

Paul Russell

University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Butler's "Future State" & Hume's "Guide of Life"*

But it must be allowed just, to ... argue from such facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that part of the Divine government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it; and from what is present, to collect, what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.

Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion*

Tis not, therefore, reason, which is the guide of life, but custom. That alone determines the mind, in all instances, to suppose the future conformable to the past.

David Hume, *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*

It is widely held that although Hume addressed problems of religion in his later philosophical writings, his *Treatise* has little substantial or direct concern with these problems, much less anything of a systematic character on this subject¹. This general

* I would like to thank Bob Bunn for discussion and comments relating to this paper. I am particularly grateful to two anonymous referees for this journal for their enthusiastic, detailed and helpful suggestions. [Uaktualniona edycja tekstu, który pierwotnie ukazał się w *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 42 (2004), 425-448.]

¹ References to Hume's writings are to *A Treatise of Human Nature* [T], ed. by D.F. Norton & M.J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* [EU], ed. by T.L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000). I will also provide references to the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch

claim is taken to include Hume's famous discussion of probability and induction. In this paper I argue, contrary to this view, that Hume's contribution to this subject, as originally presented in Book One of the *Treatise*, is significantly motivated by irreligious objectives. A particular target of Hume's arguments in this context, I maintain, is Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion*².

In the *Analogy* Butler intends to persuade his readers of both the credibility and practical importance of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. The argument that he advances relies on probable reasoning and proceeds on the assumption that our past experience in this life serves as a reliable and effective guide for our expectations concerning a future state. In the relevant sections of the *Treatise* Hume aims to discredit this religious argument and the practical objectives associated with it. More specifically, Hume argues that it is **custom**, not reason, that is the foundation of all our beliefs about the future. Although custom serves as a reliable and effective guide for our ordinary inductive inferences, as they concern future events in **this life**, this is not the case with any of our (religious) inferences concerning a **future state**. Whatever else Hume may have been aiming at in the sections of the *Treatise* concerned with probability and induction, discrediting this general line of argument, as presented in Butler's *Analogy*, was a matter of considerable importance to him.

editions of the *Treatise* and *Enquiries*. Following the convention given in the Nortons' *Treatise* (and Beauchamp's *Enquiry*), I cite Book . Part . Section . Paragraph; followed by page references to the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch editions. Thus T,1.2.3.4/ 34: will indicate *Treatise* Bk.1, Pt.2, Sec.3, Para.4/ Selby-Bigge pg.34. References to the *Abstract* [TA] are to the two editions of the *Treatise* cited above (paragraph/page). References to the editors' annotations to the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* cite page numbers in the relevant text. Other references are to *A Letter from a Gentleman to his friend in Edinburgh* [LG], ed. by E.C. Mossner and J.V. Price (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967); *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* [ESY], rev. ed. by E.F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985); *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* [D], ed. by N. Kemp Smith, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1947); *The Letters of David Hume* [LET], 2 Vols., ed. by J.Y.T. Greig (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932).

² References will be to *The Works of Joseph Butler*, 2 Vols., ed. by S. Halifax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1849).

I: “Dr. Butler” and Hume’s “Castration” of the *Treatise*

Butler’s *Analogy* and Hume’s *Treatise* were published less than three years apart; the former in 1736 and the latter (i.e. Books I & II) in 1739. The period of time in which these two works appeared was one in which the philosophical controversy in Britain concerning “deism” reached a crescendo. According to Leslie Stephen, “the culminating point in the whole deist controversy” arrived with the publication in 1730 of Matthew Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as Creation*³. Tindal argues in this work that revealed religion is, at best, useless and redundant and, at worst, a corruption of (true) natural religion. The practice of true religion comes to nothing more than benevolence, love and friendship, all of which aim at human happiness. Just as there is no need for revelation to teach humankind our duties and obligations, so too moral practice does not require any support from the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. On the contrary, this doctrine is not only unnecessary, it relies on “servile motives” and presents God, not as merciful and benevolent, but as cruel and demonic⁴.

³ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation* (London, 1730). Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 Vols., 3rd ed. (1902; reprinted London: Harcourt, 1962), I,113. For a more recent perspective on the deism controversy at this time see Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. Chp. 33. Other useful accounts of the deist controversy at this time include Ernest Mossner, *Butler and the Age of Reason* (New York: Macmillan, 1936); Robert Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton and the Design Argument*, rev. ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), esp. Chp. 4.; and James Force, “The Newtonians and Deism”, in James Force and Richard Popkin, *Essays on the Context, Nature and Influence of Isaac Newton’s Theology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), 43-73.

⁴ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, 78, 125, 145-6, 341. Samuel Clarke was an especially prominent target of Tindal’s arguments in *Christianity as Old as Creation*. In the second part of Clarke’s influential *Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (1705) presents an elaborate critique of deist doctrines, and defends both revealed religion and the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. In the last chapter of *Christianity as Old as Creation* Tindal argues that Clarke’s own doctrines lead to “true deism”. On Clarke’s critique of deism see James Force, “Samuel Clarke’s Four

Tindal's book had an enormous impact and scores of replies were published in response to it⁵. Without doubt, however, the most acute and sophisticated response to Tindal's book came from Butler in the form of the *Analogy*. Contrary to Tindal, Butler argues that there is nothing incredible or unreasonable about revealed religion, either in terms of the content of its teaching or its manner of communication⁶. He is especially concerned to impress upon his readers the **practical** importance and interest that we all have in considering the question of our happiness or misery in a future state (Butler, Wks.I, 3,33,148,156,279). Indeed, this question concerning our existence in a future state, Butler says, is “the most important question which can possibly be

Categories of Deism”, in Richard Popkin, ed., *Scepticism in the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996), 53-74.

⁵ John Leland reports that Tindal's book “made a great noise” and many good answers were returned to it.” [Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, 3 Vols. (1757: reprinted New York & London: Garland, 1978), I, 122.] See also J.M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought*, 2 Vols. (London, 1936), II, 728. Robertson estimates that Tindal's work produced over one hundred and fifty replies. There was, moreover, an immediate and strong interest in the Tindal debate in Scotland. In 1731 Robert Wallace, an influential “Rankenian”, published *A Sermon Containing Some Remarks on Christianity as Old as Creation*, in which he criticized Tindal's doctrines. A reply to Wallace was given by William Dudgeon in *The Necessity of some of the Positive Institutions of Ch---ty Considered* (1731), which defends Tindal's views. Dudgeon was a Scottish freethinker, based at Coldstream, not far from Chirnside where Hume was living at this time. The year after this, in 1732, Dudgeon's writings and deistic doctrines led to a church prosecution, that was also based at Chirnside. The local minister involved was Hume's uncle (Rev. George Home). We may assume, therefore, that Hume likely felt the impact of the Tindal debate, in a direct and immediate way, while he was still in the early stages of writing the Treatise – long before he left for France in 1734. For more details on Dudgeon, and his relevance for Hume's philosophical development at this time, see my “Wishart, Baxter and Hume's Letter”, *Hume Studies*, 23 (1997), 245-76. (See also note 63 below.)

⁶ Although Butler's principal target in this work is Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation*, the deist doctrines of Toland, Collins and Shaftesbury are also targets of his reasoning. Butler's particular concern with Tindal may have been encouraged by the fact that Tindal refers to Butler (approvingly) in *Christianity as Old as Creation* (p.278) as a source of the doctrine that the law of nature is obvious to all rational beings.

asked”⁷. “As religion implies a future state”, he argues, “any presumption against such a state, is a presumption against religion.” (Butler, Wks. I, 32)

C.D. Broad describes Butler’s *Analogy* as “perhaps the ablest and finest argument for theism that exists”⁸. More recently, Terence Penelhum suggests that Butler’s philosophy of religion should be ranked “second in English only to that of Hume”⁹. Penelhum also notes, however, that for many years the *Analogy* has been neglected by philosophers, who generally pay much closer attention to Butler’s ethics. Indeed, according to Penelhum, “the *Analogy* now ranks as the greatest unread classic in philosophical theology”¹⁰. The situation was different in Butler’s own day, when the *Analogy* was better known and widely regarded as his most important work¹¹. Nevertheless, despite its considerable reputation and influence, Butler’s *Analogy* attracted very little in the way of critical attention or commentary from his own

⁷ Butler, Wks, I, 303 – the point is made in the opening sentence of Butler’s dissertation of personal identity, which was published with the *Analogy*, along with the dissertation on the nature of virtue. Butler’s emphasis on the practical, prudential importance of the doctrine of a future state strongly resembles Pascal’s line of reasoning in the wager argument, presented a century earlier. The resemblance between Pascal and Butler is mentioned by Stephen, *English Thought*, I, 260, and discussed at more length by Penelhum, *Butler*, 90-1.

⁸ Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1930), 5.

⁹ Penelhum, *Butler* (London: Routledge, 1985), vii.

¹⁰ Penelhum, *Butler* (London: Routledge, 1985), 4. One of Penelhum’s principal objectives in his important study of Butler’s philosophy is to “rehabilitate” Butler’s philosophy of religion as presented in the *Analogy*.

¹¹ Penelhum, *Butler*, 4. An article on “Butler” (by Andrew Kippis) in the *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1784), praises the *Analogy* as “one of the most masterly performances that ever appeared in the world. ...Some hints and remarks, on the argument from *Analogy*, in proof of religion, might occasionally have been thrown out before, but Dr. Butler was the first who considered it in a direct treatise, and brought it to such a state of perfection” (III, 101). See also Reid’s remarks in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), Esy. I, Chp. iv: “I know no author who has made a more happy use of this mode of reasoning [analogy] than Bishop Butler in his ‘*Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed*’” [Reprinted in *Philosophical Works*, ed. By W. Hamilton (Hildesheim: Olms, 1967), I. 237a.]

contemporaries¹². It may be argued, however, that Hume is an important exception to this

A widely accepted view concerning the importance of Butler's *Analogy* for Hume's thought is that it (perhaps) has a significant role to play in the *Dialogues*, and (certainly) plays an important role in the parts of the first *Enquiry* that concern religion (i.e.. Sections X and XI), but that it has little or no substantial importance for Hume's major concerns in the *Treatise*¹³. This is consistent, of course, with the fact that it is also widely accepted that **other** works by Butler are taken up in the *Treatise* – most notably, the *Dissertations on personal identity and virtue* and the *Fifteen Sermons*¹⁴. These other works are understood to account for the fact Hume specifically mentions Butler in his Introduction as among the “late philosophers in England, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing...” – a project that Hume's *Treatise* is also

¹² Although Stephen recognizes the philosophical quality of Butler's *Analogy* he suggests, nevertheless, that Butler was an “isolated” figure and that his work attracted little critical attention from his own contemporaries [*History of English Thought*, I, 237]. See also Robertson's similar observations: *The Dynamics of Religion*, 2nd ed. (London: Watts, 1926), 147: “In the eighteenth century Butler seems hardly to have been publicly discussed at all...”

¹³ References to these (several) claims are provided further below. A rare exception to all this is Charles Hendel, *Studies in the Philosophy of Human Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1925). Hendel suggests that the *Analogy* influenced Hume's views on probability in the *Treatise* and that Hume “was something of a **follower** of Butler” on this subject (pp.189-92; and cp. 411 on religion). I argue below that Hendel is right about the *Analogy* being an important influence on Hume's thinking in the *Treatise*, but seriously wrong in suggesting that Hume ought to be considered a “follower of Bishop Butler” on the subject of probability and induction (much less on religion).

¹⁴ As already noted (note 7 above), the two dissertations were published along with the *Analogy* in 1736. *Fifteen Sermons* was published ten years earlier in 1726. For evidence of the relevance of these works for the *Treatise* see the editors' annotations. According to the Ochtertyre papers, “between the years 1723 and 1740 nothing was in more request with the Edinburgh literati, both laical and clerical, than metaphysical disquisitions”, and Locke, Clarke, Butler and Berkeley are mentioned as the chief subjects for debate. See George Davie, “Berkeley's Impact on Scottish Philosophers”, reprinted in *A Passion for Ideas* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), 20.

engaged in¹⁵. It cannot be denied, however, that Hume had at least some knowledge of the *Analogy* by the time that he completed the first two books of the *Treatise*, since in Book II he alludes to Butler as “a late eminent philosopher” and refers to a distinction drawn in the *Analogy* between active and passive habits¹⁶. Nevertheless, with regard to Hume’s core concerns in the *Treatise*, including his views on the subject of probability and induction, the accepted view is that Butler’s *Analogy* is not of any obvious importance in this context¹⁷.

A number of claims have been made about the significance of the Butler-Hume relationship, especially as it concerns the *Analogy*, that are seriously misleading. According to Mossner, for example, Butler’s *Analogy* was “the one theological work of the century that Hume was to deem worthy of serious consideration and whose author was to be highly respected by him”¹⁸. The basis of this claim is that “the *Analogy*, though unnamed, is discernible in Cleanthes’ empirical arguments in Hume’s *Dialogues*”¹⁹. This effort to identify closely Butler and Cleanthes has, I think, been

¹⁵ T, Intro. 7 / xxi; the reference to Butler reappears in TA, 2 / 646. The other authors cited are Locke, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, and Hutcheson.

¹⁶ T, 2.3.5.5 / 424. The reference to Butler’s *Analogy* is to Wks. I, 83f (I,5,2). See the editors’ annotations T, p.527; and also John Wright, “Butler and Hume on habit and moral character”, in M.A. Stewart and John Wright, eds., *Hume and Hume’s Connexions* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 105f.

¹⁷ Locke’s role is generally given particular prominence, whereas Butler often goes unmentioned by most commentators. See, e.g., David Owen, “Hume’s doubts about probable reasoning: was Locke the target?”, in Stewart and Wright, eds., *Hume and Hume’s Connexions*, 140f. Owen approaches Hume’s concerns from an historical perspective and argues that Locke is the particular target of Hume’s arguments about probable reasoning and induction, but Butler is not mentioned at all. Butler’s *Analogy* is (briefly) discussed in Kenneth Winkler, “Hume’s Inductive Skepticism”, in M. Atherton, ed., *The Empiricists* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 189-90. Winkler makes several observations that are relevant to the argument of this paper.

¹⁸ Ernest Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 111.

¹⁹ Mossner, *Life*, 111n, and cp. 319. Mossner defends this view at more length in his paper “The Enigma of Hume”, *Mind*, 45 (1936), 334-49.

convincingly criticized by several scholars²⁰. The fundamental objection to identifying Butler with Cleanthes is that Cleanthes “devotes the main part of his discussion to the question of God’s existence, while Butler in the *Analogy* regards this question as decided and bases his argument on the teleological proof of God, without explicitly stating it.”²¹ Beyond this, Mossner’s claim also overlooks a number of other important “theological works of the century” that clearly received serious consideration from Hume. This includes (among others) Clarke’s *Discourse on the Being and Attributes of God*, a major target of Hume’s sceptical arguments not only in the *Dialogues* (pace “Demea”), but also in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries*. Related to these mistakes, Mossner also argues that in the *Treatise* Hume “was counting on... serious consideration of his philosophy as philosophy, rather than as religious controversy”²². Clearly this claim has a direct bearing on the relevance of Butler’s *Analogy* for Hume’s concerns in the *Treatise*. On Mossner’s account, when Hume published the *Treatise*, he carefully and self-consciously avoided any direct confrontation with religious arguments of the kind that Butler had already advanced in the *Analogy*.

The evidence that Mossner relies on to support his claim (i.e. that the *Treatise* contains little or nothing that relates to contemporary religious controversy) is based largely on a letter that Hume wrote to his close friend and mentor Lord Kames (Henry Home) in early December 1737. In this letter Hume expresses an interest in meeting with “Dr. Butler” and showing him his work. Hume also tells Kames in this letter that he is enclosing “some Reasonings concerning Miracles, which [he] once thought of

²⁰ See, e.g., Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton and the Design Argument*, Chp. 9; Jeffner, *Butler and Hume on Religion* (Stockholm: Bokforlag, 1966), 131f. Hurlbutt and Jeffner suggest some alternative (and more plausible) models for Cleanthes, such as George Cheyne and Colin Maclaurin. See also Elmer Sprague, “Hume, Henry More and the Design Argument”, *Hume Studies*, 14 (1988), 305f.

²¹ Jeffner, *Butler and Hume*, 132. Cp. C.D. Broad, “Bishop Butler as a Theologian”, reprinted in *Religion, Philosophy and Psychical Research* (London: Routledge, 1953), 202: “[Butler] is not arguing with atheists, but with Deists. He assumes that his opponents accept the view that the world is due to an intelligent author...” (p.202).

²² Mossner, *Life*, 113.

publishing with the rest [of the *Treatise*], but which [he is] afraid will give too much offence, even as the world is disposed at present.” Hume continues further below:

Your thoughts and mine agree with respect to Dr. Butler, and I would be glad to be introduced to him. I am at present castrating my work, that is, cutting off its nobler parts; that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible, before which, I could not pretend to put it in to the Doctor's hands. This is a piece of cowardice, for which I blame myself, though I believe that none of my friends will blame me. But I was resolved not to be an enthusiast in philosophy, while I was blaming other enthusiasms²³.

Kames provided Hume with a letter of introduction, but Butler was not in London when Hume visited. A few months before all this, sometime during April or May 1737, Kames had met with Butler and discussed the *Analogy* with him²⁴. This is indicative of the high opinion that Kames had of Butler's philosophy²⁵. As Mossner points out, Hume shared Kames's high opinion of Butler, so it is no surprise that he was “a little anxious to have the Doctor's opinion” of the work that he was preparing for publication [i.e. his draft of the *Treatise*]²⁶.

The conclusion that Mossner draws from this episode is that Hume “castrated” his work and removed most of its religious/irreligious content²⁷. Contrary to what

²³ LET, I, 24/ #6; dated 2 Dec. 1737.

²⁴ Ian Ross, *Lord Kames* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 35-6. At this time Butler was Clerk of the Closet to Queen Caroline. The following year he was appointed Bishop of Bristol, and in 1750 he was made Bishop of Durham.

²⁵ In his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh, 1751), 61, Kames refers to Butler as “a manly and acute writer”; and in his *Sketches of the History of Man*, rev. ed. (Basil: 1796), Vol. iv, 146, he refers to him as “a writer of the first rank”.

²⁶ LET, I, 25/ #7; dated 4 March 1737/8.

²⁷ Mossner's claim is anticipated in John Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature* (1932: reprint Archon, 1967), 282-3. Laird says that there is “comparatively little in the *Treatise* that could be regarded as a direct and intentional contribution to the theory of experimental theism.... When he came to write the first *Enquiry*, Hume obviously made up his mind that there was no longer any reason for the debilitating operation [i.e. the “castration”] performed upon the *Treatise*...” A view similar to this is also presented in Antony Flew, *Hume's Philosophy of Belief* (London: Routledge, 1961), Chp.1 (esp. p.6). Flew

Mossner suggests, however, the evidence provided by Hume's letter falls well short of showing that the *Treatise*, as published, lacks any significant religious interest or content. There is, indeed, weighty evidence that tells against this claim. All that we can conclude from Hume's 1737 letter to Kames is that he had, at this time, some early draft of his discussion of miracles and that **this** work was left out of the *Treatise* (although it likely evolved into Section X of the first *Enquiry*)²⁸. Everything else, however, is a matter of conjecture. For example, we do not know how many of the irreligious passages that later appeared in the *Enquiry*, but were not included in the *Treatise*, were specifically written for the earlier work or originally intended for it. Some of these passages may have been original “nobler parts” and others may not (we do not know). Nor do we know how the “castrated” draft of the *Treatise* that Hume planned to show to Butler compares with the final published version. Hume certainly had plenty of time, in the interval before publication, to get over his “piece of cowardice” and **restore** some/many/most passages that he planned to cut-off in December 1737. In the *Treatise*, as published in 1739, there are two entire sections of Book I devoted to the subjects of the immateriality of the soul and personal identity (1.4.5 and 6). In these sections Hume refutes various arguments purporting to establish that the soul is a simple, indivisible, identical (immaterial) substance. Butler's arguments on this subject, as presented in his dissertation on “Personal Identity”

argues that whereas the *Enquiry* contains “aggressive polemics” against theological doctrines of various kinds, there is “no hint at all” of this in the *Treatise*.

²⁸ It is not entirely accurate to claim that the *Treatise* was stripped of all polemics concerning miracles. See, e.g., Hume's (mocking) remarks concerning miracles in several passages of Part III of Book I. (See the citations provided further below.) Beyond this, it is not clear why Hume was particularly cautious about publishing his views on miracles. One possibility, however, is the sobering example of Thomas Woolston, the author of six *Discourses on Miracles* (1727-30). These works, which generated a great deal of attention and interest, called into question the resurrection of Christ and ridiculed many other miracles. This led on to a prosecution for blasphemy in 1729. Woolston was fined and, unable to pay his debt, he died in prison in 1733. For more details on this case see Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, I, 192f.

would certainly have been prominent among Hume's targets in this context²⁹. It is not true, therefore, that the *Treatise* (as published) lacks any irreligious content that could cause “offence” – since it includes **substantial** discussions that bear directly on arguments that Butler had advanced in the Analogy and the accompanying dissertation on personal identity³⁰.

What conclusions should we draw, then, about the significance of Hume's letter of December 1737? First, as already explained, it is a mistake to suppose that this letter proves that the *Treatise* lacks any significant religious/irreligious content. We know that this claim is false, since even a casual glance over the contents of the text reveals that there is a (substantial) attack on the “metaphysical arguments” for the immortality of the soul (i.e. of the very kind that Butler had already advanced). No less obvious to Hume's contemporaries was the fact that his critique of demonstrative reason -- presented in Part III of Book I -- directly discredits the argument *a priori*, as prominently defended by Samuel Clarke and his followers during the first half of the

²⁹ On the wider irreligious significance of Hume's argument concerning the soul and personal identity see my “Hume's *Treatise* and the Clarke-Collins Controversy”, *Hume Studies* 21 (1995), 95-115. In his discussion Hume also refers to “the moral arguments and those deriv'd from the analogy of nature”, which he describes (sardonically) as being “equally strong and convincing” (T, 1.4.5.35 / 250). Hume considers the arguments based on “the analogy of nature” in his essay “Of the Immortality of the Soul” (ESY, 590f). Flew argues that the material in this essay, “which is very obviously although never explicitly directed against the immortalist case made by Butler in the Analogy, could well have been one of those ‘nobler parts’ which had to be excised in order to fit the *Treatise* to be seen by that good Doctor's eyes.” [*David Hume: Philosopher of Moral Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 90. Cp. J.C.A. Gaskin, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1988), 189; who also suggests that this essay “was one of the parts of the *Treatise* which ... earlier [Hume] had decided not to publish for fear of a public outcry”.

³⁰ Among the various “charges” made against Hume in 1745 when he applied for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University was the charge that he denied the immateriality of the soul and, in consequence of this, he denies the immortality of the soul. See *Letter from a Gentleman*, 13-4, 18, 29-30. See also James Beattie, *An Essay on the Nature of Truth* (1770; reprint New York: Garland, 1983), 165, 263f, 494.

eighteenth century³¹. Many other similar sections and passages could be cited that indicate Hume's **systematic irreligious intentions** throughout the *Treatise*³². It follows from all this that we have no reason to assume that Hume's discussion of probability and induction is irrelevant to the subject of religion in general, or to Butler's *Analogy* in particular. On the contrary, we have strong reason to suppose, given Hume's wider irreligious intentions throughout the *Treatise*, that his discussion of probability and induction may well touch on topics of this character. Any adequate interpretation of Hume's discussion of these issues must bear this in mind.

It may be argued, in reply to this, that all that has been shown is that Hume certainly knew about Butler's *Analogy*, read it, and was able to absorb enough of it to make a few brief and passing references to it in the *Treatise*. Nevertheless, given the relatively short interval of time between the publication of these two works, it is not obvious that Hume had **sufficient** opportunity to formulate any **substantial** reply to the *Analogy*. Contrary to this view, however, Hume had plenty of opportunity to work out a response to Butler's *Analogy* before the *Treatise* was published. As Mossner points out, Hume would have heard about the *Analogy*, at the latest, as soon as he returned to England in September 1737³³. Assuming that Hume got hold of the

³¹ Early reviews of Hume's *Treatise* bear this out. See my "Skepticism and Natural Religion in Hume's *Treatise*", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988), 247-65.

³² On this see my papers "Hume's *Treatise* and Hobbes's *The Elements of Law*", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46 (1985), 51-64; "Skepticism and Natural Religion in Hume's *Treatise*" (cited above); "'Atheism' and the Title-Page of Hume's *Treatise*", *Hume Studies*, 14 (1988), 408-23; "Epigram, Pantheists and Freethought in Hume's *Treatise*", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54 (1993), 659-73; "Hume's *Treatise* and the Clarke-Collins Controversy" (cited above); "Clarke's 'Almighty Space' and Hume's *Treatise*", *Enlightenment and Dissent: Special Issue on Clarke*, ed. by J. Dybikowski, 16 (1997), 83-113; "Wishart, Baxter and Hume's Letter from a Gentleman" (cited above); "The Material World and Natural Religion in Hume's *Treatise*", *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie* (2003); "Traktat Hume'a I problem cnotliwego ateizmu", trans. M. Oleksy and T. Sieczkowski, *Nowa Krytyka* 21 (2008); and "Free Will and Irreligion in Hume's *Treatise*", in Donald Ainslie, ed., *Hume's Treatise: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). A full study on this subject is presented in: *The Riddle of Hume's Treatise* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

³³ Mossner, *Life*, 111.

Analogy no earlier than this, he still had well over a year to develop his thoughts on this subject before putting them into print³⁴. The question that we need to ask, therefore, is whether there is any evidence that Hume took this opportunity, when he was working on the *Treatise*, to respond directly to the core argument of the *Analogy* (i.e. using his reflections and observations on the subject of probability and induction)? To answer this question we need to examine carefully the specific arguments of both texts, beginning with Butler's *Analogy*.

II. Butler, Induction and a Future State

One of the central aims of the *Analogy*, as we have noted, is to show that there is nothing in the teachings of revealed religion, particularly as concerns the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, that is impossible or inconsistent with natural religion³⁵. On the contrary, our experience of God's moral government in this world serves to show that there is “a strong probability” that we shall be held accountable in a future state in the manner that we are taught through revelation. That is to say, in so far as God's moral government is visibly established in this world, it serves as a **guide** to tell us what we may reasonably expect in the next world (of which we have no experience).

Butler begins the *Analogy* by stating that he will rely on probable rather than demonstrative reasoning to establish “a really conclusive practical proof” of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments (Butler, Wks. I, 1,288; cp. I, 1vii,

³⁴ In general, it was not unusual in the eighteenth century for book-length replies to appear in print within a year or two of publication. Thomas Chubb's *Equity and Reasonableness of the Divine Conduct in Pardoning Sinners Upon their Repentance Exemplified... Occasioned by Dr. Butler's late Book, entitled, The Analogy of Religion* appeared in 1737, the year after the *Analogy* was published. Nor is it impossible that Hume was able to acquire a copy of the *Analogy* while he was still in France (e.g. his friend and correspondent Kames could have arranged for this to be done).

³⁵ Another related theme of the *Analogy* is to examine the credibility of the evidence for divine revelation (i.e. miracles, prophecy etc.).

282-3). The Introduction of the Analogy is largely devoted to providing a general characterization of the method of probable reasoning that Butler relies on. Butler observes that for human beings “**probability is the very guide of life**” – a phrase that Hume echoes in several different passages concerned with the issue of induction³⁶. In order to determine what we ought to expect in the future, we must rely on our past experience and reason by way of analogy.

For when we determine a thing to be probably true, suppose an event has or will come to pass, it is from the mind's remarking in it a likeness to some other event, which we have observed has come to pass... (Butler, Wks. I, 2)

Butler also makes clear, however, that it is not his “design to inquire further into the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability” (Butler, Wks. I, 4). It is enough for his purposes “to observe that this general way of arguing is evidently natural, just and conclusive” (Butler, Wks. I, 4). According to Butler, therefore, it is an inescapable fact of human life that we rely on probable reasoning for our everyday practical purposes, and the general reliability and importance of this form of reasoning is not in doubt.

When it comes to employing this method of reasoning to support the claims of the Christian Religion, Butler makes clear that there is one fundamental assumption that all probable reasoning rests upon: we must assume “that all things will continue as we experience they are, in all respects, except those in which we have reason to think they will be altered” (Butler, Wks. I, 14-5). In other words, we assume that “this course of nature, which comes within our view, is connected with somewhat, past, present, and future, beyond it” (Butler Wks. I, 136). It would be “infinitely unreasonable” to suppose that the course of nature is uninterrupted or discontinuous in respect of the order and regularities we observe. If this were the case, then clearly

³⁶ See TA, 4/ 647, 16 / 652; EU, 4.20 / 36. See also the editors' annotations to both the *Treatise* (p.567) and first *Enquiry* (p.227) – indicating Hume's debt to Butler in using this expression. Ian Hacking [*The Emergence of Probability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 11, 82-4] suggests that Butler's “celebrated aphorism” can be traced back to John Wilkins's *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (1675).

there would be no reliable, rational basis for **any** expectations we form on the basis of experience and analogy.

Butler's discussion emphasizes that his method of reasoning in the *Analogy* is based on the same principles that we employ in everyday life when we ask if the food we eat will preserve our lives or if the sun will rise tomorrow³⁷. There is, nevertheless, an important distinction to be drawn that Butler's discussion obscures. When we reason, by way of analogy, from what we have experience of to what we expect to happen in the future there are two quite different “futures” that may be concerned. Ordinary inductive reasoning concerns the future (**F**) that is taken to be continuous with the course of things in this world (e.g. the sun rising tomorrow, food nourishing the body etc.). Religious inductive reasoning, by contrast, must assume that a **future state (F*)** is also continuous with our experience in this world (**P**). That is to say, the ordinary course of nature, as we observe it, is assumed to be a reliable guide to base our expectations about a future life in a future state. It is the second principle that is crucial to Butler's method in the *Analogy*³⁸. This contrast can be illustrated as follows:

³⁷ Butler, *Wks.*, I, 2,4. Cp. Hobbes's discussion of prudential reasoning in *Human Nature*, Chp. 4, esp. sects 6-11; in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. by W. Molesworth, 11 Vols., (London, 1839-45), IV, 17-8. The example of day and night following each other appears in this passage. Hume uses this example at T, 1.3.11.2 / 124; LG, 22; EU, 4.2, 6.1n / 25-6, 56n; and at EU, 4.16 / 33-4 Hume uses the example of bread nourishing us. See also Tillotson “Wisdom of being Religious”, in *The Works of John Tillotson*, 7th edn. (London, 1714), where the example of sun rising appears (as in editors' annotations T, p. 460).

³⁸ In relation to this point see Penelhum, *Butler*, 96.

Past / **Future**

Ordinary Induction (*I*)

* Inference via **U** to /-----→ [F] Future in this world
(e.g. sun rise tomorrow)

[P] Past :

i.e. our experience and

observation of this world

* Inference via **U*** to /-----→ [F*] Future State
(e.g. reward in Heaven;
punishment in Hell)

Religious Induction (I)*

According to Butler's model, in ordinary induction we make inferences from **P** to **F** based on the assumption **U** that **F** is uniform or continuous with **P**. In religious induction we make inferences from **P** to **F*** based on the assumption **U*** that **F*** is uniform or continuous with **P**. Central to Butler's whole line of argument in the *Analogy* is the general supposition that **I** and **I*** are equally credible and reliable modes of reasoning and that if **U** is an acceptable principle of reasoning then so too is **U***. Granted that **I** is an effective and reliable mode of reasoning – “the guide of life” -- we

have no reason to question or doubt **I*** when it comes to forming expectations about our happiness or misery in **F***.

In the case of both ordinary and religious induction we observe certain regularities or patterns that enable us to form **beliefs** about the (unobserved) future (**F/F***). When we discover, for example, *x*'s and *y*'s are regularly experienced together (e.g. day follows night; food nourishes etc.) then we form an expectation about what will happen in the future on this basis. When we have experience of an *x*-type event it is reasonable to expect a *y*-type event to follow. In the *Analogy* Butler undertakes to use this method of reasoning to show that there is nothing incredible or improbable in the teachings of revealed religion with respect to the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. Since the deist accepts that there is a God who is the creator and moral governor of this world, it follows that if it can be shown that the “whole Christian scheme” is consistent with (i.e. similar to) patterns and arrangements of things that we **already observe in this world** (i.e. in **P**), then there is no basis for objecting to or doubting the larger scheme of things that is proposed to us by revealed religion – indeed, we ought to expect it to be true³⁹. If “this little scheme of human life” contains no difficulties that tell against the moral government of God, and “the much larger plan of things” that Scripture informs us of is consistent with this, then there is no conflict between them or difficulties for the latter that we do not find in the former⁴⁰.

The specific analogies that Butler relies on are fairly straightforward⁴¹. In the first place, he argues that there is no basis in experience to suppose that bodily death implies the destruction of the living agent and all his powers (Butler, *Wks.* I, 16-7, and *cp.* I, 137). On the contrary, death may remove a person or animal from our view, but this does not show that the individual has been deprived of all his living powers (Butler, *Wks.* I, 28-9). In the course of nature we observe “very great and astonishing

³⁹ See Butler, *Wks.* I, 9: “Let us then...”

⁴⁰ Butler claims to be following Origen in this analogical way of defending the particular doctrines of revelation: *Wks.* I,5. See also his conclusion to Part I: *Wks.* I,135f; and I,278.

⁴¹ A useful summary of these analogies can be found in C.D. Broad, “Bishop Butler as a Theologian”, reprinted in *Religion, Philosophy and Psychological Research*; see also Penelhum, *Butler*, Chp. 4.

changes... so great, that our existence in another state of life, of perception and action, will be but according to a method of providential conduct, the like to which has been already exercised even with regard to ourselves; according to a course of nature, the like to which, we have already gone through” (Butler, Wks. I, 17). The change of condition that we are told to expect between this world and the next is analogous to the sort of changes that we already observe in this world when we see a fetus become an adult or a caterpillar become a butterfly – there is, therefore, nothing impossible or incredible about these claims⁴².

On the assumption that there is life after death (i.e. life in a future state) we may ask if it is reasonable to expect that we will be rewarded or punished in the future for our conduct in this life? Butler maintains that the evidence of God’s moral government in this world suggests, by analogy, that this is highly probable. We observe in the constitution of this world that happiness and misery are generally the consequences of good or bad conduct.

A moral scheme of government then is visibly established, and, in some degree, carried into execution: and this, together with the essential tendencies of virtue and vice duly considered, naturally raise in us an apprehension, that it will be carried on farther towards perfection in a future state, and that every one shall there receive according to his deserts (Butler, Wks. I, 139).

Our relation to a future state in this life is also analogous to a state of trial and discipline in our childhood and adolescence as it relates to adulthood. We may expect, therefore, to view this life as one that is a preparation for the next, and treat it as “a school of discipline” designed for our improvement and moral development (Butler, Wks. I, 140). Our happiness or misery in a future state depends on how we choose to use the opportunities given to us in this life in much the same way that the choices and decisions of a child will, at a much later stage, affect the happiness and misery of the

⁴² As already explained, Butler’s argument for the probability of life after death based on analogy (as presented in Pt. 1, chp.1) is supplemented by his “metaphysical arguments” in his dissertation “Of personal identity”. Cp. Butler’s remarks at Wks. I, 308; where he relates continuity of self to our interest in “what is to come” in a “future life”.

adult (Butler, Wks. I, Pt.1, Chp.5). Clearly, then, the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is something that we have every reason to expect if we consider it on analogy with the present constitution of this world as we observe and experience it.

III. Hume's Inductive Scepticism and a Future State

In the *Abstract* of the *Treatise*, which was published in early 1740, Hume begins by observing that it is “a defect in the common systems of logic, that they are very copious when they explain the operations of the understanding in the forming of demonstrations, but are too concise when they treat of probability, and those other measures of evidence on which life and action entirely depend, and which are our guides even in most of our philosophical speculations”⁴³. He goes on to say that the author of the *Treatise* “seems to have been sensible of this defect in these philosophers [i.e. Locke, Malebranche etc.], and he has endeavoured as much as he can to supply it” (TA, 4/ 646-7). Although Hume does not mention Butler in this context, there is some evidence that Butler is among the thinkers he particularly has in mind, since he uses the phrase that probability “is the guide of life” both in this passage and in a later passage of the *Abstract* (TA, 16/ 652). This (striking) phrase comes straight from the pages of Butler's Introduction of the *Analogy* (Butler, Wks. I,3)⁴⁴.

Hume's remarks in the *Abstract* suggest that the “defect” he aims to “supply” is to provide an account of the foundations of probable reasoning⁴⁵. In taking up the

⁴³ In this context Hume refers to Leibniz as making a similar observation. Cp Leibniz, *Theodicy*, ed. by A. Farrer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), Prel. Diss. #28-31.

⁴⁴ As editors' annotations to the *Treatise* point out. (See note 36 above.)

⁴⁵ The question Hume proposes to answer in the *Enquiry* (EU, 4.14-15 / 32) is: “What is the foundation of all our reasonings and conclusions concerning that relation [cause and effect]?” Hume says that he provides a “negative answer” to this question, which is that “our conclusions from that experience [of cause and effect] are not founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding.”

search for the foundations of probability Hume sets out to provide something that Butler explicitly acknowledges in his Introduction to the *Analogy* that he does not provide.

It is not my design to inquire further into the nature, the foundations, and measure of probability ...This belongs to the subject of Logic; and is a part of that subject which has not yet been thoroughly considered ... (Butler, Wks. I, 4)

Butler makes clear, as we have noted, that despite this gap in the philosophical literature concerning probable reasoning, it is nevertheless still the case that “this general way of arguing is evidently natural, just and conclusive. For there is no man can make a question, but that the sun will rise to-morrow, and be seen, where it is seen at all, in the figure of a circle, and not in that of a square” (Butler, Wks. I, 4). In the *Treatise*, *A Letter from a Gentleman* and the *Enquiry* Hume makes the point, consistent with Butler’s observation, that no one **in practice** doubts that the sun will rise tomorrow (T, 1.3.11.2 / 124; LG,22; EU, 4.2, 6.1n / 25-6, 56n). However, this is not the issue that concerns Hume. The issue that he raises – and that Butler explicitly sets aside – is the question concerning the “foundation” of probable reasoning. Hume would have known, when he raised this issue, that Butler had highlighted the principle of the uniformity of nature as the basis of all his own reasoning concerning the (probable) existence of a future state of rewards and punishments.

What, then, is Hume’s position on this subject? Hume’s discussion of probable reasoning involves two important stages of argument. The first (negative) stage presents his “sceptical doubts” about **reason** considered as the foundation of inductive inference, and the second presents his (positive) “naturalist” account of these foundations. The problem of induction, as Hume presents it in 1.3.6, is the cornerstone of the first of these two stages of argument. According to Butler, all inductive reasoning rests on the assumption that the course of nature is uniform (i.e. on U or U*). The inferences that we make commit us, on his account, to a process of reasoning whereby we rely on the principle of uniformity as a “medium” or “step” to reach **beliefs** about what to expect in the future (i.e. from P to F or F*). Expressed more formally:

- (1) Past x -events have always been followed by y -events.
- (2) The future (**F/F***) will resemble the past (**P**).
- (3) If there is an x -event, then it will be followed by a y -event. [from 1 and 2]
- (4) There is an x -event. /
- (5) There will be a y -event in the future.

Premise 2 states the principle of uniformity (**U/U***). In the case of ordinary inductive inference we are concerned with events that will occur in the future in **this** world (e.g. y = the sun rising tomorrow). In the case of religious inductive inference we are concerned with events that will occur in the future in a **future state** (e.g. y = punishment in Hell for our sins). As already noted, Butler takes premise 2 (the uniformity principle) to refer to **U** and **U***, without differentiating between them. According to this account, all our beliefs and expectation concerning the future, as based on past experience, depend on premise 2 (otherwise our reasoning is unjustified). That is to say, on Butler's account, the principle of uniformity serves as a **bridge** in our reasoning, allowing us to draw conclusions about what we have not experienced on the basis of what we have experienced. This principle is presented as a link required in all chains of probable reasoning – whether we are concerned with ordinary or religious induction. Without it, no relevant **beliefs** would be generated since we would be unable to **reason** our way to them. Hume's sceptical argument shows that this bridge cannot bear the weight that Butler places on it.

Hume maintains that the proposition that “the course of nature continues always uniformly the same” is not founded on any arguments. Any argument supporting this proposition, he says, must be either demonstrative or probable in nature. It is evident that there are no demonstrative arguments to support this proposition since we can “at least conceive a change in the course of nature; which

sufficiently proves, that such a change is not absolutely impossible” (T, 1.3.6.5 / 89; cp EU, 4.18 / 35). If we are relying on a probable argument to show that there is “a resemblance between those objects of which we have had experience and those of which we have had none”, then this argument must itself be founded on experience. The difficulty here, however, is that all reasoning of this kind is itself “founded on the presumption of a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those, of which we have had none; and therefore ‘tis impossible this presumption can arise from probability” (T, 1.3.6.7 / 90). Hume returns to this point in the *Abstract*:

Nay, I will go further, and assert, that [Adam] could not so much as prove by any **probable** arguments, that the future must be conformable to the past. All probable arguments are built on the supposition that there is this conformity betwixt the future and the past, and therefore can never prove it. This conformity is a matter of fact, and if it must be proved, will admit of no proof but from experience. But our experience in the past can be a proof of nothing for the future, but upon the supposition, that there is a resemblance betwixt them. This therefore is a point, which can admit of no proof at all, and which we must take for granted without any proof. (TA, 12 / 651-2; cp. EU, 4.19-21 /35-8)

While it is an “easy step” for us to suppose the future will resemble the past, “reason would never, to all eternity, be able to make it” (TA,16 / 652). If **reason** were the foundation of our expectations would be unable to form **any** beliefs or expectations about the future course of events.

What relevance, if any, does Hume’s sceptical argument concerning the supposition that “the course of nature continues always uniformly the same” (T, 1.3.6.4 / 89) have for Butler’s argument in the *Analogy*? In respect of our interest and expectations concerning life in a future state, we find ourselves, according to Butler, placed “in the middle of a scheme”, whereby we must judge what lies beyond our view by what falls within it (Butler, Wks. I, 136; cp. 1-2,5, 15,30-2,127-8,163, 190, 277).

But it must be allowed just, to ... **argue** from such facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that part of the Divine government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it;

and from what is present, to collect, what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter. (Butler. Wks. I, 6 – my emphasis)

Hume's critique concerning the principle of the uniformity of nature highlights a **particular vulnerability** for this way of arguing. That is, Hume's analysis suggests a **double weakness** in religious inductive arguments concerning a future state. As we have noted, Butler needs to provide an argument not only for **U** but also for **U***. When Butler says “that the future must be conformable to the past” what he has in mind is that life in a future state must be relevantly similar to our life in this world (as we experience it) – otherwise our experience in this life cannot serve as a guide to frame our expectations about a life in a future state. The difficulty here is to provide some **argument** in support of this claim. Hume's sceptical challenge shows that not only are we unable to supply any rational foundations in support of **this** claim, we cannot even provide an argument to support the more mundane claim that the future **in this life** will resemble the past (e.g. as involved in ordinary inductive inferences concerning the sun rising, food nourishing us, etc.). In itself, therefore, Hume's sceptical critique concerning our assumption that “the future will resemble the past” draws sharp attention to a particular and distinct vulnerability in religious inductive arguments of the kind that Butler advances.

In reply to this, it may be asked why Hume did not target his scepticism directly against **U***, without challenging **U**? Surely it would better serve Hume's purposes, if his specific aim was to discredit religious induction, not to raise sceptical doubts about **all** induction. The general difficulty here is that Hume's sceptical attack on the principle of the uniformity of nature appears to lead to sceptical conclusions that are too sweeping for any narrow irreligious purposes. More specifically, his sceptical argument leads to the conclusion that **none** of our probable reasoning can be justified⁴⁶. In so far as **religious** inductive reasoning is considered at all, it is just one instance of this general sceptical problem. That is to say, granted that **U** lacks any rational justification there is no basis for any reasoning from **P** to **F** (or **F***). All inferences of this kind, Hume's

⁴⁶ Cp. D,136: “This species of scepticism is fatal to knowledge, not to religion...”

scepticism implies, are equally groundless and without any foundation in reason. So interpreted, Hume's final position on the subject of induction is that of extravagant scepticism, one that leaves us despairing of all efforts to reason on the basis of experience and observation (cp. T, 1.4.7.8 / 268-9). This profoundly sceptical conclusion – which is deeply at odds with common sense -- is presented as both entirely general in nature and wholly negative in character⁴⁷.

IV. Naturalism, Belief and a Future State

What we ought to expect, if Hume was aiming to discredit (Butler's defence of) the doctrine of a future state, is a **distinction** between ordinary and religious induction – showing that the latter is vulnerable or ineffective in a way that the former is not. As we have noted, Hume's sceptical argument concerning the principle of the uniformity of nature does not serve this purpose. It is his second stage of argument – the naturalist stage – that performs this function.

On the classical sceptical interpretation, Hume is presented as having the general aim of showing that none of our probable reasonings can be justified. His discussion is understood to terminate in this wholly negative conclusion. Throughout the twentieth century a variety of rejoinders have been advanced against the classical sceptical reading of Hume on this subject⁴⁸. Although these alternative interpretations

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Thomas Reid's remarks in his Dedication to *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764): “[The author of the *Treatise*] hath built a system of scepticism, which leaves no ground to believe any one thing rather than its contrary...” [*Philosophical Works*, I, 95.] See also Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977): “As far as the competition for degrees of reasonableness is concerned, all possible beliefs about the unobserved are tied for last place...” (p.54).

⁴⁸ The relevant secondary literature concerning sceptical and naturalistic (or non-sceptical) interpretations of Hume on this subject is vast. Among recent studies that provide a good overview of this debate, along with illuminating insights of their own, are: Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Chp. 4; Georges Dicker, *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 1998), Chp.3; Harold Noonan, *Hume on Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1999), 110-31; Kenneth Winkler, “Hume's Inductive Scepticism”, 183-212; and

– which we may broadly label as “naturalist” – vary a great deal in their content, there are a few points that are central to the case against the classical sceptical account. The principal objection is that the sceptical interpretation entirely overlooks Hume’s alternative account of the (natural) foundations of probable reasoning in the operations of the imagination. It is true that Hume reaches the “negative” conclusion that **reason** cannot be the foundation of our

inferences based on experience, but it is incorrect to suggest that he leaves matters there – much less that his only aim is to make this (negative) point. On the contrary, Hume also plainly aims to **describe** the detailed mechanisms at work that enable us to draw the sorts of inferences that human life entirely depends on. The mechanisms that he is concerned with are those that generate belief, and thereby engage our passions and guide our conduct. The human mind, Hume holds, **naturally and inescapably** forms beliefs about the future based on past experience (e.g. that the sun will rise tomorrow), and to this extent our inductive inferences are immune to sceptical doubts of the very kind that he presents (see, e.g., T, 1.4.1.7 / 183; 1.4.7.10-15 / 269-73).

The essential elements of Hume’s description of the mechanism involved in causal inference are very familiar⁴⁹. It is, Hume says, **custom**, not reason, “which is the guide of life” (TA, 16 / 652). Belief in the existence of an object, Hume maintains, is simply a matter of having a vivid or lively perception. This is what we find in the case of sensation, when we feel the **force** with which an impression strikes the mind (T, 1.3.7.7 / 628-9; TA, 21/ 653-4; EU, 5.11-12 / 48-50). The way in which beliefs concerning future events are produced is through the operation of the association of ideas. When we have experience of an impression of an object *x* that is contiguous and prior to

Peter Millican, “Hume’s Sceptical Doubts Concerning Induction”, in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*, P. Millican, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 106-73. See also the helpful “critical survey” provided by the editor at the end of *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*, sec.5. (Garrett’s contribution to this collection also includes an appendix that gives a particularly succinct and valuable account of his own interpretation: Chp.11, pp.332-4.)

⁴⁹ The works cited above (note 48) are helpful on this. There is a striking resemblance between Hume’s views on this subject and Hobbes’s account of “prudence” [see, e.g., *Human Nature*, Chp. 4].

another object y , and objects resembling x 's and y 's are regularly conjoined in this way, then we also discover that on the appearance of one the mind **naturally** moves to the lively idea of the other (T, 1.3.8.2 / 98-9). It is this association of ideas that makes our beliefs about future events possible. It is these features of the human imagination - not any process of reasoning - that enables the mind “to extend to the future our experience in the past” (TA, 21 / 654). Without these natural operations of the human mind (i.e. the effects of custom) no **beliefs** about future events would be produced in us (T, 1.3.6.2 / 87: “’Tis therefore by experience only...”).

Hume draws some basic distinctions in the *Treatise* that plainly indicate that he does not believe that all our inductive inferences are equally unjustified⁵⁰. He points out, for example, that philosophers distinguish “unphilosophical probability” from our reasoning based on the probability of chances and of causes. The latter forms of probability are “allow’d to be reasonable foundations of belief and opinion”, whereas the former “have not had the good fortune to obtain the same sanction” (T, 1.3.13.1 / 143). In the case of unphilosophical probability the operations of the imagination influence belief in ways that we cannot reflectively endorse. Hume describes several instances of this kind, but the most important are cases where we fail to “distinguish the accidental circumstances from the efficacious causes” (T, 1.3.13.11 / 149). To remedy this problem Hume suggests that we must “take notice of some general rules, by which we **ought to regulate our judgment** concerning causes and effects” (T, 1.3.13.11 / 149 – my emphasis). Hume devotes an entire section of the *Treatise* (1.3.15) to a description and discussion of these rules – which enables us to identify the **real** cause of an effect. (T, 1.3.15.2 / 173). According to Hume, therefore, there is a “logic” to the inductive inferences that we (naturally) make (T, 1.3.15.11 / 175).

In his discussion of the philosophical forms of probability (i.e. probability of chances and of causes: 1.3.11 and 12), Hume points out that, although the beliefs produced in these circumstances are “allow’d to be reasonable”, there is nevertheless

⁵⁰ On this see, e.g., Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment*, 78f; Noonan, *Hume on Knowledge*, 119f; and Millican, “Hume’s Sceptical Doubts Concerning Induction”, 162f.

an important distinction we make with regard to “the degrees of evidence” involved and the corresponding influence that this has on the degree of “doubt and uncertainty” we experience (T, 1.3.11.2 / 124; cp. LG,22; EU, 6.1 / 56n)⁵¹. Hume maintains that a person would “appear ridiculous, who wou’d say, that ‘tis only probable the sun will rise tomorrow, or that all men must dye; tho’ ‘tis plain we have no further assurance of these facts, than what experience affords us” (T, 1.3.11.2 / 124). In respect of our beliefs based on experience we must, he argues, distinguish “proofs from probabilities”.

By proofs, [I mean,] those arguments which are deriv’d from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty. By probability, that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty. (T, 1.3.11.2 / 124)

Consistent with this distinction, as explained in the *Treatise*, Hume points out in his *Letter from a Gentleman* that “a man must have lost all common sense” if he doubts that the sun will rise tomorrow (LG,22). In respect of ordinary induction of this kind, we have no uncertainty due to “contrary experiments” (T, 1.3.12.1-22 / 130-40; LG,22, EU, 6.4 / 57-9). It follows from this analysis that there are variable degrees of “moral evidence”, and a given inductive inference may be considered “strong” or “weak”, depending on the extent to which the experience it is based upon is “entirely consistent and uniform” or involves “contrary experiments that produce an imperfect belief” (T, 1.3.12.5-13 / 132-5; EU, 6.4 / 57).

According to the naturalist account, if we read Hume as a radical sceptic on this subject we are mistaking his starting point for his final destination. Hume begins by noting that reason cannot serve as the foundation for our inferences based on experience, but he moves on to show that the actual foundation of these inferences rests with the principles of association that facilitate the transition among our ideas and generate the conditions of belief on which human life entirely depends. Hume’s

⁵¹ In the *Enquiry* passage Hume specifically criticizes Locke for dividing “all arguments into demonstrable and probable. In this view, we must say, that it is only probable all men must die, or that the sun will rise to-morrow....” Hume’s alternative division between knowledge, proofs and probabilities can be found in other authors at this time. (See the editors’ annotations at T, p. 461, which refers to Andrew Ramsay.)

concern, therefore, is not so much to show that all probable reasoning lacks any “rational justification”, as it is to show that this form of reasoning depends on the activity and operations of the imagination. It is custom, not reason, that is the **foundation** of the inferences that we make and that serves as our “great guide in life”. The distinction that we make between reasonable and unreasonable inductive beliefs is one that itself rests on the natural foundations of custom. Clearly, then, Hume’s intentions are primarily constructive or positive in character, which is consistent with his general aim to make a contribution to the “science of man”⁵².

What is the relevance of Hume’s naturalistic account of the foundations of probable reasoning for religious inductive arguments of the kind advanced by Butler in the *Analogy*? Hume argues that there is a significant difference between religious and ordinary induction in respect of the way that these natural operations influence the mind and generate belief – and this difference is of **practical** consequence for us. He develops this point in **explicit** detail in *Treatise* 1.3.9, where he discusses the influence of resemblance and contiguity on belief. Hume points out that the “pious” and “studious” frequently express regret concerning “the negligence of the bulk of

⁵² “Naturalist” (non-sceptical) interpretations of the *Treatise*, as I have indicated, vary a great deal in the extent to which they present Hume as retaining any (strong) sceptical commitments. It is beyond the scope of this paper to adjudicate or settle this issue (since our concerns rest, more narrowly, with Hume’s irreligious aims and intentions on this subject in the *Treatise*). Nevertheless, briefly stated, I think that it is clear that Hume does not entirely abandon his strong sceptical (i.e. Pyrrhonian) commitments. From the perspective of “the intense view”, the sceptic cannot be refuted and reason “entirely subverts itself” (T, 1.4.7.7-8 / 267-9; TA, 26 / 657; EU, 12.21 / 159) On the other hand, Hume is equally clear that this is not a perspective that we can remain in. An excessive scepticism of this kind is (“most fortunately”) subverted by nature, and the sceptic “still continues to reason and believe, even tho’ he asserts, that he cannot defend his reason by reason” (T, 1.4.2.1, 1.4.7.8-15 / 187, 268-74; cp. EU, 12.22-23 / 158-60). There is, however, some practical value in Pyrrhonist reflections, according to Hume, in so far as they remind us of the “limits” and “weaknesses” of the human understanding. The (desirable) effect of this is that it encourages us to confine our speculations to “common life” and to avoid dogmatism (T, 1.4.7.12-15 / 270-4; LG,19; EU, 12.25-26 / 162-3; D, 133-40). These conclusions are entirely consistent with the distinction that Hume wants to draw in the *Treatise* between ordinary and religious induction, as described below.

mankind concerning their approaching condition” [i.e. in a future state]. A number of “eminent theologians”, he says, “have not scrupled to affirm, that tho’ the vulgar have no formal principles of infidelity, yet they are really infidels in their hearts, and have nothing like what we can call a belief of the eternal duration of their souls” (T, 1.3.9.13 / 113-4).

A future state is so far remov’d from our comprehension, and we have so obscure an idea of the manner, in which we shall exist after the dissolution of the body, that all the reasons we can invent, however strong in themselves, and however assisted by education, are never able with slow imaginations to surmount this difficulty, or bestow a sufficient authority and force on the idea. (T, 1.3.9.13 / 114)

Hume suggest that our “incredulity” in respect of this doctrine of a “future condition” is due more to “its want of resemblance to the present life, than to that deriv’d from its remoteness” (T, 1.3.9.13 / 114). This observation is consistent with his more general observations in 1.3.12 about the variable influence of analogy on belief.

Without some degree of resemblance, as well as union, ‘tis impossible there can be any reasoning: but as this resemblance admits of many different degrees, the reasoning becomes proportionably more or less firm and certain. An experiment loses of its force, when transferr’d to instances, which are not exactly resembling; tho’ ‘tis evident it may still retain as much as may be the foundation of probability, as long as there is a resemblance remaining. (T, 1.3.13.25 / 142; and cp. 1.3.13.8 / 147)

The implications of all this are applied by Hume to the specific case of arguments based on analogy as they relate to the doctrine of a future state. Any reasoning concerning a future state will suffer from a **lack of resemblance between this life and the next**, and this “entirely destroys belief” (T, 1.3.9.14 / 114).

Just as belief has causes of the general kind that Hume describes, so too it has its own effects. An important theme in *Treatise* 1.3.10 is that belief is required to influence the will and passions, which in turn may influence our conduct. Mere ideas or “idle fictions” have no **practical** influence on us (T, 1.3.10.2 / 119). In the case of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments the implication is clear. Since there are few if any “who believe in the immortality of the soul with a true establish’d

judgment”, and we can form only “a faint idea of our future condition”, this doctrine is of little or no practical consequence for us (T, 1.3.9.14 / 114-5). In particular, we continue to be more strongly influenced by considerations of “the pleasures and pains, the rewards and punishments of this life [than] with those of a future life” (T, 1.3.9.14 / 115)⁵³. In so far as some individuals claim to believe in the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, and to be governed by it, Hume’s account presents this as generally a matter of pretence.

These observations about the relevance of belief in a future state for Hume’s views about induction suggest a different way of understanding both the sceptical and naturalist aspects of his thought and the way in which they are related. Hume’s sceptical arguments are designed to show that reason cannot be the basis of our beliefs about future events. Any process of reasoning that is supposed to terminate in **beliefs** about the future must rely on the assumption of the uniformity of nature, but there are **no arguments** to support this assumption. We require, therefore, some alternative **explanation** of the way in which our beliefs about the future are actually produced. According to Hume, these beliefs are the product of the operations of the human imagination, through the effects of custom. It is this natural process by which our experience of the past generates beliefs about the future. The crucial question, however, is whether both ordinary and religious induction are equally well served by these natural foundations in custom? Hume’s answer to this question is unambiguously and explicitly negative.

Hume maintains that in respect of ordinary induction custom operates in a reliable and effective manner. He readily agrees with Butler that it is “morally certain” that the sun will rise tomorrow and that our experience gives us “proof” of this (T, 1.3.11.2 / 124; LG,22; EU, 4.20 / 36). Moreover, our degree of belief in future events of this ordinary kind reflects the degree of evidence that supports it, and consequently

⁵³ Cp. T, 3.2.5.14 / 525: “Men are always more concern’d about the present life than the future...” See also T, 2.3.7.3-9, 3.2.7.2 / 428-32, 535 where Hume discusses the general influence of contiguity/distance on the imagination in relation to the past, present and future, as well as the practical consequences of this.

our passions and conduct reflect our beliefs in practice. Hume is also clear that sceptical worries of the kind that he has raised concerning the absence of any arguments to support the principle of the uniformity of nature neither disrupt nor discredit these natural processes – since they do not depend on any reasoning through this “medium”. The natural relations involved are strong enough to support the transfer of vivacity to our ideas, which produces belief, engages our passions and guides our conduct. This is not, however, how we find things in the case of religious inductive arguments concerning a future state.

In the case of religious inductive arguments of the kind that Butler defends, the analogies are weak and the ideas involved are obscure⁵⁴. The immediate effect of this, according to Hume’s analysis, is that our ideas concerning a future state lack any force or vivacity, which constitutes weak belief and consequently has little influence over our conduct. It is this **whole** process – beginning with the causes of belief (i.e. custom), and proceeding on to the effects of belief on the passions and conduct – that concerns Hume. This critical analysis of the credibility and practical significance of religious inductive arguments is of obvious relevance for Butler’s principal aims in the *Analogy*. It was Butler’s aim to show, on the basis of our experience of this world, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments, and that **prudence** requires that we guide our conduct in this life with a view to our expectations of happiness or misery in the next (Butler, Wks. I, 3,156,279). Our actual practice shows, says Hume, that few if any people are sincerely convinced by arguments of this kind. More importantly, Hume provides a detailed account of the psychological mechanisms that generate our beliefs concerning the future, and this account serves to explain why religious arguments concerning the doctrine of a future state inevitably fail to persuade us or influence our

⁵⁴ It is important to note that Hume’s critique of Butler’s defence of the doctrine of a future state does not rely on the claim that the inferences involved are “improbable” or “unreasonable”. On the contrary, Hume’s argument makes the more modest (and subtle) point that Butler’s argument falls short of “a really conclusive practical proof” (Butler, Wks I, 288). Since it falls well short of this standard, it inevitably fails in its primary, practical objective. At best, Butler’s argument presents us with a weak probability, not a full, convincing proof.

conduct. The significance of this is that Butler's inductive argument is without practical force and effect. This conclusion entirely defeats Butler's most basic aim and purposes in writing the *Analogy*. Whatever else Hume was aiming to establish through his discussion of probable reason and induction in the *Treatise*, it is clear from the passages that we have examined, that one important objective was to discredit religious arguments of this general kind.

V. “Nobler Parts”, Irreligious Purposes and the Myth of “Castration”

Hume's discussion of induction and probability in the *Treatise*, I maintain, aims to discredit Butler's argument concerning the practical importance of the doctrine of a future state. These observations provide further evidence that the *Treatise* was not the subject of any process of “castration” if this is taken to mean that it is without any significant irreligious content or motivation. Moreover, as already indicated (in Section I above), this interpretation of Hume's intentions, as they concern probability and induction, is entirely consistent with a more general interpretation of the irreligious character of Hume's fundamental intentions **throughout** the *Treatise* (i.e. as hostile to the metaphysics and morals of Christian theology). The question that we must now consider is what significance this irreligious interpretation of Hume's arguments on probability and induction has for his discussion on these issues as presented in the *Enquiry*.

Along side the standard view that the *Treatise* has little direct or substantial concern with problems of religion, is the accompanying claim that the first *Enquiry* engages with these issues in a more serious and systematic way. From this perspective, we ought to expect that Hume's critique of Butler's doctrine of a future state appears in a bolder and more developed form in the *Enquiry* (i.e. consistent with Hume's general change of attitude towards problems of religion). When we glance over the text of the *Enquiry* it looks like this is exactly what we will get. A closer examination, however, reveals that this is not the case.

It is significant that the penultimate section of the *Enquiry* is titled “Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State”. This section was originally titled “Of the Practical Consequences of Natural Religion”⁵⁵. A number of commentators have observed that it is evident that in this section Hume has Butler’s *Analogy* prominently in mind⁵⁶. The irony about this, however, is that the title(s) that Hume employs are rather misleading about the actual **content** of his discussion. As Kemp Smith and others have pointed out, “providence is barely referred to, and the after life is touched on only by implication”⁵⁷. Most of Hume’s discussion in this section is devoted to the argument from design, which Hume (also) aims to discredit. Butler’s argument in the *Analogy*, as we have seen, **begins** from the assumption that the argument from design is entirely sound and convincing, and he proceeds to build on this to argue for the practical importance of the doctrine of a future state. (Butler Wks. I, 6, 134-5, 290)⁵⁸. In *Enquiry* XI Hume does an effective job of raising doubts about any confidence that Butler (and the deists) may have in supposing that we can infer God’s moral attributes of perfect justice and benevolence from our experience of this world⁵⁹. Nevertheless,

⁵⁵ Editor’s annotations EU, p. 254.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., *Beattie, Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (Edinburgh, 1770; reprinted New York: Garland, 1983) 115-20; T.H. Huxley, *Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 180f; Mossner, “The Enigma of Hume”, 341, and Mossner, “Religion of David Hume”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (1978), 656-7; Flew, *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief*, Chp.10; Penelhum, *David Hume; An Introduction to His Philosophical System*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992), 172; Penelhum, “Butler and Hume”, reprinted in *Themes in Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 245.

⁵⁷ Kemp Smith, *Introduction*, D, 51n.

⁵⁸ As already explained, contrary to the views of Mossner (see notes 19 and 21 above), Butler is not so much a prominent defender of the argument from design, as an exponent of this argument, which he uses to advance his own line of reasoning.

⁵⁹ See especially Hume’s “porch” argument at EU, 11.21-22 / 141-2; and cp. Butler, Wks. I, 128, 135-6, 277. For a helpful account of this see Penelhum, *David Hume; An Introduction*, 180f. See also Beryl Logan, “Aiding the Ascent of Reason by the Wings of Imagination”, *Hume Studies* 25 (1999), 193-205. Logan makes the point that the doctrine of a future state is discredited if God’s intelligence and benevolence are put in doubt (which is, of course, true). However, the specific argument against the doctrine of a future state that is advanced in the *Treatise* does not rely on this particular line of

this is a different concern from explaining why any **belief** that we form concerning a **future state** is inevitably **weak** and can have little **practical** influence over our conduct. This argument, with its practical and future-oriented concerns, simply does not surface in the context of *Enquiry* XI⁶⁰.

It is particularly ironic – given the “castration” myth surrounding the *Treatise* -- that it is in the *Treatise* and not the *Enquiry* that Hume presents his specific arguments against the practical importance of the doctrine of a future state. Hume’s criticisms of this doctrine in *Treatise* 1.3 are further supported, as already noted, by the accompanying set of arguments in *Treatise* 1.4.5-6, criticizing the “metaphysical arguments for the immortality of the soul” (T, 1.4.6.35 / 250). These sections of the *Treatise* are among those that were discarded when Hume “cast the first part of that work anew in the *Enquiry concerning human Understanding*”⁶¹. In respect of all **these** arguments, therefore, it is the *Enquiry* -- not the *Treatise* -- that has been “castrated”.

It would be a mistake to conclude from these observations that Hume’s discussion of probability and induction in the *Enquiry* is unrelated to his earlier effort to discredit Butler’s argument concerning the practical importance of belief in a future state. On the contrary, as we have noted, there are a number of evident signs in the text of the *Enquiry* of Hume’s specific interest in Butler’s argument (e.g. as manifest in Hume’s use of expressions and examples taken from the *Analogy*). More importantly, the sceptical argument concerning the principle of the uniformity of nature is presented in an even sharper form in the *Enquiry* (section IV), and Hume’s naturalist observations describing the influence of custom as the foundation of our ability to extend our experience of the past into the future also reappear (section V). Moreover,

reasoning, but challenges Butler’s reasoning directly on its own grounds (i.e. analogical reasoning from our experience of this life to a future state).

⁶⁰ It does reappear, however, at D, 219f, where Hume notes that the prospect of “infinite and eternal” rewards and punishments in fact fails to motivate human beings. Butler, as we have explained, is very clear that there is an important difference between the question of the being and attributes of God and the (practical importance of) doctrine of a future state (e.g. Wks. I, 30-32, 290f).

⁶¹ Hume, “My Own Life”, in LET, I, 3.

in the final section of the *Enquiry* (XII) Hume draws on his sceptical reflections regarding the “weaknesses” and “narrow reach” of the human understanding to encourage us to limit our investigations to matters of “common life”, and to abandon our speculations concerning “the origin of worlds, and the situation of nature, from and to eternity” (EU, 12.25 / 162). These epistemological constraints certainly apply to Butler’s project in the *Analogy*. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is only in the *Treatise* where Hume explains in any detail why arguments of the specific kind that Butler advances fail to produce any conviction and do not have any significant practical effect.

It is evident, from these observations, that in so far as the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* differ in respect of their irreligious content it is not because one and not the other contains irreligious themes. What differences exist concern only a **variation** in the particular irreligious arguments that are presented and advanced in these two works. Clearly the *Treatise* contains some “nobler parts” that are missing from the *Enquiry*. Hume was selective in **both** works; not only about the “manner” in which he presented his irreligious arguments, but also about their (irreligious) “matter”, as it regards the particular arguments that he chose to include or exclude. For our purposes, the important point is that one of Hume’s most potent irreligious arguments is presented in the form of his critique of Butler’s attempt in the *Analogy* to provide a “practical proof” of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. While this “nobler part” remains fully and securely attached to the *Treatise* it was radically reduced, if not entirely “cut-off”, from the *Enquiry*.

By way of conclusion, a couple of points should be noted about the irreligious interpretation of Hume’s intentions on the subject of probability and induction as presented above. First, although I have argued that the evidence strongly supports the view that Butler is a particularly obvious and prominent target of Hume’s arguments in this context, this claim is not itself essential to the irreligious interpretation. On the contrary, even if Hume never read a page of the *Analogy* until after the *Treatise* was published, it is still evident that he is attacking arguments of this general kind -- and

hence his arguments still **apply** to Butler's views on this subject⁶². Hume was well aware that Butler was not alone in claiming that the doctrine of a future state is both credible and of enormous practical importance to us, so there is no reason to suppose that Butler was his only target in this context. Apart from Pascal, there were many (near) contemporaries of Hume's who would also fall within the range of his critique of the doctrine of a future state, and this would include many of those who had formulated replies to Tindal⁶³.

A further point to be noted is that it is no part of the interpretation provided to claim that Hume's **only** concern -- or even his most prominent concern -- in regard to his discussion of probability and induction is the doctrine of a future state. Hume's aims and objectives on the subject of probable reason are not only diverse, they likely evolved and altered during the process of composing the *Treatise*. For example, along side his critique of the doctrine of a future state, Hume makes a number of other observations of a generally irreligious character. This includes his account of why people are liable to believe in testimony concerning miracles, when experience tells against such claims (T, 1.3.9.9, 1.3.9.12, 1.3.10.4, 1.3.13.5 / 110-11, 112-3, 120, 145).

⁶² Notice that even if we were to suppose, contrary to what I have argued, that Hume's discussion of probability and induction was written and completed before he read any of Butler's *Analogy*, Hume would still be well aware, when he published his *Treatise* in 1739, that his irreligious arguments in 1.3 collapse Butler's specific ambitions in the *Analogy*. The only way to avoid this conclusion is to claim that Hume did not read the *Analogy* until after the *Treatise* was published in 1739 -- and, even then, it would still be true that his arguments apply to Butler's work.

⁶³ Another early Scottish reply to Tindal came from George Turnbull, who was Robert Wallace's brother-in-law and (also) a member of the "Rankenians". Turnbull is now remembered primarily as Thomas Reid's teacher at Aberdeen. In 1732 Turnbull published *Christianity neither false nor useless*. His aim in this work, as stated in its subtitle, is to "vindicate Dr. Clarke's incomparable *Discourse* ...from the inconsistencies with which it is charged by the author of *Christianity as Old as Creation*". Turnbull was clearly well regarded at Edinburgh University, as they awarded him an honorary degree the same year (1732). It is significant that in this work Turnbull anticipates Butler's use of analogy and probabilities to defend the doctrine of a future state (pp. 8-10). This indicates that Hume was likely familiar with this general form of argument before he read Butler's *Analogy*. (As Kippis's remarks cited in note 11 above suggest, Butler's basic argument was not so much original, as particularly well stated.)

(This may have been part of a lengthier discussion of miracles that was eventually “cut-off” before publication.) Hume also discusses belief in historical evidence as it relates to books passed down to us over time, where his remarks clearly allude to unreliable features of the Bible (T, 1.3.8.8, 1.3.13.6 / 97-8, 146). In general, Hume’s whole discussion in *Treatise* 1.3 is **laced** with irreligious ridicule and irony. It is likely that Hume’s original interest in probability predates his reading of Butler. Locke’s views on this subject, for example, would almost certainly have attracted his attention early on. Locke’s discussion in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (see esp. IV, 15-16,18) is significantly concerned with the reliability of testimony and belief in miracles. It is entirely possible, therefore, that Hume’s earliest interest in the subject of probability originated, not with an irreligious interest in refuting the doctrine of a future state, but with an irreligious interest in refuting the doctrine concerning miracles. The point that matters, however, from the perspective of the irreligious interpretation of Hume’s intentions on this subject, is that Hume’s discussion of induction – concerning our beliefs about the future based on past experience -- is deeply and directly concerned with the claim (as defended by Butler) that the doctrine of a future state is both credible in itself and of great practical importance for us. Whatever else Hume aimed to do in this context, **discrediting** this religious doctrine was important to him.

Abstract: “Butler’s ‘Future State’ and Hume’s ‘Guide of Life’”

In this paper I argue that Hume’s famous discussion of probability and induction, as originally presented in the *Treatise*, is significantly motivated by irreligious objectives. A particular target of Hume’s arguments is Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion*. In the *Analogy* Butler intends to persuade his readers of both the credibility and practical importance of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. The

argument that he advances relies on probable reasoning and proceeds on the assumption that our past experience in this life serves as a reliable and effective guide for our expectations concerning a future state. In the relevant sections of the Treatise Hume aims to discredit this religious argument and the practical objectives associated with it.