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Tomasz B. Stanek

California State University, San Bernardino, tomasz.stanek@vvc.edu

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Abstract

After reviewing the (2012) Oxford University Press title: *Classic and contemporary readings in the philosophy of education*, a common philosophy of education text for undergraduate and graduate students, I was surprised that the influence and the philosophical imprint of David Hume (who awakened Kant) was missing and omitted. David Hume's ideas were monumentally important not only to Immanuel Kant but also to those who would eventually call educational behaviorism their home. To fill the void, I have included my response to the ongoing debates and some of the most intriguing questions regarding Hume's philosophical stance, his suggestions, and perhaps seeds to those who would build their theories in the nineteenth and twentieth century. My first question for discussion provides a basic attempt at Hume's position regarding his basic theory of experience-based causes, the second question ponders his ideas on Socratic concept of *akrasia*, and the final question deals with Hume's is-ought concept. What is remarkable about Hume's contribution to the philosophy of education is his stance on the principles of solid experience as a way to perceive reality, constructs, or even the constructivist ideas for linguistics, missing experience, or fallacies.

Keywords

David Hume, David Hume and Education

Author Statement

Author, Tomasz Stanek, is a recent (2012) Ed.D graduate from California State University San Bernardino's College of Education, a community college teacher and a scholar interested in a variety of research: from history, migrations and diaspora, and modern conflicts to education and educational theory. Dr Stanek teaches at Chaffey College and lectures at University of California, Riverside Extension School.

On David Hume

Tomasz B. Stanek

After reviewing the (2012) Oxford University Press title: *Classic and contemporary readings in the philosophy of education* by Steven M. Cahn, a common philosophy of education text for the undergraduate and graduate students, I was surprised that the influence and the philosophical imprint of David Hume (who awakened Kant) was missing and omitted. David Hume's ideas were monumentally important, not only to Immanuel Kant, but also to those who would eventually call educational behaviorism their home.

To fill the void, I have included my response to the ongoing debates and some of the most intriguing questions regarding Hume's philosophical stance, his suggestions, and perhaps seeds for those who would build on their theories in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Although David Hume did not write any specific chapter on education, his unique approach to human learning makes his philosophy very valuable today. His insights cannot be ignored, just as we cannot ignore Charles Darwin for his 'missing' notes on pedagogy. What is remarkable about Hume's contribution to the philosophy of education is his stance on the principles of solid *experience* as a way to perceive reality, constructs, or even the constructivist ideas for linguistics, missing experience, or fallacies.

David Hume is known for his radical system of philosophical empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism. His stance on the existence of the innate ideas led him to the basic assumption that all human knowledge is ultimately founded in experience and mainly through causation. Some of his most influential publications, namely, *A treatise of human nature* (1739) and the consequent

simplification or explanation of this work, *An enquiry concerning human understanding* (1748) were misunderstood at first but became monumentally constructive for his closest follower, Immanuel Kant. Simply put, Hume advocated more for what today is known as a psychological basis of human nature and experience-based learning or experience-based knowledge. He argued that reason alone cannot possibly be responsible for human knowledge, however it is complementary and assists inductive reasoning and causality. Hume is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of Western philosophy. The essay below reflects the Humean wisdom and his perceptions of the observable world, and is intended to provoke thoughts, critiques, and comparisons to those who conduct research in the field of education and human wisdom.

I shall organize this account around the asking of three questions. The first question for the discussion provides a basic attempt at Hume's position regarding his basic theory of experience-based causes. The second question ponders his ideas on the Socratic concept of *akrasia*. The final question deals with Hume's *is-ought* concept. Each philosophical analysis of a particular question is followed by its applicability to the field of education.

Question 1

Hume offers two definitions of cause, as a philosophical relation and as a natural relation. What are we to make of these two senses of cause — is Hume a realist, anti-realist, subjectivist, or objectivist?

Hume describes two causal processes, one that occurs in the outside world, and

the other in our minds. To support this, Hume provided two definitions of causation, which lay at the heart of his philosophical foundation, and represented a different view of the same object or relation. The association in this relation should be understood as either a philosophical or natural one. For clarity in this paper, I will simply label the definitions as A, and B respectively. The first definition (A) of cause was defined by Hume as, “An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are placed in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter” (Norton et al., p. 114). The second definition (B) defined cause as, “An object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other” (Norton et al., p. 114).

I believe that Hume supplied two distinctive definitions of an experimental method in his own quest to understand reality and how that reality was related to human learning. He has (A) eliminated, and at the same time, (B) introduced human bias (or individual perception), by which the causation could be observed by one definition (A), yet it could not be realistically assessed by definition (B), partly since our own imagination may have created such causation.

Hume’s fascination with causation as the basic foundation of his philosophy of human understanding, perhaps led him to draw some basic conclusions: (A) causation occurs as it happens in nature (observable or not) and (B) causation exists as it is observed by the human mind. What is perplexing here is the notion that (A) could not be observed if (B) did not come to being and, therefore, causation may not exist at all. Why was

Hume dissatisfied with just “one definition” of causation? This is a very important interpretive question for at least two reasons. First, I cannot reject him as anti-realist by virtue of his first definition of cause. Second, I cannot ignore Hume’s claims to the necessity of the second definition and all that it represents: a central element of his philosophy of human learning.

Can Hume be truly defined by the definitions of what is considered today to be a realist, anti-realist, constructivist or objectivist? For the purpose of this short paper, I will test the following widely understood definitions. According to Stanford’s Philosophical Encyclopedia (SPE), *a realist*, - in a metaphysical sense, is “one who wishes to claim that apart from the mundane sort of empirical dependence of objects and their properties familiar to us from everyday life, there is no further philosophically interesting sense, in which everyday objects and their properties can be said to be dependent on anyone’s linguistic practices or conceptual schemes”(SPE). By the opposite supposition the *anti-realist* rejects realism. *A subjectivist* doctrine points to “knowledge as merely subjective and that there is no external or objective truth”(SPE). Therefore, “Our own mental activity is the only unquestionable fact of our experience”(SPE). According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP), the term “subjective” typically indicates the possibility of error. An objectivist, as in reference to objective knowledge, may simply refer to knowledge of an objective reality by the perceiving mind. Although this distinction between the objective and subjective reality may create a discrepancy as illustrated by Locke’s example of the icy and hot water hand experiment.

The above (IEP) definitions attempt to define Hume’s understanding of how human minds perceive causation between

ideas; simple or complex, and how humans arrive to observe, through experience, the causes and effects and vice versa. Hume clearly stated that the first definition may identify a relation not observable or clearly understood to people at the time of observation. For instance, the idea that “bad air”, not plasmodium vivax virus, is a cause of malaria. If something causes malaria in nature, we see its *effect*. Yet over time, and through careful and systematic experimentation and *experience*, the *true* and an intuitive cause may be inferred. For example, not “bad air”, but a virus carried by the mosquitoes, is the *cause* of malaria. The idea of relation or causation existed by Hume’s definition A, yet it was not until the process of *lived experience* brought about more assurance and vivacity that definition B became suitable. I believe Hume is very consistent in his logic of resemblance, contiguity, and ultimately causation. Therefore, his two definitions: (A), and (B) were not mutually exclusive.

Hume stands by his belief that observable causation did not originate in reason or a priori knowledge but only in experience. The more experience one has regarding the relations between the ideas, the more refined the idea of causation may have developed. Therefore, it seems that Hume introduced an experimental method by way of these two definitions of cause, which were based purely on repeated experimentation but not reason alone. This means that causation became central to Hume’s method of explaining human nature.

Today the concept of experience-based learning (EBL) encompassed Hume’s early ideas, and assumes that the experience of the learner inhabits the center of the learning process (Foley, 2000). Reflection upon experience becomes the foundation of the learning progress and its meaning. This approach also assumes that learning is socially and

culturally constructed. Not only it is a holistic experience but one that is heavily influenced by the individual emotions.

Hume seems to reason from factual evidence derived from nature, according to his two definitions of cause. He did make a clear distinction, in which, even if the two objects in causal relation were connected to each other, they were still distinct and different. Not only he was a *realist* in the observation of nature (what exists is observable) but also an *objectivist* by removing possible erroneous *a priori* conclusions of causation. Hume assumes that each observation remains distinct. For example, each throw of dice remains distinct and not related to the previous. Similarly, five contiguous observations do not represent a higher spectrum of assurance or probability in which all further and potential observation will remain the same.

I believe that Hume supplied the two distinctive definitions as an experimental method in his own quest to understand reality and how that reality was related to human understanding. He has, (A) eliminated, and at the same time, (B), introduced human bias, or individual perception, by which causation could be observed by definition A, yet it could not be realistically assessed by definition B, partly since our own imagination may have created such causation. For instance, a neatly cut grass in a foreign country may suggest to someone who grew up in contemporary California, that lawn equipment *caused* it (effect). It may, however, be that this effect was produced by grazing animals (reality), and not by some equipment. Thus our imagination or habit associated the effect with our logical conclusion (cause). The objective reality of cause and effect exists in nature objectively but may not be known to human mind. The sufficient resembling qualities of objects may suffice for definition A, yet the demonstrative effect

or experience must be supplied by definition B - human experience, however erroneous or subjective.

These two definitions: A, and B, may also have suggested the difference, in which Hume satisfied the objectiveness of things as they appear in nature by way of definition A, to a subjective relation of objects experienced by an individual observer through definition B. Thus the feeling or vivacity produced by our own imagination by way of previous experiences may suggest a causal relationship of a lawn mower to short grass, or a grazing goat to short grass by way of habits.

If the first definition was used by Hume to explain objectivity in causal relations in nature, then the second definition of cause was distinctively designed to apply to satisfy the subjective processes of human nature. According to Hume, mind conjoins with impressions by way of feeling in human imagination of the external objects (Norton et al.). This dual approach to causality by Hume was clearly consistent with his basic foundations and observations (for instance, missing shade of blue, whether the sun will not rise tomorrow, or his basic distinction between relations of ideas to matters of fact), and he realized the difficulty of his reasoning for an average reader. He clarified in his *Enquiries*, "I know not whether the reader will readily apprehend this reasoning. I am afraid that, should I multiply words about it, or throw it into a greater variety of lights, it would only become more obscure and intricate" (Selby-Bigge et al., 79). Since the foundation of his reasoning regarding "matters of fact" constitutes the idea of causation with its foundation in "experience" of greater uniformity of nature. For instance, white swans will form an experience of "swans" and the sun will rise tomorrow as it did always. Hume's method of induction tends to run

a vicious circle in that we trust the process of causation, and trust seems to be the foundation of experience, and not perhaps a reflection of the uniformity of natural experience. If Hume was a realist by way of natural observations, did he ultimately give in to the idea of subjective experience and human understanding? I believe that he did arrive at the point in which the logic of two definitions found itself in a vicious circle of contradictions. His theory in which observable reality (nature) finds itself in the eye of a beholder assumes that an observer exists, and any process of causation exists within the formulations of human learning.

In my opinion, Hume was keenly aware of the natural environment and man's place in it. This fascination perhaps led him to draw some basic conclusions: (A) causation occurs as it happens in nature (observable or not) and (B) causation exists as it is learned by the human mind. What is perplexing here is perhaps the notion that (A) could not be observed if (B) did not come to being. Therefore, causation may not exist at all. This notion was supported by Hume's writing and mentioned as follows, "If true causation requires knowable necessary connections, it is the required ideas that represent impressions of causal powers in objects, then there is not true causation at all" (Norton et al., p. 162). Therefore, the observation of nature becomes the observation of human mind. This is a constructivist base or foundation of Hume's theory of causation. I assume that nature was real to Hume as it appeared and did exist only by way of human observation.

I believe that Hume's two definitions of causes account for every logical and realistic possibility in which either nature, which is observable, or human mind, which expresses feelings, vivacity, or experimentation indicate the same idea. If there are in fact three relations between

objects, as Hume noted: resemblance, contiguity, and cause-effect, then these observations relate to nature. What was left, in Hume's understanding, was the philosophical or psychological field of causation experienced by human mind? I believe Hume was erroneous on purpose by introducing philosophical bias or error to his discussion on causality. He did, perhaps, seek answers or discussions from the intellectual community to remedy the implicit errors of subjectivity of human experiences and how the world *should* be observed empirically.

These above formulations suggest that Hume could be a constructivist, since he accounted for human understanding of nature, and he safeguarded subjective human experiences and habits too, and retained them within the second definition of cause. With each example throughout the *Treatise* or *Enquiries*, Hume suggested objective reality, examined the subjective reality, and reexamined the imperfections for both cases.

Lastly, Hume's definitions of cause were the basis for his understanding of the human mind. I believe that the notion of reality that exists in nature, regardless of human perceptions, and the reality constructed by the human perception may be at odds, even if the object observed remained the same. Therefore any theories, constructs, or narratives created by people in human understanding may as well be only perceived as causal relations but not necessarily true. For instance, a "one-size-fits-all" test approach in education, religions, climate cycles, science, and so on.

John Dewey, in *Democracy and Education*, criticizes most philosophical traditions in education, such as those of: Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, "especially with regard to their implicit reductionism" (Reich et al., 2016, p. 998). Dewey rejected an a priori element of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant and closely

followed customary practices and habits through which a careful analysis could be reconstructed. Practice and experience was the reflection of human learning, which mirrors that of Hume. A Skinnerian approach to behaviorism assumes that habits and customs are conditioned responses to the experienced environment. In fact, these responses could be trained as one may train for a test. The problem here is, as pointed out by Hume and supported by Dewey, that the "objective" qualities of a test become too distant to the contextual realities of social, cultural, emotional, creative dimensions of learning (Reich et al., 2016).

A typical example of such "objective" learning is for example, a "one-size-fits-all" approach or teaching towards the test. The deductive characteristic of this limited methodology does not allow for educative growth. It is almost as if one shaved a coconut to get to the pre-optioned price, as opposed to a process of cultivation of a garden with some coconut trees among others - not merely for its fruit but also for the anticipated excess surplus of other fruits, vegetables, and unknown possibilities. These unknown possibilities are only assumed through a "one-size-fits-all" approach, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) (PISA) testing. Educators assume that standardized testing is a good predictor of an inductive surplus of students' success. Some of these philosophical conclusions, I believe, identify two important conclusive points: 1) wrongly interpreted predictive qualities of too few observations to explain the phenomena, as in a "one-size-fits-all" approach, and 2) the experience of an individual observation should stand as unique to the observable, and any theories, constructs, or narratives created by people in human understanding may as well only be perceived as causal relations but not as necessarily true. After

reviewing a Deweyan approach to philosophy of education it is remarkable how Hume's 1740s approach to learning through experience resonates with Dewey's education philosophy of 1900s.

Question 2

Hume declared in 1739 that, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey him" (p. 174). How would he answer Socrates's claim that no one ever knowingly does wrong?

In the famous dialogue *Protagoras*, Socrates asserted that, "No one goes willingly toward the bad" (p. 124) nor ever knowingly does wrong. As an intellectual to whom knowledge was a virtue, and this virtue was an integral part of knowledge (*episteme*), Socrates believed that all reasonable decisions were based on the motivation of gain and benefit to the decision maker, however they may seem to others. He argued that even bad decisions, as seen by outsiders, originated with some calculated benefits, however short-lived. Miscalculation is possible and often occurs and could be comparable to the miscalculations of the size of objects seen from a distance. In this example, no one intends to commit error that may be harmful as a consequence, but at the same time, no one possesses the correct knowledge to make a totally error-free decision. This skill could be learned or taught, Socrates argues, and thus logically explains that virtue and knowledge could be acquired, therefore, the harmful effects could be remedied by knowledge and education.

Unlike Socrates, Hume argues, "that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will" (Norton et al., p.260). This stance is very anti-intellectual and a counterpoint to

the virtue of reason argued by Socrates. Hume delegates reason as doubtful, blind, inconstant, and deceitful to passions defined as "the internal impressions we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body or new perception of our mind" (Norton et al., p. 266). In addition, virtues as the basis for informed and *correct* decisions argued by Socrates, are rejected by Hume, who states that even, "demonstrative reasoning (math) never influences our actions, but only directs our judgement concerning causes and effects; which leads us to the second operation of the understanding" - prospects of pain and pleasure (p. 267). Hume believes that reason's role is simply that of assistance and not the originator in decision-making, and, "This is from the prospect of pain or pleasure that the aversion or propensity arises towards any object" (p. 267) through processes of cause and effect and experience. Since reason only assists with the connections required for causal affects, reason alone can never produce or prevent any action that is formed primarily by impulse of passion. As a consequence, Hume proclaims that, "Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (p. 268).

One of the greatest differences between the Socratic and Humean approach is the role of reason, virtue, and knowledge in the process of influencing motives of the will. What sets them both apart is the fundamental approach, in ancient and modern philosophy, to the combat between passion and reason. Socrates argues for reason and knowledge in decision-making, while Hume for passions by way of subservient reason's assistance. Hume uses reason as an instrument to figure out causation, which is the foundation of Hume's human understanding. Practically speaking of

Hume, human reason only enables the necessary connections needed for behavioral mechanisms or learning. At the same time, reason is part of the practicality of the process in which some decisions may be deemed by reason as unreasonable. Therefore, causation or experiences may be re-examined by this reasonable process. This perhaps could be learned but mostly experienced to ease or to facilitate the causation process. I believe that Hume's theory of behavior motivation or *action* as he defined it lies in his basic mechanical foundations. By this, I mean the very behavioral-like conditions of the mechanisms of how humans understand and behave, such as; causation, experience, motivation toward pleasure, and aversion from pain. His approach deems reason partly needed to sort out the unknowns or uncorrelated from the greater mill of causation. Hume's approach reminds me of a blank canvas of human mind or a computer without software, which only becomes something after some initially injected or experienced new data in order to make sense of undoubtedly chaotic streams of foreign and unrelated information. Since Hume rejects a priori construction of human mind, this approach leaves him no room to consider human reason in broader terms. Socrates, on the other hand, attempts to build a cognitive world with human reason as virtue (knowledge) at its center. He does not have to reject reason as secondary to human passion, since his theory is not based in the mechanical concepts of ideas, impressions, connections, or causality. The Socratic approach to lived experience is purely complementary to its influences on the cognitive abilities of human mind. It is reason and knowledge to which experience is complementary and often necessary. If lived experience is missing, which it may be, the equivalent value may be learned.

Hume rejects the assertion that morality is born from reason or that it is a product of reason alone. He continues that vice and immorality are not found in causes and effects but only in the sentiments of the observers. His discussions on demonstrative reasoning described the relations *of ideas* but not virtues or vices, which are not part of the process of resemblance, contiguity, or cause and effect. His anti-rationalist approach is best illustrated by his representation of argument in which passions, volition, and actions can be neither reasonable nor unreasonable. Since reason cannot provide action, morality then must be somehow connected to passions that generate actions. This is a very important assertion by Hume who disconnects reason from morality. Hume agrees that people will commit to some obligations by way of the simple mechanism that assumes a certain degree of reward (pleasure) or pain if action is not taken or taken to a certain expectation. He rejects Hobbesian societal obligation or action of some sort of intuitive thinking bound by the social covenant but agrees that some could do it to satisfy their appetites of passion or self-interest. This is not to say that Socrates and Hume are in concert here. Socrates confronts the idea of innate wrongdoing by human mind, and argues that such is purely done out of ignorance of facts. Hume, on the other hand, rejects the general consensus that people may be do-gooders by reason alone, and introduces self-interest as if in a contractual relationship that posits trust and predictability that could be rewarded or punished through pain and pleasure. In fact, I believe that Hume follows closely Newtonian principles by way of finding causes for everything that happens concerning human mind. Hume does not treat virtues as some sort of a priori instinct or understanding delivered and

implanted by God, and he explains them as a psychologist in need of finding cause to an effect.

Hume could certainly respond to Socrates that human emotions are contiguous and depend on signs of a sentiment sent from one to another (Norton et al., p. 238). In such a way, we do feel sentiments, not goodness described by Socrates. Since Hume defines sympathy as the propensity to act, all communication and clues from the outside world are just indications from others. Therefore, decisions and will bring action from passions based on the sentiments received. Reason, only sorts out the irregularities resulting from the differences between our sentiments and those exhibited or experienced by others. Simply, Humean process is very mechanical, it excludes a priori morality that Socrates believed was heavily vested in human behavior, and strictly depends on sentiments, or impressions' clues from others. If others are immoral and act out of viciousness, Humean process would copy this behavior, however contradictory, and provide action similar to that observed. Hume states that the greater concept of morality does not exist. We are merely copying each other. After reading *Treatise I and II*, what I believe is a difference, between Hume's and Socrates' positions on the fundamentals of human will, is to do with the mechanics of behavioral and cognitive process. To Hume, reason is secondary to passions, while to Socrates reason and virtue are the catalysts for everything that follows. I assert that Hume expects all human beings to resemble each other in all functions of life, including that of reason, therefore, the impressions of ideas shared between humans and the vivacity and feeling they produce vary in individuals based on their sentiments. This contradicts Socrates on the basis of an a priori concept of goodness and morality,

and it is doubtful that Socrates could accept such mechanics in the human will. What guides Socratic concepts in which "no one knowingly does anything wrong" is a greater argument of self-betterment. In Humean philosophy this a priori concept of ubiquity of morality is replaced by the mechanics of copied impressions, which, in turn, are agreed by the society as acceptable, since morality, as it is known to Socrates, does not exist in Hume. The dichotomy of the battle between reason and passions does not exist in Hume's writing, and no amount of learning or knowledge will change that, instead, the idea of the liveliness (vivacity) of the impressions create a sentiment that is morally neutral, a dramatic change to that of Socratic thinking. Lastly, I believe, that similarly to Socrates, Hume asserts that human understanding or will is subject to the concept of the prevalence of self-interest in Socratic understanding, and the pleasure principle in Hume's writing. Therefore, the greater morality is created by copying the impressions from people around, which become lived experiences in Humean understanding, therefore morally accepted as normative. In such way, virtue is created by the copying mechanism, impressions, resemblance, cause and effect, and greater reward of pleasure or penalty of pain, but not reason alone. I think Hume would reject the Socratic concept of a priori morality and goodness as if implanted by God or nature, and he would defend the Newtonian mechanism of causality in nature as the only way to derive truths about human understanding.

The teaching of ethics underlines exactly this idea, where an a priori concept of ethics is absent among students, and a new normative morality is built by experience, and more like a social policy. In this process, a student assumes that ethical behavior is an institutional policy that may or may not be applicable outside

of the classroom's frameworks. I believe, that students' ethical behavior varies depending on the level of experience, institutional proximity, and social adaptability of learned ethics.

The implications of Humean *Akratic* approach to the field of education could suggest that cheating, for example, may not be immoral or set within individual boundaries of morality but as a product of practice or a construct. For instance, new exposure to newly introduced "morality boundaries," where cheating is not allowed, creates new sets of parameters of morality to which an individual will adjust. The initial punishment for "cheating" becomes immoral as a contradiction to the prior experience, assuming cheating was prevalent and somehow acceptable in the past, and any consequence of past cheating in the newly constructed morality of "no cheating" cannot be held against the individual where it becomes itself illogical. After all, Hume insisted that, just because we have experienced five consecutive occurrences of white swans, it does not mean that the next swan to be seen will in fact be guaranteed to be white. This logic if applied to cheating instances or investigations among students assumes illogical assumptions that past experience will infer the future. It is easier to assume that cheating "morality" is socially constructed, and has nothing to do with an innate human sense of morality, at least in Humean meaning. According to Strom's (2008) study quoting Sommers and Satel (2005), "Dishonesty in school is merely a reflection of the broader erosion of ethical behavior which has become commonplace in societies that tend to support self-centeredness over concern for others" (p. 107). Another observation in the same study suggests that, "Teachers are partially responsible because they ignore evidence of character failure and choose not to hold students accountable" (p. 107). In light of Strom's study, the

established experience of felt lack of responsibility and accountability by the students reinforces the motivation to cheat as a socially "constructed" clue from the environment. An approach of originality through which a meaningful new project or essay on the information gathered by the writer in the form of observations, interviews, or experiments could generate a new "constructed" norm. Therefore, a whole set of newly "constructed" assignments based on a new set of guidelines could reset the expectation of the norm. Using oral critique, reflectivity, an ongoing revision process of improving the final product of a project, including its public presentation could break the cycle of plagiarism. This is to say that the entire nature of the assignments should reflect the new Bloom's-like taxonomy approach.

Question 3

What is Hume claiming in the famous *is-ought* passage of Book III, Part 1, Section I? Is he claiming that you cannot get an *ought* from an *is* (R. M. Hare calls this "Hume's Law") or is he claiming something altogether different, even contrary to this? How does his position relate to the statistical sampling debate in the field of education?

The famous passage representing the last paragraph of Book III, Part I, Section I, of Hume's *Treatise* has been analyzed and discussed by many who either find the Humean approach to human morality contradictory or completely consistent with [Hume's] "notions on the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding" (p. 301). In this short analysis, I argue that Hume attempts to discredit the doctrines and the dogmas of orthodox religious beliefs. What Hume says is:

In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always

remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, this necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it ... I shall presume to recommend it to the reader; and am persuaded, that this small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceived by reason. (p. 302)

A typical interpretation of this passage is that morals come from the *matters of fact* and any immoral act, such as a murder, is *reasoned* to be wrong. One can also infer that morals are not part of the *matters of fact*, and morality is simply arbitrary and found in the *relations of ideas*. Although this may sound utterly confusing and contradictory to most readers of Hume, I believe that Hume pragmatically delivers his skepticism towards the narrowness of human or societal “systems” of understanding. Hume attempts to demonstrate that the only principles or “systems” available to people are discovered by his non-codified principles of association: resemblance, contiguity, and causality. Most codified principles with which Hume did not agree are too

limiting for human free understanding and include among others: religious ethics’ “Ten Commandments,” the dualities or dichotomy of arguments from Descartes, and even Newtonian principles. Hume argues that the deductive qualities of the scientific method are too rigid, and bound already by an arbitrary limit, therefore unfree and not open enough to experiment. The skeptical approach to the scientific method, in Hume’s estimation, delivers unbounded possibilities, including the basic understanding of morality and perhaps - God. I believe, Hume hints at the possibility that the only reality that exists is one that is perceived by our senses, experiences, and causation. For instance, take for example saying that God exists equals a statement of fact or self-explanatory demonstration that the existence is true. Hume cannot demonstratively prove that God exists (for instance, $2+2=4$) but he insists, likely because of his critics, that the complex world that exists is a demonstrative fact on its own, fully observable and experienced in reality, therefore created by supreme intelligence or intellect, and most likely God. Hume’s calibration of this statement could be interpreted by the following: if God *is* believed to exist, and all signs point to intelligent design (reality of the world), therefore God *ought* to exist by habitual belief (religion) or the experience of the world. If experience is the only way to understand, and a concept of God may be experienced by habit, it is only natural for our senses to experience God. This does not demonstrate God’s existence by Hume’s method, instead, we only know particular impressions, beliefs, and causations of the idea of God or religion. In a similar way, a missing shade of color may be reproduced or even experienced by an individual by way of resemblance or habit, even if such shade of color does not exist. I believe that

Hume fully demonstrated his point here on (non)existence of God.

I make sense of Hume's position on morality from the perspective in which the moral code (virtues and vices) *ought* or *is* are bound within the *matters of fact*. Only experience, and not *a priori* knowledge can determine the understanding by way of habit and causality. This skeptical approach builds up understanding by not deducing from the established principles (for example, Catholic ethics) but by forming from bottom up *vis a vis* the Humean trivium (resemblance, contiguity, causality). Hume argues that we cannot prove the universal *a priori* morality, and he implies that only experience, or its lack, makes our own perception of belief. There is no set standard of morality among rational beings, thus a savage behavior elsewhere may be just as normative as attending church services in Scotland. The morality, as Hume sees it, is as fluid as the breadth of our experience with or without it. For instance, most would agree to call a patricidal murder an immoral act, but not many could see a parity of that act to a patricide between an oak tree and its sapling.

What I find contradictory is Hume's *Enquiry* position on belief in a divine judge and its sanctioned effects on morality (Selby-Bigge, 1996, p. 147). In *Enquiry*, Hume states that having the idea of the final judgment [religiously speaking] creates the impression of necessity, pain or pleasure, and certain fulfilling moral conduct. This naturally does not prove that God *is* and exists, but it insinuates posterior belief that God *ought* to exist (a contradiction).

I believe that Hume, through his systematic skeptical critique, attempts to discredit the doctrines and dogmas of orthodox religious belief. He cannot do it openly by proclaiming that God is dead, but he does it through a kitchen door - his lack of piety and clever attacks on theism.

For Hume, morality is a fully practical and experience-based affair that sanctions, conforms, or motivates behavior. In my opinion, this mechanical approach to morality creates an idea of program-like behavior, and generates a notion of a passive mind that only reacts to perceptions and impressions. Hume modifies Locke's idea of "tabula rasa," and Berkeley's conclusion of "to be is to be perceived," and formulates a skeptical platform in which "no ideas are innate". This assertion is monumental for Hume, and a foundation for behaviorism in the field of education. Therefore, all learning is experience-based. Human learning, for Hume, exists in a loop of exposure, experience, and habit. Although Hume did not write on education in particular, he did describe a Skinnerian theory of learning. It has no *a priori* construct, therefore, all that is known is simply reproduced, learned, and generated based on the senses and causal relations. A person can have an idea of an apple or a tree, but human understanding can also erroneously imagine (relate) a mermaid or a unicorn, that become habitually real yet do not exist. Hume presents a valid logical argument in which the existence of God could be comparable to that of the existence of a mermaid or a unicorn, and the only skeptical methodology to find the truth is the experience alone.

If Hume himself commits inferences from *is* to *ought* on several occasions and at the same time suggests that an *ought* cannot be derived from an *is*, could the key to decipher what Hume really meant be based on the argumentation and its moral or ethical acuteness? When combined with Hume's fork, the *ought-is* designation creates a problem in which there is a possibility of no moral knowledge. Morality is not self-demonstrative as it is not universal, but a morality could be experienced, yet questioned based on the individual

experience. If such possibility exists according to Hume, the *is-ought* statement creates a contradiction that threatens the validity of morality or ethics by implying subjective and arbitrary judgments. The logic of this argument rejects the argumentation of ethics as the key to this riddle.

The pragmatism of Hume seeing the idea about the idea, lies in the fact that ideas are not there to be discovered but to be used as tools of experience in order to understand the world. Collectively, ideas become social tools and entirely dependent upon people and their environment of which morality, ethics, or religion becomes a human creation. Since all ideas, according to Hume, are based on the real-world experience, a new reality of today's social media tools, such as, gathered information on trends, fashion, art, and meta-data "re-create" the perceived world. By eliminating objective knowledge, Hume attacks the permeated "objectivity" as the basis for traditional philosophical and scientific discourse and introduces a new creative approach. The experience-based approach, and not the universally held norms, are, according to Hume, the truest reflections of reality (human and nature centered but not superstitious or religious).

Overall, Hume is remarkably pragmatic, he relies on coherent accounts of human experience, he excludes the possibilities of erroneous turns, such as; the superstitions or unfounded connections "*oughts* from *is*," and builds

from ground up a new experimental method of human understanding that is based solely on the mechanical premise of the perceptions and human experiences to include his position on religion. The experience-based approach to education, in the postmodern sense of understanding, drives and exposes human-centered accounts of human experience, which may not be universal, and applies them to the greater understanding and developing of our educational curriculum. We teach and test ourselves to avoid *is* to *ought* errors through evidence-based research. While we rely on the statistical inferences of the future or sampled observations, our limited approach relies heavily on the Humean *ought to*, rather than *is*. By analyzing this third question, I cannot help but to stress the importance of a qualitative approach to educational research, where a single observation or a piece of evidence is analyzed for the qualities that are observable without committing the inferential "*ought*" of probabilities that tend to fit or diminish the "*is*". The "affinity of researchers" with certain kinds of people, designs, data, theories, concepts, or explanations (Norris, 1997) introduce biases, which are embedded in the exact process described by Hume. Consequently some biases, including "the sampling of times, places, events, people, issues, questions and the balance between the dramatic and the mundane," find their way into research as unavoidable and reflective of *is* to *ought* errors (p. 174).

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