

How Hume Became the New Hume: A Developmental Approach

James Hill

One assumption shared by both sides in the so-called ‘New Hume debate’ is that Hume has a single view of causality that he expounds—perhaps with different emphases—in all his discussions of the question. The aim of this paper is to question this assumption by exploring the developing relation between Hume’s theory of causality and his reception of Newtonian physics. It will be argued that while in the *Treatise* Hume shows a residual attachment to the mechanical paradigm, in the *Enquiry* he consciously and explicitly rejects mechanism and sides with Newtonianism. This change is demonstrated, among other things, by his now treating gravitation as a principle of nature no less fundamental than ‘the communication of motion by impulse’, and it is also the main reason for his abandoning the condition of spatial contiguity between cause and effect. Hume’s acceptance of Newtonian active powers brings with it a general agnosticism about the real nature of causal power, which the New Hume interpreters have drawn attention to—a development that is particularly evident in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. While the Hume of the *Treatise* is, roughly speaking, the Old Hume, I shall argue that the Hume of the *Enquiry* and the *Dialogues* has become the New Hume.