Pouring New Wine Into Old Skin:  
Hume and the Early Wittgenstein on Induction and Causation

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This paper compares Hume's claims about induction and Causation (in both the Treatise and the Enquiry) to the prima facie similar treatment of these issues by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (esp. 6.3-6.3751 & 5.135-5.1363). The proposition that there are no grounds for believing that the sun will rise tomorrow appears in all three texts, and always does so within strongly anti-metaphysical frameworks. However there is much controversy regarding the exact nature of these frameworks and how they relate to the proposition in question.

In the case of the Wittgenstein, it is clear that the proposition is not meant to be simply epistemological, but also metaphysical: "There is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened. The only necessity that exists is logical necessity" (T 6.37). The trouble, however, is that the early Wittgenstein took most (if not all) of the propositions of the *Tractatus* to be nonsense. Moreover, there is much debate as to whether or not he took these nonsensical propositions to nevertheless show profound ineffable truths which cannot be said. Thus, the 'Old' reading of the *Tractatus* (G. E. M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker), has Wittgenstein 'trying to whistle' such ineffable metaphysical truths, 'The New Wittgenstein' (C. Diamond, J. Conant), by contrast, would have agreed with Ramsey that 'if you can't say it, you can't say it, and you can't whistle it either'. Just what he thought about induction, therefore hangs on whether or not he took the propositions in question to show us something of which we cannot speak.

In the case of Hume, there is a slightly different debate regarding whether was purely epistemological, or metaphysical as well. The 'Old' reading of Hume (B. Stroud, R. Woolhouse) took it that he holds a straightforward positivist 'regularity' theory of causation. On this reading, Hume makes a negative metaphysical claim about Causation: causal powers cannot be conceived and therefore do not exist. 'The New Hume' (E .Craig, G. Strawson, & J. Wright) makes no such metaphysical pronouncements. Instead, realising that it is useless to speculate about such things (though he believes that there must be a fact about the matter) he adopts a sceptical realist position according to which although reason cannot tell us whether or not Causation exists, we nevertheless take it for granted that there is more to causation than mere regularity. Thus the 'Old' Hume makes the same metaphysical claim as the 'Old' Wittgenstein, the big difference here being that until recently it was never thought that Hume might have regarded his own propositions to be nonsense. This new idea has been put forward by Rupert Read who takes Hume to be a 'New' Wittgensteinian: 'Hume is to some extent a positivist. And to some extent an ineffabilist - not a la New Hume, but rather in hinting that the philosophical worries are true, just unactionable. But in a way he really is Tractarian. In the *Treatise* -- the philosophy really is reduced to nothing. It's idle. In the *Enquiry* - he throws away what the New Humeans think he allows. And at the end, he must be committed to throwing the *Enquiry* away. Its sentences are empty'. The 'New Hume', on the other hand, portrays him as wishing to make no metaphysical pronouncements, but only epistemological ones, though it must be noted that these too would have been regarded as nonsensical by the early Wittgenstein.

The upshot of all this is that whether or not Hume was a proto-Wittgensteinian depends on whether the early Wittgenstein was a Humean, though of course whether or not Wittgenstein was truly Humean (i.e. true to Hume) in turn depends on whether Hume was a proto-Wittgensteinian. Other parallels within this context include questions raised by both philosophers concerning psychological justification, the will, human freedom, and ethics; the limited role of 'reason' in Hume vs. the importance of 'logic' in Wittgenstein; the sense in which 'metaphysical speculations are 'meaningless' and 'inconceivable' for Hume and 'nonsense' for Wittgenstein, the consequent relation of each philosopher to the logical positivists, and the pertinent question of whether any plausible reading of Hume and/or Wittgenstein leaves room for Blackburn's distinction between a causal 'nexus' and a causal 'straightjacket'.