

Hume Variations



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Hume! Yes, David Hume, that's who Jerry Fodor looks to for help in advancing our understanding of the mind. Fodor claims his *Treatise of Human Nature* as the foundational document of cognitive science: it launched the project of constructing an empirical psychology on the basis of a representational theory of mind. Going back to this work after more than 250 years we find that Hume is remarkably perceptive about the components and structure that a theory of mind requires. Careful study of the *Treatise* helps us to see what's amiss with much twentieth-century philosophy of mind, and to get on the right track. Hume says in the *Treatise* that his main project is to construct a theory of human nature and, in particular, a theory of the mind. "Hume Variations" examines his account of cognition and how it is grounded in his 'theory of ideas'. Fodor discusses such key topics as the distinction between 'simple' and 'complex' ideas, the thesis that an idea is some kind of picture, and the roles that 'association' and 'imagination' play in cognitive processes. He argues that the theory of ideas, as Hume develops it, is both historically and ideologically continuous with the representational theory of mind as it is now widely endorsed by cognitive scientists. This view of Hume is explicitly opposed to recent discussions by critics who hold that the theory of ideas is the Achilles heel of his philosophy and that he would surely have abandoned it if only he had read Wittgenstein carefully. You don't have to know much about Hume to enjoy this inventively argued, provocative, and stimulating defence of the representational theory of mind - which is looking increasingly hard to resist. *Lines Of Thought: Philosophy books don't need to be hundreds of pages long to make a substantial contribution to the subject. This new series presents original works by leading philosophers at an affordable price and a readable length. Series Editors include: Peter Ludlow (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), and Scott Sturgeon (Birkbeck College, London).*

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