we must be obliged to acknowledge . . . necessity . . . in every deliberation of our lives, and in every step of our conduct and behaviour" (EHU 8.22; SBN 94). This does not commit Hume to the implausible view that an agent must be conscious of her own personal history and the bearing it has on an occurrent act. For, according to Hume, custom, more often than not, influences our thoughts about ourselves and the world without our ever noticing:

the past experience, on which all our judgements concerning cause and effect depend, may operate on our mind in such an insensible manner as never to be taken notice of, and may even in some measure be unknown to us. (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 103)

Yet this is not to deny that an agent, in a moment of clarity or clinical reflection, may very well attend to the way in which a present act is situated within her own personal history. Hume, ultimately, is advancing the view that the influence of custom, however accessible it may be to introspection, is not restricted either to our view of interactions among external objects or to our view of the behaviour of others. The influence of custom is equally present in the view we have of ourselves.

However, according to Stroud, it is because Hume takes the influence of custom to nearly permeate the view we have of our own voluntary acts that his theory of causation ought to rule out the possibility of our having an experience of looseness in ordinary cases. For Hume seems to be committed to the view that the experience of voluntary action, even if only in those rare cases in which we attend carefully to its performance, must be characterized by the feeling of determination. If this is the case, then the experience we have of the performance of an act would not be qualitatively distinguishable from the experience of someone merely observing the act. Of course, it does not follow from Stroud's reading that Hume has no basis on which to discriminate these perspectives. For an agent will bring constant conjunctions pertaining to her own personal history and psychological life to bear on her action. These elements of her perspective are, at least in ordinary cases, unavailable or not readily available to a spectator. And the spectator, by contrast, will bring constant conjunctions pertaining to the regular observation of human behaviour to bear on this act. Stroud's point is that, although such differences will likely obtain, it is nevertheless the case that both individuals will feel themselves passively attending to various circumstances as well as feel themselves subject to the influence of custom. Stroud is puzzled that Hume does not embrace this result. Stroud asks:

How then is it possible for us to be so immune to the pressures of past and present experience in the case of our own actions, especially if Hume is right about our causal beliefs arising from a 'feeling of determination'? (147)¹⁸

Therefore, Hume's claim that an agent, unlike a mere observer, has "something like" an experience of "looseness or indifference" appears to sidestep what is actually demanded by his theory of causation. "Somehow," according to Stroud, "when we are acting, that feeling [of determination] deserts us" (147).

5.2. *Two perspectives on action*

The reading from Stroud depends on an oversimplification of the distinction between the observation and performance of an act. It is a distinction that holds most clearly in the case of two separate individuals, one being an agent and the other a spectator. But we need to keep in mind that, for Hume, the distinction between the observation and performance of an act also holds in the case of a single individual.¹⁹ If we neglect this fact, then we will have a difficult time explaining why Hume claims that an agent has an experience of looseness. To the extent that an agent *reflects* on a particular act or on certain behavioural patterns in herself, she will feel her thoughts carried along the associative connections that have developed on the basis of the constant conjunctions in her personal history. She will be brought to form certain causal judgements about this act or about her proclivities more generally. Here we see the respect in which Hume's theory of causation *does* require that an agent view her own acts in light of the influence of custom. But this is all that is entailed by the theory. When Hume acknowledges "something like" the experience of "looseness or indifference" he is referring to the experience had by an agent to the extent that she abstains from mere reflection and attends to what it is like to *perform* a voluntary act. And this is consistent with Hume's theory of causation. For, as Stroud overlooks, he can permit an experience of this kind without denying that an agent is affected by constant conjunctions in her own personal history at the level of thought or reflection.

Hume himself provides a case that supports the resilience of what he takes to be the characteristic feel of voluntary action. His example is one in which we "confess we were influenc'd by particular views and motives" (T 2.3.2.1; SBN 407). Here we have a case in which our awareness of our own personal history brings us to attribute a certain causal antecedent to our action. Yet, despite recognizing the presence of necessity, we perform this act, Hume notes, without being sensible of anything like "force, and violence, and constraint" (T 2.3.2.1; SBN 407). For example, when I walk into the kitchen, fully aware of my desire for coffee and its influence on me, my actions do not thereby lose the quality of being performed voluntarily. This case is significant for Hume in that he takes it to be familiar to his readers as well as to demonstrate that his definition of necessity is applicable to human action in virtue of what we ourselves can attest. Our actions are regularly preceded by certain motives or psychological states. It is for this reason that Hume maintains that

necessity...has universally, tho' tacitly, in the schools, in the pulpit, and in common life, been allow'd to belong to the will of man, and no one has ever pretended to deny, that we can draw inferences concerning human actions, and that those inferences are founded on the experience'd union of like actions with like motives and circumstances. (T 2.3.2.4; SBN 409)

But Hume also intends this case to show that the applicability of necessity to human action does not conflict with our possession of liberty. According to Hume, we possess "the liberty of *spontaneity*" insofar as our actions are neither hindered nor, as he puts it, met with "violence" (T 2.3.2.1; SBN 407).²⁰ By contrast, we have no basis on which to attribute to ourselves "the liberty of *indifference*," a much stronger claim to freedom, which Hume defines as "a negation of necessity and causes" influencing the will (T 2.3.2.1; SBN 407). He offers the following explanation:

For what is meant by *liberty*, when applied to voluntary actions? We cannot surely mean, that actions have so little connexion with motives, inclinations, and circumstances, that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other, and that one affords no inference by which we can conclude the existence of the other. For these are plain and acknowledged matters of fact. (EHU 8.23; SBN 95)

Therefore, on Hume's view, even though someone, myself included, can draw a reliable inference from my desire for coffee in the morning to my going to the kitchen to start the drip machine, it does not follow from the tenets of his theory of causation that what it is like to *perform* this action must be characterized by the felt quality of compulsion or necessitation. Rather, as Hume acknowledges, our voluntary actions, even in those cases in which we are aware of our own motives and with respect to which we draw reliable causal inferences, are ordinarily characterized by "something like" an experience of "looseness or indifference."

6. Hume's criticism of the argument from experience

Hume advances what appears to be an essentially sceptical reply to the argument from experience. He claims that the "*sensation or experience* [of] liberty," the experience which some thinkers take to be direct evidence of our possession of free will, is "*false*" (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408). Some commentators take Hume, in light of this assertion, to hold the view that what is uniquely apparent from the perspective of an agent is strictly illusory. But careful attention to Hume's criticism of the argument from experience reveals that he is not sceptical about any feature of the phenomenology of agency.

6.1. Scepticism and agentive experience

Commentators have rarely attempted to explain why Hume takes the "*sensation or experience* [of] liberty" to be "*false*." The standard suggestion is that this experience is "*false*" simply in virtue of the fact that what an agent experiences

when she performs a voluntary act *differs* from what someone else experiences when they observe this action.²¹ But the fact that these two perspectives on voluntary action *differ* fails to explain why Hume seems to privilege one perspective over the other. Accordingly, Harris suggests that “the first-person perspective [of the agent]” is something Hume merely “explains away in order to get the result he wants” (2005, 14).

What distinguishes Baier’s reading from other scholarly treatments is that she offers an explanation as to why Hume privileges the perspective of the observer over the perspective of the agent. And her explanation cuts to the quick. Baier takes Hume’s position to be that an agent has a “self-deceiving viewpoint” such that there is something inherently misleading, or “false,” about the experience of acting voluntarily (1991, 154).²² Hume has certainly framed his criticism of the argument from experience in a way that lends itself to this sceptical reading. Hume writes:

We may imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves; but a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and disposition. (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408-9)

Here, it may seem as if Hume takes the spectator to have the only undeceived view of human agency. Note, however, that Baier, like other commentators, does not distinguish between the “*sensation or experience* [of] liberty” and agentic experience as a whole. Therefore, Baier must take Hume to hold the view that agentic experience *as such* is “false.” But this is clearly mistaken. For Hume does not take the kinaesthetic sensation of motion, the experience of effort or the impression of will to be illusory in nature. As we have seen, Hume takes them to be uncontroversial features of ordinary experience. Of course, Hume’s identification of a “*false sensation or experience* [of] liberty” *does* refer to something uniquely apparent from the perspective of an agent. Therefore, I believe that we should understand Baier’s reading in a way that speaks to a narrower concern with the potential “falsity” of the experience of looseness that Hume identifies in the course of developing his criticism of the argument from experience.

6.2. *Responding to the argument from experience*

To clarify just what Hume takes to be “false” in his criticism of the argument from experience, we need to distinguish between three claims. The first two concern the perspective of someone acting voluntarily. The third concerns the felt quality that underlies our judgement that two objects or events are related by “liberty or chance.” First, as already discussed at length above, Hume claims that there is “something like” the experience of “looseness or indifference” that is characteristic of voluntary action. Hume claims, second, that defenders of free will “imagine [they] feel that the will itself is subject to nothing” and, more generally, that we

“imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves” (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408). The third claim, a basic principle within Hume’s theory of causation, holds that when we deem two objects to be related by “liberty or chance,” or take no causal relation to obtain between them, it is because of “a certain looseness” we feel in our thoughts about them (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408). Hume clearly does not take the last of these three experiences to be “false.” He is simply describing the experience of what it is like for our thoughts to move independently of the influence of custom. When we experience objects in the same vicinity and without any prior experience of their being constantly conjoined, the mind, in the absence of a customary association, is left “in its native situation of indifference” (T 1.3.11.4; SBN 125). Therefore, when Hume speaks of the “falsity” of the “*sensation or experience* [of] liberty” he must refer to one of the other two experiences listed here.

If Hume holds that the experience of looseness is “false,” then he is committed to a sceptical view of the phenomenology of agency. Of course, it need not follow that Hume is committed to the illusory status of other features of agentive experience. But it will follow that the specific feature of agentive experience that demonstrates the compatibility between Hume’s theory of causation and an adequate account of the phenomenology of agency is ultimately deceptive. However, if Hume takes the second experience to be “false,” then what he deems illusory is no more than what defenders of free will imagine to be apparent in the experience of voluntary action. An illusion of this sort does not require Hume to be sceptical of any feature of agentive experience.

Hume portrays the intended conclusion of the argument from experience as an essentially metaphysical thesis about the will. This argument, Hume tells us, is for the “real existence” of the liberty of indifference (T 2.3.2.2; SBN 408) and a total “negation of necessity and causes” impinging on the will (T 2.3.2.1; SBN 407). This portrayal is not unfair to those who advance the argument from experience, because this argument is just as philosophically ambitious as Hume suggests. I offer two examples in support of this view. Bramhall, whose *A Defense of True Liberty* (1655) makes up part of his extended debate with Hobbes, writes: “our own and other men’s experience, do teach us that the will has a dominion over its own acts, to will or nill without extrinsical necessitation” (Chappell 1999, 63). And Crousaz argues, in his *A New Treatise of the Art of Thinking* (1724), that “Attention to what passes within us” reveals that “our Soul [is] the sole and immediate Cause of its own Resolution, Choice, and Determination” (Vol. I, 141). According to Crousaz, one “perceives this Truth directly” (Vol. I, 141). These and other defenders of free will take the experience of voluntary action to immediately acquaint them with the free operation of the will.²³ In the words of van Inwagen, proponents of this argument take themselves to have “‘direct access’ to the springs of action” (1983, 204).

Where the argument from experience goes wrong, according to Hume, is in mistaking a legitimate experience, the experience of looseness that he associates with voluntary action generally, for what is “imagined” to be a direct insight into the metaphysical status of the will. Hume, who adjusts certain aspects of

his criticism as it appears in the *Treatise* for inclusion in the *Enquiry*, later emphasizes the illusory status of this purported insight. There he describes it as the “false sensation or *seeming* experience which we have, or *may* have, of liberty or indifference, in many of our actions” (EHU 8.22n18; SBN 94n1; my emphases). This means that, in the *Enquiry*, Hume tempers the suggestion that those who advance the argument from experience restrict themselves to what is actually experienced in the performance of an act. And, finally, Hume explicitly refers to this species of error in the *Treatise* not as a sensory illusion, which would imply the illusory status of some experience, but as an “illusion of the fancy,” which implies a mistake in judgement about *what* is experienced (T 2.1.10.9; SBN 315).²⁴ Therefore, we have sufficient evidence to draw the following conclusion. Hume intends the “*false sensation or experience* of . . . the liberty of indifference” to pick out what defenders of free will merely imagine to be apparent in the experience of voluntary action. This means that Hume has structured his criticism of the argument from experience in such a way that its success neither depends on nor entails that any feature of agentive experience is illusory in nature. If we read Hume in the way I suggest here, then his criticism accords well with, what was during this period, the traditional response to the argument from experience. Thinkers did not typically respond to defenders of free will by questioning the veracity of agentive experience. For example, in his *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (1717), Collins, famous for his opposition to free will, dismisses the argument from experience not because the experience of acting voluntarily, or any feature of this experience, is illusory. Rather, referring to various features of agentive experience, Collins states that defenders of free will “mistake them for the exercise of Freedom, or Liberty from Necessity” (14).²⁵

7. Conclusion

I have argued that a fairly prominent criticism of Hume is not successful. This is the criticism that Hume’s theory of causation commits him to an account of agentive experience that is implausibly thin. I have also argued that a sceptical reading of Hume’s argument against free will is not supported by the text. This reading takes Hume to either reject the veracity of agentive experience *as such* or reject the veracity of what he takes to be the characteristic feel of performing an act. I hope to have shown in each of these cases that Hume’s position does not entail the degree of parsimony that is or might be attributed to him. It must be admitted, however, that Hume does not advance a full and colourful account of what it is like to act voluntarily. Yet we would be mistaken to draw the conclusion that he, or any other proponent of a broadly Humean theory of causation, could not possibly develop an account of the phenomenology of agency that is compatible with ordinary experience as well as with the ordinary epistemic intuition that the peculiar sense we have of our own agency is non-illusory.²⁶

Notes

1. The literature on this issue is sizeable. A partial list of works with which I will not presently engage and in which Hume's view of human agency meets with such a criticism is as follows: Anscombe and Geach (1961), Aune (1977), Bricke (1984), Stalley (1986), Connolly (1987), Keutner (1987), Bricke (1996), and Mumford and Anjum (2011). These works develop criticisms that fall outside of the scope of this paper. However, Wood (2014) attempts to address a subset of these criticisms, namely, those concerning Hume's view of the basic structure of human agency.
2. Citation of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* is indicated by "T" and includes book, chapter, section and paragraph numbers from the 2011 Norton and Norton edition followed by the corresponding page number, set off by "SBN," from the 1978 Selby-Bigge edition revised by Nidditch. Citation of Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* is indicated by "EHU" and includes the section and paragraph numbers from the 2009 Beauchamp edition followed by the corresponding page number, set off by "SBN," from the 1975 Selby-Bigge edition revised by Nidditch.
3. Hossack (2003), for example, states that "there is something it is like to move one's arm voluntarily; if a movement of one's arm is not voluntary, the phenomenology is different, even if the arm makes exactly the same physical movement" (188). Horgan, Tienson, and Graham (2003) write, similarly, "there is 'something it is like' to behave in a way that constitutes voluntary action, something phenomenologically distinctive that incorporates but goes beyond the phenomenology of one's own bodily motion" (323). And Wakefield and Dreyfus (1991) claim that "a [voluntary] action is not like one's body moving, even in a desired and useful manner" (206).
4. Strawson refers to it as the "sense of engagement" (236). Relatedly, Ginet (1990) claims that voluntary action is "*actish* in its phenomenal quality" (25).
5. See, for example, Bayne and Levy (2006) who maintain that "the experience of first-person agency includes many other experiences as components" (50). And Pacherie (2007) refers to the "multi-faceted character of the phenomenology of agency" as well as the assumption among researchers that "the experience of agency includes many other experiences as components" (2).
6. Mayr takes Hume's theory of causation to entail that

all human actions, as natural phenomena, must also be part of the flux of events and, as such, 'happenings'; and the only way in which it allows that this happening can essentially involve the agent, as actions do, is as something that happens *to* the agent or is connected to other events that happen *to* him. (9)

See also Melden (1961, 183), Nagel (1986, 110–118), and Ellis (2002). Korsgaard argues that Hume cannot possibly incorporate into his account of voluntary action the rational and deliberative process of endorsing and acting on a normative principle. This particular criticism does not pertain to the issue of phenomenology. However, she comes close to stating the problem of alienation that is raised by Hornsby and others. Korsgaard maintains that Hume, with respect to explaining both causal relations and human actions, has "a third-personal approach" (2008, 296n32) or a theory within which "only third-personal options are available" (57n38). This is a problem for Hume, since, as Korsgaard holds, action is "essentially first-personal" (57). She takes this to commit Hume to a view within which "our agency is entirely constituted in the eyes of those around us" (21) and within which "an action essentially is nothing more than a movement caused by a judgement or idea that regularly has an effect on the will" (2009, 63–64).

7. For a fuller discussion of kinaesthesia see Clarke and Horch (1986).
8. Much has been published on the phenomenon of anarchic hand syndrome. See, for example, Marchetti and Della Sala (1998) as well as Marcel (2003).

9. Further discussion of this issue can be found in Marcel (2003, 73).
10. On this point see James (1981, Vol. II, 1101–1102) where he discusses a number of cases in which subjects make voluntary movements with anesthetized limbs. The subjects in these cases are aware of the fact that they are either voluntarily moving or voluntarily holding a limb in a specific position. However, they are unaware of other aspects of their actions such as a limb descending of its own weight or the positional changes imposed on a limb. Clark and Horch (1986) discuss a case in which a subject's limb is paralysed and, despite the introduction of certain kinaesthetic and exertive sensations, can distinguish this experience from voluntary movement:

Subjects have a clear perception of their attempts to contract their muscles and also of their inability to move. Even if the experimenter tries to fool the subject by eliciting cutaneous sensations consistent with a successful voluntary movement with paralyzed muscles, a subject still reports that no movement occurred. (13.29)

This suggests that the kinaesthetic and exertive sensations, even when present, are insufficient to produce the peculiar sense that we have of our own agency.

11. Ginet (1990) conveniently cuts through the need for devising thought experiments of this kind with the following gesture:

we know how seeming to feel a given sort of exertion could occur without its seeming voluntary, for we know that the same *afferent* neural input that produces a subject's experience of seeming to feel a bodily exertion when he is voluntarily making it could in principle be produced by sources outside his body when he was not actually trying to make any exertion. (29)

12. On this point, Penelhum (2009) notes that Hume takes instances of volition to be “readily detectable components in the mechanisms of human choice” (254).
13. See also Broadie (1990) who denies that the impression of will is “something concurrent” with action (121). Mumford and Anjum (2011) take “a Humean model of causation” to entail, in cases of voluntary action, that “the cause will have been fully exercised in the act of will, which was already completed, and would have its constantly conjoined effect after the willing had occurred” (207). Not all commentators explicitly attribute to Hume a view on which the impression of will is strictly antecedent to the performance of an act. However, these commentators do not typically differentiate their interpretation of the impression of will from the strict priority reading. For example, Stroud (2007) attributes to Hume a view on which an agent experiences “at first a felt ‘volition,’ and then an impression of what happens next” (26). Here, the temporal status of the impression of will is not fully addressed.
14. This view is often attributed to Hume. For example, Kemp Smith (1941) writes:

[in Hume] voluntary actions are treated like other perceptions and ideas of the mind, as items in causal sequences, i.e. as being indifferently either causes or effects, according as we regard them in their relation to their consequences or in connection with their antecedents. (435)

And Korsgaard (2009) takes Hume to “identify [a voluntary] action with movement produced by a particular sort of causal route through the person, say, a route through the person's psychology” (100).

15. Hume refers to this type of mental transition as a “conveyance” (EHU 5.12; SBN 50) and characterizes it elsewhere as an altogether passive event: “in all cases, wherein we reason concerning them [viz. causes and effects], there is only one perceived or remembered, and the other is supplied in conformity to our past experience” (T 1.3.6.2; SBN 87). He also states, for example, that such transitions occur “without

- the assistance of memory” (T 1.3.8.13; SBN 104), “without any choice or hesitation” (T 1.3.9.7; SBN 110) and without “any deliberation” (T 1.3.12.7; SBN 133).
16. Here, the discussion in the *Enquiry*, which contains what is, for the most part, a reproduction of Hume’s argument against free will as it occurs in the *Treatise*, is somewhat fuller: “Now we may observe, that, though, in *reflecting* on human actions, we seldom feel such a looseness or indifference, but are commonly able to infer them with considerable certainty from their motives, and from the dispositions of the agent; yet it frequently happens, that, in *performing* the actions themselves, we are sensible of something like it” (EHU 8.22n18; SBN 94).
 17. Hume intends to claim no more than that the constant conjunction between psychological antecedents and subsequent acts is *as reliable as* the constant conjunctions holding between interactions among objects: “No union can be more constant and certain, than that of some actions with some motives and characters; and if in other cases the union is uncertain, it is no more than what happens in the operations of body” (T 2.3.1.12; SBN 404).
 18. See also Ayers (1996) who simply takes it to be the case that Hume, given the terms of his theory of causation, holds that “our subjective sense of our own agency [is] as much a result of custom and habit as any other causal belief” (107).
 19. Baillie (2000) also notes as much about the status of observation within Hume’s discussion: “While Hume writes as if this interpretive strategy is primarily adopted towards someone else, it can also be applied to oneself” (83).
 20. Hume holds that this “liberty is universally allowed to belong to every one, who is not a prisoner and in chains” (EHU 8.23; SBN 95). For more on Hume’s view of the liberty of spontaneity see, for example, Baillie (2000, 79–80) and Pitson (2002, 223).
 21. Baillie (2000) claims that the “crucial move” of Hume’s argument “is to step back from the first-person perspective of the agent herself, and adopt the third-person stance of the observer or interpreter” (81–82). Magri (2008) claims that the “source of this false experience is the difference between the observer’s and the agent’s standpoint” (189). And, finally, Russell (2010) tells us that the falsity of the experience of liberty “is accounted for by the different perspectives we have on action depending on whether we are an agent or a spectator” (232).
 22. See also Baillie (2000) who suggests that the falsity of this experience, so far as Hume is concerned, is “perhaps . . . basic and inexplicable” (74). Incidentally, this reading may have motivated Baier (2010), at least in part, to claim summarily that “Hume’s philosophy of action . . . can be called skeptical” (513).
 23. Hume takes these arguments to be tokens of the “intuitive” version of the argument from experience. For a helpful discussion of Hume’s response to the “demonstrative” version of the argument from experience see especially Stroud (1977, 146–47).
 24. This occurs in a passage in which Hume looks ahead to his discussion of “that false sensation of liberty” at *Treatise* 2.3.2 (T 2.1.10.9; SBN 314).
 25. See also Spinoza who, in a letter originally published in 1677, raises a similar criticism of the argument from experience. A human being, Spinoza suggests, is like a stone that has been set in motion. Spinoza writes:

the stone thinks, and knows that it is endeavouring, as far as in it lies, to continue in motion. Now this stone, since it is conscious only of its endeavour . . . will surely think it is completely free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than it so wishes. This, then, is that human freedom which all men boast of possessing. (1995, 284)

In drawing this comparison, Spinoza does not dispute the veracity of the experience of voluntary action. He advances this criticism without, as he puts it, “gainsaying my

own consciousness" (285). Nevertheless Spinoza holds that the freedom which some purport to discover in the experience of voluntary action is merely "imaginary" (285).

26. An early version of this paper was presented at the 2011 Harvard–MIT and Princeton–Penn–Columbia Graduate Conferences in Philosophy. I am grateful to my commentators, Melissa Schumacher and Wiebke Deimling, and to the audience members at these conferences for their questions and criticisms. Special thanks are owed to Kenneth Winkler, Jennifer Marusic, Alison G. McIntyre, and the anonymous reviewers for this journal for their stimulating comments.

Notes on contributor

Joshua M. Wood is a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Wellesley College.

References

- Anscombe, G. E. M., and P. T. Geach. 1961. *Three Philosophers*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Aune, Bruce. 1977. *Reason and Action*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Ayers, Michael. 1996. "Natures and Laws from Descartes to Hume." In *The Philosophical Canon in the 17th and 18th Centuries: Essays in Honour of John W. Yolton*, edited by G. A. J. Rogers and Sylvana Tomaselli, 83–108. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Baier, Annette C. 1991. *A Progress of Sentiments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Baier, Annette C. 2010. "Hume." In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, edited by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis, 513–520. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Baillie, James. 2000. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hume on Morality*. New York: Routledge.
- Baldwin, Thomas. 1995. "Objectivity, Causality, and Agency." In *The Body and the Self*, edited by José Luis Bermúdez, A. J. Marcel, and Naomi Eilan, 107–126. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bayne, Tim. 2008. "The Phenomenology of Agency." *Philosophy Compass* 3 (1): 182–202.
- Bayne, Tim, and Neil Levy. 2006. "The Feeling of Doing: Deconstructing the Phenomenology of Agency." In *Disorders of Volition*, edited by Natalie Sebanz and Wolfgang Prinz, 49–68. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bricke, John. 1984. "Hume's Volitions." In *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by V. Hope, 70–90. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bricke, John. 1996. *Mind and Morality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Broadie, Alexander. 1990. *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy: A New Perspective on the Enlightenment*. Savage, MD: Barnes & Noble Books.
- Chappell, Vere. 1999. *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, Francis J., and Kenneth W. Horch. 1986. "Kinesthesia." In *Handbook of Perception and Human Performance. Vol. 1: Sensory Processes and Perception*, edited by Kenneth R. Boff, Lloyd Kaufman, and James P. Thomas, 13.1–13.62. New York: Wiley.
- Collins, Anthony. 1717. *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*. London: Printed for R. Robinson.
- Connolly, John. 1987. "David Hume and the Concept of Volition: The Will as Impression." *Hume Studies* 13 (2): 276–305.

- Crousaz, Jean-Pierre de. 1724. *A New Treatise of the Art of Thinking*. 2 Vols. London: Printed for Tho. Woodward.
- Descartes, René. 1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 1. Translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, Brian. 2002. "Human Agency, Realism and the New Essentialism." In *Recent Themes in the Philosophy of Science*, edited by Steve Clarke and Timothy D. Lyons, 193–208. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- Ginet, Carl. 1990. *On Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, James. 2005. *Of Liberty and Necessity: The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Horgan, T., J. Tienson, and G. Graham. 2003. "The Phenomenology of First-Person Agency." In *Physicalism and Mental Causation: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action*, edited by S. Walter and H.-D. Heckmann, 323–340. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
- Hornsby, Jennifer. 2004. "Agency and Alienation." In *Naturalism in Question*, edited by Mario De Caro and David Macarthur, 173–187. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hossack, Keith. 2003. "Consciousness in Act and Action." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 2: 187–203.
- Hume, David. 1975. *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge. Revised 3rd edition by P.H. Nidditch. London: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, David. 1978. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge. Revised 2nd edition by P.H. Nidditch. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, David. 2009. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, David. 2011. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. 2 Vols, edited by David Fate Norton, Mary J. Norton. New York: Oxford University Press.
- James, William. 1981. *The Principles of Psychology*. 2 Vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kemp Smith, Norman. 1941. *The Philosophy of David Hume*. London: Macmillan.
- Keutner, David. 1987. "David Hume and the Concept of Volition: The Will as Wish." *Hume Studies* 13 (2): 306–322.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. 2008. *The Constitution of Agency: Essays on Practical Reasoning and Moral Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. 2009. *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Magri, Tito. 2008. "Hume on the Direct Passions and Motivation." In *Blackwell Companion to Hume*, edited by Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, 185–200. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Marcel, Anthony. 2003. "The Sense of Agency: Awareness and Ownership of Action." In *Agency and Self-Awareness: Issues in Philosophy and Psychology*, edited by Johannes Roessler and Naomi Eilan, 48–93. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marchetti, C., and S. Della Sala. 1998. "Disentangling the Alien and Anarchic Hand." *Cognitive Neuropsychiatry* 3: 191–207.
- Mayr, Erasmus. 2011. *Understanding Human Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Melden, A. I. 1961. *Free Actions*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Mumford, Stephen, and Rani Lill Anjum. 2011. *Getting Causes from Powers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Pacherie, Elisabeth. 2007. "The Sense of Control and the Sense of Agency." *Psyche* 13 (1): 1–30.
- Penelhum, Terence. 2009. "Hume's Moral Psychology." In *Cambridge Companion to Hume*, edited by David Fate Norton and Jacqueline Taylor, 238–269. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pitson, A. E. 2002. *Hume's Philosophy of the Self*. New York: Routledge.
- Russell, Paul. 2010. *The Riddle of Hume's Treatise*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de. 1995. *The Letters*, edited by Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Stalley, R. F. 1986. "The Will in Hume's *Treatise*." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24 (1): 41–53.
- Strawson, Galen. 1986. *Freedom and Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stroud, Barry. 1977. *Hume*. London: Routledge.
- Stroud, Barry. 2007. "'Gilding or Staining' the World with 'Sentiments' and 'Phantasms'." In *The New Hume Debate*, edited by Rupert Read and Kenneth A. Richman, 16–30. London: Routledge.
- van Inwagen, Peter. 1983. *An Essay on Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Velleman, David J. 2000. *The Possibility of Practical Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wakefield, J., and H. Dreyfus. 1991. "Intentionality and the Phenomenology of Action." In *John Searle and His Critics*, edited by E. Lepore and R. van Gulick, 259–270. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- Wood, Joshua M. 2014. "Hume and the Metaphysics of Agency." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (1): 87–112.