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HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE

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BY

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Secretary, Professor R. A. Sampson, for allowing me to consult the Hume MSS. in its possession; and I should like to thank the Library Staff at King's College, Aberdeen—especially Miss M. S. Best, the sub-librarian—for finding, and (dare I add?) for dusting, so many books for me. My colleague, Professor A. S. Ferguson, and my friend, M. Étienne Gilson, have also helped me in many ways.

Mr. R. Metz's recent book on Hume (in Fromman's Klassiker der Philosophie, 1929) seemed to me so good that I had to put it away lest I should follow it too closely; and Mr. Metz's 'Bibliographie der Hume Literatur' (*Literarische Berichte*, Heft 15/16, Erfurt, Stenger, 1928) is, of course, invaluable. If I could not always agree with T. H. Green, Sir L. A. Selby-Bigge, Mr. N. K. Smith, Mr. Hendel and other interpreters of Hume, I hope I have learned from them all.

I had completed my book about a week before Mr. J. Y. T. Greig's lively biography *David Hume* appeared and I have chosen to leave the book unaltered, except for one or two footnotes. Mr. Greig's forthcoming edition of Hume's *Letters* will doubtless supersede Hill Burton's *Life*, and the other sources I have chiefly relied on; but his biography of Hume contains little documentary evidence bearing expressly upon Hume's philosophy.

J. L.

KING'S COLLEGE,
OLD ABERDEEN.
December, 1931

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

THE Clarendon Press editions (ed. Selby-Bigge) have been used both for the *Treatise* and for the *Enquiries*. A number standing by itself refers to the page n this edition of the *Treatise* (e.g. (n) indicates page n of that edition. Similarly (E. n) refers to page n of the *Enquiries*. The dates of the copies I consulted were *Treatise* 1888, *Enquiries* (2nd edition) 1902.

Green and Grose's edition is referred to as G. with the number of the volume. Thus (G. III, n) refers to page n of Vol. III—as it happens, to the Essays.

J. Hill Burton's *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, in two volumes, is referred to as B. with the volume and page.

G. Birkbeck Hill's *Letters of David Hume to William Strahan* is similarly referred to as H.

The references to Locke's *Essay* are to book, chapter and paragraph. Regarding Berkeley, P stands for the *Principles*—I.P. for the Introduction to that work—and the paragraph is cited. A. stands for Berkeley's *Alciphron* where the number of the dialogue and the paragraph are stated; T.V. for his *Theory of Vision*. The references to Hobbes are to Molesworth's edition of his *English Works*, volume and page being given. Regarding Malebranche, the references, unless otherwise stated, are to his *Recherche de la vérité*, book and chapter.

Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* is quoted as in Mr. Kaye's edition; Reid's works as in Hamilton's edition. In the quotations from Hutcheson, Hutcheson's plan of calling the two parts of his *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 'Treatise I' and 'Treatise II' respectively has been followed, the two parts of his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* being similarly designated as 'Treatise III' and 'Treatise IV'. (I have used the fourth edition, 1738, of the *Inquiry*, and the first edition, 1728, of the *Essay*.)

'Greig' (in certain footnotes) refers to Mr. J. Y. T. Greig's *David Hume*, 'Shaftesbury' to the third edition (1723) of the *Characteristicks*, 'Baxter' to A. Baxter, *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*, second ed., London, 1737.

HUME'S PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

§ I. Biographical

DAVID HUME—for so he preferred to spell the family name of Home—a great philosopher, a notable economist, and generally considered, for more than a century, a great historian, was born in Edinburgh on the 26th of April, O.S., 1711. His father, Joseph Home of the estate of Ninewells, in the parish of Chirnside, near Berwick (who died in Hume's infancy), belonged to the landed gentry, his ancestors having owned this estate for some generations. They regarded themselves as a branch of the family of the Earl of Home or Hume; but they were not rich. The philosopher's mother was a daughter [1] of Sir David Falconer (who, under the title of Lord Newton, had been a Lord of Session in the Courts at Edinburgh), and was described by her famous son (G. III. 1) as 'a woman of singular merit, who, though young and handsome, devoted herself entirely to the rearing and educating of her children'—that is to say, of John Home of Ninewells, the eldest, a sister whom Hume called Katty (B. I. 338) and David, the youngest. She is stated, perhaps apochryphally, to have said at some unspecified date that 'Oor Davie's a fine good-natured crater, but uncommon wake-minded'.[2]

In his own words, Hume 'passed through the ordinary course of education with success' (*ibid.*), and the name David Home, with the date 27th February 1723, is recorded in the books of

[1] And of Joseph Home's stepmother. Greig, p. 27.

[2] At some date Hume's brother is reported to have said: 'My brother Davie is a good enough sort of a man, but rather narrow minded' (*Supplement to the Life of David Hume, Esq.*, London, 1777, pp. 33 *sq.*).

Edinburgh University, as an 'intrant' into the Bejan or Greek Class, then conducted by Mr. W. Scott who had sixty-three pupils.[1] It is to be inferred that the freshman (or *bec jaune*) was, like many others, proficient enough to omit the Humanity (or Latin) Class, and the earlier part of the Greek Class in this Session (which began in the Autumn). It is also probable that he continued his studies for two years subsequently in the Semi (or Logic) Class, and in the Magistrand (or Natural Philosophy) Class. Hume's name, it is true, does not appear upon the roll of graduates (or elsewhere than in the above entry). We cannot infer, however, that he was plucked, or other than highly successful. For, in those days, many, and these not the worst, preferred *not* to graduate.[2]

In his 'Letter to a physician' (B. I. 31), Hume remarked that 'as our college education in Scotland, extending little further than the languages, ends commonly when we are about fourteen or fifteen years of age, I was after that left to my own choice in my reading, and found it incline me almost equally to books of reasoning and philosophy, and to poetry and the polite authors'. Hence in 1734 (the probable date of the letter) Hume ascribed his genuine advance in learning to libraries, not to the University; and this evidence, probable in itself, is incomparably better than the statement, made at the end of his life in the Advertisement to the definitive edition of his *Essays* (E. 2), that his *Treatise* (which he then formally disowned on account of its immaturity) was 'a work which the Author had projected before he left College, and which he wrote and published not long after', the more particularly as the second part of this statement was, to speak mildly, misleading. Nevertheless, even when full allowance is made for the circumstance that Edinburgh University, when Hume was a boy student there, was a much less stimulating place than it became later in the century, it seems clear that Hume might have obtained, and probably did obtain, an extensive if superficial and introductory acquaintance with philosophy, science and culture within the University walls; and it is noteworthy that Colin Maclaurin, the celebrated Newtonian, became colleague and successor to Mr. James Gregory [3] in the chair of

[1] Dalzel, *History of the University of Edinburgh*, Vol. II, p. 327.
[2] Cf. Greig, p. 58.
[3] Who, according to Reid (*Works*, Hamilton's ed., pp. 68 *sq.*), 'was the first professor of philosophy that taught the doctrines of Newton in a Scotch university' as superseding Cartesianism.

mathematics there during the year 1725, Sir Isaac Newton himself having written to the Provost of Edinburgh: 'I am ready (if you please to give me leave) to contribute twenty pounds *per annum* towards a provision for him, till Mr. Gregory's place become void, if I live so long.'[1]

In any case, we find Hume, at the age of sixteen, busy with philosophical composition. 'All the progress that I made', he then wrote to his friend Michael Ramsay, 'is but drawing the outlines, on loose bits of paper: here a hint of a passion; there a phenomenon in the mind accounted for: in another the alteration of these accounts. . . . Just now I am entirely confined to myself and library for diversion since we parted' (B. I. 13). His family thought of the law for him; but he, for his part, 'found an unsurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of philosophy and general learning; and while they fancied I was poring upon Voet and Vinnius, Cicero and Virgil were the authors which I was secretly devouring' (G. III. 2). And Cicero (or philosophy) soon took precedence of Virgil (or literary criticism).

Our evidence concerning this stage of Hume's development, apart from a scrap of correspondence dated 1732[2] in which he thanked Ramsay for his 'trouble about Baile',[3] another scrap (probably of the same period) in which he asked for 'Pelisson's History and the last volume of Rapin', and a later statement (B. I. 332) in which he spoke of burning 'an old manuscript book wrote before I was twenty, which contained, page after page, the gradual progress' of his thoughts about natural religion, is contained in the 'letter to a physician',[4] and is singularly complete. For in addressing this philosopher-physician—who may or may not have received the letter, and was almost certainly Dr. Cheyne, a mountain of a man from Aberdeen who had an extensive practice in London, was the author of works on philosophy and on fluxions, and in his account of 'the English malady' (1733) claimed to have explained 'the nature and causes of nervous distempers' on purely naturalistic lines with special reference to his own experience—Hume narrated the course of his mental as well as of his physical history with studied clearness.

He had, he said, 'fairly got the disease of the learned' (or the 'vapours') as a result of over-study, and, while coolly

[1] See p. vi of the Memoir prefixed to Maclaurin's *Account* of Newton's discoveries.
[2] MSS. R.S.E.
[3] Probably Bayle's *Dictionary*.
[4] Printed *in extenso* B. I. 30 *sqq.*

relating such physical symptoms as a ptyalism, a touch of scurvy, and a rapid change from raw-boned leanness to a corpulence impervious to riding and other strenuous exercise, was chiefly concerned about a recurrent spiritual lassitude, which seemed to him to be similar to the 'coldness and desertion of the spirit' of 'the French mystics' and of 'our fanatics here'. This malady had seriously interrupted the course of life he had planned for himself. He had seen very early that philosophy and criticism 'contained little more than endless disputes', had 'found a certain boldness of temper' growing within him until 'when I was about eighteen years of age, there seemed to be opened up to me a new scene of thought,[1] which transported me beyond measure, and made me, with an ardour natural to young men, throw up every other pleasure or business to apply entirely to it'. Yet, in a few months 'all my ardour [2] seemed in a moment to be extinguished'; and it was a full two years before Hume could adapt himself to the altered situation which presented itself to him in the following light:

'I found that the moral philosophy transmitted to us by antiquity laboured under the same inconvenience that has been found in their natural philosophy, of being entirely hypothetical and depending more upon invention than experience: every one consulted his fancy in erecting schemes of virtue and of happiness, without regarding human nature, upon which every moral conclusion must depend. This therefore I resolved to make my principal study, and the source from which I would derive every truth in criticism as well as morality. I believe it is a certain fact, that most of the philosophers who have gone before us, have been overthrown by the greatness of their genius, and that little more is required to make a man succeed in this study, than to throw off all prejudices either for his own opinions or for those of others. At least this is all I have to depend on for the truth of my reasonings, which I have multiplied to such a degree, that within these three years, I find I have scribbled many a quire of paper, in which there is nothing contained but my own inventions. This, with the reading most of the celebrated books in Latin, French and English, and acquiring the Italian, you may think a sufficient business for one in perfect health, and so it would had it been done to any purpose; but my disease was a cruel encumbrance on me. I found that I was not able to follow out any train of thought, by one continued stretch of view, but by repeated interruptions, and by refreshing

[1] In the language of the time Hume was an 'esprit fort'; see Preface to Heineccius, *Elementa Philosophiae*, 1730; and Baxter, II, 152 n.

[2] The classical 'exaggeratio animi', Cic., *Tusc. Dis.*, II, xxvi.

my eye from time to time upon other objects. Yet with this inconvenience I have collected the rude materials for many volumes: but in reducing these to words, when one must bring the idea he comprehended in gross, nearer to him, so as to contemplate its minutest parts, and keep it steadily in his eye, so as to copy these parts in order,—this I found impracticable for me, nor were my spirits equal to so severe an employment. Here lay my greatest calamity. I had no hopes of delivering my opinions with such elegance and neatness, as to draw to me the attention of the world, and I would rather live and die in obscurity than produce them maimed and imperfect.'

In view of this 'calamity',[1] Hume had decided, he said, to enter the office of 'a considerable trader in Bristol' in the hope that a change of occupation, and an active life, might dispel the vapours and enable him, before very long, to resume his philosophical labours with better prospects of 'a continued stretch of view'. He meant, apparently, to deliver the letter while *en route* to Bristol; and he did make his experimental entry into the trader's office. A few months of the life, however, sufficed, and, in his own words: 'I went over to France, with a view of prosecuting my studies in a country retreat; and I there laid that plan of life, which I have steadily and successfully pursued. I resolved to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contemptible, except the improvement of my talents in literature' (G. III. 2).

Hume's choice of a retreat in provincial France was doubtless determined in part by motives of economy combined with his desire to see something of the world (B. I. 38), but largely, we must suppose, by a sense of affinity with the French genius. As he wrote some eight years later (G. III. 159):

'The English are, perhaps, greater philosophers; the Italians better painters and musicians; the Romans were greater orators; But the French are the only people, except the Greeks, who have been at once philosophers, poets, orators, historians, painters, architects, sculptors and musicians. With regard to the stage they have excelled even the Greeks. And, in common life, they have, in a great measure, perfected that art, the most useful and agreeable of any, *l'Art de Vivre*, the art of society and conversation.'

[1] According to Mr. Greig, there may have been a girl in it—a Chirnside wench called Agnes Galbraith; and Mr. Greig, admittedly guessing, suggests that John Home 'kicked his brother out' (!), with a small supplement to the £40 a year which, according to Greig (p. 88), David possessed.

It is true that, at the time, as Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* (1734) and (a few years earlier) Fontenelle's *Éloge de Newton* testified, the current of philosophical ideas was rather from England to France than from France to England. Hume may even have regarded himself as an unknown but able emissary from the land of experimentalism to the home of a waning Cartesianism and decrepit scholasticism; but he must have expected, as the event proved, that residence in France would help the 'elegance and neatness' of the work he had planned and so largely written, and would diminish its insular quality.

Unfortunately, we know very little of this first visit to France. He went first to Rheims (au Peroquet verd) [1] but finally selected La Flèche in Anjou as the scene of his literary labours. There he spent over two years 'very agreeably' (G. III. 2) and 'enjoyed the advantages of leisure for study' (B. II. 100). Local tradition says that he lived in the small château of Yvandeau on the slopes of a coteau some two miles from the pleasant town.[2] And although Hume never mentioned the fact, it is scarcely credible that he did not remember, pretty frequently, that another great philosophical revolutionary, Descartes himself, had been educated at the Jesuit College of La Flèche.

In the cloisters of the College Hume discussed the subject of miracles with 'a Jesuit of some parts and learning' (B. I. 57), and we may reasonably conjecture that part of the conversation turned upon the Abbé Paris and the alleged miracles at his tomb—a subject that Hume studied carefully (E. 344 *sqq.*); but we do not know what other philosophical topics Hume discussed with the Jesuits. We can be pretty sure, however, that the general atmosphere of the College was strongly and progressively devoted to the defence of scholasticism against Cartesianism. For a time, it is true, the Jesuits had tolerated a certain sympathy with Descartes and with Malebranche, and even their prohibition of thirty Cartesian propositions at the fifteenth General Congregation may have been official rather than strictly personal.[3] In the eighteenth century, however, La Flèche seems to have been regarded by the Order as a sort of sanatorium for those who loved Malebranche's ideas too well. André, who later wrote Malebranche's biography,

[1] B. I. 56. [2] *La Flèche et ses environs*, p. 68 (La Flèche, 1912).
[3] G. Sortais, S. J., *Le cartésianisme chez les jésuites français au XVII^e^ et au XVIII^e^ siècle*, pp. 40 *sq.*

was sent there, under protest, in 1706 for a cure.[1] As he converted the P. de la Pilonière he was sent to Hesdin in Artois.[2] And the P. du Tertre, who, about the same time, annoyed the Préfet général des études at La Flèche by his Cartesianism, was banished in 1712 to the College at Compiègne.[3] In the *Gentleman's Magazine* of April, 1739, extracts were given from a work by the P. Bougeaut who was said to be 'now in confinement at La Flèche, for his Notion, in the first part of his Work, concerning Beasts having a Spiritual Soul'—a notion certainly not Cartesian, but decidedly heterodox.

Hume left France in 1737 and spent a considerable period n London (at the Rainbow Coffee-house, Lancaster Court) [4] in discussing and amending the *Treatise*, and in negotiating for its publication. He especially desired the opinion of Joseph Butler (not yet a Bishop) whose *Analogy* had been published in 1736; but the two did not meet. 'I am a little anxious', Hume wrote (B. I. 65), 'to have the Doctor's opinion. My own I dare not trust to; both because it concerns myself, and because it is so variable, that I know not how to fix it. Sometimes it elevates me above the clouds; at other times, it depresses me with doubts and fears; so that, whatever be my success, I cannot be entirely disappointed.'

Articles of agreement between Hume and his publisher for the publication of the first two volumes of the *Treatise of Human Nature* were signed on 26 September 1738 (Hume receiving £50), and the following notice appeared in the list of new books in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of January, 1739: '6. A Treatise of humane Nature. In 2 vols., 8vo. Printed for J. Noon. Pr. 10s.'[5] The book was very well printed on paper which, in the only copy I have seen, is still very white. The first volume contains 475 and the second 318 pages. The third volume, concerning Morals (of 310 pages, including the Appendix), was published by Thomas Longman in 1740. Its general appearance is very similar indeed to that of the first two. All the volumes (for Hume loved a mystery, and hated the obscurity of a first author's name) were published anonymously.[6]

His later statement that the book (G. III. 2) 'fell dead-born

[1] *ibid.*, p. 24. [2] *ibid.*, p. 28.
[3] *ibid.*, p. 44. [4] B. I. 65.
[5] Dr. Birkbeck Hill erroneously denied the existence of this entry (H. xx, n. 3).
[6] Such anonymity, however, was much less unusual then than now.

from the press' seems to have been a marked exaggeration, for in a letter to Hutcheson, written from Ninewells on 4 March 1740, we read:

'Since I saw you, I have been very busy in correcting and finishing that Discourse concerning Morals which you perus'd; and I flatter myself that the Alterations I have made have improv'd it very much both in point of Prudence and Philosophy. I shall set out for London in three weeks or a month with an Intention of publishing it. The Bookseller, who printed the first two volumes, is very willing to engage for this: and he tells me that the Sale of the first Volumes, though not very quick, yet it improves. I have no Acquaintance among these Folks, and very little Skill in making Bargains. There are two Favours therefore, I must ask of you, viz. to tell me what Copy-Money I may reasonably expect for one Edition of a thousand of this Volume, which will make a four shillings Book. And if you know any honest Man in this Trade, to send me a Letter of Recommendation to him that I may have the Choice of more than one Man to bargain with.'[1]

Again, twelve days later, he wrote to Hutcheson (B. I. 117 *sq.*): 'I must trouble you to write that letter you was so kind as to offer to Longman the bookseller. . . . I wait with some impatience for a second edition, principally on account of alterations I intend to make in my performance.' There was no second edition during Hume's lifetime; but the sequel to a still-born publication (including an Appendix referring to that publication) could hardly have been a negotiable asset.

The first of these letters contains references (B. I. 116) to a certain 'Mr. Smith' and also to a 'somewhat abusive' review of the *Treatise* which had appeared in the principal literary periodical of the day. This Mr. Smith was probably Adam Smith, then, although very young, completing his course under Hutcheson in Glasgow. If so, the letter indicates the beginning of a long and close friendship between the two

[1] MSS. R.S.E. This letter concludes with the statement: 'I have sent you the *Conclusion* as I have altered it, that you may see I desire to keep on good Terms even with the strictest and most rigid. You need not return this Copy, unless you point out any Passages which you think it proper for me to alter.' In the MSS. R.S.E. there is a copy of this 'Conclusion' (i.e. *Tr.* III, iii, Sect. 6) in very neat handwriting, very minute towards the close of a line, with a narrow margin apparently ruled in pencil, and curling y's, d's and g's. No other part of the manuscript of the *Treatise* is extant; but the retention of *any* part of the manuscript is peculiar, in view of the fact that Hume ruthlessly burned so many of his papers and manuscripts.

greatest men that Scotland produced in the eighteenth century. And the review in the *History of the Works of the Learned* (Nov. and Dec. 1739) may have had an important influence upon Hume's subsequent literary and philosophical development.

It was a very long review, the first instalment occupying 38 and the second 14 pages, both referring to the first volume and being, in accordance with the custom of the journal, a would-be synopsis with running comments. On the whole it was an unusually perfect example of misplaced superiority combined with semi-competent futility; for despite the length of the passages cited, it effectively concealed the substance of Hume's contentions.

The review concluded, it is true, with a handsome, if equivocal, tribute to 'incontestable marks of a great capacity, of a soaring genius, but young and not yet thoroughly practised' and compared Hume's performance to 'the *Juvenile* works of *Milton*, or the first Manner of a *Raphael* or other celebrated painter'. Its general tone, however, was insufferable. The reviewer appears to have been thoroughly irritated by Hume's confidential (and occasionally foppish) habit of writing in the first person. 'This work', he said (p. 357 n.), 'abounds throughout with *Egotisms*. The Author would scarcely use that Form of Speech more frequently, if he had written his own Memoirs'. 'I have remarked' (p. 393) 'that this Writer deals mightily in *Egotisms*: he is no less notable for Paradoxes . . . enough to stagger any Man who has not a strong Headpiece.' He was fond of accusing Hume, not merely, as he might have done with some justice, of faulty arrangement, but of indefensible obscurity. 'I have revolved this Sentence [1] in my Mind till I have quite tired myself but cannot, after all, find any Meaning in it. I do not mention this as a singular Instance of our Author's Inscrutability, for there are, to me innumerable in this Work of his' (p. 362 n.). 'This Axiom [2] is somewhat like a Conjurer's *Hocus-Pocus*: it works Wonders and is at every Turn repeated' (p. 365 n.). 'He assumes the Air of a Sphinx' (p. 374). And he seems to have considered any criticism of Locke or of Clarke as the most shameless effrontery. 'On all these Heads,[3] a Man, who has never had the Pleasure of reading Mr. Locke's incomparable Essay, will

[1] That what is absurd in fact must be absurd in idea.
[2] That what is distinguishable is separable.
[3] Memory, Association, etc.

peruse our Author with much less Disgust than those who have been used to the irresistible Reasoning and wonderful Perspicuity of that admirable Writer' (p. 359). 'Dr. Clarke and one John Lock, Esq., whom he particularly names, two of the most superficial Reasoners, were, as well as many others, so weak as to fancy . . .' (p. 377). 'How happy a Talent he has for surmounting those Difficulties, which have proved the *ne plus ultra* of many others' (p. 386). 'Poor Dr. Clarke . . . Shall all thy strong, thy clear and unanswerable Arguments, as so many of the best Judges have esteemed them, be now levelled with the Dust and trampled on with Abhorrence! This is indeed a lamentable Case; but such is the absolute Pleasure of our Author, and we must submit. Neither Locke, nor Clarke, nor the most venerable Names, shall usurp the place of Truth in his Affections' (p. 397).

Hume never wrote philosophy in the same style again. The spice of adventure and of excited self-communing disappeared from his pages; and, with greater art, his manner became less engaging.

Although Mr. Lytton Strachey's statement that 'had Hume died at the age of twenty-six, his real work in the world would have been done and his fame irrevocably established'[1] is clearly exaggerated as well as inaccurate in minor particulars, it is, I think, correct to affirm that none of Hume's later philosophical pieces, with the exception of two works on religion, was appreciably more, in substance, than a re-stating of the doctrines of the *Treatise*. Again, allowance being made for the circumstance that Hume wrote for a competence as well as for fame, and therefore was guided by the taste of the reading public[2] and by the opportunities of his career, it seems clear that all that he subsequently composed, not excepting the *History* and the discussions of religion, had obvious roots in his interests and his application during the period we have surveyed. Accordingly, I shall deal much more briefly with the rest of his literary labours, and, since we are here concerned with Hume as a writer and not with Hume as a man, I shall be almost curt concerning his other activities and distinctions.

[1] *Portraits in Miniature*, p. 142.

[2] Mr. Greig (p. 72) quotes from Ramsay of Ochtertyre (I. 195) the following: 'It is well known that between 1723 and 1740, nothing was in more request with the Edinburgh *literati*, clerical and laical, than metaphysical disquisitions.' Therefore, the *Treatise* itself was a bid for literary fame.

A slim volume of *Essays, Moral and Political,* was published in Edinburgh in 1741, followed by a second edition, and also by a second volume, in 1742. These essays, literary, philosophical, but, for the most part, dealing with political theory with conscious reference to Bolingbroke's organ *The Craftsman,* were largely, Hume declared (G. III. 41), 'wrote with a view of being published as weekly-papers'; and Hume said of them at the time (B. I. 143 *sq.*): 'They may prove like dung with marl, and bring forward the rest of my philosophy, which is of a more durable, though of a harder and more stubborn nature.' Hume, however, was constitutionally incapable of writing for the moment, and these essays, consequently (despite the affected style which he deliberately employed in some of them) had the promise of permanence. They were anonymous, but Hume gave his name to them in the edition of 1748.

Early in 1745 Hume had high hopes of obtaining the professorship of 'ethics and pneumatic philosophy' then about to become vacant in the University of Edinburgh, but, at the same time, accepted an invitation to reside with (and instruct) the Marquis of Annandale who had been 'charmed with something contained in his Essays' (B. I. 175). From the Marquis's house near St. Albans he wrote (B. I. 178): 'I am informed that such a popular clamour has been raised against me in Edinburgh, on account of scepticism, heterodoxy, and other hard names, which confound the ignorant, that my friends find some difficulty in working out the point of my professorship, which once appeared so easy.' And he lost the post. His residence for a year at St. Albans improved his pecuniary position by some hundreds of pounds (B. I. 203) but was otherwise vexatious. Some idea of the situation may be inferred from the circumstance that the Court of Chancery declared, in 1748, that the Marquis had been a lunatic since 12 December 1744.[1]

Hume's subsequent appointments were much more fortunate. In 1746 he accompanied General St. Clair, as secretary and judge-advocate, on the descent on the coast of Brittany at Port L'Orient; and—futile though the expedition was—welcomed the opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge of military affairs with a view to the 'historical projects' he then had formed (B. I. 221). Then, in 1748, he accompanied the General on a diplomatic mission to Turin, and made (B. I. 240) 'a sort of journal', somewhat detailed and some-

[1] H, xxi.

times vivid, of his journey to that place. It was at Turin that Francis Caulfield, first Earl of Charlemont, met him 'disguised in scarlet' and wearing his uniform 'like a grocer of the trained bands'.[1] 'His face', Caulfield wrote,[2] 'was broad and fat, his mouth wide, and without any other expression than that of imbecility. His eyes, vacant and spiritless, and the corpulence of his whole person was far better fitted to communicate the idea of a turtle-eating Alderman, than of a refined philosopher. His speech, in English, was rendered ridiculous by the broadest Scotch accent, and his French was, if possible, still more laughable; so that wisdom, most certainly, never disguised herself in so uncouth a garb.'

About this time Hume re-cast his *Treatise* into a form that might prove more readable and more palatable. What is now called the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* was published in 1748; its successor, the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, in 1751. These correspond, respectively, but with omissions, to Books I and III of the *Treatise*. A brief résumé of Book II, under the title 'A Dissertation on the Passions', was included among the *Four Dissertations* published in 1757, and Hume at one time intended to include (but did not) a dissertation entitled 'Some Considerations Previous to Geometry and Natural Philosophy' (B. I. 421) —i.e. an account of a part of the *Treatise*, Book I, almost entirely omitted from the *Enquiry*—in this volume of dissertations. Of the *Enquiries*, Hume said (E. 2): 'Henceforth the Author desires, that the following Pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles'; and he regarded the second *Enquiry* (into morals) as 'of all my writings, historical, political or literary, incomparably the best' (G. III. 4), although (H. 330) he may have entertained some private reservations concerning the *Dialogues*.

It is a debatable question whether an author is or is not the best judge of his own performance; but if Hume regretted the publication of the *Treatise*, posterity is profoundly grateful to him. It is, of course, absurd to maintain that the *Enquiries*

[1] F. Hardy, *Memoirs of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont*, I, 15 (2nd ed.). Hume's taste regarding civilian attire seems sometimes to have been flamboyant, for an eye-witness at a later date (see H. 86 n. 1) spoke of 'the philosopher's ponderous uncouth person equipped in a bright yellow coat spotted with black'. Doubtless, however, such finery was unusual with him. Boswell, near the time of Hume's death, described him as 'drest in a suit of grey cloth, with white metal buttons, and a kind of scratch wig' (Boswell, *Private Papers*, XII, 225–32). [2] *ibid.*

were merely a sordid and regrettable bid for literary fame. On the contrary, their publication shows that Hume was very much in earnest. Having failed, in vulgar phrase, to 'put it across', he tried again. 'By shortening and simplifying the questions', he wrote (B. I. 337): 'I really render them much more complete. *Addo dum minuo.* The philosophical principles are the same in both; but I was carried away by the heat of youth and invention to publish too precipitately —So vast an undertaking, planned before I was one-and-twenty, and composed before twenty-five, must necessarily be very defective. I have repented my haste a hundred, and a hundred times.' And, setting aside the questionable advantage of including the sections on Miracles and on Providence in the first *Enquiry*, it is undeniable that the later exposition, by its superior orderliness, and by the inclusion of explanations which, although, for the most part, they but amplified the Appendix to the *Treatise*, really did clarify Hume's thesis, is, to say the least, an invaluable commentary upon the earlier.

Nevertheless, the *Treatise* delights philosophers to a degree which the *Enquiries* can never rival. We could not endure the loss of the discussions of body, of the self, or even (I think) of geometry; and we would not miss the contagion of Hume's first ardour. In the earlier work, he scaled, or attempted to scale, peak after peak from the mere joy of climbing. In the later pieces he explained, with studied patience, that there was a practicable route not very far above the clouds. To be sure, the earlier adventure included some unessential ascents, and a few enterprises in which a dubious success, or a plain failure, seemed to justify the sneers of stay-at-home critics. A prudent, sensitive Hume might therefore reasonably ask to be judged by his more mature declarations. But the Hume we admire to-day is Hume the explorer; and therefore we regard the *Treatise* as his evidence in chief. The reviewers of 1752, no doubt, were of a different mind. In the *Monthly Review* of January of that year we read: 'The reputation this ingenious author has acquir'd as a fine and elegant writer, renders it unnecessary for us to say anything in his praise. We shall only observe in general that clearness and precision of ideas on abstracted and metaphysical subjects, and, at the same time, propriety, elegance and spirit, are seldom found united in any writings in a more eminent degree than in those of Mr. Hume.' A changed tone: but reviews pass, and great books abide.

In essentials, Hume ceased to write philosophy after he was forty; for, in the year 1751, a great part of the *Dialogues* existed in manuscript (B. I. 331 *sqq.*), and the *Natural History of Religion* (published in 1757) seems to have been written 'some years' before 1755 (B. I. 421). Indeed, this statement would be true even if we regarded economics as a branch of moral philosophy—as Hutcheson and Adam Smith, like other Scottish professors, did in their prelections in Glasgow. Hume's *Political Discourses*, which contain his economic essays, were published in 1752. They immediately gained him a very high continental reputation—which he retained—and translations into French [1] appeared in 1753 and in 1754 (B. I. 365).

In 1751 Hume and his sister, upon the marriage of their brother, set up house in Edinburgh, Hume having £50 a year, and 'near £100 in my pocket', his sister £30 a year, and both 'loving order and frugality' (B. I. 342 *sq.*). He was disappointed in an attempt to become Adam Smith's successor in the Chair of Logic in Glasgow—where Smith had become Professor of Moral Philosophy—but in 1752 was elected librarian of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh. This office, despite some friction, he retained until 1757. The salary was small; but his access to the resources of the library encouraged him to set to work at once upon his *History*, at which he laboured prodigiously during the next decade. Since his main interest in British history grew out of his earlier discussions of political theory (and particularly concerned the struggle between 'liberty' and 'prerogative') he began with the Stuart reigns, and, as Horne Tooke said, 'wrote his *History* as witches say their prayers—backwards'.[2] The successive instalments were *The History of Great Britain*, Vol. I (James I and Charles I), 1754; Vol. II (to the Revolution), 1756; *History of England under the House of Tudor*, 1759; and *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Accession of Henry VII*, 1761. With the publication of the last of these volumes, at the age of fifty, Hume's literary activity ceased, although he continued, with curious assiduity, to make minute corrections for the press. Requests from the booksellers (H. 54 *sq.*) and even from the Sovereign,[3] that he should continue his history were without effect; and

[1] Cf. Greig, pp. 257 *sq.*

[2] See H. xxix. n. 3.

[3] See Hume's letter to the Marquise de Barbantane printed in *Private Correspondence* (London, 1820), p. 261.

d'Alembert suggested in vain that he should write a history of religion and paint 'au naturel notre mère Ste Eglise'.[1]

During this decade of sedulous application to the *History*, Hume increased his fortune and consolidated his fame. Although he was disappointed with the first sales of the *History*, Dr. Birkbeck Hill has computed that he received, in all, £1,940 for the *House of Stuart* (H. 15; cf. Greig, p. 217). In the case of the *House of Tudor* Hume made a 'previous agreement' with Millar the bookseller for £1,400 (B. II. 61). His way of living altered correspondingly, although at a prudent distance. According to Dr. Carlyle[2]: 'As Mr. Hume's circumstances improved he enlarged his mode of living, and instead of the roasted hen and minced collops, and a bottle of punch, he gave both elegant dinners and suppers, and the best claret, and, which was best of all, he furnished the entertainment with the most instructive and pleasing conversation, for he assembled whosoever were most knowing and agreeable among either the laity or clergy. This he always did, but still more unsparingly when he became what he called rich. For innocent mirth and agreeable raillery I never knew his match.'[3] At a later date, Hume set up a chaise (B. II. 782).

He was the first citizen in the Scottish Republic of Letters —a Republic, moreover, which did not undervalue itself. 'Is it not strange', Hume wrote in 1757 (B. II. 28), 'that, at a time when we have lost our princes, our parliaments, our independent government—even the presence of our chief nobility: are unhappy, in our accent and pronunciation; speak a very corrupt dialect of the tongue we make use of —is it not strange, I say, that, in these circumstances, we should really be the people most distinguished for literature in Europe?' And Hume was the most distinguished of them all, being regarded as the equal of Lord Kames[4] in literary criticism, as greater than Adam Smith (at the time) in economics by reason of his *Political Discourses* and their continental reputation, and having inaugurated (with Robertson a few years behind him) a movement which led him to say (H. 155):

[1] *Letters of Eminent Persons*, etc., p. 218.

[2] *Autobiography*, pp. 275 *sq.*

[3] Carlyle also said (*ibid.*, p. 273): 'His conversation was truly irresistible, for while it was enlightened, it was naïve almost to puerility.'

[4] According to Ramsay of Ochtertyre, 'Lord Elibank, Lord Kames, and Mr. David Hume were considered as a literary triumvirate, from whose judgment, in matters of taste and composition, there lay no appeal' (I, 319).

'I believe this is the historical Age, and this the historical Nation.' Hume was Secretary of the Philosophical (later the Royal) Society of Edinburgh,[1] a first and leading member (though he never spoke in public) [2] of the Select Society—a self-constituted Scottish Academy which endeavoured to encourage Scottish trade and industry [3] in addition to its avowed object of 'promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland' [4]—and one of the earliest members of the more convivial Poker Club.

Although sensitive to the attacks of Whigs and of ecclesiastics—as his references to Hurd and Warburton's 'petulance and scurrility' (G. III. 5) or to Dr. John Brown's *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (B. II. 23) show—Hume steadily declined to reply, and, being a friend of the 'moderates' in the Scottish Church, bore with equanimity an attack upon himself and Sopho (Lord Kames), together with their printers, on the part of the 'zealots' or 'high-fliers', who, in 1756, with a Mr. George Anderson at their head, made a written overture for an inquiry into Hume's infidelity [5] at the next General Assembly. The sting of the Warburtonian attack on the *Natural History of Religion* lay in its tail; for the 'Remarks on Mr. David Hume's Essay' (1757) concluded with a reference to 'this adorer of Nature, this *last* hope of his declining family, gathered *to the dull of ancient days*

> 'Safe where no critics, no divines molest,
> Where wretched Toland, Tindal, Tillard rest.'

As for the Whigs, Hume 'dished' them by making the corrections in his *History* incline more and more towards the Tory side (B. II. 73 *sqq.*).

During the years that succeeded the completion of the

[1] Rae, *Life of Adam Smith*, p. 107; cf. Greig, p. 211.
[2] Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 279. [3] Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 107 *sqq.*
[4] Ritchie's *Life of Hume*, p. 99.
[5] There is no doubt that Hume had a life-long, or at least a very longstanding animus against religion, and that his feelings were too deep to be always apparent to himself. Mr. Greig notes that Chirnside was a rather 'fanatical' part of Berwickshire, and suggests by 'pure guess-work' that Hume's uncle, the Rev. George Home, minister of Chirnside, 'probably turned the batteries of wrath upon him every time they met' (p. 82). Mr. Greig also maintains against Professor Taylor (and, I think, correctly) that Hume's intimacy with the moderates, clerical and lay, in Edinburgh began 'in 1753 or thereabouts' (p. 163). On the affair in the General Assembly see Greig, pp. 220 *sqq.* and B. I. 424 *sqq.*

History, Hume, on the whole, bore success with dignity. He showed, indeed, a splenetic disposition towards the Whigs [1] and the English generally (H. 55 *sqq.*) ; he never could endure the zealots ; and when his enemies said that it was his invariable custom ' to fly out into a transport of passion and swearing ' [2] when Professor James Beattie's (a philosophical critic's) name was mentioned, it is likely enough that they were right (cf. H. 290). For Beattie and his kind were worth, very nearly, a damn. On the other hand, Hume's generous appreciation of Robertson (B. II. 32), of Adam Smith (B. II. 486) and of the rising star of Gibbon (B. II. 484) and his friendship with all who counted in letters prove that there was little that was small in the vanity which, because he could not conceal it, he habitually wore upon his sleeve. His unfortunate quarrel with Rousseau (B. II. 293-381) should now be regarded as an episode simply curious.

In this autumnal part of his career, Hume accompanied Lord Hertford, the British Ambassador, to Paris in 1763, and, in Hertford's absence, was *chargé d'affaires* at the British Embassy there for some months in 1765. Brougham, who examined the relevant documents, testified to the excellence of ' the philosopher's business-like talents and his capacity for affairs '.[3] Hume declined, however, to accompany Hertford to Ireland (as Secretary for Ireland) later in 1765 (B. II. 291). He did not want to ' speak in public ' or to ' drink and carouse with the Irish ' (*ibid.*). He also declined a ' genteel ' sinecure (*ibid.*), but accepted a life-pension of £400 a year. He was Under-Secretary of State (under General Conway, Hertford's brother) in London from 1767 to 1768, and, on losing the office, had his pension increased.

In Paris the ' treasure ' of some fifteen volumes of holograph memoirs of King James II almost tempted him to return to historical writing ; but not quite. For he wrote to Lord Hardwicke : ' I am so sick of all these Disputes and so full of Contempt towards all factious Judgements, and indeed towards the Prejudices of what is call'd the Public,

[1] From 1768 on, we are struck with two facts : Hume had become obsessed with John Wilkes and London radicals, and his voice has taken on a new tone of peevishness, which is both regrettable and unexpected in ' le bon David ' (Greig, p. 369).

[2] From a letter in the Beattie *MSS.*, Aberdeen.

[3] *Lives of Men of Letters and Science*, p. 225. Mr. Greig, however, after seeing Hume's dispatches, concludes that ' they show competence, but nothing more ' (p. 324).

that I repent heartily my ever having committed any thing to Print. Had I a Son I shou'd warn him as carefully against the dangerous allurements of Literature as K. James did his Son against those of Women; tho' if his inclination was as strong as mine in my Youth it is likely, that the warning wou'd be to as little Purpose in the one Case as it usually is in the other'.[1] The most interesting circumstance regarding Hume's sojourn in Paris, however, is the amazing furore he occasioned. Anglophile and deistic, Parisian literary society, of all ages and of both sexes, made him their idol. According to Charlemont: 'No lady's toilette was complete without Hume's attendance. At the Opera, his broad unmeaning face was usually seen entre deux jolis minois.'[2] According to Horace Walpole: 'Mr. Hume is fashion itself, although his French is almost as unintelligible as his English. . . . Mr. Hume, that is the Mode.'[3]

Surrounded by this adulation,[4] Hume, nevertheless, kept his head. 'I am determined', he said, 'to abandon the fine folks, before they abandon me' (B. II. 181). But he often thought of making France his permanent home, and he greatly valued the friendship of d'Alembert, Buffon, Diderot, Holbach, Helvétius, Turgot, Mme de Boufflers[5] and others with whom he afterwards corresponded, in many cases with great frequency. He left d'Alembert £200 in his will.

In the spring of 1775 Hume was 'struck with a disorder in his bowels' (G. III. 7) and came to accept it as mortal. Summoning an ostentatiously pagan fortitude, he calmly awaited the end; and he died on the 25th of August 1776, in the confident expectation that his mind would be extinguished when his body dissolved, if indeed the two were distinct. Near his end, as Adam Smith relates (G. III. 11), he amused himself with a playful addition to Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*.

[1] Published by R. Metz, *Englische Studien*, LXIII, 3, p. 376.
[2] Hardy, *op. cit.*, I, 234. [3] *Letters* (Toynbee), vi, 298, 295.
[4] Among the various translations of Hume's works into French it is interesting to note that the *History of the House of Stuart* was translated by the author of *Manon Lescaut* (1760).
[5] Marie—Charlotte—Hippolyte de Campet de Saujeon, Comtesse de Boufflers-Rouverel and 'L'Idole du Temple', i.e. the reigning favourite, for very many years, of the Prince de Conti at his house the 'Temple'. The reader who is curious concerning Hume's 'friendship' with this lady should consult Mr. Greig, Chapters XIX, XXIII and XXIV.

' "I could not well imagine," said he, "what excuse I could make to Charon in order to obtain a little delay. I have done every thing of consequence which I ever meant to do; and I could at no time expect to leave my relations and friends in a better situation than that in which I am now likely to leave them: I, therefore, have all reason to die contented." He then diverted himself with inventing several jocular excuses, which he supposed he might make to Charon, and with imagining the very surly answers which it might suit the character of Charon to return to them. "Upon further consideration," said he, "I thought I might say to him, Good Charon, I have been correcting my works for a new edition. Allow me a little time, that I may see how the Public receives the alterations." But Charon would answer, "When you have seen the effect of these, you will be for making other alterations. There will be no end of such excuses; so, honest friend, please step into the boat." But I might still urge, "Have a little patience, good Charon: I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the Public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition." But Charon would then lose all temper and decency. "You loitering rogue, that will not happen these many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instant, you lazy loitering rogue." '

In an odd and anonymous *Supplement to the Life of David Hume, Esq.* (London, 1777) it is recorded that a mob flocked round the grave—which was promptly railed in (pp. 45 *sq.*)—and that ' after his interment, two trusty persons watched the grave for about eight nights. The watch was set by eight at night; at which time a pistol was fired, and so continued to be every hour till daylight. Candles in a lanthorn were placed upon the grave where they burned all night ' (p. 46). In short, the populace of Edinburgh expected a sign from heaven at the place where the notorious infidel was laid. Instead, in due time, they were to perceive a rather ostentatious dome, designed by Robert Adam, in the new cemetery on the Calton Crags, for which Hume had provided by his will.

Contrary to the desires of his friends, including Strahan his publisher (H. 356), Hume's essays on ' Suicide ' and on ' The Immortality of the Soul ' were published after his death (G. III. 69). (They had been printed, at an earlier date, for the volume of dissertations, but had been suppressed—although Wilkes (B. II. 202) was for some time in possession of a copy.) The *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* were published in 1779 by Hume's nephew David (later Baron) Hume, as enjoined by his uncle's will, both Adam Smith and Strahan (H. 348, 362)

having declined the task. These *Dialogues* raised much less outcry than Smith's account of his friend's last hours. In *A Letter to Adam Smith, LL.D., on the Life, Death, and Philosophy of David Hume, Esq., by one of the People called Christians*, Dr. George Horne, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and afterwards Bishop of Norwich, wrote: 'You would persuade us by the example of David Hume Esq. that atheism is the only cordial for low spirits and the proper antidote against the fear of death.' [1] And this sentiment was very general. Hume's name continued, indeed, to be anathema to many of the clergy. His writings, according to Archbishop Magee, were 'standing memorials to a heart as wicked and a head as weak as ever pretended to the character of philosopher and moralist'.[2]

§ II. The Design of the *Treatise*

The 'Letter to a physician' clearly shows that the 'new scene of thought' which so 'transported' Hume was his discovery of the resources of the inductive, experimental or Newtonian method in the entire domain of human nature. His rejection of 'hypotheses' (i.e. of scholastic occult qualities) and of 'invention' (i.e. of what Maclaurin later [3] called the 'philosophical romance' of Descartes) had no other meaning, and was the constant theme of contemporary Newtonian writers (cf. e.g. the Introduction to Pemberton's *View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, London, 1728). Hume meant, in short, to become the Newton of the Human Mind. Accordingly the sub-title of his *Treatise* was 'An attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects',[4] the term 'moral' being understood in the wide sense in which

[1] Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 312. [2] Brougham, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
[3] *Account*, 3rd ed., p. 66.
[4] Cf. Shaftesbury, I, 297: 'The Study of human Affection cannot fail of leading me towards the Knowledg of human Nature, and of *My-self*. This is the Philosophy, which, by Nature, has the Pre-eminence above all other Science or Knowledg. . . . It has not its Name, as other Philosophys, from the mere Subtlety and Nicety of the Speculation; but, by way of Excellence, from its being superior to all other Speculations; from its presiding over all other Sciences and Occupations; teaching the Measure of each, and assigning the just Value of every thing in Life. By this Science Religion it-self is judg'd. . . .' And also Hobbes (III, xi) as well as his *Opera Latina*, I, Ad Lectorem 'Mentis ergo tuae et totius mundi filia Philosophia in te ipso est; nondum fortasse figurata, sed genitori mundo qualis erat in principio informi similis'.

Hume later (G. III. 244) spoke of 'moral causes', i.e. 'all circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us'. Hume further explained, in the 'Advertisement' to Books I and II, that 'the subjects of the *understanding* and *passions* make a compleat chain of reasoning by themselves', but that if he had 'the good fortune to meet with success' he would 'proceed to the examination of *morals*, *politics* and *criticism*; which will compleat this *Treatise of Human Nature*'.

He began his Introduction to the work by pointing out (in a phrase partly borrowed from Bolingbroke [1]) that truth in these matters could not be discovered by a rabble of eloquent 'trumpeters, drummers and musicians', but must be abstruse and must lie pretty deep. This being granted, it was plain that every science bore some relation to human nature, since every science came under the cognizance of human faculty. What was needed, therefore, was a thorough acquaintance with 'the extent and force of human understanding . . . the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings'. This would be true even of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy and Natural Religion (where man was regarded as God's mere creature). It was transparently obvious in the case of the humanistic sciences, Logic, Morals, Criticism and Politics. For Logic (i.e., very largely, what is now called Epistemology) was wholly concerned with 'the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas', and the other humanistic sciences were concerned with human taste, human sentiment, and human corporate life. Therefore it seemed to Hume that, if human nature were thoroughly explored, the master-key to *every* science would have been found. He did not so much as consider the obvious objection that the human mind might be primarily a sort of tool, and that, if it were a tool, the nature of its objects might no more be inferable from its own nature than the character and disposition of the stars are inferable from the composition of a telescope. 'There is no question of importance', he declared, 'whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science' (xx).

Accordingly (Hume said) there was required a new, or almost entirely new' *experimental* foundation of the science

[1] *Dissertation on Parties*, 10th ed., p. 16.

of man. Like Pemberton,[1] Hume stated that my Lord Bacon had originated the new or experimental method in the physical sciences, but he remarked that a century had to elapse before ' Mr. Locke, my Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutchinson, Dr. Butler &c ' (xxi n.) began to put the human sciences upon this footing. The length of the period, he thought, suggested a parallel to the history of Greek philosophy when Socrates revolted from the cosmogony of Thales and adopted the principle *Quod supra nos nihil ad nos.* This statement was, in fact, a very neat rejoinder to the *Novum Organum* (I. Aph. 79) where Bacon had deplored the turn that Socrates had given to philosophy ; but we should also remember that Bacon had declared (*ibid.* Aph. 127) that his inductive method applied ' non tantum ad naturales, sed ad omnes scientias ', expressly including logic, psychology and political theory.[2]

Hume's reference to ' Mr. Locke ' in the above passage (a footnote) was perhaps a trifle casual. The truth seems to be that Locke's attitude towards these questions had become a part of Hume's mind, with the result that Hume, forgetting both his obligations to Locke and the depth of Locke's originality, took Locke for granted except where criticism or clarification seemed to be necessary. Obviously, however, Hume's conception of the nature, the scope, and the promise of the experimental method was very thoroughly Lockean. ' If by this inquiry into the nature of the understanding ', Locke had written (*Essay*, Introduction, § 4), ' I can discover the powers thereof ; how far they reach ; to what things they are in any degree proportionate ; and where they fail us, I suppose it may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension ; to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether ; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities.' In the same way, Hume in *his* Introduction (xxii) advised his readers to ' sit down contented ' and derive ' a more delicate satisfaction ' from *comprehending* what the vulgar merely believed, viz. that *no* reason can be given why phenomenalism (or the *look* of our experience) should be

[1] *op. cit.*, Introduction, §§ 4 *sqq.*

[2] Cf. the conclusion of Newton's *Opticks* : ' If natural Philosophy . . . by pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will be also enlarged.' But *via* theism, or deism, according to Newton.

just what it is—and no more. Hume also shared Locke's agnosticism. The essence both of body and of mind being 'equally unknown', he said (cf. Locke, II. xxiii, §§ 5 *sq.*) we could expect to discover only the 'simplest and fewest' *apparent* or phenomenal 'causes'; and 'any hypothesis that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature, ought at first [i.e. from the outset] to be rejected as presumptuous and chimerical' (xxi).

None the less, Hume professed to expound a wider philosophy than Locke's, the more especially because he expressed discontent with introspective methods (xxiii). 'We must', he said, 'glean up our experiments . . . from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension.' [1]

Proofs derived entirely from sense-experience; caution in going beyond the plainest sense-experience; contentment with uniformities which, though not ultimate, yet carried us a great way; a rigid parsimony [2] (cf. 282 and 578) in the principles of explanation. So Hume, like most contemporary Newtonians, understood the essentials of the experimental method: 'If we carry our enquiry beyond the appearances of objects to the senses, I am afraid', Hume said (639), 'that most of our conclusions will be full of scepticism and uncertainty . . . If *the Newtonian* philosophy be rightly understood it will be found to mean no more. . . . Nothing is more suitable to that philosophy, than a modest scepticism to a certain degree, and a fair confession of ignorance in subjects, that exceed all human capacity.' And similarly in Hume's other references to Newton (e.g. E. 14, E. 30, E. 204).

It seems fitting to conclude this chapter with a quotation from Hume's *History* (ch. 71).

[1] Cf. Shaftesbury, III, 156.

[2] Hume's reference (E. 204) to 'Newton's chief rule of philosophizing' was to the first of Newton's 'Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy' in the *Principia*, viz.: 'We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances. To this purpose the philosophers say that Nature does nothing in vain, and more is in vain when less will serve; for Nature is pleased with simplicity, and affects not the pomp of superfluous causes.'

'In Newton', he there said, 'this island may boast of having produced the greatest and rarest genius that ever rose for the ornament and instruction of the species. Cautious in admitting no principles but such as were founded on experiment; but resolute to adopt every such principle, however new or unusual. From modesty, ignorant of his superiority above the rest of mankind; and thence, less careful to accommodate his reasonings to common apprehensions: More anxious to merit than to acquire fame: He was, from these causes, long unknown to the world: but his reputation at last broke out with a lustre, which scarcely any writer, during his own lifetime, had ever before attained. While Newton seemed to draw off the veil from some of the mysteries of nature, he showed at the same time the imperfections of the mechanical philosophy; and thereby restored her ultimate secrets to that obscurity in which they ever did and ever will remain.'

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCIPLES OF SENSORY PHENOMENALISM

HUME'S philosophy has been variously described as empiricism, scepticism, naturalism and phenomenalism; and all these descriptions are defensible. If they are not consistent, Hume was inconsistent.

Phenomenalism is the doctrine that all our knowledge, all our belief, and all our conjectures begin and end with appearances; that we cannot go behind or beyond these; and that we should not try to do so. Sensory phenomenalism is the doctrine that such appearances are, in the last analysis, either sensations or images which echo and mimic sensations. If the term 'experience' is taken to mean 'sense-experience', a philosophy which professes to be nothing but a prolonged appeal to 'experience' is a *pure* sensory phenomenalism.

Hume set out to lay the foundations of pure sensory phenomenalism. He retained, it is true, a meagre residuum of 'knowledge' understood in a sense that can hardly be regarded as even quasi-sensory; and his exposition, as it proceeded, came to include a phenomenalism decidedly 'mitigated' and not at all pure. It is a mistake, however, to say with Mr. Whitehead,[1] that Hume's pure phenomenalism was 'make-believe'. Hume began the *Enquiry* with it (E. 17 *sqq.*) just as he began the *Treatise*; and his considered opinion on the point may be seen in the first sentence of the penultimate quotation in our last chapter.

§ I. Impressions, Ideas and Memory

'All the perceptions of the human mind', Hume said (1), 'resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas.' This statement, combined with the assertion (e.g. 634) that the mind was wholly *composed* of 'perceptions', sums up his phenomenalism. He maintained, indeed, (4) that a *full* examination of the relation between impressions and ideas was 'the subject of the present treatise',

[1] *Process and Reality*, p. 240.

and, as Reid said,[1] employed the distinction as a simple code of 'inquisition' with which to try all philosophical systems, and condemn most. 'Is the prisoner an Impression or an Idea? If an idea, from what impression copied?'

The choice of these terms, Hume thought, had greatly improved Locke's terminology by 'restoring the word, idea, to its original sense,[2] from which Mr. Locke had perverted it, in making it stand for all our perceptions' (2 n.). In Hume's altered terminology, a 'perception' became the generic term for what Locke had called an 'idea' and had defined as 'whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking' (Int. § 8). Hume divided the genus 'perceptions' into the two species 'impressions' and 'ideas' (i.e. in modern language, into sensa and images).

'By the term of impression', Hume further said (2 n.), 'I would not be understood to express the manner, in which our lively impressions are produced in the soul but merely the perceptions themselves; for which there is no particular name either in the *English* or any other language, that I know of.' In other words, he meant to give the traditional term 'impression' a new and purely phenomenalistic interpretation.[3]

According to the cruder varieties of scholastic theory, the 'forms' of external objects were received, as *species impressae*, and were transformed into *species expressae* in intelligent or semi-intelligent experience.[4] The Cartesian psycho-physics of the 'animal spirits' was somewhat less inadequate. Nevertheless, the doctrine of impressions, in Malebranche for example, remains obscure. According to that author, 'les objets grossiers' make an 'impression' on the external organs, and the animal spirits arouse a *similar* 'impression' in the brain (I. iv). Yet although Malebranche held that sensations were not brain-states but modifications of the mind or 'notre esprit même modifié de telle ou telle manière',[5] he was quite prepared to speak of 'les impressions de nos sens' (e.g. I. vi, Sect. ii). Similarly, in the first three editions of Locke's

[1] *Works*, Hamilton's ed., p. 144.

[2] As with Hobbes (III, 673) 'the imaginations themselves, that is to say, . . . those ideas, or mental images we have of all things we see, or remember.'

[3] See, however, Dr. Isaac Watts's *Logic* (1724), p. 16: 'Perception is that *act of the mind* (or, as some philosophers call it, rather a *passion of impression*) *whereby the mind becomes conscious of any thing.*'

[4] For a fuller discussion see the first essay in Gilson's *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale, etc.*

[5] *Réponse à Regis*, ch. ii.

Essay (II. i. § 23) it was affirmed that sensation was 'such an impression or motion made in some part of the body as makes it be taken notice of in the understanding'. In the fourth and subsequent editions the phrase 'makes it be taken notice of', was altered to 'produces some perception'. On the other hand, Clarke, like Malebranche, held that 'colours, sounds, taste and the like' were 'plainly thoughts or modifications of the mind itself' and that they were 'not properly *caused*, but only *occasioned* by the impressions of figure and motion' (*Demonstration*, p. 87).[1]

It is clear that Hume by deliberately putting a phenomenalistic interpretation upon a term currently employed non-phenomenalistically ran the risk of confusing both himself and his readers; and when he began his discussion by speaking of the way in which perceptions 'strike upon the mind and make their way into our thought and consciousness' (1) or described the senses as 'inlets', it is hard to acquit him of an unconscious betrayal of pure phenomenalism. A grosser instance may be found, *inter alia*, in his statement (239) that 'no external object can make itself known to the mind immediately, and without the interposition of an image [i.e. a physical or physiological *phantasma* or *species* [2]] or perception'.[3] Officially, however, he renounced all the physical implications of 'impressions' just as Berkeley had meant to do when he spoke (P. § 5) of sensations as 'impressions on the sense' or of 'imprinting an idea on the mind' (*ibid.* § 19).

Following Locke in both instances (II. vi. and II. ii. § 1)—although in the first case in a way of his own—Hume subdivided impressions (i) into impressions of sensation as distinguished from impressions of reflection and (ii) into simple as distinguished from complex impressions. The basis of the first of these subdivisions will be considered later. For the moment it seems sufficient to say that 'impressions of sensation', for Hume, included 'thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other' (8) as well as heat, colour and other sensa; and that they were *primary*. 'Impressions of reflection', contrariwise, were secondary, although they were genuine 'impressions' because they 'arise *originally* in the soul, or in the body, whichever you please to call it, without

[1] 2nd ed., 1706. [2] Cf. 372.

[3] Cf. E. 152 and (8): 'The examination of our sensations belongs more to anatomists and natural philosophers than to moral.'

any preceding thought or perception' (276); and they consisted for the most part (if not exclusively) of 'passions, desires and emotions' (8). The second subdivision (which also applied to 'ideas') was so very perfunctory in Hume's pages that (despite its importance for his theory) it must be said, quite simply, to have been taken for granted. It indicated, in fact, Hume's acceptance of the age-long ideal of explanation according to which the business of thinking was to discover what was (analytically or visibly?) simple, and thereafter to 'explain' anything, either by exhibiting its ultimate simplicity, or its composition out of simple elements.

Before proceeding to examine Hume's distinction between 'impressions' and 'ideas' it seems appropriate to give a general indication of the part played by 'impressions of sensation' in Hume's subsequent narrative.

(*a*) Hume habitually spoke of these impressions as 'objects'. To 'the generality of mankind', he said (202), 'those very sensations, which enter by the eye or ear, are the true objects', such 'objects or perceptions' being 'what any common man means by a hat, or shoe, or stone, or any other impression, convey'd to him by his senses' (*ibid.*). It would also, he said, 'imply no contradiction' if, as the vulgar supposed, such objects existed separately from the mind (634).

(*b*) Granting that Hume's analysis of the mind-body problem leads to regions remote from the common view, it is hard to reconcile the obvious intention of statements such as the above with a host of others in which Hume, following Malebranche and others, insisted that 'all impressions are *internal* [i.e. mental] existences, and appear as such' (194). Indeed, Hume's assertion (190) that 'every impression, external and internal, passions, affections, sensations, pains and pleasures, are originally on the same footing' ought, properly speaking, to have suggested to him that the distinction between external and internal, mental and physical, was, logically and temporally, *posterior* to this 'original footing'. A similar comment should perhaps be made upon another of his celebrated dicta which obviously echoed Malebranche's 'Il est donc nécessaire que notre ame voie les maisons & les étoiles où elles ne sont pas, puisqu'elle ne sort point du corps où elle est, & qu'elle ne laisse pas de les voir hors de lui' (I. xiv, cf. III, Pt. II, i). 'Let us chace our imagination to the heavens', Hume said (67 *sq.*) 'or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves,

nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass.'

(*c*) Hume sometimes (e.g. 192 *sq.*) gave physiological reasons to clinch his opinion. In the main, however, his argument was that 'impressions or perceptions' must 'appear, all of them, in their true colours. . . . For since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness, they must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear' (190). Nevertheless he admitted the existence of sensory illusion (e.g. 47) and also professed to discover 'secret' impressions (375) and 'dormant' principles of the mind (439).

(*d*) Hume held that all *simple* impressions were indefinable (329, cf. 277 and 399). Since he also maintained, however, that impressions (unlike ideas) 'like colours, may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself' (366, cf. 443) it was not so clear whether any given impression *was* simple.

(*e*) One of his fundamental tenets was that impressions of sensation were 'original'. They 'arise in the soul', he said, 'originally, from unknown causes (7); or, again, 'As to those *impressions*, which arise from the senses, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind, or are deriv'd from the author of our being'[1] (84). He further explained (275) that these original impressions arose in the soul 'without any antecedent perception'—a passage which, like the others, is difficult to reconcile with the mitigated phenomenalism of many very different statements, e.g. that quoted by Huxley:[2] 'All our perceptions are dependent on our organs and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits' (211).

(*f*) The best known and probably the most important part of Hume's contentions in this matter was that all impressions were 'compleat in themselves'.[3] Our senses, he said (189), 'convey to us nothing but a single perception, and never give

[1] i.e. whether representative realism, a theory of innate ideas, or Malebranche's theory accounts for them.

[2] *Hume*, p. 75.

[3] Cf. Keill, *Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, third edition, London, 1733, p. 17: 'No Body or Portion of Matter stands in Need of the Existence of another Body, in order to its own Existence; . . . this evidently follows from the Nature of Substance'.

us the least intimation of anything beyond'. Even 'impressions of reflection', he held, were 'original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference' to other impressions of reflection (458, cf. 415).

In other words, his doctrine was that impressions were *non-representative*, and *atomic*. Being non-representative they were insusceptible of truth or falsity, i.e. of agreement or disagreement either with fact or with other ideas (458). Being atomic 'all our perceptions are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe; they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider'd as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of any thing else to support their existence. They are, therefore, substances, as far as this definition[1] explains a substance' (233).

This was Hume's celebrated 'loosening' of 'all our particular perceptions' which led him to confess (635 *sq.*) that 'all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head'. It, and its implications, meet us at every turn of his argument; and so we need not speak of it now. We may note, however, that it seems to be plainly contradictory to his doctrine of the 'blending' of sensations, and that it ascribes to appearances a disjointed look that they do not appear to have. In other words, it may be a misdescription of appearances themselves, and consequently not a genuine phenomenalism.

Let us turn, however, to a question of at least equal importance, Hume's account of the distinctions and relations between 'impressions' and 'ideas'.

Hume did not think it 'very necessary to employ many words in explaining this distinction' (1). As everyone knew, to 'shut one's eyes and think of one's chamber' (3) gave a totally different experience from actually perceiving one's chamber. In modern psychological (not physical or physiological) terminology, any such experiment supplied *images* (in the given instance memory-images) in place of *percepts*; and we seldom mistook the two. Hume admitted, indeed, the possibility of dubiety, or even of actual confusion 'in particular instances' (2). 'In sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul' (*ibid.*) the two might approach very nearly; and an 'idea' was said to be 'presently

[1] That substance = what can exist *per se*.

converted into an impression ' ' when any affection is infus'd by sympathy ' (317). Nevertheless, Hume meant, we did not in general confuse between the eye and the mind's eye, between victuals set before us and a Barmecide feast, between day-dreams of the frozen Caucasus and a summer's evening in July.

This being premised, Hume explained that the relations between impressions and ideas were that ideas were *derived* from impressions, that ideas *copied* impressions, but that, being copies, the two could not differ in character, with the result that the essential difference depended upon ' the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind ' (1). Ideas were ' faint and languid ' (9). Impressions were ' forcible '.

Hume followed Locke in accepting the fact of derivation, and in assuming its importance. ' It is not in the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding ', Locke had written (II. ii. § 2), ' by any quickness or variety of thought, to *invent* or *frame* one new simple idea in the mind '. Similarly, Hume maintained that although there might be a good deal of invention in a *complex* idea (like the New Jerusalem), the rule held without any exception that ' every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it; and every simple impression a correspondent idea ' (3). The proof was that a child must *see* scarlet before it could *imagine* scarlet, and that a child blind from birth could never dream or otherwise imagine scarlet at all (5).

Both for Locke and for Hume, this circumstance anchored the memory and the fancy very firmly upon pungent sensible fact, and ultimately preserved humanity from beating the void. On the other hand, Hume (although not Locke) was capable of being thoroughly contemptuous of the importance sometimes attached to mere temporal priority. Thus in one of his discussions of innate ideas (E. 22 n.) he remarked that ' if by innate be meant, contemporary to our birth, the dispute seems to be frivolous; nor is it worth while to enquire at what time thinking begins, whether before, at, or after our birth '. Again, his doctrine of ' impressions of reflection ' was precisely that although these impressions were subsequent, in time, to impressions of sensation, and were therefore ' secondary ', nevertheless they *were* ' impressions ' and were not ' ideas '.

Hume's doctrine of ' copying ' presents several minor difficulties. Strictly speaking, he had attempted to prove it with regard to *simple* ideas only, and despite his statement that

'ideas . . . are endow'd with a kind of impenetrability' (366) which prevented their 'mixture', he treated them, in the main, as so very plastic, and blended them so very thoroughly with impressions and with one another, that he might have found considerable difficulty in explaining the 'exact' (33) similarity between even 'simple' ideas and 'simple' impressions. All such minor difficulties, however, become insignificant when compared with the *petitio principii* of his governing assumption that because ideas were 'copies' therefore 'ideas always represent their objects or impressions' (157). According to Hume, impressions were ultimate, complete in themselves, and non-representative. Ideas, on the other hand, were derivative and, in a certain sense, incomplete in themselves, just because they were essentially representative and were always felt to be so. An idea, for Hume, was always an idea *of* its impression, or at least, more vaguely, of something sensory.

Of this doctrine it is not too much to say with Mr. Stout that 'without this assumption he [Hume] would not be able to stir a step in the exposition of his philosophy'.[1] Yet the mere fact (if fact it were) that ideas are *derived* from impressions surely does not prove, or even suggest, that every idea is so very wise as to know its own father, or even as to know that it has a pedigree of any kind; and the fact (if fact it were) that certain ideas and certain impressions do actually resemble one another is no more a proof of an idea *knowing* this resemblance than the similarity between one penny stamp and another one is a proof that penny stamps possess knowledge at all. 'Copies' in other words need not *mean* or *refer*; and if impressions do not mean and do not refer, why should their effigies do so?

A special feature of Hume's form of the copy-theory—viz. that ideas did not differ *in their nature* from impressions but only in their 'force and vivacity'—requires special consideration.

Hume's description, at this point, seems to have been borrowed from Malebranche, who had spoken (I. xii. Sect. iv) of 'les sensations fortes et vives [2] . . . qui étonnent l'esprit, et qui le réveillent avec quelque force' and had said that what

[1] *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p. 366. Cf. *Mind and Matter*, pp. 218 *sq.*

[2] Cf. Descartes, *Med.*, VI: 'plus vives, plus expresses et même à leur façon plus distinctes'.

he called ' images ' were ' une espèce de sensations foibles et languissantes ' (III, Conclusion. Cf. V. vii) ; and Berkeley had used similar terms (P. § 30), although Berkeley laid at least as much emphasis upon the relational properties of order and constancy as upon strength and vivacity, as when he said (*ibid.* § 33) : ' The ideas imprinted on the Senses by the Author of nature are called *real things* and those excited in the imagination, being less regular vivid and constant are more properly termed *ideas* or *images* of things, which they copy and represent.' For Hume, however, at the outset of his investigations, the sensible pungency of *real* things (as opposed to fantasies, and, in certain ways, even to memory-images) belonged to each separate impression as such although it was not a *quality* of any impression but instead an extrinsic denomination which described the *manner* in which impressions ' strike ' the mind.

The large question hence arising will be discussed when we come to deal with Hume's account of *belief in reality*. I shall there argue that Hume's term ' vivacity ' was intended to indicate something ultimate and indefinable, not, as would seem in the preliminary discussion, the mere intensity of our perceptions, and also that what we call the ' reality ' of what we perceive in waking life is at least as much relational as an affair of sensory items (cf. 189), besides being, in many ways, derivative rather than ultimate. Without anticipating this discussion, it may suffice, for the present, to say that Hume's initial explanations (which would seem to identify vivacity with intensity) cannot be regarded as *merely* provisional, and designed to get the discussion under way, since they reappeared pretty often in the *Treatise* and also in the *Enquiry* (e.g. E. 17). Consequently, although Hume frequently said very different things in the *Treatise*—as when he admitted that there was ' a little ambiguity ' in the terms ' strong and lively ' (105), or combined ' settled order ' with ' force ' (108, cf. 428)—and although in the end he frankly confessed that it was an ' error ' to say ' that two ideas of the same object can only be different by their different degrees of force and vivacity. I believe there are other differences among ideas, which cannot properly be comprehended under these terms ' (636), he cannot be acquitted of ambiguity in this particular or of (consciously or unconsciously) taking advantage of the ambiguity.

I shall conclude this discussion of impressions and their ideas by (*a*) referring briefly to Hume's laconic comments upon the doctrine of innate ideas, and by considering more fully (*b*) his

account of memory and (*c*) of the 'one contradictory phenomenon' (5) to what (3) had *no* exception.

(*a*) Hume regarded the theory of innate ideas as something obviously *vieux jeu*. 'The principle', he said—and he ascribed it to the Cartesians (160)—'has been already refuted, and is now almost universally rejected in the learned world' (158). The refutation (7) was simply his assertion that *all* ideas were derived from impressions; with the consequence (164), that 'no kind of reasoning could give rise to a new idea'. In short, he rejected *in limine* all traces of the conception that intellectual principles were *sui generis* and neither the echoes nor the result of sensory presentations. His rather fuller treatment in the *Enquiry* (E. 22 n.) was, as we have seen, not altogether consistent with much in his own theory, although, in its way, trenchant and memorable. He concluded it with the statement that Locke had 'been betrayed into this question by the schoolmen' (not by the Cartesians); and, very ungenerously, complained of Locke's 'ambiguity and circumlocution . . . on this as well as on most other subjects'.

(*b*) According to Hume, our memories were intermediate in vivacity between perception and fantasy. They were, it appears, sensations gradually growing feebler—but less enfeebled in proportion as they were more recent (85, cf. 143). Indeed Hume sometimes spoke (e.g. 84) of the *impressions* of the memory, and in the Appendix to the *Treatise* (627 *sq.*) he plainly regarded memory as something ultimate. In that passage he put the case of two friends who had taken part in some enterprise which the first friend remembered and the second friend had forgotten, and supposed that the first friend eventually succeeded in reviving the second friend's memory by 'running over the circumstances'. 'Here', he remarked, 'the person that forgets receives at first all the ideas from the discourse of the other, with the same circumstances of time and place; tho' he considers them as mere fictions of the imagination. But as soon as the circumstance is mentioned that touches the memory, the very same ideas now appear in a new light, and have, in a manner, a different feeling from what they had before.' In the main, however, he adhered to the doctrine of intermediate vivacity. 'We find by experience', he said (8), 'that when any impression has been present with the mind, it again makes its appearance there as an idea; and this it may do after two different ways; either when in its new appearance it retains a considerable degree of its first

vivacity, and is somewhat intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea; or when it intirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea.'

Verbally at least, this statement implied that our 'momentary and perishing' impressions were literally capable of a comatose resurrection; and Hume's language on this point was frequently ambiguous, as when he asked, 'What is the memory but a faculty, by which we raise up the images of past perceptions?' (260). There are, however, other, and even more serious objections to Hume's theory. As Reid very pertinently said, Hume's 'ideas, in the gradual declension of their vivacity, seem to imitate the declension of verbs in grammar. They begin with the present, and proceed in order to the preterite, the future and the indefinite. This article of the sceptical creed is indeed so full of mystery, . . . that they who hold that creed are very injuriously charged with incredulity; for to me it appears to require as much faith as that of St. Athanasius'.[1]

In short, the theory of intermediate vivacity was a *tenseless* theory which did not so much as mention the past at all; and naturally Hume noticed that the memory, when it 'offers an idea' also 'represents it as past' (106). Indeed he declared that 'the chief exercise of the memory is not to preserve the simple ideas, but their order and position' (9) and that 'the memory is in a manner ty'd down in that respect, without any power of variation'. In an even stronger statement he declared (110) that 'the impressions of the memory never change in any considerable degree'.

He had, however, no way of combining the property of referring to the past with the doctrine of intermediate vivacity, however 'common and vulgar' (9) the phenomenon might be. 'For', he said (85), 'tho' it be a peculiar property of the memory to preserve the original order and position of its ideas, while the imagination transposes and changes them as it pleases; yet this difference is not sufficient to distinguish them in their operation; . . . it being impossible to recal the past impressions, in order to compare them with our present ideas, and see whether their arrangement be exactly similar.' And his last word was wholly sceptical even with regard to 'that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person' (265). 'Even with relation to that succession,' he said (*ibid.*), 'we cou'd only admit of those perceptions, which are imme-

[1] *Works*, p. 199.

diately present to our consciousness, nor cou'd those lively images, with which the memory presents us, be ever receiv'd as true pictures of past perceptions.'

(*c*) The solitary exception to a professedly exceptionless rule was an 'instance so particular and singular that 'tis scarce worth our observing' (6). Let all the shades of blue be put before a man except one that the man has never seen. Then the man would not merely notice a blank but would be able to 'raise up to himself the idea of that particular shade' (*ibid.*).

Hume's discussion of the point has all the appearance of an afterthought and may have been suggested to him, while he was in France by some one familiar with Cartesianism. For Descartes had written (*Regulae*, Rule xiv): 'If a man has been blind from his birth, it is not to be expected that we should be able by any train of reasoning to make him perceive the true ideas of the colours which we have derived from our senses. But if a man has once perceived the primary colours, although he has never seen the intermediate or mixed tints, it is possible for him to construct the images of those he has not seen, from their resemblance to the others, by a species of deduction.' Hume accepted a more limited, and therefore a more plausible, application of this general contention, although the principle of it would obviously apply to music with even greater facility than to colours. On the other hand, the thing seems unverifiable in Hume's instance, since no grown person can possibly be sure that he has not observed all the shades of blue, in garden, sea or sky, sometime in his past career. Still, Hume's willingness to accept a contradictory experiment, even if the experiment were impracticable, is a signal instance of his candour.

Certain modern psychologists, commenting upon Hume's imaginary experiment, seem to have missed the point of it, although their inferences may be true in substance. Thus Mr. Spearman,[1] with express reference to Hume, asserts that the phenomenon (which Mr. Spearman verified as well as he could,[2] that is to say, not very well) should be subsumed under the 'eduction of correlates' (e.g. finding a fourth proportional) which itself is one of the governing potencies of the human mind. What amazed Hume, however, was not the 'eduction of correlates' in general, but the highly specific eduction of a new *simple* idea without an exactly correspondent *simple* impression.

[1] *The Nature of Intelligence and the Principles of Cognition*, ch. vii.
[2] *ibid.*, p. 94.

Per contra—and this is why Mr. Spearman's contention is true in substance—Hume should have seen that his admission led to inferences which he himself did not explore at all; for the derivation of simple ideas from corresponding simple impressions is but an insignificant part of the problem of the origin of series. The 'ideas' in such series do not really remain unmodified when they or their residues are altered *to scale*; and the whole question of the structure of series, of the modifications of the constituents within such structures, and of the possibility of educing novel sensory correlates as our insight into the nature of series and proportioned unities progresses, can scarcely be said to have been even begun by Hume's airy observation that somehow, mediately or immediately, simple ideas were derived from simple impressions. What Hume would have said had he entered more deeply into such questions is beyond reasonable conjecture. His system, as it stands, was based upon a stubborn vagueness regarding all such matters. But with subsequent history to help us we may assert, with some confidence, that even our 'picture thinking' is profoundly affected by circumstances of this order, and that the implications of serial arrangement carry us a long way towards the effectual recognition of non-perceptual or but semi-perceptual, patterns, structures and relations within and around the domain of what Hume called 'perceptions'.

§ II. Association, Custom and Imagination

Having 'loosened' all our perceptions, Hume had to explain why they did not fall into utter and obvious chaos. The imagination might be 'frivolous' (504 n.), 'whimsical' (117) and 'unaccountable' (10); but commonly there were 'uniting principles in the ideal world' (260). Ideas 'naturally introduce' (10) one another by an 'attraction or association' (289) which Hume compared to the attraction of gravity according to Newtonian theory[1] and described (10) as 'a gentle force which

[1] Cf. R. Cotes's Preface to Newton's *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1729), Vol. I: 'Some I know disapprove this conclusion, and mutter something about occult qualities. . . . But shall gravity be therefore called an occult cause, because the cause of gravity is occult and not yet discovered? Those who affirm this, should be careful not to fall into an absurdity that may overturn the foundations of all philosophy. For causes use to proceed in a continued chain from those that are more compounded to those that are more simple; when we are arrived at the most simple cause we can go no farther.'

commonly prevails'. In denying the universality of association—it was neither the 'infallible' nor the 'sole' cause of a 'union among ideas' (92)—Hume, in effect, contrasted it with gravitational attraction; but, in another way, he was very Newtonian indeed. Association, he said, was original, ultimate (cf. E. 43) and inexplicable, the very opposite of a Cartesian *idée claire*. 'Nothing is more requisite for a true philosopher than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes' (13). In the same way Newton, in his third letter to Bentley, had declared: 'That gravity should be innate, inherent and essential to matter, so that one body may act upon another, at a distance through a vacuum, without the mediation of anything else, by and through which their action and force may be conveyed from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity that I believe no man who has in philosophical matters a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it',[1] and yet had also maintained (*Opticks*, p. 369) that there are 'Agents in Nature able to make the Particles of Bodies stick together by very strong Attractions. And it is the Business of experimental Philosophy to find them out'.

In view of the importance of Hume's contribution to the celebrated theory of Associationism—though Priestley said that 'compared with Dr. Hartley, I consider Mr. Hume as not even a child'[2]—it seems advisable to give a short account of the previous history of the philosophy of this subject, both in England and on the continent. For although the *name* 'association' in this employment seems to have been due to Locke, the principle itself, particularly with regard to the facilitating conditions of reminiscence, had been noted with some care by Plato and by Aristotle, if not even by their predecessors.[3]

Hume remembered his Hobbes pretty well. According to that author, imagination was 'decaying sense' which, when we would express the thing itself is called 'imagination', but was called 'memory' when we meant to signify that 'the sense is fading, old and past'. 'Much memory, or memory of many things, is called *experience*' (III. 6); and 'the imagination that is raised in man, or any other creature indued with the faculty of imagining, by words, or other voluntary signs, is

[1] Cf. Galileo's Dialogues, *The Two Great Systems*, tr. Salusbury, I (1661), 210 *sq.*

[2] *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, p. 126.

[3] See Hamilton's Note D[xx] (edition of Reid) and Croom Robertson, *Philosophical Remains*, pp. 102 *sqq.*

that we generally call *understanding*; and is common to man and beast. For a dog by custom will understand the call, or the rating of his master' (III. 11).

Further, said Hobbes:

'When a man thinketh on any thing whatsoever, his next thought is not altogether so casual as it seems to be. Not every thought to every thought succeeds indifferently. But as we have no imagination, whereof we have not formerly had sense, in whole or in parts: so we have no transition from one imagination to another, whereof we never had the like before in our senses. The reason whereof is this. All fancies are motions within us, relics of those made in the sense. And those motions that immediately succeeded one another in the sense, continue also together after sense. . . . But because in sense, to one and the same thing perceived, sometimes one thing sometimes another succeedeth, it comes to pass in time, that in the imagining of any thing, there is no certainty what we shall imagine next. Only this is certain, it shall be something that succeeded the same before, at one time or another' (III. 11 *sq.*).

Such trains of thought, Hobbes went on to say, were of two sorts, viz. 'unguided, without design, and inconstant', on the one hand, and 'regulated' on the other. The first might be a 'wandering' and 'wild ranging of the mind', and yet 'a man may oft-times perceive the way of it, and the dependence of one thought upon another'—Hobbes gave a famous instance (III. 12 *sq.*)—In the second, there was 'some passionate thought to govern and direct those that follow; and prudence itself was 'a presumption of the future, contracted from the experience of time past' (III. 16).

Locke's account of association appeared for the first time in the fourth edition of the *Essay* (1700) at a time when he was occupied with his posthumously published *Examination of Malebranche*. There is some evidence, however,[1] that he had been considering the problem since 1695, and regarded his views as highly original. 'Some of our ideas', he said (II. xxiii. § 5), 'have a *natural* correspondence and connexion one with another: it is the office and excellency of our reason to trace these. . . . Besides this, there is another connexion, of ideas wholly owing to *chance* or *custom*. Ideas that in themselves are not all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds, that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company.' In other words, Locke regarded association as a principle of '*wrong* connexion in our minds of

[1] Fraser's edition, I, 527 n.

ideas in themselves loose and independent of one another' (*ibid.*, § 9). He regarded it as 'madness' rather than as 'education' or 'prejudice' (§ 3); and he suggested a physiological cause in the 'animal spirits' (§ 6).

Many of Locke's followers [1] accepted these explanations. Thus Isaac Watts wrote (*Logic*, p. 180): 'The best relief against this *prejudice of association* is to consider, whether there be any rational or necessary connexion between those ideas, which *fancy, custom or chance* hath thus joined together; and if *nature* has not joined them, let our judgment correct the folly of our *imagination*, and separate these ideas again.' Similarly, Hutcheson (*Inquiry*, p. 87) said that 'by *Education* there are some strong Associations of Ideas without any Reason, by mere Accident sometimes, as well as by Design, which it is very hard for us ever after to break asunder'. In this statement, however, association did not appear to be altogether 'madness' and there was a growing tendency to return to a position nearer that of Hobbes. 'The *Association*', according to John Gay,[2] 'remains even after that which at first gave them the connexion is quite forgot, or perhaps does not exist, but the contrary.' On the other hand, Edmund Law maintained that 'a Connexion of Ideas may be either *natural* or *acquired*; either a necessary, rational one, which produces real Knowledge; or an accidental, absurd one, commonly known by the name of *Association*'.[3] And Berkeley preferred to speak of (arbitrary) '*signs*' (e.g. T.V. 144), 'marks' and 'suggestions'.

On the Continent, Malebranche had mentioned 'la communication contagieuse des imaginations fortes' (II, Pt. III, i), had asserted that 'l'esprit est tellement l'esclave de l'imagination, qu'il lui obéit toujours lorsqu'elle est échauffée' (V, xi), and had contrasted 'l'opinion et la coutume' with the rules of reason (II, Pt. III, vi). In the main, however, his interest was psycho-physiological and concerned the 'liaison' between ideas and 'traces' in the brain. This correspondence, he held, was due primarily to the original designs of God, secondarily to the temporal identity of the two, thirdly to social agreement (II, Pt. I, v). According to him both sense and

[1] And others also. Cf. Crousaz, *New Treatise of the Art of Thinking*, I, i, ch. vii.

[2] 'Preliminary Dissertation' to Law's translation of King's *Origin of Evil*, 3rd ed., p. lii (1st ed., 1731).

[3] *An Enquiry into the Ideas of Space*, etc. (1734), p. 45.

imagination were ' due ', in the occasionalistic sense, to cerebral causes,[1] so that ' les sens & l'imagination ne diffèrent que du plus ou du moins ' (II, Pt. I, i) ; and the imagination itself was the mind's power of making absent objects present to it ' en s'en formant, pour ainsi dire, des images dans le cerveau ' (I, iv).

Regarding ' custom '—Hume once (G. III, 247 n.) referred to Strabo's ' all is custom and education '—it is further to be remarked that while the general relation between usage and reason had been the subject of speculation much earlier than the ' contra sensus et perspicuitatem, contraque omnem consuetudinem contraque rationem ' of Cicero's *Academic Questions* (II. xxvii) or than Pliny's ' usus efficacissimus rerum omnium magister ', there were statements in Pascal's writings quite amazingly similar to many in Hume's. ' La coutume ', Pascal said, ' fait nos preuves les plus fortes et les plus crues ; elle encline l'automate, qui entraine l'esprit sans qu'il y pense. Qui a démontré qu'il sera demain jour, et que nous mourrons ? Et qu'y a-t-il de plus cru ? C'est donc la coutume qui nous en persuade ' (*Pensées*, 252). And again : ' Qu'est-ce que nos principes naturels, sinon nos principes accoutumés ? ' (*ibid.*, 92). ' La coutume est une seconde nature, qui détruit la première. Mais qu'est-ce que nature ? Pourquoi la coutume n'est-elle pas naturelle ? J'ai grand peur que cette nature ne soit elle-même qu'une première coutume, comme la coutume est une seconde nature ' (*ibid.*, 93).

Despite one marked exception (60 *sq.*)—which, in its way, was a curiosity because of its doctrine of ' proper traces ' and the ' rummaging '[2] of some individual cell—Hume, in general, renounced physiological explanations. In pronounced opposition to Locke he regarded association, not as ' madness ', but, like Pascal's ' custom ', as a sane, if irrational, principle of connexion. He differed from Pascal in extending the application of the principle to all mental connexions ; and he roundly declared that ' relations, modes, and substances '—in short the most fundamental metaphysical categories—were reducible to association (13). ' Custom . . . facilitates the entrance and strengthens the conception of any object ' (353).

He subdivided our associations into the three types of Resemblance, Contiguity (in time or place or both) and Causation. The names of the two former types may be said

[1] Cf. Descartes (Adam et Tannery), X, 414 ; VII, 90, 387, 389.
[2] For the phrase see Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, II, 168.

to be self-explanatory, but the inclusion of 'causation' as a type of *mere* association was obviously an extreme paradox, only to be justified, if at all, by prolonged argument. For the time being, perhaps we may avoid some of the ambiguities and difficulties of Hume's philosophy in this particular by describing what he called 'causation' by the neutral term 'common-sense expectation'. For that, pretty nearly, was what Hume meant. Such expectation, in Hume's view, was a joint-product of Resemblance and Contiguity. It included all the crude and vulgar beliefs that depend upon custom or habit; and, according to Hume, none of our expectations could really have a subtler foundation.

Since Hume was more interested in the conspicuous 'effects' of association than in its inexplicable 'causes' (13), he tended to pay too little attention to the logical foundations of his theory. It seems necessary, however, to examine some of these.

(*a*) Association implies repetition. Yet although Hume, on occasion, was prepared to distinguish between 'the frequent conjunction of objects' and 'the habit which produces the association' (130) he tended to speak of custom, habit, association and connexion quite indiscriminately. In reality, however, his theory implied, not merely *de facto* repetition but, as he once wrote in italics, '*undesign'd*' or involuntary repetition (140).

(*b*) It is also evident that perceptions must *be* similar in order to be associated *by* similarity, and that they must *have been* contiguous in order to be associated *by* contiguity. For this reason, since resemblance and contiguity are *de facto* relations, it follows that association cannot constitute, but on the contrary presupposes, 'relation'. Resemblance and contiguity are (objective) 'ties' (378). Hume, however, frequently used the terms 'relation' and 'association' interchangeably (e.g. 511); and he cannot be defended for doing so. On the other hand, when he said (355) that 'in order to produce a perfect relation betwixt two objects, 'tis requisite, not only that the imagination be convey'd from one to the other by resemblance, contiguity or causation, but also that it return back from the second to the first with the same ease and facility' and therefore distinguished (356) between reversible and irreversible associations, it would seem, on the whole, that 'relation' did not mean the same thing as the passage of the imagination.

In general, of course, Hume saw what any one must see. ' Objects ', he said (168), ' bear to each other the relations of contiguity and succession ; like objects may be observ'd in several instances to have like relations ; and all this is independent of, and antecedent to, the operations of the understanding '—and therefore of the associative imagination.

' 'Tis plain, that in the course of our thinking, and in the constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination runs easily from one idea to any other that *resembles* it, and that this quality alone is to the fancy a sufficient bond and association. 'Tis likewise evident, that as the senses, in changing their objects, are necessitated to change them regularly, and take them as they lie *contiguous* to each other, the imagination must by long custom acquire the same method of thinking, and run along the parts of space and time in conceiving its objects ' (11). ' The imagination, when set into any train of thinking, is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and, like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse ' (198).

(*c*) In most psychological accounts of association it is assumed that similars turn up associatively, and that the similarity may or may not be afterwards noticed. Such, for the most part, was Hume's opinion. ' 'Tis evident ', he said (305), ' that the association of ideas operates in so silent and imperceptible a manner, that we are scarce sensible of it, and discover it more by its effects than by any immediate feeling or perception.' On the other hand, speaking of the gay associating with the gay, and the serious with the serious, he explained (354) that ' Where they remark the resemblance, it operates after the manner of a relation, by producing a connexion of ideas. Where they do not remark it, it operates by some other principle '.

(*d*) When Hume spoke of association he referred, for the most part, to the association of an *idea*, either with another idea, or with an impression. He further maintained, however, that *impressions* of reflection might be associated with one another, although only by resemblance (283) ; and he also held that association might occur when one of the connecting terms was not a ' perception ' at all.

' Resembling ideas ', he said (61), ' are not only related together, but the actions of the mind, which we employ in considering them, are so little different, that we are not able to distinguish them. This last circumstance is of great consequence ; and we may in general observe, that wherever the

actions of the mind in forming any two ideas are the same or resembling we are very apt to confound these ideas, and take the one for the other.' Again he said that resemblance ' not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea by an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other. This circumstance I have observ'd to be of great moment; and we may establish it for a general rule, that whatever ideas place the mind in the same disposition or in similar ones, are very apt to be confounded. The mind readily passes from one to the other, and perceives not the change without a strict attention, of which, generally speaking, 'tis wholly incapable ' (203, cf. 220). Similarly, dealing with the association between words and ideas, he said (93) : ' In this case it is not absolutely necessary that upon hearing such a particular sound, we shou'd reflect on any past experience, and consider what idea has been usually connected with the sound. The imagination of itself supplies the place of this reflection, and is so accustomed to pass from the word to the idea, that it interposes not a moment's delay betwixt the hearing of the one, and the conception of the other.'

Since ' dispositions ' are neither impressions nor ideas, but dormant and hidden, and since Hume's account of the mind (as we shall see) had no place for these ' operations '—although he accepted them when it suited him—it is clear that association by means of dispositions and operations was quite inconsistent with Hume's pure phenomenalism. This point, indeed—which has been treated with something very like finality, e.g. by Mr. Stout in his *Analytic Psychology*—is the centre and pivot of anti-associationism. Association, the critics say, ' marries only universals '. ' The connexion which is operative in the process of revival is not between atomic particulars as such, but between general elements of content which they have in common.' [1] What occurs, to repeat our earlier criticism of ' impressions ', is not the literal resuscitation of past ideas, but a plastic process in which there is novelty, not mere re-shuffling; the *form* of the synthesis is at least as important as the elements synthesized; and past experience does not remain *unmodified* in the new train of ideas. On the other hand, if we choose to regard Hume as a philosopher too big for mere consistency, we may give him as much credit as we like for the subtlety and insight of these observations.

[1] Stout, *Analytic Psychology*, II, 46.

While Hume could not deny that Resemblance had a tendency to divagate along different lines of resemblance (e.g. 356 and 509 n.) and might lead to error (61); while he admitted that resemblance and contiguity were responsible for many weak-minded and superstitious associations, as in the instances of amulets, pilgrimages to Mecca and the like (e.g. 110); he was concerned, in general, with Hobbes's 'prudence' and not with his 'wild ranging of the mind', and therefore took the good horse sense of *relevant* common-sense expectation to be the authentic and most characteristic office of the associative principle. *Custom*, or reiterated experience, in this view, stood midway between the '*primary constitution* of our nature' (i.e. instinct), on the one hand, and *caprice*, on the other hand (299). It was second nature—Locke [1] had said 'a greater power than nature'—acquired through admonitory experience. In other words he was anxious to 'distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible and universal; [2] such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles which are changeable, weak and irregular. . . . The former are the foundations of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary, or so much as useful in the conduct of life: but on the contrary are observ'd only to take place in weak minds' (225). These 'general and more established properties of the imagination' he also called 'the understanding' (267).

Obviously, therefore, Hume (like Hobbes, Descartes and Malebranche) regarded the 'imagination' as a very extensive faculty. Indeed, in one passage, he made it responsible for all 'vivacity'. 'The memory, senses, and understanding', he there said (265), 'are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas'; and although, in general, he contrasted 'imagination' with 'reason', he was also prepared to call common-sense expectation, built upon custom and repetition, 'reasoning' (e.g. 117).

Being sensible that this wide, if not lax, employment of the term might justify some complaints, Hume tried to make the matter clear in two footnotes (117 *sq.* and 371), the second of which repeated the first. The first ran:

[1] As quoted by J. H. Stirling, *Mind*, O.S., IX, 536.
[2] Like the ideal of *honnêteté*.

'In general we may observe, that as our assent to all probable reasoning is founded on the vivacity of ideas, it resembles many of those whimsies and prejudices, which are rejected under the approbrious character of being the offspring of the imagination. By this expression it appears that the word, imagination, is commonly us'd in two different senses: and tho' nothing be more contrary to true philosophy, than this inaccuracy. . . . I have often been oblig'd to fall into it. When I oppose the imagination to the memory, I mean the faculty by which we form our fainter ideas. When I oppose it to reason, I mean the same faculty, excluding only our demonstrative and probable reasonings. When I oppose it to neither 'tis indifferent whether it be taken in the larger or more limited sense, or at least the context will sufficiently explain the meaning.'

It may be doubted whether this explanation really did explain; but, as has been shown, Hume's use of the term imagination, including its alliance with fancy, memory, and prudential 'understanding', was in accordance with tradition, and Hume might have cited the authority both of Hobbes and of Malebranche. The same lesson might have been drawn from general literature. Milton had written (P.L. v. 100 *sqq.*)

> 'But know that in the soul
> Are many lesser faculties, that serve
> Reason as chief. Among these Fancy next
> Her office holds; of all external things,
> Which the five watchful senses represent,
> She forms imaginations, æry shapes,
> Which Reason, joining or disjoining, frames
> All what we affirm or what deny, and call
> Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
> Into her private cell when Nature rests.
> Oft in her absence, mimic Fancy wakes
> To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes,
> Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,
> Ill matching words and deeds long past or late.'

And since 'reason' for Pico della Mirandola was intermediate between phantasia and intellectus,[1] being regarded[2] as a calculative faculty, peculiar to human beings, and therefore distinct from the intellect (which was common to men, angels and deity), Hume's inclusion of the 'understanding' and of a sort of 'reasoning' in the scope of 'imagination' need not be regarded as an utter innovation.

[1] *Of the Imagination*, ch. xi. [2] *ibid.*, ch. x.

§ III. Relations, Modes and Substances

When Hume, having 'loosened' all perceptions, explained that 'the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences' (636) he, in effect, denied the possibility of apprehending any relation that really did relate; and, as we have seen, he habitually confused between association, or (509 n.) the 'natural propensity to join relations' (i.e. related facts) and those relations which association itself presupposed.[1] Nevertheless, having explained that there was a clear distinction between the 'natural relations' (13) of common language—which signified a close connexion or a facile associative union (cf. 99)—and 'philosophical relations'—which signified mere comparability, however strained or remote (14)—he proceeded to give a 'diligent' enumeration of the latter.

A philosophical relation, he affirmed (14), was 'produced' by a 'quality which makes objects admit of comparison' and implied some resemblance 'since no objects will admit of comparison, but what have some degree of resemblance' (*ibid.*). Indeed (236) ''tis impossible to found a relation but on some common quality'. Beyond these general indications of his meaning, except for the statement (354) that a relation must be *remarked*, Hume did not go; but obviously he was borrowing from Locke, who, while asserting that relations 'terminate in simple ideas' (II. xxv. § 9) which must contain 'a ground or occasion for their comparison' (*l.c.* § 6), maintained that 'the understanding . . . can carry any idea as it were beyond itself, or at least look beyond it, to see how it stands in conformity to any other' (*l.c.*, § 1). This circumstance, Locke said, was marked most clearly by correlative terms, but was not confined to them, since 'Caius, whom I consider to-day as a father, ceases to be so to-morrow, only by the death of his son, without any alteration made in himself' (*l.c.*, § 5); and Locke inferred that relations are 'extraneous and superinduced' (*l.c.*, § 8) to things themselves. Hence he argued, quite falsely, that relations 'have no other reality but what they have in the minds of men' (II. xxx. § 4), although he admitted that our knowledge of certain relations (e.g. paternity) might be clearer than our knowledge of substances (II. xxv. § 8) and at a later stage in the *Essay* gave what might have been a salutary warning to all phenomenalists. This passage ran:

[1] Cf. the implications of (505 n.): 'If it be natural to conjoin all sorts of relations, 'tis more so, to conjoin such relations as are resembling, and are related together.'

' But since our knowledge is founded on and employed about our ideas only, will it not follow from thence that it is conformable to our ideas; and that where our ideas are clear and distinct, or obscure and confused, our knowledge will be so too? To which I answer, No; for our knowledge consisting in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of any two ideas, its clearness or obscurity consists in the clearness or obscurity of that perception, and not in the clearness or obscurity of the ideas themselves: v.g. a man that has as clear ideas of the angles of a triangle, and of equality to two right ones, as any mathematician in the world, may yet have but a very obscure perception of their *agreement*, and so have but a very obscure knowledge of it ' (IV. ii. § 15).

If Hume's definition of ' relation ' was somewhat vague, his enumeration of the several species of philosophical relation [1] was very precise indeed and he professed entire satisfaction with it (464). There were, he said, seven such categories of relation (14 *sq.*), viz. Resemblance, Identity, Space and Time, Quantity and Number, Degrees of Quality (Hobbes's phrase, I. 5), Contrariety, Cause and Effect. Difference, so far as distinguishable from Contrariety, was expressly excluded from the list (15) since Hume understood it to be either the negation of identity (numerical difference) or the negation of resemblance (difference of kind).

This classification followed Locke very closely. For Locke, having admitted that ' there is no one thing . . . which is not capable of almost an infinite number of considerations in reference to other things ' (II. xxv. § 7) proceeded to give an unexhaustive but serviceable classification of this infinitude. His list was (II. xxvi. *sqq.*): Cause and effect, time, place, identity (including personal identity), degree and proportion, generation, volition, morality. Returning to the question at the beginning of Book IV, he gave a somewhat different treatment, viz. I, Identity or Diversity; II, Relation; III, Co-existence or Necessary Connexion; IV, Real Existence; and the logic of this second list was confused. Identity was taken to mean, quite simply, that any idea is what it is, and although identity in this sense (the plain meaning of IV. i. § 4) is not a relation but prior to all relations, it was called a relation in § 7. Again the distinction between relation and co-existence was awkwardly expressed since both were relations; for Locke meant to distinguish between the relations *between* things and

[1] It was Hume's substitute for the Aristotelian Categories, the usual introduction both to the Scholastic Manuals of Logic and to the *Port Royal Logic*.

the relations *within* things. And the last category was the most dubious of all since the existence of real things cannot be ascertained from a comparison between their ideas and the *idea* (if there is one) of existence ; but, contrariwise, involves an affirmation, without any comparison, of the *fact* that they exist.

Dealing with his own list, Hume explained, as we have noted, that resemblance was the foundation of all philosophical relations, but also remarked that a very pervasive resemblance in nature might be too widely diffused to excite a ' natural ' relation of specific association. Identity he took to mean unchanging persistence in time, i.e. the sense of Book II. of Locke's *Essay*, and not the logical sense of Book IV. This was unfortunate since the logical law of identity is simpler than the conception of a changeless continuant, and also since the relations between logical identity and resemblance were eminently worthy of study.

Otherwise, with the exception of contrariety (cf. E. 24 n.), none of the members of the sevenfold group appears, in its nature and definition, to require special comment. Regarding contrariety, Hume remarked that it was not opposed to the fundamental requirement that all comparison implies some resemblance, since the most contrary ideas (even in the extreme case existence and non-existence) have some resemblance (if only ' exclusion from ' and ' inclusion in ' the sum of things). In principle, again, what he said regarding ' difference ' seems defensible. It would be a very bad logical division to speak of resemblance, identity, etc., *and* difference, if what was meant was resemblance *or* non-resemblance, identity *or* non-identity, and similarly for the rest of the list. On the other hand, an ambiguity attaching to ' resemblance ' weakened Hume's case. He gave no proper account of non-resemblance, since contrariety, for him, was a kind of resemblance, and since he offered no analysis of logical negation, but presupposed it, along with affirmation, throughout his argument.

Hume's sevenfold classification of relations, however, was of minor importance in comparison with his subdivision of the seven classes into those which permitted of strict demonstration and those which, depending entirely upon experience, yielded ' probability ' only. Although this subdivision, derived from Locke, had not quite the structural importance for Hume's *Treatise* that it had for Locke's *Essay*, it permeated both, and may be best approached by recalling Locke's views.

The traditional doctrine according to which Hume's highly developed empiricism and thorough-going phenomenalism show what Locke should have held had he been persistently clear-headed is, up to a point, tolerably accurate. It fails, however, to perceive that Locke, in his own way, was as stubborn a rationalist as ever he was an empiricist, and that a distinct tincture of his rationalism remained in Hume's philosophy, essentially unmodified if ultimately disowned, although the range of it was much more rigorously restricted than with Locke.

Briefly, the position was as follows. One of Locke's aims, if not his chief aim, was to ascertain wherein certainty, *real* certainty, consists (IV. iv. § 18). By 'real' certainty Locke meant *scientia* in the rationalistic sense of intuitive or demonstrative *knowledge*, fully evidenced and utterly clear; and he trenchantly separated such *knowledge* from the 'assurance' (however firm) which only 'passes for knowledge' and satisfies our 'judgment' or our sense of 'probability'. (Hence Butler, in the Introduction to his *Analogy*, made a novel point when he maintained that the *verisimile* or probable 'belonged to the subject of logic' as well as the *verum*.)

There was no hesitation about Locke's *conception* of 'perfect' knowledge. It existed, he said, if 'the congruity and incongruity of the things themselves be certainly discovered' (III. xi. § 16), and was an affair of the comparison of ideas,[1] that is to say of 'the perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy' of the same (IV. i. § 2). Such comparison was, in the last analysis, intuitive (demonstrative proof being but a chain of connected intuitions): 'Thus the mind perceives that white is not black, that a circle is not a triangle, that three are more than two and equal to one and two. Such kinds of truths the mind perceives at the first sight of the ideas together by bare intuition; without the intervention of any other idea; and this kind of knowledge is the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of' (IV. ii. § 1).

Arguing in terms of this (Cartesian) ideal of *scientia*, Locke should have concluded that wherever the comparison of ideas was impossible, or did not reveal necessity to intuition, 'knowledge' did not occur, but was replaced, at the best, by assurance or probability. And in the main, with certain exceptions, he did so argue. The chief exception was what he called 'sensitive

[1] Cf. *Port Royal Logic*, Pt. II, ch. iii, the initial definition.

knowledge'; for our sensitive certainty even in the existence of what we perceive when we perceive it, was *not* a clear perception of the agreement between some idea of sensation and the idea of existence. On the other hand, Locke did apply his doctrine, with something like relentless rigour, to all general 'experimental' propositions of physical science, as well as to all persistent substances, or sorts of substances, of common-sense belief. He was not, indeed, entirely ruthless, since substance or thinghood remained an enigma in his pages, being an inexpugnable idea although obscure (II. xxiii. § 3). Nevertheless, this idea, being obscure, could not serve the purposes of strict demonstration; and therefore all 'experimental'[1] generalizations were but 'judgment' or 'probability'. Gold, in our experience, was always yellow, heavy and soluble in *aqua regia*, but all we could say *for certain* was that these properties went constantly together. There was no clear intellectual repugnancy in gold being pink, or light, or responsive to quite different chemical tests. The most we could say would be that such a substance would not commonly be *called* 'gold' (e.g. III. vi. § 19).

In the same way Hume divided the seven types of philosophical relation into two sharply contrasted groups. 'These relations', he said (69), 'may be divided into two classes: into such as depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together, and such as may be chang'd without any change in the ideas.' Thus the equality of the angles of a triangle to two right ones is invariable 'as long as our idea remains the same'; but the contiguity or remoteness of objects in space 'depends on a hundred different accidents'. To the first-class resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality and proportions in quantity or number belonged. The remaining three, i.e. identity, situations in time and place, and causality, belonged to the second. The first class yielded 'knowledge' in the strict Cartesian sense. Its members 'depending solely upon ideas, can be the objects of knowledge and certainty' (70). The phenomena of the second class, however simple, did not depend upon the nature of the ideas concerned. They therefore yielded 'probability' only, since there was nothing in such relations 'which we cou'd foresee without the help of our memory and experience' (*ibid.*).

In the *Enquiry* (E. 25) the technical terms 'relations of

[1] Cf. IV, iii, § 29, where the reference was to cause rather than to substance. For the phrase 'experimental knowledge', see IV, vi, § 7.

ideas' and 'matters of fact' were habitually employed to describe these two contrasted classes, and the same language, although not yet hardened into explicit terminology, may be found in the *Treatise*. 'The operations of human understanding', we there read, 'divide themselves into two kinds, the comparing of ideas, and the inferring of matter of fact' (463). Hume may have remembered Butler's distinction (*Analogy*, Pt. II, viii.) between 'abstract truth' and 'matter of fact' (cf. G. IV. 399); and Mandeville had said (I. 122) that 'there is no argument so convincing as Matter of Fact'.[1] In controversy (e.g. 464 n.) Hume sometimes designated 'relations of ideas' by the term 'relations' *simpliciter*.

Hume therefore defined the *ideal* of perfect 'knowledge' precisely in Locke's sense; and there is no evidence that he ever rejected the legitimacy of this *conception* although, for particular purposes, he was sometimes prepared to extend the application of the words 'truth' and 'reason' to probable causal 'proofs' (e.g. 448: 'Truth is of two kinds, consisting either in the discovery of the proportions of ideas, consider'd as such, or in the conformity of our ideas of objects to their real existence'), and although, as a sceptic, he endeavoured to show by various oblique arguments that even 'knowledge' eventually degenerated into 'probability' (181). Indeed, it is surely very significant that in the very act of asserting this sceptical conclusion he said that 'knowledge and probability are of such contrary and disagreeing natures that they cannot well run insensibly into each other, and that because they will not divide, but must be either entirely present, or entirely absent' (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, Hume set himself to show that the domain of this 'knowledge' was much more exiguous than even Locke had supposed. The relations of resemblance, contrariety, and degrees in quality, he said, were 'discoverable at first sight, and fall more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration' (70). The brunt of the claim to systematic knowledge or science, therefore, fell upon 'the proportions of quantity or number' (*ibid.*), that is to say upon geometry, arithmetic and algebra; and Hume, admitting that algebra and arithmetic were 'possest of a precise standard' (71)

[1] Cf. Shaftesbury (I, 44): 'the specious Pretext of moral Certainty, and *Matter of Fact*'; Locke (II, 1, § 10): 'he that would not deceive himself, ought to build his hypothesis on matter of fact'; Hobbes (III, 368): 'history . . . the only proof of matter of fact.'

maintained that geometry could not reach such precision, since it depended ultimately upon sensible appearances far too vague for 'the prodigious minuteness of which nature is susceptible' (*ibid.*). This view of geometry, it is true, was changed in the *Enquiry* and was replaced by the statement that geometrical propositions 'are discoverable by the mere operation of thought without dependence upon what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there were never a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would forever retain their certainty and evidence' (E. 25). But this tamer view is difficult to reconcile with Hume's phenomenalism.

Obviously, as the sphere of 'knowledge' contracted, the sphere of 'probability' proportionately increased. What had 'passed for knowledge' had to be interpreted as mere 'matter of fact'; and the greater part of Hume's philosophy was concerned with the reputed *inferences* of this order. As he pointed out (73) the *perceived* relations, of identity and of time and place, were not *reasoning*—he went too far in describing them as 'a mere passive admission of the impressions thro' the organs of sensation' (*ibid.*)—and so he went about to contrast the experimental inferences which depended upon memory and experience with those that depended upon 'the proportion of ideas considered as such'. In other words, the bulk of his argument was concerned with common-sense expectation. ''Tis only *causation*, which produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas followed or preceded by any other existence' (73 *sq.*).

Hume's success in this elaborate enterprise of exhibiting the nature and the full force of the experimental method is a question for the sequel of the present commentary. In this place, however, we should consider his criterion of the fundamental distinction between 'knowledge' and 'probability', that is to say, his distinction between the rationalistic implications of 'ideas considered as such' and the experimental inferences which might alter although the 'ideas' remained unchanged.

As every philosophical tyro knows, Kant solemnly suspended all metaphysicians from their offices until such time as they had tackled the question, 'How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible'; [1] and there is no doubt that Kant, in doing so, was dealing profoundly with a problem of profound moment.

[1] *Prolegomena*, Mahaffy's translation, p. 29.

Nevertheless, it seems important to notice that the less truculent, although not less central, formulation of Hume suggests, in many ways, a simpler and a better account of the problem than Kant's own.

In the first place, the importance of Kant's distinction between ' analytic ' and ' synthetic ' propositions seems greatly exaggerated. According to him, an analytic proposition was really a tautology since it asserted a predicate already contained in the definition of the subject. It merely affirmed that S, by definition pqr, was p. Yet, as Locke saw very clearly when he distinguished between ' trifling ' (i.e. analytic) propositions and ' instructive ' ones (IV, viii.), the visible connexions between ' ideas ' (i.e. the logical implications of their essences) need not be, and in important cases, were not, analytic. It seems probable that Kant was misled by the language of Hume's *Enquiry*, where it was stated that the contrary of any ' matter of fact ' was always possible because it could never imply a contradiction (E. 25) (cf. *Treatise*, 80).[1] Granting, however, that Hume gave occasion to Kant's interpretation, the *principle* enunciated in the *Treatise* did not imply that chains of intuitions into the connexions of ideas were necessarily *analytic*; and Hume's examples from arithmetic and from algebra would have been self-stultifying if there had been this implication, whether or not Hume himself clearly perceived the point.

In the second place (which may be the same thing viewed from a different angle) Kant seems to have assumed that synthesis *a posteriori* (i.e. in experience) needs no explaining, while synthesis *a priori* does ; and therefore it is essential to notice the simpler form in which Locke, and Hume in the *Treatise*, put all such questions. According to their simpler way of philosophizing, everything depends upon the nature of the evidence at our disposal. If we perceive a dozen eggs in a basket we can infer that they might be separated into two groups of six, or into three groups of four, because we can infer such proportions by incontestable intuitions. The fact that ' existence ' enters is, as such, *nihil ad rem* ; and if the eggs were smashed, the implications of arithmetic would not

[1] Cf. W. J. s'Gravesande, *Mathematical Elements of Natural Philosophy* (Eng. trans., 2nd ed., London, 1726), I, p. xiv : ' All Mathematical Reasonings turn upon the Comparison of Quantities, and their Truth is evidenced by implying a Contradiction in a contrary Proposition '.

be affected, although we should no longer have a dozen eggs to deal with. On the other hand, if we argue that because bread nourished yesterday it must nourish to-morrow, the evidence is entirely different, not simply because matter of fact is different from abstract relationships, but fundamentally because the evidence in such matter of fact is the brute circumstance that bread has behaved in this way during the past. There is no relevant connexion intuitively evident to our minds as in the case of arithmetic. Therefore, because the type of evidence contained in ' relations of ideas ' is lacking, generalizations concerning ' matter of fact ' co-existences and sequences *must* have a different foundation, not primarily because they have to do with ' existence '—for in arithmetic we may very well count actual things—but because the ideas or essences which characterize them do not have visibly necessary *causal* implications although they *do* have visibly necessary arithmetical implications.

Hume's preliminary account of substance and mode (15 *sqq.*) may be discussed much more briefly. He rejected Locke's ' obscure ' idea of substance on the ground that it could not be derived from any impression whatsoever (16, cf. 232 and 633). Therefore, he said, the yellowness, weight, etc., of gold must be regarded as ' a collection of simple ideas that are united by the imagination ' (*ibid.*). In short, the ' substance ' of much metaphysical theory, especially of scholastic theory (221), was an ' unintelligible chimera ' (222), although bodies (187) and minds (218) in the concrete had plausible, if ultimately unsatisfactory, claims to be regarded as manifest realities.

Regarding modes—which Locke (II. xii. § 4) had defined as ' such complex ideas which, however compounded, contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as dependences on, or affections of substances '—Hume was content to say that they represented ' qualities ' which were either, like beauty, non-constitutive or else, like ' a dance ' ' dispers'd in different subjects ' (17). These expressions were hardly consistent with the criticism of abstract ideas to which we must now proceed.

§ IV. Abstract Ideas

In the Section on abstract ideas (17 *sqq.*) Hume said that his sole intention was to confirm the arguments with which Berkeley had disputed the received opinion on this matter. It is necessary, therefore, to consider what Berkeley had said.

Berkeley's arguments were set forth in the Introduction to his *Principles* (§§ 6 *sqq.*), and in the seventh Dialogue of his *Alciphron*. We are here chiefly concerned with the statement in the first edition of the *Principles*—for the second edition (1734) contained a dubiously consistent addition—and in the first two editions (1734) of the *Alciphron*.

The third edition (1752) omitted the three fundamental sections which Hume had in mind.

It seems probable that Hume relied on his memory, and did not write with the text of Berkeley before him.

Berkeley's thesis developed out of criticism of Locke who had held (III. iii.) that although 'all things that exist are only particulars' and 'universality belongs not to things', words become general 'by being made the signs of general ideas', and that these general or *abstract* ideas 'are general when they are set up as the representatives of many particular things' which they 'signify' or 'stand for'. He also said (§ 11) that 'the signification they have is nothing but a relation that, by the mind of man, is added to them'.

Berkeley's counter-argument consisted of two parts, a negative and a positive. In the negative part he denied the possibility of 'abstracting' or 'prescinding' in either of the two cases in which it was usually held to be feasible, viz. in the abstraction of 'qualities' (such as shape and colour) which are never found separate in nature, and in the formation of an abstract noun (say 'man') distinct from the particular men and women included in the class 'human beings'.

Regarding case, the first, Berkeley argued that we could no more picture (or otherwise *imagine*) a quality in the abstract than we could see (or otherwise *perceive*) it in the abstract. Thus Alciphron was repeatedly asked (e.g. A. vii. § 6) to shut his eyes, and so to 'assist his meditations' in a futile attempt to visualize 'force' apart from 'body, motion and outward sensible effects'.

His negative argument regarding terms like 'man' or 'triangle' pursued an equally simple course. Locke himself had admitted (IV. vii. § 9) that it required 'some pains and skill to form the general idea of a triangle . . . for it must be neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural nor scalenon: but all and none of these at once. In effect it is something imperfect that cannot exist; an idea wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together'. This kind of inconsistency, said Berkeley, was just

as absurd in visual imagery as in actual vision. It was just as impossible to image or to dream a triangle which was *neither* oblique—,acute—,or right-angled (or, again, which was all these at once) as to draw such a monstrosity upon paper. The dream-triangle must have a determinate dream-shape. It could not be ' all and none of these at once '.

Hume accepted this negative argument without any reservations, and said that ' to tell the truth ' he ' placed his chief confidence ' in it (24). The image of a line, he maintained, is precisely what it is. Its length and its shade of colour must therefore be completely determinate (18 *sqq.*, cf. 161). Again, the circumstance that ideas have less ' vivacity ' than impressions—and this alone distinguished the two—did not imply that ideas, any more than impressions, could have indeterminate or self-contradictory properties.

Before passing to the positive part of Berkeley's argument, and to Hume's attempted confirmation of it, we may properly offer some comments on the negative part. Here the principal questions are (1) whether a non-sensory but intellectual abstraction may not be possible and (2) whether either ideas or impressions do in fact have the complete and entire individuation that Berkeley and Hume attributed to them.

(1) Berkeley and Hume were correct in maintaining, against Locke, that an abstract *image* was a psychological absurdity. They should, however, have considered other opponents besides Locke—for example, Malebranche, who had said that ' les vérités abstraites ' ' n'ont point d'images ou de traces instituées de la nature pour les répresenter ' (V. ii.), or Kenelm Digby, who had declared that precisely the opposite of the ancient adage ' Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit prius in sensu ' must be true, since there could not be an *image*, say, of a ' half ' although we know that the whole is greater than the part.[1] In Hume's view, to be sure, all this talk about ' spiritual and refin'd perceptions ' was but a cloak to ' cover absurdities ' (72); but even he was prepared, when he chose, to distinguish between ' that *quality*, which operates, and the *subject*, on which it is plac'd ' (279).

Indeed, when Berkeley, in the second edition of his *Principles*, admitted that ' a man may *consider* a figure merely as triangular, without attending to the particular qualities of the angles or relations of the sides. *So far he may abstract* '

[1] *Demonstratio immortalitatis animae rationalis* (1664), p. 216; cf. *Port Royal Logic*, Pt. I, ch. i.

(I.P. § 16)—the solution subsequently endorsed by J. S. Mill [1]—he, in effect, threw up the sponge ; for, granting that attention may neglect a good deal, it can hardly neglect *everything* except *mere* triangularity either in a perceived or in an imaged figure ; and therefore the question is not exhausted by the discussion of what we can perceive or image in isolation, even if it be conceded, as Hobbes said (I. 13) that ' sensible moniments ' are necessary to all abstract thought : ' for no man is able to remember quantities without sensible and present measures, nor colours without sensible and present patterns, nor number without the name of numbers disposed in order and learned by heart ' (*ibid.*). Indeed Hume himself, in later life, actually said that

' when we reason upon *general* subjects, one may justly affirm, that our speculations can scarcely ever be too fine, provided they be just. . . . General reasonings seem intricate, merely because they are general ; nor is it easy for the bulk of mankind to distinguish, in a great number of particulars, that common circumstance in which they all agree, or to extract it, pure and unmixed, from the other superfluous circumstances . . . . They cannot enlarge their view to those universal propositions which comprehend under them an infinite number of individuals, and include a whole science in a single theorem. But . . . it is the chief business of philosophers to regard the general course of things ' (G. III. 288).

(2) The complete determinateness of impressions (sensa) and of ideas (images) is much more problematical than Hume or Berkeley supposed. According to them, images and sensa plainly exist, and therefore must be completely determinate, on pain of contravening the Law of Excluded Middle. Yet as Hume inconsistently admitted (33), ' many of our ideas are so obscure, that 'tis almost impossible even for the mind, which forms them, to tell exactly their nature and composition ' ; and many philosophers aver that although processes of sensing, imaging, and ' thinking ' undoubtedly occur, it does not follow that sensa, thoughts and images are fully individuated entities. Thus, according to W. E. Johnson, ' Locke and Berkeley were both wrong even where they agreed ; inasmuch as neither images nor perceptions reflect the concreteness and particularity of the individual thing, which should be described as determinate, in contrast to the indeterminateness of the mental processes '.[2]

Of course Hume and Berkeley would have said that this

[1] *Examination* of Hamilton, pp. 393 *sqq.* [2] *Logic*, Part I, p. xxix.

vagueness or indeterminateness concerned the ' reference ', not the existence, of ideas, and that we had to do with the *use* even more than with the *look* of them. This reflection may lead us to consider the positive part of their thesis.

Berkeley denied the reality of *abstraction*, but he did not deny the reality of *generalization*. On the contrary, he offered a positive theory of the latter process which greatly elaborated the hints that Locke had dropped regarding this part of the subject. The essence of Berkeley's theory of generalization was that generality is entirely a *relational* property, whereby some particular idea (for all ideas are particular) comes to signify, or represent, other particular ideas through the relation of similarity, all such relations being ' extrinsic denominations '. This doctrine of relational generality was supplemented (not altogether clearly) by a theory of substitute signs which ' stood for ' what they signified.

' I believe we shall acknowledge ', said Berkeley (I.P. § 12), ' that an idea, which considered in itself is particular, becomes general, by being made to represent or stand for all other particular ideas of the same sort. To make this plain by an example. Suppose a geometrician is demonstrating the method of cutting a line in two equal parts. He draws, for instance, a black line of an inch in length: this, which in itself is a particular line, is nevertheless *with regard to its signification* general, since, as it is there used it represents all particular lines whatsoever: so that what is demonstrated of it is demonstrated of all lines, or, in other words, of a line in general. And as *that particular line* becomes general by being made a sign, so the *name* line, which taken absolutely is particular, by being a sign, is made general.'

Again, Berkeley's theory of substitute signs contained much of great interest. A competent practising mathematician, he noted that, in algebra for instance, the attention is usually occupied with the signs themselves, so that ' though a particular quantity be marked by each letter, yet to proceed right it is not requisite that in every step each letter suggest to your thoughts that particular quantity it was appointed to stand for ' (I.P. § 19). ' We substitute sounds for thoughts, and written letters for sounds; emblems, symbols and hieroglyphics, for things too obscure to strike, and too various or too fleeting to be retained. . . . Hence the use of models and diagrams ' (A. vii. § 13). ' It is not, therefore, by mere contemplation of *particular things*, and much less of their *abstract* general ideas, that the mind makes her progress, but by an apposite choice and skilful management of signs ' (*l.c.*, § 11).

Berkeley also denied that words (i.e. noises used as signs) serve for communication only. They have, he said, a direct emotive function. 'If I mistake not, it will be found that, when language is once grown familiar, the hearing of the sounds or sight of the characters is oft immediately attended with those passions which at first were wont to be produced by the intervention of ideas that are now quite omitted. May we not, for example, be affected with the promise of a *good thing*, though we have not an idea of what it is?' (I.P. § 20). Similarly, he argued in the *Alciphron*, that since 'force', although non-picturable, may be usefully employed in science, 'grace' (which is equally non-picturable) may be useful in theology. And the following passages may specially have influenced Hume: 'Words may not be insignificant, although they should not, every time they are used, excite the ideas they signify in our minds; it being sufficient that we have it in our power to substitute things or ideas for their signs when there is occasion (A. vii. § 5). 'They [in this instance numeral names] direct us in the disposition and management of our affairs, and are of such necessary use that we should not know how to do without them' (*ibid.*).

Both Meinong [1] and Husserl [2] remark that Hume's theory of representation, although professedly borrowed from Berkeley, was wholly nominalistic while Berkeley's was not. Hume therefore mis-described Berkeley's theory in one particular when he said it was the view 'that all general ideas are nothing but particular ones, annex'd to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification, and makes them recal upon occasion other individuals, which are similar to them' (17, cf. 93). This complete nominalism may have been due to Hobbes, whose opinion was that 'this word *universal* is never the name of any thing existent in nature, nor of any idea or phantasm formed in the mind, but always the name of some word or name' (I. 20). Hume may, however, have been simply inadvertent, since so much in Berkeley's theory, as well as in Locke's, referred to the office of general names.

In any case, Hume's intention obviously was to corroborate Berkeley's positive view. We notice, he said, a resemblance between certain objects of frequent occurrence, and associate a certain name with 'the compass of that collection' (22). Through this association, or custom, the hearing of the name

[1] Hume-Studien I, *Sitzungsberichte* of the Vienna Academy, No. 87, pp. 218 *sq.*

[2] *Logische Untersuchungen*, II, 183 *sq.*

revives the idea of some particular member of the collection, and the other members of the collection are not actually associated but are present 'in power' (20), i.e. we 'keep ourselves in a readiness to survey any of them, as we may be prompted by a present design or necessity' (*ibid.*).

In short, he attempted to explain why and how Berkeley's positive theory might be true, and like many modern psychologists, he discovered that the indirect evidence for the existence of 'potentialities' or 'psychical dispositions' is the strongest. Thus he remarked that if the word 'triangle' is associated with all three-sided plane rectilinear figures, the ideas of scalene and other non-equiangular triangles 'immediately crowd in upon us' [1] if through inadvertence we argued as if all triangles were equiangular because the particular specimen in front of us was (21). And since the *words* 'figure', 'triangle', etc., are different, Hume found no appreciable difficulty in the different 'compass' of genera in comparison with their species.

For the rest, he had only, he thought, to show that his analysis was conformable to general psychological verity. 'To explain the ultimate causes of our mental actions is impossible' (22). All that could be done was to describe analogous tendencies; and representation, as above defined, *was*, he said, analogous to other instances of association. To choose the stock (Cartesian) example, we cannot in general picture 1,000 entities clearly, but we have the power of enumerating the entities in detail if we have 'an adequate idea of the decimals' (23). In rote memory, a single word may revive a line or even a whole poem (*ibid.*). The habits associated with certain words very often prevent us from talking nonsense [2] (*ibid.*)—for few, however careless, would say that 'in war the weaker always have recourse to conquest' (instead of 'to negotiation'), although terms which are wholly insignificant and unintelligible' (224) *may* mislead us in this way. And, generally, a 'genius' has 'a kind of magical faculty' (24) for 'picking out' what is apposite to the occasion, while others, who are not geniuses, have considerable powers of the same order.

As we have seen, however, Hume did not profess the same entire confidence in the positive as in the negative part of his argument; and certainly the positive argument involved

[1] Bolingbroke's phrase, *D. P.*, xi (p. 173).

[2] Cf. *Port Royal Logic*, Pt. I, ch. xiv, on names and their 'customs'.

serious difficulties for his philosophy. For, firstly, potentialities are neither impressions nor ideas; secondly, the relational theory of generality, by substituting very abstract relations for abstract images, did not square with 'impressions and ideas' any more than the view it supplanted; thirdly, as Berkeley unintentionally indicated when he spoke of 'representing or standing for all other particular ideas *of the same sort*' (I.P. § 12) it would appear that resemblance itself implies agreement in certain abstract respects, qualities, or 'universal' features.

It is difficult to see how Hume could have dealt with either the first or the second of these objections. He had built his sensory phenomenalism upon Gassendi's 'Omnis idea orsum ducit a sensibus'[1] or upon Hobbes's assertion that 'the first beginnings of knowledge are the phantasms of sense and imagination' (I. 66) and he refused to admit (as Kant later pointed out) that what *begins with* sense-experience need not, in all respects, *come out of* sense-experience.[2] Therefore, in strictness, anything that was not an impression or an idea was nothing at all. Even the invisible 'ties' of association were occult and mystical.

Hume did, however, attempt a reply to the third objection, and maintained that resemblance itself was always prior to any abstract identity of respects.

'"Tis evident", he said (637), 'that even different simple ideas may have a similarity or resemblance to each other; nor is it necessary, that the point or circumstance of resemblance shou'd be distinct or separable from that in which they differ. *Blue* and *green* are different simple ideas but are more resembling than *blue* and *scarlet*; tho' their perfect simplicity excludes all possibility of separation or distinction. "Tis the same case with particular sounds, and tastes and smells. These admit of infinite resemblances upon the general appearance and comparison, without having any common circumstance the same. And of this we may be certain, even from the very abstract terms *simple idea*. They comprehend all simple ideas under them. These resemble each other in their simplicity. And yet from their very nature, which excludes all composition, this circumstance, in which they resemble, is not distinguishable nor separable from the rest. "Tis the same case with all the degrees in any quality. They are all resembling, and yet the quality, in any individual, is not distinct from the degree' (637).

[1] *Institutio Logica*, Pt. I, Canon ii, quoted *Port Royal Logic*, I, Pt. I, ch. i.

[2] *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction.

This explanation seems to have grown out of a conversation with Hutcheson (B. I. 118 *sq.*), but Hume had dealt with the same point in his valiant effort to explain away the '*distinction of reason*' which is so much talk'd of, and is so little understood, in the schools' (24).

For Descartes the *distinctio rationis* (I. 153, IV. 349 [1] and other places) was a distinction 'per abstractionem intellectus' (III. 421) and was in some degree 'inadequate', and definitely opposed to *distinctio realis*. It was *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*, not *rationis ratiocinatae* (IV. 349 *sq.*). In the *Port Royal Logic*,[2] to which (43) Hume specifically referred, this 'discrimination of reason' (*ratione non re*) was illustrated by the way in which, observing an equilateral triangle, we may 'detach our minds' from its equiangularity, then from its triangularity, and so eventually reach extension itself (Pt. I, ch. v).

Hume illustrated it by 'the distinction betwixt figure and body figur'd, motion and the body mov'd' (24) and discussed the relation between shape and colour. True to his governing principle that there could be *no* differences which were not separately perceptible (and therefore separately imaginable since imagination was the mimic of sense) he concluded that a 'distinction of reason' *must* be explicable in terms of association.

What, then, of the facts upon which the 'distinction' was based? Two billiard balls precisely similar in size and shape, may clearly differ in colour; and one of them, the red one, may be precisely similar in colour to a very unspherical boiled lobster. Hume's answer was that 'we view them in different aspects, according to the resemblances of which they are susceptible' (25). In any perception or image the colour was not distinguishable (because it was not separable) from the shape, and the shape was not distinguishable from the colour. What was true was only that the red billiard ball was externally related, by similarity, to a series s′ of spherical entities and also to a series s″ of red entities, while the white billiard ball was externally related, by similarity, to the same series s′ but also to a different series s‴ of white entities.

If Hume's discussion explains the point, and compels a revision of what we formerly inferred regarding association by resemblance, 'tis well. I cannot see that it does.

[1] Edition Adam et Tannery. [2] i.e. L'Art de penser.

CHAPTER III

SPACE, TIME AND EXTERNAL EXISTENCE

HUME'S commentators [1] often say that his talents were unsuited to an adequate discussion of space, time and mathematics in their relations to physics; and it is true that he was not a mathematician. It seems apposite, indeed, to say of him what Pascal said of the Chevalier de M.: 'Il a très-bon esprit, mais il n'est pas géomètre; et même il ne comprend pas qu'une ligne mathématique soit divisible a l'infini, et croit fort bien entendre qu'elle est composée de points en nombre fini, et jamais je n'ai pu l'en tirer: si vous pouviez le faire, on le rendroit parfait.' [2]

On the other hand, no philosopher can neglect these problems; and they permeated the thought of Hume's time. Theologians discussed Newton's 'absolute space' together with its alleged similitude to God's sensorium; and Clarke, in his controversy with Leibniz [3]—according to Voltaire, 'peut-être le plus beau monument que nous avons des combats littéraires' [4]—had defended the said similitude (*1st Reply*, § 3; *2nd*, § 3; *3rd*, § 10). Newtonians and Cartesians discussed *pro* and *con*, whether matter was distinct from the space which it occupied, many Newtonians believing that the existence of a vacuum or void could be demonstrated both from the implications of motion and by experiments such as Pascal's at the Puy-de-Dôme, and Locke being convinced that at least the *idea* of a vacuum was 'clear' (II. xiii. § 22).

Again the times resounded with discussions of the infinite. According to Malebranche, infinity was the grandest proof of God's existence (III., Pt. II, vi); according to Locke, the idea of infinity was merely a 'power of repeating without end' (II. xvii. § 6). The theory of fluxions and of infinitesimals was as familiar to Hume's age (and as little understood) as the

[1] e.g. N. K. Smith, *Mind*, N.S., No. XIV, p. 150.
[2] Quoted by Todhunter: *A History of the Mathematical Theory of Probability*, p. 11. [3] English translation, 1717.
[4] *Physique de Newton*, Pt. I, ch. ii.

Theory of Relativity is to ours. The pamphleteers discussed it as well as writers who were literary and also learned persons, like Fontenelle in the Preface to his *Elémens de la géometrie de l'infini* (1727); and when, some little time later, Maclaurin replied to Berkeley's *Analyst* (1734) and *Defence of Free Thinking in Mathematics* (1735) he made certain very significant admissions.

'Nor can it be denied', his biographer wrote,[1] 'that the terms *infinite* and *infinitesimal* were become much too familiar to mathematicians, and had been abused both in *arithmetic* and *geometry*: At one time introducing and palliating real absurdities, and, at others, giving these sciences an affected mysterious air which does not belong to them. To remedy this growing evil . . . Mr. *Maclaurin* found it necessary, in demonstrating the principles of fluxions, to reject altogether those exceptionable terms, and to suppose no other than finite determinate quantities, such as *Euclid* treats of in his geometry.'

Again, the properly philosophical theory of the *ideality* of space and of time had been asserted, not only by Berkeley or by Leibniz, but by many lesser authors now little known. Edmund Law in his *Enquiry* (1734) argued that actual immensity was nonsense (p. 11) and that the idea of space 'is what we ourselves have made it, viz. an abstract idea' (p. 80) and 'is not really natural and necessary, but acquired, and owing rather to Habit than any unavoidable Report of Sense' (p. 47). Dr. Isaac Watts, following Dr. Henry More, had been content to regard the immensities as riddles which could not be real.[2] And Robert Green, in his *Principles of Natural Philosophy*, had (1712) asserted a very thorough-going phenomenalism, having affirmed e.g. (ch. II, § 3) that 'our Reasonings upon Nature are not to be thought imaginary, neither is Nature itself to be accounted so, tho' all were resolved into our Perceptions, since our Perceptions have a real Existence, and are as justly entitled to the Being called and esteemed Nature, as anything that can be supposed external to us'. Green also ridiculed the 'mathematick demonstration' of a vacuum, citing Borelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Mr. Raphson (*De Spatio Reali*) and Mr. Keil (*Introductio ad veram Physicam*) on the margin (ch. IV, § 6), and affirmed, like Collier in his *Clavis Universalis* (1713), that matter was only an 'abstracted idea' and 'creature of the mind' (ch. vi, § 2).

[1] *Life* prefixed to Maclaurin's *Account*, pp. xvii *sq.*
[2] See Cassirer: *Das Erkenntnis-Problem*, II, 453.

Consequently there was nothing presumptuous in Hume's (scarcely avoidable) excursion into these subjects. It seems probable, indeed, that in his earlier years, he was of opinion that 'religion and politics, and consequently metaphysics and morals . . . form the most considerable branches of science. Mathematics and natural philosophy . . . are not half so valuable' (G. III. 187). In the conclusion to the *Enquiry*, however, all except mathematical and experimental books were to be 'committed to the flames' (E. 165), and in the *History*, in addition to what he said of Newton, Hume declared that Galileo was greater than Bacon (ch. 49, App.) and that Napier, the inventor of logarithms, deserved the title of 'great man' more than any other Scotsman (ch. 58).

In any case, Hume long retained his interest in these subjects, although he was diffident of his capacity concerning them. As we saw, he wrote, but suppressed, a dissertation on geometry, very late in his philosophical career. 'I happened to meet with Lord Stanhope, who was in this Country,' he said (H. 230), 'and he convinced me, that either there was some Defect in the Argument or in its perspicuity: I forget which.' Now Philip, second Earl of Stanhope, was a very considerable mathematician—'no better in England', d'Alembert wrote to Hume (admitting that he spoke from hearsay) in the course of a letter in which he proposed to nominate Stanhope for election as a foreign associate to the French Academy, and, failing Stanhope, 'M. de La Grange géomètre de Berlin'.[1] And it is interesting to observe that the Hume manuscripts in Edinburgh [2] contain two short disquisitions upon the foundations of geometry, neither of which appears to be in Hume's handwriting, and both of which are criticisms of Hume himself.

This part of Hume's 'system' as he called it, consisted of two successive steps. The first was a professedly irrefragable (31) *demonstration* that space and time cannot be infinitely divisible, the second a positive theory of their nature. For convenience of exposition, I propose to consider the cases of space and time separately.

The 'demonstration' may be represented as follows: (1) Whatever can be divided *in infinitum* must consist of an infinite number of parts (26); (2) we do not and cannot frame infinite ideas since our capacities are always finite; (3) our ideas, if

[1] *Letters of Eminent Persons to David Hume*, pp. 215 *sq.*
[2] Royal Society, Edin.

just, are adequate representations of objects, and therefore have the 'relations, contradictions and agreements' that the objects have (29). Consequently, (4) since our ideas or representations must be composed of a finite number of constituents, the space they adequately represent must also be composed of a finite number of constituents, which must ultimately be indivisible.

This alleged demonstration appears to be quite exceptionally question-begging, as may be seen from an examination of its several parts.

(1) In a footnote (30) Hume dealt, very cavalierly, with the objection that infinite divisibility did not presuppose an infinite number of *aliquot* (i.e. of constituent) parts, and called the objection 'frivolous'. This frivolous view, however, was the opinion of most good Newtonians (cf. Clarke to Leibniz, p. 43 and p. 77) since they held that space was indivisible even in thought and consequently could not be *parted*, the phrase 'division into parts' being 'a figurative abuse of the word parts' (p. 79). Hume's rejection of this possibility appears to be a mere *petitio*, as was stated, very patiently, in one of the two short disquisitions among the Edinburgh manuscripts to which I have referred. 'Two contiguous checquers of a Chase-board', the writer explained, 'touch one another in a line; on one side of the line the board is black, on the other it is white; between the black and the white, there is no distance, no breadth; they touch in a line which is neither broad nor thick, but is long; it is no part of the board, it covers no part of it; neither is it a part of the Surface; it is neither on the black nor on the white; but the limit of the black on the one side and of the white on the other.' And similarly: 'At any corner of a checquer two of the lines, which bound it, meet in a point. . . . It is a point, it has neither length, nor breadth nor thickness. It is no part of either of the lines, but a limit to each of them.'

(2) The doctrine *Mens nostra, eo quod finita sit, nihil certi scire potest de infinito*,[1] to quote the form of it which the Jesuits condemned in their list of prohibited Cartesian propositions, has been employed in various ways that are mostly fallacious. Hume's form of the argument (26 *sq.*) was simply that there was no difference between an idea of infinity and an infinite idea. This would follow if ideas could never be

[1] Ninth axiom in the *Port Royal Logic*, Pt. IV, ch. vii.

anything but slavish copies, but it had no intelligible connexion with Hume's relational theory of representation or with any other serious attempt to analyse the intent and significance of 'ideas'.

(3) The precision of correspondence here asserted between 'objects' and 'ideas' might be a legitimate implication of pure phenomenalism, but is unintelligible in terms of the halting and debased phenomenalism which characterized much of Hume's argument at this point. A man who could say *both* that 'as long as we confine our speculations to *the appearances* of objects to our senses . . . we are safe from all difficulties' (638) and *also* that sensible appearance might deceive, '*seeming even to the eye*' (632) to be what it is not, could say a good deal; and in the present connexion he said it. His opinion was (48) that 'sound reason convinces us that there are bodies *vastly* more minute than those which appear to the senses' (although not infinitely more minute), that our ideas are capable of subtleties like 'the smallest atom of the animal spirits of an insect a thousand times less than a mite' [1] (28) and yet that 'when you tell me of the thousandth and ten-thousandth part of a grain of sand, I have a distinct idea of these numbers and of their different proportions; but the images, which I form in my mind to represent the things themselves, are nothing different from each other, nor inferior to that image, by which I represent the grain of sand itself, which is suppos'd so vastly to exceed them' (27). In other words, we *can* 'represent' what we *cannot* picture to ourselves.

Similarly, Hume clung to (Berkeley's) *minimum visibile* and *minimum tangibile* despite his assertions that 'our senses represent as minute and uncompounded what is really great and composed of a vast multitude of parts' (28) and that microscopes and telescopes 'spread' what is apparently simple (*ibid.*). Many of his arguments, however, would not deceive a child. Thus speaking of a spot of ink, he said (27): 'Fix your eye upon that spot, and retire to such a distance, that at last you lose sight of it; 'tis plain, that the moment before it vanish'd the image or impression was perfectly indivisible.' What is *the* 'spot' if the 'impressions' form a series? If the 'image or impression' were perfectly indivisible, how

[1] The 'mite' appeared in Malebranche (I, vi) and in Berkeley (T. V., § 80, and *Hylas*, Dialogue I). Cf. Pascal's *Pensées* 72. And the *Port Royal Logic*, Pt. IV, ch. i, on the grain of sand.

could a pair of binoculars 'spread' it? And where is the proof that it is even *sensibly* indivisible? Why should the smallest perceptible spot be other than the *minimum* perceptible *area*, and very different indeed from an unextended point? Berkeley had said, indeed (T. V., § 54): 'There is a *minimum tangibile*, and a *minimum visibile*, beyond which sense cannot perceive. This every one's experience will inform him.' But experience does not, in fact, refute Locke's contrary statement (II. xv. § 9) that 'the mind is not able to frame an idea of *any* space without parts'.

(4) These remarks are plainly applicable to Hume's conclusion, but before proceeding to the second part of his 'system' of space it is necessary to remark upon an argument derived from the nature of number which Hume employed here (30) and elsewhere (e.g. 141).

The substance of this argument was that while any compound or collection may be 'considered as an unite', anything actual must either be an ultimate unit or composed of ultimate units. The 'unity which can exist alone' is therefore 'perfectly indivisible'. Hence, extension being a 'number' (more accurately a whole of parts) Hume inferred that either there is no extension at all, or else an extension composed of minima.

He cited the authority of Nicolas de Malezieu, tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, regarding him as principally responsible for the *Eléments de géometrie de Mgr. le duc de Bourgogne* (1705, Trévoux and Paris). This work was highly commended by Malebranche (VI. vi), and since it is difficult to procure in England, I propose to quote the relevant passage (p. 135) with which M. Gilson has kindly supplied me.

'D'ailleurs quand je considère attentivement l'existence des êtres, je comprends très clairement que l'existence appartient aux unités, et non pas aux nombres. Je m'explique.

'Vingt hommes n'existent que parce que chaque homme existe ;[1] le nombre n'est qu'une dénomination extérieure, ou pour mieux dire, une répétition d'unités auxquelles seules appartient l'existence ; il ne saurait jamais y avoir de nombres, s'il n'y a des unités ; il ne saurait jamais y avoir vingt hommes, s'il n'y a un homme : cela bien conçu, je vous demande : ce pied cubique de matière, est-ce une seule substance ; en sont-ce plusieurs ? Vous ne pouvez pas dire que ce soit une seule substance ; car vous ne pourriez pas seulement le diviser en deux ; si vous dites que c'en sont plusieurs, puisqu'il y en a plusieurs, ce nombre quel qu'il soit, est

[1] Cf. G. II. 433.

composé d'unités ; s'il y a plusieurs substances existantes, il faut qu'il y en ait une, et cette une ne peut en être deux ; donc la matière est composée de substances indivisibles. Voila donc notre raison réduite a d'étranges extrémités. La Géometrie nous démontre la divisibilité de la matière a l'infini et nous trouvons en même temps qu'elle est composeé d'indivisibles.'

Hume succinctly expressed the second part of his system as follows: 'The parts, into which the ideas of space and time resolve themselves, become at last indivisible, and these indivisible parts, being nothing in themselves, are inconceivable when not fill'd with something real and existent. The ideas of space and time are therefore no separate or distinct ideas, but merely those of the manner or order in which objects exist' (39 *sq.*).

Regarding space, the salient questions that arise out of this explanation are (*a*) the nature of the constituent indivisible points, and (*b*) the nature of the 'order' between them.

(*a*) Hume held that 'what is extended must have a particular figure, as square, round, triangular'; and that since tones, relishes and smells had, properly speaking, *no* shape (*ibid.*), the only points which when 'disposed in a certain manner' *had* figure were coloured and/or tangible points.

I have used this cumbrous expression 'coloured and/or tangible points' to call attention to a difficulty concerning which Hume had far too little to say, for it is not at all clear from his argument whether or not he maintained that *the same* indivisible point might be *both* coloured and tangible. In general, by speaking of 'coloured *and* tangible points' he seems to have regarded them as different. In one passage, however (34), he remarked that the disposition of the points might 'be carried beyond the objects of one sense', i.e. from sight to touch.

(*b*) Hume's fullest account of the 'order', '*manner*' (36 *sq.*) or 'disposition' called space was given in a later passage where he said (427 *sq.*):

> 'Tis obvious that the imagination can never totally forget the points of space and time in which we are existent. 'Tis also remarkable, that in the conception of those objects, which we regard as real and existent, we take them in their proper order and situation, and never leap from one object to another, which is distant from it, without running over, at least in a cursory manner, all those objects which are interpos'd betwixt them. When we reflect, therefore, on any object distant from ourselves, we are oblig'd not

only to reach it at first by passing thro' all the intermediate space betwixt ourselves and the object, but also to renew our progress every moment.'

This passage laid emphasis upon the *continuity* of imagined space, and upon the centrality of a man's *body* even in his imagining. Of perceived, as opposed to imagined space, Hume also said (429): 'Any one may easily observe that space or extension consists of a number of co-existent parts dispos'd in a certain order, and capable of being at once present to the sight or feeling.'

It is possible that this 'disposition in a certain order' was itself an echo of Cartesianism; and certainly the Jesuit Buffier,[1] criticizing the Cartesians, complained that their 'certain arangement' 'certaine disposition' and the like were only despicable substitutes for the despised scholastic 'qualities'. Be that as it may, Hume's explanation of this 'order' or 'disposition' was only to mention it. 'When we draw lines upon paper', he said, 'or any continu'd surface, there is a certain order, by which the lines run along from one point to another, that they may produce the entire impression of a curve or right line; but this order is perfectly unknown, and nothing is observed but the united appearance' (49). Similarly, he denied (52) that there was 'any such firmness in our senses or imagination, as to determine when such an order is violated or preserved'.

Yet surely the fact that we did perceive coloured and tangible space in this very distinctive order was worth some little attention. Hume, in his anxiety to show that empty space cannot be separately discerned or imaged (and therefore that it was not an isolated impression or idea, although (E. 63) he once allowed himself to say that extension was complete in itself) fell into the equally serious error of neglecting to discriminate the form *in* the visible appearance. An unknown order, or an abstracted order, is certainly not what is perceived; and Hume's denial of the 'distinction of reason' did not lessen his difficulties. He was bound to hold that space was not an impression, because it was not a separate impression. For the same reason he was bound to hold that no idea could copy it. And therefore he had no way of distinguishing this 'manner' or 'order' in which the individual minima were 'disposed' from any other manner or order, or,

[1] *Examen des préjugez vulgaires pour disposer l'esprit* (1704), Diss. vi, pp. 154 *sq.*

for that matter, from disorder. Yet the manner or order was the essence of space.

Hume had, however, certain oblique arguments to offer by way of answer to other objections. Thus he maintained:

(1) That a physical or extended point is absurd, since whatever has extension has parts, and cannot be made out of nothings; but that coloured and tangible points are genuine entities, although unextended (40).[1]

(2) That two contiguous coloured points remain two and do not coalesce. Therefore the two together are extended, compounded, and divisible, although each of them separately is unextended and indivisible. And this does not imply their penetration; for if they did interpenetrate one or other of them would be annihilated (40 *sqq.*).

(3) That the question may be illuminated by consideration of the nature of geometry.

(4) That space, destitute of visible or tangible points, is nonsense and nothingness. We can have no idea of it, and therefore, in this sense, no idea of a vacuum.

Regarding vacua[2] Hume had to meet Locke's argument that at least we have a clear idea of the term, and also the stock arguments from the supposed implications of motion, and from the possibility of conceiving the objects inside a room to be annihilated although the walls retained their relative position.[3] To answer these contentions he 'took the matter pretty deep' (55), and tried to offer a more precise analysis of the relevant ideas.

Visually speaking, he said, the idea of a vacuum was the idea of a completely dark extension, and darkness (*ibid.*) was not an idea of anything. It marked the *absence* of optical stimulation; and it was a mistake to conclude that there could be an idea of a vacuum, just because there might be a clear similarity between the disposition and distances of luminous points set in darkness and their disposition and distances when there was a continuous expanse of visible points between them. All that happened was that our senses were similarly affected, the angles of incidence, etc., being the same (cf. Malebranche, I. ix. div. 3). In the case of

[1] Thus replying to the *Port Royal Logic* (IV, i), 'two non-extensions cannot form an extension'.

[2] Cf. the *Port Royal Logic* (versus Gassendi), Pt. III, ch. xix, Sect. iv.

[3] The 'old Cartesian' argument. Law's *Enquiry*, p. 76. And frequently in the literature.

touch, a parallel argument could be found by 'imagining a man to be supported in the air, and to be softly convey'd along by some invisible power' (56), i.e. without sensing any tangible points.

These 'deep' arguments seem confused. As Locke had clearly shown (II. viii. § 4) it is illegitimate to infer that blackness or darkness are not positive sensations simply because they may be caused by the absence or sudden cessation of visual stimuli; and it is quite plain that there are dark expanses which *look* extended, i.e. which, phenomenalistically speaking, *are* extended. Again, Hume himself withdrew his remarks concerning the angle of incidence (636) on that very ground, viz. 'that these angles are not known to the mind, and consequently can never discover the distance'.

Hume pointed out certain obvious analogies between time and space. The fact of motion, he said, implies that time is infinitely indivisible if space is (31, cf. 55 *sqq.*); therefore the nonsense of infinite divisibility had to be avoided in both cases. Again, 'longer' in time implies more temporal parts just as 'further' in space implies more spatial parts (35 *sq.*); and empty time has the same logical status as empty space.

He may, however, have remembered Leibniz's pregnant remark in his controversy with Clarke (p. 231) that 'from extension to duration *non valet consequentia*'; and in any case he discussed many of the special features of time. Firstly, he pointed out that *all* ideas and impressions are temporal, although some only are spatial (34 *sq.*); secondly, that succession in time differs from the co-existent disposition of spatial points; thirdly, that the measurement of temporal equalities is much more question-begging than that of spatial magnitudes (48). He also maintained that time, in many ways, gave clearer evidence of the truth of his arguments than space did. 'If each moment, as it succeeds another, were not perfectly single and indivisible, there would be an infinite number of co-existent moments, or parts of time; which I believe will be allowed to be an arrant contradiction' (31, cf. E. 157). Again, when five notes were played successively upon a flute, it was particularly evident, he thought (36), that time was not a sixth impression additional to the five notes, but only the 'manner' 'in which the different sounds make their appearance' (37).

Hume endorsed the argument (37, cf. 65) that an unchanging object, if there were one, would be strictly non-temporal,

on the ground that we could not be aware of time except in so far as we were aware of succession; and he supported his argument with an explicit acceptance (35 n.) of Locke's guess (II. xiv. § 9) that we had a private physiological tempo in this affair (something like revolving images in a lantern) and of Locke's contention that a burning stick, revolved very rapidly, appeared to be non-successive. In this identification of time with noticeable change, however, Hume, along with Locke and Berkeley (P. § 98), seems to have been wrong; for the hypothesis of a persistent unchanging object is quite precisely the hypothesis of something that *endures* and therefore is manifestly temporal.

The section (427 *sqq.*) on imaginative distance in space and in time was much fuller regarding time than regarding space. All our imagining, Hume there remarked, is conducted from the standpoint of the present; and every part of time 'must appear single and alone, nor can regularly have entrance into the fancy without banishing what is suppos'd to have been immediately precedent' (429 *sq.*). Consequently the fancy finds greater difficulty in its imaginative journeys in time than in space, although forwards and backwards in time are in some respects symmetrical—'as the future will *sometime* be present, so the past was *once* present' (431). Nevertheless, Time's Arrow (to use a modern phrase) does not affect the fancy, so that 'we rather chuse to fix our thought on the point of time betwixt the present and the future than on that betwixt the present and the past' (431 *sq.*).

Certainly the most interesting, and probably the most important turn of the argument in this part of the *Treatise* was the attempt to show that the science of geometry, when its demonstrations became at all intricate, could not attain the 'perfect exactness and certainty' that Hume (71) allowed to arithmetic.

In his views concerning arithmetic Hume was opposed to Berkeley—who denied that there was 'any such idea' as 'unity in abstract' (P. § 120)—and agreed with Malebranche (VI. v) that unity was 'une idée simple & parfaitement intelligible, une mesure universelle, & qui puisse s'accomoder à toute sorte de sujets', or with the similar statements of Locke (II. xvi. § 1). Indeed, the germs of Hume's theory of geometry may perhaps be found in another assertion of Locke's (IV. ii. § 10), viz. that 'in comparing their equality or excess, the modes of numbers have every the least difference very

clear and perceivable; and though in extension every the least excess is not so perceptible, yet the mind has found out ways to examine, and discover demonstratively, the just equality of two angles', etc.

According to Hume, geometry failed in one respect only. It accepted the absurdity of infinite divisibility. 'All its other reasonings command our fullest assent and approbation' (52). By way of confirmation he made a bold and original attempt to establish a phenomenalistic theory of its foundations.

The *definitions* of geometry, he said, obviously implied indivisible points (42); and a point, being without length, breadth and depth, *must* be an unextended atom or corpuscle. It was useless to try to evade the question by speaking as if imaginary points could differ in this particular from the points *in rerum natura*, or take one's luck with a 'distinction of reason' (43).

Therefore (44) the demonstrations of geometry contradicted its definitions. For the demonstrations lavishly employed the absurdity of infinite *divisibility*. Hume was not content, however, with discovering this *impasse*. Exploring it further he maintained that geometry, being phenomenalistic at its foundations, could not aspire to any supersensible standards. 'It takes the dimensions and proportions of figures justly, but roughly and with some liberty' 'being built on ideas, which are not exact, and maxims, which are not precisely true' (45).

Take, he said, such fundamental matters as equality or inequality of length, the straightness of a line, the planeness of a surface. If we could *count* the number of unextended points in two straight lines, we could, no doubt, declare with decision which of the two was the greater. But we never could count the points; and if, *per impossibile*, such lines were infinitely divisible, we should again have to abjure all such precise standards, since infinite numbers, properly speaking, were neither equal nor unequal. Superposition, again—Hume referred (46) to the *Mathematical Lectures* of Isaac Barrow, Newton's predecessor in the chair of mathematics at Cambridge—could not help. It was a species of comparison and could yield precision only if we knew in advance what precisely we were comparing. When the region of apparent contact in superposition became at all minute we were immediately thrown back upon other standards.

Hume's conclusion was that we base our judgments of

equality or inequality in the proportions of bodies upon an *imprecise* impressionistic standard 'without examining or comparing the number of their minute parts' (47). Such judgments, he said, were infallible when considerable differences in sensible magnitude appeared; and sensible standards might be greatly refined by the use of measuring instruments. Nevertheless the ultimate standard was that of the 'weak and fallible judgment' (51); for measuring instruments themselves appealed to the senses. Similarly (71), Hume argued that the 'original and fundamental principles of geometry are derived merely from appearances' and that all we could do in the end was to return to the 'easiest and least deceitful appearances' (72). When the eye determined 'that right lines cannot concur', its mistakes could 'never be of any consequence'.

The same conclusions (Hume held) emerged when we considered the relations between straight lines and curves, or the nature of a plane surface. The *order* in straight and in curved lines might, indeed, be very different; but what we observed was only 'the united appearance' (49, cf. Malebranche, I. vii, div. 3). Straight lines, again, might have certain properties (e.g. of being the shortest distance between two points) but such properties must not be confused with definitions (50) and presupposed an independent knowledge of what a straight line was. The ultimate standard of geometry was that of *apparent* shapes and figures; and it was absurd to look for a more delicate criterion 'since the true perfection of anything consists in its conformity to its standard' (51). If two straight lines approached at the rate of an inch in twenty leagues, who could *know*, if no one could *see*, that they did not have a common segment? (51). Who could know, if no one could see, whether the tangent to a circle met the circle at a single point, or throughout a small length? (53). And as for a plane surface, any attempt to define such a surface by the (even) 'flowing' of a line was a definition *per obscurius*. We knew, from sensory observation, what a plane surface was (50); and the conjectural 'flowing' of straight lines agreed at the best with what we had already seen for ourselves.

In asserting and emphasizing the fundamental contrast between the precision of arithmetic and the ultimate imprecision of geometry, Hume may be said to have followed the principles of Newton's *Universal Arithmetic* in opposition to the 'universal geometry' of Descartes, Hobbes and Barrow,

where number itself was regarded as derivative from *spatial* quantity. On the other hand, Hume's insistence upon the cardinal doctrine that space, in ultimate analysis, is always *seen* or *touched* distinguished his theory altogether from Newton's ' spatium absolutum, naturâ suâ sine relatione ad externum quodvis ' (i.e. ' ad sensibilia ') in his *Principia* (Def. VIII. Schol) as well as from all modern attempts to ' arithmetise ' geometry. Hume never supposed that the space of geometry might be attained by an intellectual process starting from, but also diverging from, the intermittent, and (although he did not think so) obscure, untidy, discrepant and relatively indeterminate spatial data of sense.

To be sure, Hume's ' system ', even regarding geometry, was not wholly faithful to its professed phenomenalism. His account of the ' united appearance ' as distinguished from precise knowledge of the parts of extension (47) was irreconcilable with his doctrine that ' the mind cannot form any notion of quantity and quality without forming a precise notion of degrees of each ' (18 *sqq.*). Again, what could have been the precise phenomenalistic meaning of the angle between lines that approached at the rate of an inch in twenty leagues? For phenomenalism, lines that *looked* coincident must really *be* coincident. Suppose, however, that we had ascertained indirectly by measurement that there were *two* straight lines which did approach at that minute angle. We should then (should we not ?) have a direct contradiction between measurement and sense. Hume, to be sure, in other places, welcomed this sceptical *impasse* (231). In the present instance, however, he seems simply to have said different things, having affirmed both that we can reason legitimately from simple sensible differences, and by various devices *correct* our sensa, and also that we must always trust the naked sensible appearances, *advienne que pourra.*

Accordingly, Hume's argument in this Part of the *Treatise* deserves some of the very hard things that have been said of it. Nevertheless it was not altogether unworthy of the attention of mathematicians, as is shown by the circumstance that Maupertuis based his empirical theory of all science, mathematics as well as physics, very largely upon Hume, whom Maupertuis described as ' un des plus grands hommes de l'Angleterre ' ; and as Mr. Cassirer has shown (*Das Erkenntnisproblem*, II, 426 n.) Maupertuis referred, in the first instance, to Hume's *Treatise*, not to his *Enquiry*, the outlines of his

judgment concerning Hume having been asserted at least as early as 1746 when they were published in the *Proceedings* of the Berlin Academy. Hume's *Treatise*, indeed, played an important historical rôle in the movement which led to the mathematical opinions of the French Encyclopaedists, aptly summarized in Diderot's statement, ' Il n'y a rien de précis en la nature '.[1]

Hume's general arguments concerning space and time, however, were less original than is sometimes supposed. He seems indeed to have written with the celebrated Article ' Zenon ' in Bayle's *Dictionary* at his elbow, and many of his readers must have been aware of the fact, since Edmund Law, for example, had specifically referred to Remarks E and I of that article (*Enquiry, etc.*, p. 67 n.).

Much, indeed, that was common to Hume and to Bayle in this article might be said to be common property. But the casual way and the actual terms in which Hume dismissed ' physical points ' (40) was a free translation of Bayle (Rem. G. I). And Bayle's statements that ' les argumens que l'on emprunte des Mathématiques pour prouver la divisibilité à l'infini, prouvent trop ; car, ou ils ne prouvent rien ; ou ils prouvent l'infinité des parties aliquotes ' and his ' les esprits les moins pénétrans peuvent connoître avec la dernière évidence, s'ils y font un peu d'attention, que plusieurs néants d'étendue joints ensemble ne seront jamais une étendue. Consultez le premier Cours de Philosophie Scholastique qui vous tombera entre les mains, vous y trouverez les raisons du monde les plus convaincantes ' (*ibid.*) were a text for the greater part of Hume's discussion (e.g. 30 and 40). Indeed, instances of the most precise correspondence crowd in upon us ; and a doubter could be conclusively refuted if he were asked to explain Hume's curious statement concerning the schoolmen (44) where he remarked parenthetically, and in a way that scarcely advanced his argument, that the scholastics maintained that Nature had mixed some mathematical points with infinitely divisible physical ones. The reason was that this parenthesis was translated literally (although with some omissions) from Bayle (Conclusion of Rem. G, Sect. IV).

I would suggest indeed (*a*) that Hume (except regarding the nature of number) accepted the argument of Berkeley's *Principles* (123 *sqq.*) *en bloc*. These arguments, largely formulated in opposition to Locke, asserted clearly that sensible

[1] See Bréhier's *Histoire de la philosophie*, II, Part ii, p. 437.

space was the only space, that a *minimum sensibile* undoubtedly existed, that an adequate theory of abstract ideas solved most of the puzzles regarding these questions (cf. E. 158 n.), and that the infinite divisibility of finite extension was a plain absurdity. Incidentally, the fact that Berkeley, who was obviously something more than an inspired amateur in the domain of mathematics, explicitly applied his argument to ' fluxions ' must have encouraged Hume in the belief that he himself was talking sound sense although he did not attempt to discuss the calculus in set terms.

I suggest, however, (*b*) that the turn and expression of Hume's argument was principally derived from Bayle, and in the following way: What Bayle chiefly did was to give an argument concerning *time* which Hume adopted without appreciable alterations, but to argue that Zenonian and other difficulties concerning *space* proved the ideality of space and put insuperable difficulties in the way of accepting its physical reality. Hume, however, was convinced—as Berkeley, very early, had seen (cf. his *Commonplace Book*, 373 [1]: ' Malbranch's and Bayle's arguments do not seem to prove against space, but onely Bodies ')—that, since space must mean *apparent* space, any suggestion of the ideality or unreal character of apparent space must be frankly absurd. Therefore (I think) he set himself to show that unextended units of visibility or of tangibility played the same part in the analysis of space as, according to Bayle, individual pulses of succession played in the analysis of time. I do not think that this suggestion is at all far-fetched in view of Bayle's actual argument concerning time. It ran as follows (Rem. F, cf. Hume, 31):

' Puis donc qu'il est impossible que le lundi et le mardi existent ensemble, et qu'il faut nécessairement que le lundi cesse d'être avant que le mardi commence d'être, il n'y a aucune partie du tems quelle qu'elle soit, qui puisse coexister à une autre ; chacune doit exister seule ; chacune doit commencer d'être, lorsque la précédente cesse d'être ; chacune doit cesser d'être, avant que la suivante commence d'être. D'où il s'enfuit que le tems n'est pas divisible a l'infini, et que la durée successive des choses est composée de momens proprement dits, dont chacun est simple et indivisible, parfaitement distinct du passé et du futur, & ne contient que le tems présent.'

What Hume had to say concerning ' matter ' or physical existence is to be found at a later stage in his argument. At

[1] Numbered as in Mr. Johnston's edition.

the present stage, however, he paved the way for the later discussion by introducing some very general and difficult contentions concerning ' existence ' and ' external existence '.

Locke had said that ' existence ' was ' suggested ' by *every* idea. ' When ideas are in our minds, we consider them as being actually there, as well as we consider things to be actually without us—which is, that they exist, or have existence ' (II. vii. § 7). Yes, said Hume, but consider the ' dilemma ' implied. The idea of existence, being attributed to *everything*, must either be an inseparable companion of everything, although derived from a distinct impression, or else it must be identical in connotation with the very meaning of an ' object or perception ' (66). Even the quasi-difference of a ' distinction of reason ' could not enter (67) because there could not be a distinct train of association regarding what, *ex hypothesi*, was contemplated always and everywhere.

Since a separate impression of existence was an absurdity (67) Hume concluded incontinently that ' the idea of existence is the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent. To reflect on anything simply, and to reflect on it as existent, are nothing different from each other. That idea, when conjoin'd with the idea of any object, makes no addition to it. Whatever we conceive, we conceive to be existent. Any idea we please to form is the idea of a being ; and the idea of a being is any idea we please to form ' (66 *sq.*). He repeated this contention in a later statement (94, cf. 96 n.) which ended with the words, ' When I think of God, when I think of him as existent, and when I believe him to be existent, my idea of him neither increases nor diminishes.'

Clear as this argument seems, it was not without serious difficulties. When we conceive Mr. Pecksniff, do we really conceive him as existent, an architect in Salisbury, as Sir Christopher Wren was an architect in London ? Is it not, rather, true that because we do *not* conceive him as existent (except as an imagination of Dickens's communicated to some millions of readers), we do not trouble to consult the town records of Salisbury for information, say, concerning Mercy Pecksniff's birth ?

Again, as we shall see, Hume did distinguish, very emphatically, between ' belief ' in ' matter of fact ' and mere imaginative conception. What, then, was the relation between this latter distinction and the statements quoted above ?

Essentially the point was that ' existence ' is not a *charac-*

terizing predicate, so that a hundred possible dollars and a hundred actual dollars do not differ in any assignable *characters*. Hume, who had no doctrine of predication (cf. 96 n.), could not use this language; but he seems to have meant pretty much what Kant meant in the famous illustration of the hundred dollars. (*Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Dialectic, Bk. II, ch. iii, sect. iv). For Hume held that belief in matter of fact depended entirely *either* upon the 'vivacity' of the relevant perceptions, *or* upon their 'relations and situation', i.e. in other words, not upon the *natures* of the perceptions, but upon certain extrinsic denominations pertaining to them.

None the less, a part, at least, of what Hume said in this portion of his argument seems thoroughly exceptionable. He relied upon what he called the 'establish'd maxim in metaphysics' (32) 'that nothing we imagine is absolutely impossible'. The 'establish'd' maxim, however, was the very different Cartesian proposition that whatever we *clearly* conceive (in the rationalistic sense) must be true [1]; and Hume's translation of 'clear conception' into 'obvious imagery' made nonsense of the doctrine, as Law [2] and others had shown. It is doubtful, even, whether impressions are possible existences; for, setting aside the classical difficulties of the bent oar and the dove's neck (with its variety of colours seen from different angles), our impressions may not be fully determinate and so may lack something which we always attribute to existence. And if impressions might be incapable of existing *in rerum natura*, ideas, *à fortiori*, might well be incapable of doing so since many of them could not even become impressions. Psychologists seem to be agreed, it is true, that it is a hard thing (if not quite impossible) to point to any distinctive characteristic that is present in all percepts and

[1] Cf. *Port Royal Logic*, Part IV, ch. vi: 'We cannot dispute this principle without destroying the whole evidence of human knowledge and establishing an absurd Pyrrhonism. For we can judge of things only by the ideas which we have of them, since the only means we have of conceiving them is through what we have in our mind, and things are there only through our ideas. Now if the judgments which we form by considering these ideas do not regard things in themselves . . . it is plain that we could have no knowledge of *things*, but simply of our *thoughts*, and consequently we should know nothing of the things we are persuaded that we know most certainly; but we should only know that we think them to be so and so, which would manifestly destroy all the sciences.'

[2] *Enquiry*, p. 6.

absent from all images, but they also agree in holding that many images have a sketchy and schematic appearance which does not seem to pertain to *any* percept. And surely, we have no right to assert that chimeras or centaurs could exist *in nature* simply because we can dreamily fabricate such monsters.

In asserting, then, that 'esse' *meant* 'percipi' Hume went much further than Berkeley—who never said so, although he maintained that the 'esse' of sensations was *their* 'percipi' (P. § 3). And 'since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions', Hume naturally inferred that ''tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of anything specifically different from ideas and impressions' (67). According to him, we had therefore *no* idea of 'external' or physical 'existence' *in this sense.*

The phrase 'specifically distinct' had been used by Colliber (*Impartial Enquiry*, 1718, p. 214) with reference to Newton's absolute space, and implied a distinction in *character.* Hence Hume's denial of *specific* difference was not intended to assert the absence of *all* difference. On the contrary, Hume reserved the question of a difference in 'relations, connections and durations' for future discussion (68).

It seems convenient, in this place, to discuss a point almost ubiquitous in Hume's exposition, and dubbed by his 'abusive' reviewer in 1739 'a Conjurer's *Hocus-Pocus*'. One of Hume's fullest statements of it was the following: 'Whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination. And we may here add, that these propositions are equally true in the *inverse*, and that whatever objects are separable are also distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are also different' (18).

What Hume called the 'inverse' is what logicians usually call the 'converse'; and since the universal affirmative 'All P is S' does not *follow* from the universal affirmative 'All S is P', we must take Hume to have meant that all the separate propositions he mentioned were independently evident. He therefore affirmed, as evident, the following four propositions: (1*a*) 'All differents are distinguishable'; (1*b*) 'All distinguishables are different'; (2*a*) 'All distinguishables are separable'; (2*b*) 'All separables are distinguishable'.

It would seem, however, that these several propositions have very different degrees of evidence, and even of plausibility.

If by 'distinguishable' we mean 'correctly distinguishable'

it seems clear that (2*b*) is true, and that (1*b*) is true in the sense that there must be a difference of *some* kind wherever a distinction may be correctly drawn. On the other hand, (1*a*) is doubtful unless we mean that an omniscient knower could discern every difference that existed everywhere and everywhen—and it is quite possible, indeed even likely, that there are many distinctions that human beings never will discern and never could be expected to discern. Finally (2*a*) seems plainly to be false in Hume's sense, if we mean to assert by it that there are no discernible distinctions in things unless either (1) X is discernibly different from Y because it can be pictured in isolation, or (2) because it can be pictured in conjunction, not with X, but with something different, say Z. Despite Hume, there is no absurdity in believing in the existence of inseparable companions which are intellectually, not impressionistically or pictorially, separable ; and Hume begged the question by asserting, in effect, that imaginative or sensorial separation was the only kind of distinction men could ever draw even in their thoughts.

CHAPTER IV

CAUSALITY, EXPERIMENT, AND INDUCTION

HUME began this, his greatest contribution to theoretical philosophy, by distinguishing the relations of 'knowledge' from those of probability; and I shall assume that I have sufficiently indicated the nature of this distinction. I shall therefore proceed at once to give a synopsis of his examination of the principles of causal 'inference'.

So far as I can see, there is no way of making this synopsis very short without spoiling the effect of Hume's sinuous argument; and therefore, with some misgivings, I shall try to follow Hume's own tortuous order, allowing myself scarcely a word of comment. Like Hume, I have to warn the reader that while the beginning and the end of the argument form an obvious logical structure, the middle part was intentionally circumambient. It was designed to supply the main structure with buttresses, and, on the whole, it did so—although we may sometimes suspect that the structure supported the buttresses rather than conversely.

§ I. Hume's Prodigious Discovery regarding Causes

Hume began his argument by pointing out that causality occupied a peculiar place among matter-of-fact relations (73 *sq.*). The other two relations of this type, viz. *identity* and *situation in time and place*, were, properly speaking, instances of immediate 'passive' perception. If, however, we held that any objects were *always* contiguous, *always* remote, or *always* identical, we covertly assumed that there was a *cause* for the uniformity. Causation, therefore, was the only matter-of-fact relation that 'can go beyond what is immediately present to the senses, either to discover the real existence or the relations of objects' (73); and it 'produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas followed or preceded by any other existence or action' (74).

After this preamble Hume declared that we must 'begin

regularly' (74) and search for the primary impression from which the idea of causal connexion arose. Indeed, his entire investigation—as too many of his commentators, with no excuse, have neglected to notice—was intended to be a search for this elusive impression.

Now, according to Hume, *every* object, external and internal (75), was either an effect, or a cause, or both; and obviously there was no single causal common quality observable in *all* objects (*ibid.*). Accordingly, the required impression should be sought, not among the *qualities*, but among the *relations*, common to all the objects that were said to be instances of causation (*ibid.*).

Contiguity was one such relation. For remote causes were 'link'd by a chain' of intermediate causes until we came to the proximate cause; and it was not difficult (cf. 237 *sqq.*) to explain why non-spatial impressions came to be regarded as spatially (not merely temporally) contiguous.

Again, a cause seemed always to be *prior* to its effect. This, said Hume, might perhaps be proved—and he gave an argument (76), borrowed, as it happened from Hobbes (I. 123). But even if the proof were disputable, the assumption, he said, was legitimate.

Obviously, however, objects might be contiguous and prior without being regarded as causes (77). The causal relation purported to reveal *necessary connexion* in matters of fact; and contiguity and priority, in any single given instance, were not evidence of necessary connexion.

Neither the *qualities* nor the *relations*, therefore, of any single pair of objects, contained the required impression; and the wisest plan was to 'beat about the neighbouring fields' (78) in the hope of starting the quarry. Hume therefore went about to consider (i) why we said it was necessary that *everything* that had a beginning had a cause, and (ii) why we said we inferred with necessity, and why we believed in, *specific* causal laws.

(i) This general principle, said Hume, *could not* be either intuitively or demonstratively certain. For it was always conceivable that an object might come into, or pass out of, existence without having been caused to do so; and intuitive or demonstrative *certainty* implied that the opposite was inconceivable (80). Therefore, although (as he later admitted) we had to overcome a certain 'repugnance' (172) in admitting the point, it *must* be true that all would-be *demonstrations* of

the causal principle were ineffective. In particular, Hobbes, Clarke and Locke, together with some others (82), flagrantly begged the question.

Accordingly, causal inference could not be *knowledge*, but, if it were ' reasoning ' at all, must be probable or experimental reasoning, based upon matter-of-fact experience ; and Hume preferred (82) to approach the analysis of this type of reasoning by examining (ii) *particular* causal laws. Here the question was *how* experience taught us, given x, to infer the necessary existence of its specific attendant y, when y was *not* given.

(ii) Hume therefore argued (*a*) that inference from experience must always rest upon *actual* experience, i.e. upon a present impression, or upon a memory, or upon a conviction that we have observed such and such a fact although the memory of it, strictly speaking, had been effaced (84) ; and (*b*) that actual experience, as thus explained, differed from what was merely conceived or imagined by its ' force and liveliness ' (86) which constituted ' the first act of the judgment '.

How, then, did we infer from experience ? Hume's answer was (87) that remembering x to have been constantly followed, without sensible interruption, by y, in *several* (uncontradicted) instances, we inferred the existence of y, given the existence of x (e.g. seeing flame, we inferred heat without, it may be, feeling it). An *additional* relevant relation concerning causality had therefore been discovered, viz., an observed *constant conjunction* in past experience.

But how, he asked (88), did this discovery help us ? Instead of a *single* x-followed-by-y we had now a multitude of (uncontradicted) instances of x-followed-by-y , but, *ex hypothesi*, each several x, and each several y, in this crowd of instances, had the *same* nature as in a single instance. Would it not appear that ' from the mere repetition of any past impression, even to infinity, there will never arise any new original idea, such as that of a necessary connexion ' ? (88).

But let us pluck up heart. *De facto*, at least, there *was* such an ' inference '. Its ' principle ', if it had one, must be that ' instances of which we have had no experience, must resemble those of which we have had experience ' (89), or, in other words, the uniformity of nature. Any such principle must pertain either to the associative imagination or to the reason. It could not, however, pertain to the reason, because, if it did, it would be demonstrative, whereas a sudden change in nature's habits was perfectly conceivable (89).

Accordingly, even *after* experience of constant conjunction (91), the causal inference could not be an affair of *knowledge*. It belonged to 'probability' and the probability itself was founded on the *presumption* of a resemblance between experienced and unexperienced (which presumption, therefore (90), could not itself be based on probability). On the other hand, the facts were precisely what might be expected of a principle of the associative imagination. After the uncontradicted repetition, when x had been associated with y, we *did* immediately expect, pass to, or 'infer' y, without being able 'to penetrate into the reason of the conjunction' (93).

Up to this point, the course of Hume's argument was fairly straightforward; for although he ostensibly abandoned the direct question when he began to 'beat about the neighbouring fields' he started the quarry pretty quickly; and the kill seemed imminent. It was delayed, however, for some 20,000 words.

To vary the metaphor, Hume set himself, at this point, to consolidate his position, and, in particular, to entrench two sectors of the front, viz., belief and probability. His discussion of both of these topics, especially of the former, was of the first importance, and it did enable Hume to mass his forces, even when it suggested new sources of weakness. Hume's readers may be excused, however, if they sometimes lose sight of the governing problem; and therefore I shall try, for the time being, to restrict my exposition to those portions of his discussion of belief and of probability which seem most deeply concerned with causation.

The 'belief' examined by Hume was not the 'first act of the judgment' previously mentioned, but rather (although he did not use the words) a second act of the judgment. The 'first act' was the assurance, assent or conviction that immediately and involuntarily attended actual experience of the memory or senses. The second act was the assurance, assent or conviction that, immediately and involuntarily, *extended* actual experience and 'peopled the world' (108) with generally acknowledged *realities* not immediately presented to the mind. And discussion of this second act of the judgment was essential for Hume's purposes precisely because it was literally identical with causal 'inference'. 'Belief arises only from causation' (107). 'The only relation that can be traced beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, that we do not see or feel, is *causation*' (74). In other words, when x and y were causally associated, we *believed* in the existence of y,

given the existence of x; when they were non-causally associated we only *thought* of y, given x. Furthermore (although to say this is to anticipate) there was nothing astonishing in this distinction between causal and non-causal association, since causation, according to Hume, was just the species of association in which we feel ourselves *necessitated*, or *constrained*, to believe.

Hume remarked (97 n.) that the act of the mind in belief 'has never yet been explained by any philosopher'. It was easily accounted for, he said, in matters of intuition or of demonstration, for then the mind was 'necessarily determined to conceive in that particular manner' (95). From this we might naturally conclude that constraint, or the sense of being 'fixed' (96), was the essential differentia of belief—and that, in substance, was what Hume really meant. It was not, however, precisely what he said at this stage of his narrative, where he was content, rather carelessly, and in a way that he subsequently abandoned, to fall back upon 'vivacity'. Obviously, he maintained, belief that was based on, but extended, experience, simulated (96 and 112), and had the same results as (118) actual experience itself. The clue to what I have called the 'second' act of the judgment had therefore to be found in the 'first act', i.e. in the type of assurance that belonged to impressions. Now when we believed in an impression there was no distinct idea of existence added to, or connected with the impression (96 n., cf. 66). There was only a distinctive 'manner' of accepting the impression. And this 'manner' according to previous arguments (8 *sqq.*) was just 'vivacity'. Vivacity, therefore, *was* conviction. What we merely entertained (and did not believe) was languid; what we entertained with conviction (or believed) was 'strong, firm and vivid'.

I shall show, later, that 'vivacity' by Hume's own admission, was a very inexpressive term for what he meant to convey. Arguing in terms of it in this part of his exposition, however, he tried to show that every idea was enlivened (i.e. had its vivacity increased) when associated with a present impression, and that such enlivening reached the point of conviction, assent, or complete assurance in the instance of causal association.

Thus, after briefly asserting that there was enlivening in all cases of association (98 *sqq.*), Hume returned to the *full* assurance of causal association, and conducted an elaborate experiment in 'natural philosophy' (101) according to what

was later called the Method of Difference. In the course of conducting this experiment he asserted that since the cause of belief must be 'internal', the entire experiment must be internal (i.e. mental) and insinuated much that was characteristic of his final conclusion regarding causation. The experiment, he said, being purely psychological, was an investigation into our 'consciousness', where everything is just what it seems to be. Accordingly, since the causal inference was introspectively *immediate*, it followed that it was not reflective (102)—for reflection proceeded by comparison of intermediaries —and was therefore rightly called 'custom'. Indeed, Hume concluded, rather easily, that 'all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation' and that 'objects have no discoverable connexion together' (103) since association was a union or connexion *in ourselves only*, and not in objects.

Indeed, Hume's growing confidence in the strength of his argument led him (rather prematurely) to discuss its ramifications. He therefore explained that experience, in the sense of determinate memory, was not essential—as when a man stopped short on coming to a river without explicitly remembering instances of people who had been drowned in rivers (103 *sq.*, cf. Malebranche's 'connaissance imparfaite ou commencée,' VI, Pt. II, vii); and that—here going further than Malebranche (II, Pt. II, viii, div. 4)—a *single* experiment 'provided it be made with judgment, and after a careful removal of all foreign and superfluous circumstances' (104) might induce full assurance, being tacitly assimilated to the general belief in the uniformity of nature.

'Nature', therefore, had wisely provided us with a causal assurance going beyond our present perceptions—for otherwise we could form no prudent expectations (119)—and the causal associates of impressions always 'actuate the soul' (118) although other associations did not.

Hume was very well aware, however (107), that critics might urge that non-causal associations (i.e. mere resemblances or mere contiguities) might enliven ideas altogether too much for the truth of his theory. He therefore explained in some detail (108 *sq.*) that the senses, the memory, together with what was causally associated with them, formed a settled and stable 'system' which common sense 'dignified with the title of realities' (108) and which we all accepted as such unless we were mad (123). He also explained that non-causal associations were, in comparison, 'very feeble and uncertain' con-

taining ' no manner of necessity ' (109). Indeed, we formed a general rule *against* accepting them (110), and put our trust in causation alone, where a ' fixed, unalterable and precise ' *y* was associated with the given *x*, and yielded ' something solid and real, certain and invariable ' (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, he said, although non-causal associations are *by themselves* so feeble and so capricious, they may greatly assist the solidity of our convictions within the framework of the causal system of ' realities ' (113).

These contentions required (and received) further attention from Hume, but he elected, for the moment (124 *sqq.*), to discuss probability more generally.

Hitherto, he said, he had, following Locke, used the term ' probability ' to designate any assent other than ' knowledge ' (124). Common sense, however, would distinguish between what is *only* probable (i.e. conjectural and uncertain) from causal expectations (which were utterly convincing). Hume, therefore (*ibid.*), proposed a threefold division into (rational) ' knowledge ', (causal or experimental) ' proofs ' and (conjectural) ' probabilities '.[1] He had also to note that there was a mathematical calculus of the ' probabilities ' both of ' causes ' and of ' chances '.

So he set himself to discuss the technical implications of this latter species of ' probability ' with all the zest appropriate to a subject both ' curious ' (128) and incorrigibly ' abstruse ' (138). His obvious delight in these subtleties, however, and the special character of the discussion, tended to impede the progress of his argument concerning causation; and I shall postpone consideration of the question. Speaking generally, what Hume had to do, in this part of his discussion, was to show how our opinions and convictions derived from *imperfect experience*, and from *contrary* causes might be explained in conformity with the principles that governed the convictions that arose from *uncontradicted* sequence. He believed that he had succeeded.

[1] Hume seems to have borrowed this threefold division from the Chevalier Ramsay, with whom (B. I, 12) he corresponded. Baxter (II. 317 n.) gives the relevant passage from *Travels of Cyrus*, Book VI. ' La source du Pyrrhonisme vient de ce que l'on ne distingue pas entre une demonstration, une preuve & une probabilite. Une demonstration suppose l'idee contradictoire impossible; une preuve de fait est, ou toutes les raisons portent à croire, sans qu'il y ait aucun pretexte de douter; une probabilite est, ou les raisons de croire, sont plus fortes, que celles de douter ' (Accentuation Baxter's).

A point of even greater importance, however, emerged almost casually, and as it were by afterthought, at the conclusion (142) of these arguments, viz. Hume's account of the place of Analogy in causal inference (subsequently discussed in the *Enquiry* (E. 36, E. 104 and E. 143 *sqq.*) and in the *Dialogues*, especially Pt. V). There was, he said, an oversight in his previous exposition. He had spoken of x being repeatedly followed by y, and then of x turning up again. Strictly, however (he admitted), since all impressions were distinct existences, he should have spoken of impressions of the *kind* x, and should also have said that in most of our causal inferences we proceeded by analogy rather than by exact resemblance, dealing with x' followed by y', and with x'' followed by y'', rather than simply with x followed by y. Again, the resemblance or analogy 'admits of many different degrees' (142), and scientific gentlemen might need much insight, and more faith, to assert that there was any analogy at all. Hume, however, did not pursue the point with appreciable vigour, although he occasionally returned to it (e.g. 147 and 209).

Having completed his account of what philosophers called 'probability', Hume turned to 'unphilosophical' (i.e. admittedly unreasonable) 'probability', and, after explaining how recent evidence seemed more convincing than old (although it was not better evidence) and such-like matters (143), he came upon a question of greater interest, and, had he known it, of greater difficulty for his philosophy. This was the relation of prejudiced conviction to conviction based upon repeated experience.

The difficulty, which had occurred earlier regarding non-causal association, was obvious. According to Hume, all (experimental) 'reasonings' were 'nothing but the effects of custom' (149). Nevertheless we might, and did, associate 'accidental circumstances' as well as 'efficacious causes' (*ibid.*, cf. 148). Indeed, 'the vulgar are commonly guided by the first, and wise men by the second' (150). How then could the wise and the foolish sorts of custom be adequately distinguished in theory?

Hume's answer was (1) that our associative faculty led us to form general rules, and (2) that while some of these rules were 'rash' and fallacious, others were of the sort by which 'we ought to regulate our judgment' (149). In other words, he 'explained' by classifying.

Thus even 'judgment' might be 'rash'; and it may be

doubted whether Hume's reference to 'the more general *and authentic* [1] operations of the understanding' (150) was truly intelligible. Where all was non-rational and a thing of sensation, what was the point of appealing to an 'authentic' (really to a valid), species of 'judgment' that we 'ought' to form? Yet Hume gloried in the circumstance. All general rules, he said (150), were rash and unphilosophical, but we saved our wise and philosophical faces by correcting all *other* unphilosophical inferences by *this* unphilosophical one.

The fact remains, however, that Hume *did* distinguish a logical from an illogical kind of inference from experience; and that he *did* believe himself fully entitled to discriminate 'causes' in the same sense as historians and natural scientists (cf. his celebrated arguments concerning miracles and the unfreedom of the human will).

With these explanations, Hume regarded the process of consolidation as completed, and he congratulated himself upon the solidity of his arduous but necessary achievement (154 *sq.*). It remained, therefore, to return to the original, direct and governing question, in order to make the final push. *What* was the impression from which the idea of necessary connexion was derived?

The solution, Hume said, was apparent. As he had shown, objects in themselves evinced nothing but prior conjunctures; but the *repetition* of similar specific conjunctures evoked the *feeling* of necessity; and this feeling of necessity, or 'determination of the mind' (156), was *itself* an impression, although an 'impression of reflection'. *It* was the impression from which the idea of connexion was derived. The conjuncture of objects remained mere conjuncture; and our own experience of necessitation was the reality whose shadow was the mistaken supposition of a necessary connexion in things.

Lest the simplicity of the solution should mask its importance, Hume repeated the substance of his argument several times (e.g. 163, 165 and 166). He also made every effort to admonish his readers of the prodigious importance of his discovery.

The problem of the power and efficacy of causes, he said, had always been regarded as one of the most sublime exercises of metaphysics (156). What had been lacking, hitherto, was a clear and faithful analysis of our ideas on the subject (*ibid.*).

[1] Italics are mine.

Accordingly Hume remarked (1) that the terms 'efficacy,[1] agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion and productive quality' were all 'nearly synonymous' (157), (2) that *reason* could not (as Locke said it did) infer such efficacy (*ibid.*). For 'reason', since there were no innate ideas, only drew consequences from ideas supplied from elsewhere (cf. 164), and, as had been abundantly shown, there was nothing irrational in *conceiving* that a thing might *come into being* without being *produced*.

Granting then (Hume continued) that this idea of efficacy, or its synonyms, must arise from experience, it must, like all clear ideas, represent (157), or be derived from, some determinate impression. We must find some efficacious-seeming fact or 'natural production' (158) which might be clearly represented in idea.

As Malebranche and others had shown, the scholastics, instead of exhibiting any such natural fact, blindly manufactured unnatural fictions, of an occult kind, such as 'substantial forms' (158). They might be silenced by being asked to show a single instance of 'natural production' (159). The Cartesians themselves, however, were little better than the scholastics. They *defined* matter as inefficacious, and therefore ascribed genuine efficacy to God alone. When innate ideas were rejected (160), however, our ideas of God's power, and even of God himself, must be derived from experience.

The scientists, again, were not at all superior to the philosophers. Those who believed in the (subordinate) efficacy of 'second' (or material) causes (i.e. as may be conjectured, Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton [2]) had to confess that we cannot observe efficacy among the visible properties of matter (161); and although, if we *had* the idea, we might try to ascribe it to matter, the question became quite different when we asked whence and how we had the idea at all. Such efficacy could not be observed in objects. It was also not observable in the exercise of the human will. (This latter point was briefly explained in the Appendix (632), in a paragraph marked for insertion at this place, and much more fully in the *Enquiry*, E. 64 *sqq.*)

[1] In the logic manuals, e.g. the *Institutes* of Burgersdicius, the usual definition of 'causa' was 'cujus vi res est'; definitions of 'actio', 'passio', etc., followed.

[2] Or even Descartes himself, who said of the Deity (*Discours*, Part V), 'pourvu qu'ayant établi les lois de la nature, il lui prêtât son concours, pour agir ainsi qu'elle a de coutume'.

Hume's negative argument was therefore (he submitted) irrefragable. The human mind could not even conceive an efficacious or necessary connexion *in objects* (161) or point to any particular instance in nature from which the general idea of efficacy could be derived (162). There were no 'ties' that bound *objects* together.

According to Hume, the same conclusion followed from the decisive circumstance that it was the *repetition* of specific conjunctures that convinced us of necessary connexion. This repetition did not *discover* (163) anything new in the objects, for no new property in the objects was revealed by their mere multiplicity; and it did not *produce* anything new in the objects, for it would be absurd to say, e.g. that the correspondent shocks in a hundred collisions of billiard-balls on different tables and at different times *produced* any new fact in nature simply because we noticed the multiplicity (164). In short, the repetition could not affect *things*. What it did affect was our own *minds*. It produced *in us* a new feeling of determination or of necessitation, and this mental effect (or novel impression of reflection) was the only difference that the multiplicity made. (The reader will perceive that Hume contradicted himself when he said that the impression of necessity was itself *caused*; but he did say so.)

The causal 'union' therefore was our own associative transition (165); and this circumstance, Hume explained, was the reason for his apparently roundabout procedure in 'beating about the ground', and in declining an initial, and question-begging, definition. And Hume enlarged upon the theme. All necessity, he affirmed, was just as mental as the (supposedly mental) necessity that two and two made four (166). No doubt it seemed 'extravagant and ridiculous' (167) and even a reversal of the order of nature (*ibid.*) to say that causal efficacy was strictly and always mere mental association. Our common-sense belief was always that 'thought may well depend on causes for its operation, but not causes on thought' (167). But Hume was obdurate. He could see no other source than the mind for any *clear* (168) idea of necessary connexion. He admitted, indeed, that *something* in nature (or in 'objects') was independent of our thought and reasoning' (168). For objects were prior and contiguous. But they were not connected. When we regarded them as connected, he said, we transferred our own feeling of habituation to *their* (imaginary) 'union' (167). And all that could be

said by way of mitigating the paradox was that this feeling of determination in our own minds was just as unintelligible as anything philosophers ever said about efficacy; for it was simply a stubborn and inexplicable *fact* of experience (169).

Thus ended what is justly regarded as one of the most remarkable pieces of sustained philosophical argument in any language. The rest was consequence. Hume, remembering his Hobbes (I. 123 and 125), tried to define causation at long last. He drew various corollaries to the effect that current distinctions (such as those between cause and occasion, moral and physical necessity, power and the exercise of power (cf. Hobbes, I. 127) had no foundation (171). He gave a list of rules by which to judge (wisely) of causes and effects (173 *sqq.*). And finally he discussed the then fashionable topic of the relation between the human and the animal mind in this affair of habitual expectation.

§ II. Commentary

It seems necessary to preface an examination of Hume's arguments concerning causation with a brief account of the relation of the *Enquiry* to the *Treatise* in this matter. For the *Enquiry* was a supplement and a commentary.

In the *Enquiry*, the discussion of 'Liberty and Necessity' was included as part of the argument on causation, and not, as in the *Treatise* (399–412), in connexion with ethics. A section on 'Miracles', the original draft of which had probably belonged to the first design of the *Treatise* (cf. B. I. 63), was also appropriately included; for it dealt with the evidence of testimony. A more mature account of the nature of belief (E. 47 *sqq.*) expanded some hints (e.g. 106) in the body of the *Treatise*, and the more adequate statement of its Appendix (623 *sqq.*); and, as we saw, the treatment of analogy and of the alleged perception of volitional efficacy became more elaborate. A long footnote (E. 43 *sqq.*) on the relation between 'reason' and 'experience' may also be regarded as a substantial addition.

In the main, however, there was no difference in doctrine although there was a marked difference in tone. In the *Enquiry*, Hume, although still a pioneer, was a reminiscent pioneer, giving a record of his expedition. It was often a better account, or, at any rate, better arranged; but it was not so exciting, and, on the whole, not so effective. Again, Hume's obvious desire to make his argument plausible and acceptable to the general public, invested the whole of the

later composition with a new, and less delectable, atmosphere.

In a letter, apparently of uncertain date (B. I. 97 *sq.*), Hume said :

> ' Allow me to tell you that I never asserted so absurd a proposition as *that anything might arise without a cause.* I only maintained that our certainty of the falsehood of that proposition proceeded neither from intuition nor demonstration, but from another source. *That Caesar existed,* that there is such an island as Sicily—for these propositions, I affirm, we have no demonstration nor intuitive proof —would you infer that I deny their *truth,* or even their certainty ? There are many different kinds of certainty ; and some of them as satisfactory to the mind, though perhaps not so regular, as the demonstrative kind.'

Pretty clearly, this had always been Hume's opinion ; but there was something almost unctuous in the statement of the *Enquiry* that ' though none but a fool or madman will ever pretend to dispute the authority of experience . . . it may surely be allowed a philosopher to have so much curiosity at least as to examine the principle of human nature, which gives this mighty authority to experience ' (E. 36). Again Hume's *emphasis* upon ' secret causes ' in the *Enquiry*—although this doctrine occurred in the *Treatise* too—was surely odd. ' Nature ', he said, ' has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects ' (E. 32 *sq.*). These superficial qualities, however, were just the sensible phenomena which, according to pure phenomenalism, were all we could know of nature or matter of fact. Similarly, although the apparently un-Humian admission in the *Enquiry* (54) of ' a sort of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas '—for the authority of experience is surely *post*-established—may be said to have been anticipated by what Hume said about ' instinct ' in the *Treatise,* it indicated a spirit of accommodation happily absent from the earlier work.

But let us proceed to commentary.

i. The Impotence of Intuition and of Demonstration

By an ' intuitive ' knowledge of the causal principle Hume meant a clear intellectual vision of that principle when the essences or natures of the relevant ' ideas ' were directly compared. He denied that any such intuition was possible, on

the ground that the opposite supposition was perfectly intelligible, whether or not it was true.

As he thought, the more serious objection he had to face was that it was possible to *demonstrate* the causal principle by a chain of intuitions or by a *reductio ad absurdum*; and he made a serious effort to collect representative doctrines of this kind from the best authorities. The specific arguments which he mentioned were the following:

(1) An argument ascribed to Hobbes (80) to the effect that all the points in space and time being indiscernible, indifferent, or identical, it was impossible to conceive an event happening without also accepting the necessity for some *special reason* why the event should occur at one time or place rather than at another time or place. Hobbes used the argument frequently (I. 115, III. 94, IV. 276); and it was familiar to the times since Clarke had used it to ruin Toland (*Demonstration*, 2nd ed. (1706), p. 38; cf. Second reply to Leibniz, § 1). Hume's simple and sufficient comment was that it is necessary to decide *whether* there is a cause before attempting to decide *when* and *where* a cause operates.

(2) An argument ascribed (80) to 'Dr. Clarke and others' who were said to have asserted that everything must have a cause since otherwise a thing would produce itself, or exist before it existed, which was absurd. Hume had no difficulty in showing that this argument was a bare-faced paralogism. If we exclude causes, he said, 'we really do exclude them' (81) and need not contradict ourselves by affirming that an uncaused event causes itself.

(3) A point of some interest, however, arises concerning the question *where* 'Dr. Clarke and others' used this argument. Messrs. Green and Grose (G. I. 382 n.) refer to Clarke's *Demonstration*, I and II; Mr. Hendel (*Studies*, 61 n.) to *Demonstration*, I, and to Clarke's Second Reply to Leibniz, § 1. In all these places, however, Clarke's argument was either Hume's first or his third, not his second; and the relevant passage appears to occur on pp. 125 *sq.* of the *Demonstration*, where it was said that 'the sum of what all atheists, whether ancient or modern, have ever said upon this head, amounts to no more but this one foolish argument: That matter could not begin to exist, when *it was not*; because this is supposing it to be, before it was; and that it could not begin to exist when *it was*; because this is supposing it not to be, after it was'. In fact, however, this argument, along with the next, were commonly asserted

together in the literature of the age (e.g. in Law's translation of King's *Origin of Evil*, p. 46 n., where a reference was given to Colliber's *Impartial Enquiry*).

(3) The third, and most usual of these arguments Hume (81) ascribed to Locke (IV. x. §§ 3 and 8), although, as I have shown, he might also have referred to Clarke. The argument stated that a thing produced without any cause would be produced *by nothing*. Locke called this supposition 'of all absurdities the greatest' (*l.c.*, § 8), and Clarke said (*Dem.*, I) that to affirm that 'a thing is produced, and yet that there is no cause at all of that production, is to say that something is effected when it is effected by nothing, that is, at the same time when it is not effected at all'. Hume replied in the same way as he replied to the second argument. To suppose, he said, that a thing is *uncaused* is to suppose that it is *not produced*, and not at all to suppose that it is *produced* (or caused) *by nothing* (cf. 77 and 90).

(4) The fourth argument, which Hume called 'still more frivolous' (82), was that everything must have a cause since cause and effect were correlative terms. Without troubling to give references, Hume showed that the denial that an event was either-cause-or-effect was in no way affected by the circumstance that *if* (contrary to hypothesis) it *were* a cause, it *would have* an effect. Husbands, he said, must have wives: but not every man need be married (82).

These four were the *a priori* arguments Hume examined, but he later (157) dealt with Locke's favourite contention that the mind, *after* experience of change, 'collects', *by a rational process*, an active power to make the change and a passive power to receive it (II, xxi. § 4, cf. II, xxvi. § 1). Indeed, a great part of Hume's entire discussion might be described as a prolonged and devastating commentary upon Locke's careless and slipshod, if plausible, account of this important matter.

Locke's celebrated chapter 'Of Power' began as follows:

'The mind being every day informed, by the senses, of the alteration of those simple ideas it observes in things without; and taking notice how one comes to an end, and ceases to be, and another begins to exist which was not before; reflecting also on what passes within itself, and observing a constant change of its ideas, sometimes by the impression of outward objects upon the senses, and sometimes by the determination of its own choice; and concluding from what it has so constantly observed to have been, that the like changes will for the future be made in the same things, by like agents, and

by the like ways—considers in one thing the possibility of having any of its simple ideas changed, and in another the possibility of making that change: and so comes by that idea which we call power.'

Obviously, this inference from constant conjunctures to specific uniformities throughout all future time, took some explaining. Hence the greater part of Hume's discussion. But one of the implications of Locke's argument is very apt to be overlooked.

Locke, Clarke and other such philosophers (including all the deists) believed in the existence of an unoriginated God, the Prime Mover, whom Clarke described as self-existent (*Dem.*, III). All these authors, therefore, were constrained to deny that *everything* must have a cause; for they all perceived that the Prime Mover was uncaused. Accordingly they maintained, more moderately (although, on that account, perhaps less plausibly), only that everything *that had a beginning*, or, more shortly, that every *change*, must have a cause. Thus Locke wrote to Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester: [1]

'Again, *Everything must have a cause;* Though I find it so set down by your Lordship, yet, I humbly conceive it is not a true principle of reason, nor a true proposition: but the contrary. The certainty whereof we attain, by the contemplation of our ideas, and by perceiving that the idea of eternity, and the idea of the existence of something do agree; and the idea of existence from eternity and of having a cause do not agree, or are inconsistent within the same thing. But *everything that has a beginning must have a cause*, is a true principle of reason, or a proposition certainly true, which we come to know by the same way, i.e. by contemplating our ideas and perceiving that the idea of *beginning to be*, is necessarily connected with the idea of *something operating*, which we call a cause, and so the beginning to be is perceived to agree with the idea of a *cause*, as is expressed in the proposition.'

Here, as the reader will see, the necessity for a cause of change was expressly declared to be matter of *knowledge* arising from the comparison of ideas. He will also perceive the gap between such alleged *a priori* knowledge, and the semi-empirical contention of the chapter on 'Power'.

It is also important to notice how careful Hume was to repudiate the pseudo-intuition of a visible necessary connexion in certain instances of motion. Sometimes, of course,

[1] Cf. Law's *Enquiry*, ch. v, where (at p. 148 n.) this excerpt was cited.

it was plain that these effects surprised every one, as in Hume's example, borrowed from Malebranche (VI. Pt. II, ix), that two smooth pieces of marble were very hard to separate except by lateral pressure (402, cf. E. 28). But Hume was very well aware that the communication of motion *by contact* appeared to many natural philosophers to be self-evident and therefore he bestirred himself to dispel this notion, even if it was a scientific as much as a vulgar prejudice.[1]

This was obvious in the *Enquiry* where the reference to billiard-balls was reiterated with unusual insistence in an author as skilful as Hume. (The general subject of motion was mentioned in the *Enquiry*, on pp. 28 *sqq.*, 43 and note, 48, 63, 70 *sq.*, 73 n., 75, 77 n.—a liberal allowance.) And the point was not neglected in the *Treatise*. Hume denied (76 *sq.*) that *contact* was an instance of connexion which was more than conjunction. He eagerly accepted the Cartesian doctrine of the inactivity of matter (159); and he mentioned the billiard-balls (164) a few pages afterwards. On the whole, however, his most important discussion came earlier (111) where the ideas of 'some philosophers' concerning the 'communication of motion' were cited as the most striking instance of the way in which association by resemblance gave a delusive appearance of rational self-evidence.

In this matter, no doubt, Hume was helped by current scientific controversy. Robert Boyle had said, indeed, that he 'looked upon the phenomena of nature to be caused by the local motion of one part of matter hitting against another'; [2] and Hobbes had declared that all active power consisted in

[1] Cf. Keill, *Introduction*, etc., p. 136: 'Let the Philosophers at length leave off inquiring into the Cause of the Continuation of Motion; for there is no other besides that first Cause, which does not only preserve Motion, but everything else in its *Being*, the All-wise and Great God . . .' (p. 137). 'Let the philosophers also leave off disputing concerning the Communication of Motion'. And Locke (IV, iii, § 29): 'The coherence and continuity of the parts of matter; the production of sensation in us of colours and sounds, etc., by impulse and motion; nay, the original rules and communication of motion being such, wherein we can discover no natural connexion with any ideas we have, we cannot but ascribe them to the arbitrary will and good pleasure of the Wise Architect.' Also Clarke, *Demonstration*, IX: 'Motion itself, and all its Quantities and Directions, with the Laws of *Gravitation*, are entirely arbitrary; and might possibly have been altogether different from what they now are. . . . There is not the least appearance of Necessity, but that all these things might possibly have been infinitely varied from their present Constitution.'

[2] *Works* (London, 1672), III, 42.

motion (I. 131). But Locke, while stubbornly maintaining that impulse was ' the only way which we can conceive bodies to operate in ' (II. viii. § 11 in the fourth edition), explained, in his reply to Stillingfleet's second letter (1669, p. 468), that he had been ' since convinced by the judicious Mr. Newton's incomparable book, that it is too bold a presumption to limit God's power on this point ' by man's ' narrow conceptions '. This reluctant abandoning of an alleged intuition was indeed necessary if gravitation were accepted as not less fundamental than the ' impulsive forces ' of Newton's opponents. Thus Maupertuis remarked (*Discours sur les differentes figures des astres*, 1732, p. 11) that ' le mot d'attraction a effarouché les esprits ; plusieurs ont craint de voir renaître dans la philosophie la doctrine des *qualités occultes* ' and consequently denied ' que la force impulsive soit plus concevable que l'attractive ' (p. 17). The need for saying so was proved, e.g. by the plaintive statement in Fontenelle's *Éloge* of Newton : ' Pourquoi *ce terme plus clair* (d'impulsion) n'aurait-il pas été preferé ? '

ii. The Perceptibility of Efficacy

According to Hume, the perception of efficacious quality in x would imply that, antecedent to experience, we should know from the mere perception of x *what particular* y must necessarily follow it ; and he had little difficulty in showing that there is no perception of efficacious quality in this sense.

He was equally confident that causality could not be based upon a perceptible *relation*, although he admitted that there *were* perceptible relations (e.g. priority and contiguity). In other words, he held that, while we may and do perceive that y *has* followed x, we never perceive that it *must always* follow x, still less that what is x-like must always be succeeded by what is y-like.

These contentions require examination, but it is necessary to preface the examination by discussing the common opinion that we can observe either the quality or the relation of efficacy in our own volitions. Knowing his Berkeley (e.g. P. § 28), Hume was, of course, very well acquainted with the philosophical use that might be made of this common opinion ; but he agreed with Malebranche, who had said (VI. Pt. II, iii) ' il me paroit très-certain que la volonté des esprits n'est pas capable de mouvoir le plus petit qu'il y ait au monde ; car il est évident qu'il n'y a point de liaison nécessaire entre la volonté que nous

avons, par exemple, de remuer notre bras, & le mouvement de notre bras'—or, rather, with the reason given. He very nearly overlooked the point in the *Treatise*, and mentioned it, very briefly, in the Appendix only (632 *sq.*); but he rectified the omission in the *Enquiry* to which we may therefore turn.

There (E. 65 *sqq.*) Hume dealt (*a*) with the influence of volition upon bodily movement, and (*b*) with our voluntary control over our own thoughts. Regarding (*a*) he maintained (1) that the union of soul with body was the *most* mysterious of all the unions in nature; (2) that since 'consciousness never deceives' we must be acquainted with all the relevant factors, and yet were notoriously unable to perceive why the will had an influence 'over the tongue and the fingers' and *not* 'over the heart or liver' (he might have chosen better examples), or, again, why the usual control over tongue and fingers did not exist when a man was paralysed; (3) that 'anatomy' taught us that the proximate causes of moving the tongue or fingers were nerves, muscles, etc., and not the volitions at all (cf. Malebranche, *Éclair*, xv.). Regarding (*b*), his arguments, like Malebranche's (*ibid.*), were, broadly speaking,[1] parallel. We did not know why our souls evoked ideas, and we could not explain the mysterious limitations of, and variations in, our control over our own thoughts. Nothing but experience, Hume said, could discriminate between what we could, and what we could not, effect voluntarily.

These arguments, perhaps, were not quite unexceptionable. It is not altogether evident why Hume should have learned so much from 'anatomy' since the *immediate* sequence of certain movements upon volition frequently *seems* to be directly perceptible; and there may very well appear to be a connexion of content between a volition and its fulfilment which is absent from the odd behaviour of the smooth pieces of marble. None the less, Hume's arguments abundantly proved, in this instance also, that anything we perceived in our volitions was not either a quality or a relation that *inevitably and uniformly* brought about a certain *specific* result.

In the *Enquiry* (67 n., 77 *sq.* n.), although not in the *Treatise*, Hume became aware of the possible objection that the animal

[1] According to R. W. Church, *A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche*: 'Hume's second argument, that we have to learn from experience which volitions are efficacious and which are not, is anticipated by La Forge and Cordemoy but ignored by Malebranche' (p. 100); the other two arguments being Malebranche's. The second argument, however, would not have surprised Malebranche.

nisus, or the experience of strong endeavour in overcoming resistance, might be the impression from which the idea of efficacy was derived. He therefore argued (67 n.) that God, and often we ourselves, might effect changes without experiencing this *nisus*, that inanimate beings could not be supposed to possess it, and so that its effects had to be gleaned from experience. He admitted, however, that 'the animal *nisus*, which we experience, though it can afford no accurate, precise idea of power, enters very much into that vulgar, inaccurate idea, which is formed of it' (*ibid.*); and that we *were* apt to transfer the animal feelings of pushing and of being pushed to inanimate bodies (78 n.).

The 'vulgar' idea here rejected by Hume (who preferred another kind of vulgarity) was that of an agency neither necessary nor uniform. The plain man believes that he possesses a sort of reservoir of potential activity which he can, but need not, exercise; and that he may exercise much or little of it as he chooses. When Hume defined the human will as 'knowingly giving rise' to a new movement or perception (399) he seems to have reverted to the plain man's order of ideas.

It may therefore be asked whether Hume did not make a mistake when he said that 'efficacy' and 'necessary connexion' were 'nearly synonymous' (157), and whether a tenable theory might not be constructed on the general lines that we experience 'agency' (not necessarily uniform) in ourselves; that we infer that inanimate objects may exercise, although they cannot feel such agency; and that the function of 'experience' is really to teach us to discriminate in practice between the agency which is regular in its operations, and the agency which is not.

To Hume, any such view was nonsense. He thought of causes in terms of experimental science, that is to say as consisting of supposedly invincible uniformities; and therefore he did not even contemplate the possibility of non-uniform causes. The distinction between power and its exercise, he said (171), was delusive—although he employed it apologetically in his account of the passions (311). He also borrowed from Hobbes (I. 122) the principle that 'an object which exists for any time in its full perfection without any effect, is not the sole cause of that effect, but requires to be assisted by some other principle, which may forward its influence and operation' (174, cf. 76).

Hobbes's principle might well seem obvious. For if an agent exercises only a part or none of its ' power ', we may intelligibly demand a reason for its restraint ; and if it exercises the power in different ways on different occasions, we may surely ask whether there was not a reason for the difference. In reality, however, to say these things is to beg the question. It is to assume that the only intelligible ' reason ' in such cases is a ' cause ', that a cause must be ' necessary ', and that the uniformity of causal action, given precisely similar antecedents, follows from the necessity. Nevertheless, if any intelligible meaning could be attached to the idea of an *influence* which need not be *necessary*, Hume would not have refuted this possible alternative ; and it is a very usual opinion among philosophers and physicists to-day that indeterministic influence *is* intelligible and *does* occur.

It might even be suggested that if our fundamental premiss were only the colourless principle that everything *may* make some sort of difference to *some* other thing, we might still deduce a good deal from the circumstances (*a*) that certain kinds of things seem *always* in the past to have made a specific *sort* of difference, i.e. from the way in which history has limited the *a priori* apparent possibilities, and (*b*)—more doubtfully —that in some at least of our volitions it looks as if we could see why a certain *sort* of difference should have been made. Such inferences, although chastened, would not seem wholly irrational ; and they would be based upon perceptible qualities or relations, however vague.

iii. Notes on Hume's Terminology

Difficulties may perhaps be experienced with regard to Hume's use—largely non-technical—of certain critically important terms, although his meaning, at any given time, was usually sufficiently apparent from the context.

As we have seen, the causal problem, according to Hume, was the problem of the *extension* beyond actual experience of a belief, based on actual experience, which simulated, but was not, actual experience. In other words, there was a transition of the mind, *felt* to be necessary, but going beyond what had been observed. This transition Hume also called ' inference ', and he maintained, in the end, that the ' transition ' or ' inference ' was associative and not an affair of ' reason '.

Nevertheless he was quite prepared to speak of causal ' reasonings ', and even of causal ' proofs '. Such language,

if not regarded either as a concession to common ways of speaking or as a plain inconsistency, involved the consequence that there *was* a species of causal reasoning, and even of causal logic, provided that such ' proof ', ' logic ' or ' reasoning ' was neither the intuitive nor the demonstrative ' reason ' of *knowledge* or *scientia*.

The word ' proof ' in this connexion was (as we have seen) used to indicate that the causal inference yielded certainty (in the sense of complete assurance or conviction), and so had to be distinguished from ' probability ' when the latter term was understood to mean what was *only* likely and was not completely assured.

Such assurance, in the language of Hume's age—i.e. assurance which (*a*) went beyond perception and memory and (*b*) was not the intuitive or demonstrative certainty of *knowledge* —was commonly called ' judgment '.[1] Thus Locke (IV. xiv. § 4) said that judgment was ' the putting ideas together, or separating them from one another in the mind, when their certain agreement or disagreement is not perceived but *presumed* to be so ' ; and clearly stated (*l.c.*, § 3) that such ' judgment ' might be well-grounded (although demonstration was not to be had) but might also be slovenly and prejudiced. Hume tended to distinguish ' judgment ' altogether from ' prejudice '.

The major ambiguities of the term ' probability ' have already been noticed, but there is some interest in considering more fully that general sense of ' probability ' in which, for Locke and Hume, it was opposed to ' knowledge '.

' Probability ', Locke said (IV. xv. § 3), ' is likeliness to be true, the very notation of the word signifying such a proposition, for which there be arguments or proofs to make it pass, or be received for true. The entertainment the mind gives this sort of propositions is called *belief, assent* or *opinion*, which is the admitting or receiving any proposition for true, upon arguments or proofs that are found to persuade us to receive it as true, without certain knowledge that it is so. And herein lies the difference between *probability* and *certainty, faith* and *knowledge*, that in all the parts of knowledge there is intuition ; each immediate idea, each step, has its visible and certain connexion ; in belief not so. That which makes me believe is something extraneous to the thing I believe.'

In the same way Bishop Butler in the Introduction to his celebrated *Analogy* (1736) said that ' the slightest presumption

[1] Cf. Malebranche's ' jugement naturel ' (*Éclair*, vi).

is of the nature of a probability ' which was ' like some truth or true event, like it, in itself, in its evidence, in some more or fewer of its circumstances ', and illustrated what was like (but *only* like) a true event by ' the belief that a child, if it lives twenty years, will grow up to the stature and strength of a man ; that food will contribute to the preservation of its life, and the want of it for such a number of days be its certain destruction '. In short he maintained, that ' *to us*, probability is the very guide of life ', although Omniscience would have knowledge and not mere verisimilitude.

Since for Hume all causal ' inferences ', ' reasonings ', ' proofs ', and ' probabilities ' were associations, he ascribed them all to the ' imagination ' which he regarded as the faculty that made *every* non-demonstrative ' transition '. When the mind felt necessitated and entirely convinced *through repeated and uncontradicted former experience* the imagination, so tutored, became identical with the (matter-of-fact) *understanding*.

iv. The Uniformity of Nature

As we saw, Hume distinguished between *specific* uniformities (e.g. heat attended by flame) and the *general* uniformity of nature—i.e. the principle that ' instances of which we have had no experience resemble those of which we have had experience ' (89 and 104 *sq.*), and, in particular, that the future must resemble the past.

He did not believe, however, that the foundations of these distinguishable principles could ultimately be different. For, in accordance with the relational theory of generalization he had set forth regarding abstract ideas, he held that what is general is always derived from what is specific, and is only a way in which the specific is considered to represent and summarize a multitude like to itself. General uniformity, therefore, was, like specific uniformities, only an instance of associative transition, ' inference ' or expectation.

Certain implications of Hume's position in this matter should now be considered.

(*a*) Hume ' allowed ' (92) that causal association, as well as other associations, was not an *infallible* ' cause of an union among ideas ', and therefore asserted the relatively moderate view that it was ' almost impossible ' (93) for the mind to prevent a causal association (cf. 128), and that ' the imagination itself ' (93) hurried us along in unpremeditated causal leaps.

Nevertheless, and rather unexpectedly, it would appear that Hume accepted the general uniformity of nature in the same unreserved (although ultimately alogical) sense as he accepted specific causal uniformities. This is plain, as we shall see, from his attitude to alleged exceptions, particularly ' miracles ' and the ' freedom ' of the will ; but it was also Hume's usual contention.

When Hume said, as he often said in the *Treatise* (130, 132, 404, 461 n.), that ' philosophers ' look for ' secret ' causes when they perceive, on the surface of things, either a *prima facie* absence of causes or a *prima facie* exception to some established causal uniformity, there can be no doubt that he commended the philosophers for doing so, and held that the only thing that was wrong about this philosophical procedure was the reasons the philosophers gave for following it.

The same point emerges from Hume's account of the convincing ' single ' experiment (104 *sq.*, 131), and of the growth of the habit of causal expectation. Regarding the single experiment—a point overlooked by Ward in his comments on Hume [1]—Hume said that, when due scientific precautions had been taken, a single experiment is held to prove a general law because it is subsumed under the *general* uniformity of nature which ' has established itself by a sufficient custom ' (105) in ' many millions ' of (scientific ?) experiments. Regarding the growth of the habit of causal expectation he said (130) that the growth of the habit must be gradual, but denied (131) that any one ' who is arriv'd at the age of maturity ' retained even the barest recollection of this unavoidable preliminary stage.

(*b*) The subject of ' general rules ' was very closely connected with the above. Notwithstanding his admission (150) that our trust in general rules was just as alogical or ' unphilosophical ' as the rest of our confidence in causes, Hume *did* put his trust in them ; and these general rules included the uniformity of nature as well as specific uniformities.

Hume's most consistent account of this matter was given in the place (148 *sqq.*) where he said that our imagination tended towards a rash, exuberant and biassed transition going far beyond ' the instances from which it is derived, and to which it perfectly corresponds ' (cf. 293), but that this ' first ' enthusiasm for general rules (characteristic of the vulgar) was corrected by a ' second ' operation (characteristic of the wise) where men confined themselves to ' the more general and

[1] *Psychological Principles*, p. 341.

authentic operations of the understanding'. Along with this went a certain subordinate species of rationalistic *reasoning*; for although there could be no sensible difference between ten thousand, and ten thousand and one, favourable instances, the 'judgment' accepted the general principles of arithmetic (141).

It is difficult, however, to reconcile this doctrine with the passages in which Hume sided altogether with the philosophers against the vulgar. When he said (132), not only that the vulgar were too hasty when they supposed that causes might be as 'uncertain', and, even as 'contrary', as they seemed to be on 'their first appearance', but also that the idea of a vast variety of hidden springs and principles was '*converted into certainty*'[1] by the 'exact scrutiny' which showed 'that a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes', he clearly gave a scientific bent or twist to his theory of association that was foreign to his own most fundamental principles. To the vulgar, while the seasons seem very regular, the wind seems very capricious; and it is nonsense to say that the science of meteorology, especially in Hume's day, had shown by 'exact scrutiny', that every wind was determined in all its details in accordance with a known specific uniformity. The most that could truly be said was that such causes might some day be discovered. And Hume said very much more than that, although he elsewhere admitted (e.g. 461 n.) that there was 'uncertainty' and 'variety' 'even in natural objects'.

(*c*) The application of the principle of uniformity, specific or general, to the *future* raises special questions. We commonly hold that the past is unalterable, the future to some extent alterable, and consequently that inferences to a (necessarily unobserved) future may have a practical importance that must be absent from inferences from an observed to an unobserved past. And it might be contended that there is an equally fundamental theoretical difference. For some hold that it is uncertain whether there will be a future at all, and others hold that if there is a future, nature, for no special reason, may come to behave very differently in it. Indeed, certain theologians, who never dreamed of doubting that there had been a God in the past, maintained that we might significantly ask '*why God will exist to-morrow*'.[2]

[1] Italics are mine.

[2] Law's *Enquiry*, p. 150. s'Gravesande, the Newtonian physicist (*Mathematical Elements*, etc., I, p. xv), professed to deduce that 'A Building, this Day firm in all its Parts, will not of its self run to Ruin

In Hume's examination of causality, time was taken for granted. In other words, he never doubted that there would be a future. He only denied the possibility of proving, by any demonstrative argument, that the future must resemble the past.

There was a snare, however, in this confident acceptance of *time*. It is doubtful, indeed, whether Hume's own doctrine of the nature of temporal perception gave him any proper warrant for accepting a uniform time-order as distinguished from the sense of temporal passage in the private tempo of the percipient. In any case, the conception of time implied in Hume's arguments concerning causality appears to have been of *absolute time*, whereas, according to Hume's own theory, moments of succession were *all* that was absolute in time, temporal order being wholly relative.

If so—*pace* Mr. Hobart in his recent articles in *Mind*, N.S., Nos. 155 and 156—the proper conclusion surely is that temporal order (including the future) expresses certain relations of objects. The question therefore is not whether the relationships will continue, but whether time (including continuance and the future) properly expresses them. Hume seems never to have perceived that his own philosophy of time should have led him to ask *this* question instead of the question that he did ask. And Kant—whatever may be thought of his professed solution in detail—seems clearly to have raised a very searching question when he asked whether it was possible to perceive or assign either contiguity or priority to objects except upon the basis of a knowledge of the connexions in nature which determined space and time themselves. Whether Mr. Whitehead, by saying that time, as known to us, ' is not pure succession ; it is the derivation of state from state ' (*Symbolism*, p. 41), and that ' the past consists of the community of settled acts which, through their objectifications in the present act, establish the conditions to which that act must conform ' (p. 42) really illuminates the question, is a matter into which I do not care to enter.

v. Belief

Hume took for granted that conviction inevitably occurred in *knowledge*, the mind being then necessarily determined (95).

to Morrow ' *not* from reason or sense, *but* from the principle ' We must look upon as true, whatever being denied would destroy civil Society, and deprive us of the Means of Living '.

The 'belief' that he discussed was 'belief' with regard to matter of fact only; and, except in a footnote which may have been an afterthought (96 *sq.*), he did not examine what might have been expected to be his chief concern, viz. belief in propositions.

This footnote showed obvious traces of Malebranche's influence, and especially of the passage which stated (VI. Pt. I, ii): 'Nous avons montré, dès le commencement de cet ouvrage, que l'entendement ne fait qu'appercevoir, & qu'il n'y a point de différence de la part de l'entendement entre les simples perceptions, les jugemens et les raisonnemens, si ce n'est que les jugemens et les raisonnemens sont des perceptions beaucoup plus composées que les simples perceptions.' Hume's way of stating the matter was that 'all logicians'[1] had made a great mistake. They held that there was (*a*) 'conception' of ideas, (*b*) the uniting of two ideas in 'judgment', (*c*) the uniting of more than two ideas by some middle term in 'reasoning'. Hume objected (1) that in many judgments (e.g. 'God is') there was only one idea (existence not being an idea) and (2) that inference (as in causal expectation) might reach its conclusion without a middle term. He therefore inferred that only *one* 'act of the mind' was involved (i.e. 'conception'), and that 'judgment' and 'reasoning' were but trains of successive conceptions. Thus he had to deal, he thought, with one question only, viz. the difference between conceiving an object with conviction, and conceiving an object without conviction.

Hume also took for granted the 'first' act of the judgment (86), that is to say he took for granted that the firm tang of sense-impressions, and indeed of remembered as well as of present sensa (*ibid.*), was, *eo ipso*, belief *in reality*. His problem, therefore, essentially concerned the 'second' act of the judgment, that is to say our assurance in the reality of matter of fact which was neither actually observed nor actually remembered.

His solution was that if an idea was so united to an impression as immediately to 'flow in upon us with a force like that of sensation'—to quote from the *Dialogues* (G. II. 403)—if, in other words, it simulated the *reality* or convincing *manner* of

[1] Cf. Keckermannus, *Systema Logicae*, 1640; Burgersdicius, *Logicae Institutiones*, 4th ed., 1698; Aldrich (Mansel's edn.), Cap. I, etc., etc. Also the *Port Royal Logic*, Introduction, and Heineccius, *Elementa Philosophiae*, Pt. I, ch. ii, § 11.

the impression, it was believed without question, i.e. accepted as a piece of existence ; and that causal associations, and these only, were so accepted. Accordingly, he said, we were thrown back upon the ultimate difference between impressions and ideas ; and so he began his section on belief (96) by asserting that impressions differed from ideas *only* in force and vivacity (cf. I. *sq.*), and by describing the difference in the crudest possible way by saying that the ' liveliness or brightness ' of a colour, as distinguished from its hue, was the sort of difference he was thinking about.

Many critics have regarded this declaration as final. According to Reid :

' Suppose the idea to be that of a future state after death ; one man believes it firmly—this means no more than that he hath a strong and lively idea of it ; another neither believes nor disbelieves —that is, he has a weak and faint idea. Suppose, now, a third person believes firmly that there is no such thing, I am at a loss to know whether his idea be faint or lively ; if it is faint, then there may be a firm belief where the idea is faint ; if the idea is lively, then the belief of a future state and the belief of no future state, must be one and the same ' (*Works*, Hamilton, p. 107).

According to T. H. Green (e.g. G. I. 177), ' Hume tells us that by " idea " he merely means a feeling less lively than it has been '. According to Mr. Whitehead (*Process and Reality*, p. 188), the ' force and vivacity ' doctrine ' is very unplausible, and, to speak bluntly, is in contradiction to plain fact ' ; and Hume's abandonment of it in the Appendix (636), according to the same critic (*ibid.* n.), could not be permitted without protest, since ' in the light of the retractation the whole " sensationalist " doctrine requires reconsideration '.

I do not suggest that Hume could answer all these criticisms. In particular, positive *dis*belief, despite Hume (624), must be distinguished from the mere absence of belief-pungency, yet cannot be so distinguished unless *propositions* are adequately distinguished from a succession of perceptions. For there are no negative perceptions, although there are negative propositions. On the other hand, Green was far from candid when he neglected Hume's retractation (and many other similar explanations), altogether ; and Mr. Whitehead's comments seem to demand a fuller investigation than the space at Mr. Whitehead's disposal permitted.

In his retractation, Hume, admitting the ' error ' of asserting that ' force and vivacity ' constituted the *sole* relevant differ-

ence, observed: 'Had I said, that two ideas of the same object can only be different by their different *feeling*, I should have been nearer the truth.'

Now it may be true that the principle of this retractation cut very deep and therefore could not be regarded as a 'minor adjustment' (as Mr. Whitehead (*ibid.*) correctly observes). I would suggest, however, that Hume did not contemplate any drastic revision of his theory, but merely wanted to say that 'feeling' expressed his meaning better than 'force and vivacity'. In support of this interpretation I can plead, at any rate, (*a*) that in the body of the *Treatise*, to some extent, and repeatedly as well as emphatically in the Appendix, Hume explained that, although no term fulfilled his purpose quite adequately, 'feeling' was the best of the inadequate terms, (*b*) that the *Enquiry* (E. 47 *sqq.*) endorsed the explanation of the Appendix, and (*c*) that inasmuch as the amended doctrine retained and enforced what Hume evidently regarded as the crux of his theory, i.e. that impressions and ideas did not differ in their intrinsic *natures*, Hume apparently did regard the 'withdrawal' as only a 'minor adjustment'. The fact that the feeling in question was just Malebranche's 'le je ne sais quoi qui nous agite, car la raison n'y a point de part' (V. xii), and that Malebranche, as we have seen, also spoke of 'force and vivacity', tends to confirm this interpretation.

In the *Treatise* (106) Hume spoke of assurance of present existence—'call it *firmness*, or *solidity*, or *force*, or *vivacity*'—and added that it was 'that certain *je-ne-scai-quoi* of which 'tis impossible to give any definition or description, but which every one sufficiently understands'. The Appendix (624 *sqq.*, 628 *sq.*) was fuller:

'We may . . . conclude that belief consists merely in a certain feeling or sentiment, in something that depends not on the will, but must arise from certain determinate causes or principles, of which we are not masters. . . . That there is a greater firmness and solidity in the conceptions, which are the objects of conviction or assurance, than in the loose and indolent reveries of a castle-builder, every one will readily own. They strike upon us with more force; they are more present to us; the mind has a firmer hold of them, and is more actuat'd and mov'd by them. It acquiesces in them; and, in a manner, fixes and reposes itself on them. In short, they approach nearer to the impressions, which are immediately present to us; and are therefore analogous to many other operations of the mind' (624 *sq.*). 'An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea, that the fancy alone presents to us: And this differ-

ent feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*, or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*. This variety of terms, which may seem so unphilosophical, is intended only to express that act of the mind, which renders realities more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passions and imagination. Provided we agree about the thing, 'tis needless to dispute about the terms. . . . Its true and proper name is *belief*, which is a term that every one sufficiently understands in common life' (629).

These assertions were incorporated, with a minimum of rewriting, in the *Enquiry* (47 *sqq.*), and led similarly to the conclusion that belief was ultimate and *sui generis*. Accordingly, it seems to me to be very doubtful indeed whether the specific 'error' that Hume withdrew necessarily involved extensive alterations in his sensationalist system, although it may very well be true that if he had pursued the question more resolutely than he ever thought of doing, he might have had to go further than he meant.

However that may be, it is clear that Hume's reference to this indefinable 'feeling' was a reference to the indefinable *manner* in which conviction 'strikes upon the mind' and so was *extrinsic* to the 'conception' that was apprehended. The significance of the 'acquiescence' of the mind in a sentiment 'of which we are not masters' (624) cannot escape the attention of a careful reader; and although Hume admitted (116) that 'education' *might* acquire a force even stronger than actual experience, he regarded the semi-voluntary influence of education as obviously weaker, in all normal instances, than the 'custom' which arose from repeated (involuntary) experience (*ibid.*). Indeed, in one of his essays (G. III, 130 n.) he held that even opinion was involuntary. 'Is a man's opinion, where he is able to form a real opinion, more at his disposal than his complexion?' And it is abundantly plain that when Hume said that belief was a species of sensation (103), he meant his readers to see that belief was constrained and involuntary just as sensation was. He therefore gave no countenance to 'the will to believe'; and although he was something of a pragmatist when he said that we are 'actuat'd and mov'd' by beliefs and not by imaginations, his reason for saying so was simply that, according to him, anything that successfully simulated or passed for sensation, actuated us in the notorious and perfectly inexplicable way in which sensation actuated.

According to Hume's own principles, however, the distinction between what is voluntary and what is involuntary had to be *learned*, and was not original. It would seem, therefore, that the distinction between impressions and ideas themselves might, in part at least, be *acquired*.

Even if we concede to Hume that any sane adult normally distinguishes between an impression (however faint) and an image (however vivid) without the least hesitation, there is surely something of a problem concerning *why* he does so; and even if we do not hold the theory opposed to Hume's, viz. that our 'primitive credulity' makes us accept *every* presentation as a 'reality' unless we are baulked by some definite contradiction, we must at least admit that much (and very probably the greater part) of the distinction between 'fact' and 'fancy' has to be learned by a slow critical process, in which children, and adults too when they are half-asleep, are not noticeably expert.

Hume greatly exaggerated the capriciousness of the 'imagination' in the sense in which he opposed that faculty to belief based upon experience. He seems to have been content with the surface-fact that resemblance (111 *sqq.* and 147 *sqq.*), contiguity (110), education (116 and 118), and poetic exuberance (123) did not *usually* produce full conviction, and therefore that any exceptions were to be compared to 'the extraordinary ferment of the blood and spirits' in 'madness or folly' (*ibid.*). This contrast between the utter license of the fancy and the fixed and unalterable character of belief due to causal association—where 'each impression draws along with it a precise idea, which takes its place in the imagination, as something solid and real, certain and invariable' (110)—was definitely overdrawn in his pages, even if he *had* been able to distinguish effectively between the horse-sense of beliefs based on experience, and those which were due to prejudice, education or a romantic turn of mind.

To sleep, perchance to dream—there's the rub for Hume's ultimate and original separation of impressions (and what is impression-like) from mere ideas. For dreamers do normally accept dream-manifestations as 'realities' *during their dreams*. Therefore, if dream-manifestations are mere 'ideas', Hume's theory falls; for the status of many 'ideas' is habitually misinterpreted during a large part of every human life. If, again, they are 'impressions' his theory also falls. For he had then no intelligible explanation of the way in which we

decline to admit the ' reality ' of these dream-manifestations the moment we wake up.

Indeed, once we face this question squarely, it becomes apparent that even if there is an ultimate, not further explicable, and highly important difference between (at any rate) *most* impressions and *most* ideas, the reason why we all learn to dismiss dream-memories so very promptly from waking life, is largely, if not principally, their lack of interconnexion, *inter se* and with waking life, rather than any lack of apparently intrinsic ' reality '. As Thomas Brown said, belief ' is something very different from a lively and firm conception of an object. It is a sentiment which is attached rather to the relations of things than to things themselves, and is therefore as little vivid in any case as the feeling of mere relation in which it is involved '.[1]

Berkeley, to whom (among others) Hume was greatly indebted for his formulation of the distinction between impressions and ideas, had included ' orderliness and coherence ' (P. § 33) as well as ' strength ' (*ibid.*) and ' independence of *our* wills ' (P. § 29) in his account of ' ideas of sense '. ' The ideas of sense ', he said (P. § 30), ' are more strong, lively and distinct than those of the imagination ; they have likewise a steadiness, order and coherence, and are not excited at random as those which are the effects of human wills often are.' And Hume, who remembered Berkeley's language so well (e.g. 629), availed himself of the relational implications of ' firmness ' and of ' steadiness ' not only in relatively casual expressions like the ' force *and settled order*[2] arising from custom ' (108) but pervasively throughout his book.

It was the *system* of the memory, senses, and causal expectations that formed the core of Hume's natural philosophy. To be sure, this ' system ' was something more than mere abstract coherence ; and a commentator would have to admit that a rather sketchy ' system ' principally composed of impressions would be firmer than a better-articulated system whose constituents were only ideas. Still, the systematic connexion of the ' memory and senses ' has a great deal to do with the promptness and certainty with which the adult mind accepts sensible facts and repudiates day-dreams, and has much to do with the waking rejection of dreams themselves, even when, at the time of dreaming, the dream-manifestations

[1] *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect*, 3rd ed., p. 404.
[2] Italics are mine.

are, to say the least, very *like* impressions. To this fact Hume's own account of the 'system' of the memory and senses, amplified by his doctrine of the constancy and coherence of common-sense 'things' (195 *sqq.*) and of our irresistible tendency to equip a pair of legs with a trunk and a head when all we can see is the legs on the stairs (626), bore eloquent and copious testimony.

Again, it is plain that assurance may be complete, and yet permit a variation in vivacity. As we saw, Hume himself said that a memory was fainter than a present impression, and a distant memory than a nearer recollection. Yet in dealing with the 'experience' on which causal inferences are based, he resolutely ignored all such difficulties, and credited *all* memories with *complete* assurance of existence and reality (110). He even said (632) that 'where an opinion admits of no doubt, or opposite probability, we attribute to it a full conviction: tho' the want of resemblance, or contiguity, may render its force inferior to that of other opinions'.

vi. Free Will, Testimony and Miracles

I propose, now, to test the range of Humian 'belief' in the uniformity, and in the specific uniformities, of nature by considering what he said about free will and about miracles, that is to say about events commonly regarded as non-uniform. The former problem was discussed in the *Treatise* (399 *sqq.*) as well as in the *Enquiry* (E. 80 *sqq.*), the latter in the *Enquiry* only (109 *sqq.*).

Since an 'anatomist' of human nature was bound, in any case, to examine the notion of human freedom, it is unnecessary to give historical reasons why Hume decided to discuss the subject, but it is interesting to note that Hume had probably studied Anthony Collins's 'Essay concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions' (1707) pretty closely—in addition, of course, to Locke's chapter on Power—and that Collins had argued that liberty, in the sense of freedom from compulsion,[1] must be granted (p. 47), but (p. 49) that there must be definite and necessary causes for doing or forbearing. It may also be noticed, as a symptom of the spirit of the times, that, contem-

[1] Hobbes's fundamental thesis in his controversy with Bishop Bramhall. See e.g. IV, 261 *sq.*: 'The distinction of *free* into *free from compulsion*, and *free from necessitation*, I acknowledge. For to be *free from compulsion* is to do a thing so as *terror* be not the cause of his *will* to do it. . . . But *free from necessitation*, I say, no man can be, and it is that which his Lordship undertook to disprove.'

poraneously with the *Treatise* (1739), ' A View of the Necessitarian or Best Scheme freed from the objections of M. Crousaz in his Examination of Mr. Pope's Essay on Man ' was published anonymously. In this work it was maintained, with Mr. Pope and his necessitarian scheme, ' that man, though free from compulsion or restraint, yet is necessarily determined by the constitution of his nature to desire happiness ' (p. 11), that libertarianism ' overthrows the simple and natural ideas of morality ' (p. 14), and that there could be no evil in a God who had created the best of all possible worlds (pp. 17 *sqq.*).

Regarding miracles, Hume, as we saw, had discussed the subject with a Jesuit at La Flèche, and it would have been surprising had no such conversation occurred. For Hume arrived in France only two years after the amazing series of reputed miracles at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, when the Molinists prevailed upon the king to close the cemetery in order to prevent further awkward miracles of the kind that heartened the Jansenists. Hume was not likely to have forgotten the comment of one of the wits of the time:

> De par le roi, défense à Dieu
> De faire miracle en ce lieu:

and, speaking as one of those ' who had been in France about that time ' (E. 345), he appended a long footnote to the *Enquiry* upon the apparent excellence of the evidence for these miracles, as related in detail by two contemporary authors—one of them M. Montgeron who had suffered for telling the story.

In truth, however, the air was dense with the subject of miracles when Hume published his *Enquiry*. He complained that the ferment occasioned by Dr. Conyers Middleton's *Free Enquiry* spoilt his own sales (G. III. 3); but he himself came as near to writing a *chapitre d'occasion* as he ever did. The subject of miracles, along with prophecy, was the vantage-ground of the more outspoken deists; and Woolston, a clergyman probably half-insane, in order to hasten the ' Extinction of ecclesiastical *Vermin* out of God's House ' (*Fifth Discourse*, p. 70) [1] had called the Resurrection ' the most . . . barefaced Imposture that ever was put upon the World ' (*Sixth Discourse*, p. 27)—so certain was he that miracles were ecclesiastical legends designed to conceal God's truth: that is to say, the religion of nature. And Anthony Collins, without any traces of madness, had written in the essay already mentioned: ' Suppose a

[1] The dates of the *Discourses* were 1727–9.

Man should bring the highest Testimony imaginable of his Divine Mission, by working a Miracle for the Confirmation of his Doctrine; yet if there were any thing in the Doctrine repugnant to the natural Notions which I have of God, I could not receive it as coming from God . . . and if our natural Notions of other things are as certain as our natural Notions of God, then it follows, that nothing which we judg repugnant to natural Notions ought to be assented to upon the highest Testimony whatever' (p. 15). Collins also quoted Dr. Clarke in explicit support (p. 40).

The gist of Hume's argument concerning necessitarianism was exceedingly simple. ''Tis universally acknowledged', he said (399 *sq.*), 'that the operations of external bodies are necessary, and that in the communication of their motion, in their attraction, and mutual cohesion, there are not the least traces of indifference or liberty. Every object is determined by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion, and can no more depart from that precise line, in which it moves, than it can convert itself into an angel or spirit or any superior substance.' These motions, to use one of his phrases (402), arose 'necessarily because uniformly'; and the only intelligible problem was whether human actions had in fact been observed to show the same uniformity as past natural events, and whether we did infer necessity from past uniformity in their case. Hume had no doubt whatever that the answer was in the affirmative. The two sexes, he said (401), had differed uniformly in their 'sentiments, actions and passions' just as clearly as the 'products of Guienne and Champagne' had regularly differed in their relishes. And we did infer in precisely the same way. A general relied on the courage of his soldiers, a merchant on the probity of his supercargo. A man's jailors, if the man found them incorruptible, were obstacles to his escape in precisely the same sense as stone walls, if he found them strong (405 *sq.*).

In short, there was no relevant difference between natural and moral evidence in this particular (406, cf. 171). No doubt we discovered (apparent) inconstancy in human actions, but so we did in earthquakes and in the weather. In both sets of instances we should 'proceed upon the same maxims' (403), and 'from the operation of contrary and concealed causes, conclude that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho'

to appearance not equally constant and certain' (404). 'As chance is commonly thought to imply a contradiction, and is at least directly contrary to experience, there are always the same arguments against liberty or free-will' (407). If there had been anything *occult* in causation, there might have been a relevant difference; but there was nothing occult about the uniformity that was common to the moral and the natural. 'I do not ascribe to the will that unintelligible necessity, which is suppos'd to lie in matter. But I ascribe to matter, that intelligible quality, call it necessity or not, which the most religious orthodoxy does or must allow to belong to the will' (410).

Granting that Hume was concerned to *examine* and not to *deny* the principle and the range of causality, the confident tone of these assertions may seem decidedly strange. By his own admission, past experience of physical nature had shown apparent inconstancy as well as apparent uniformity; and he might have seen, pretty easily, that the proportion of experimentally *attested* uniformities to the rest of nature (or even to the rest of nature *which had been observed*) was very small indeed. We have to conclude, therefore, that Hume believed that any exception to complete uniformity, either in human or in natural actions, would be simply *absurd* and a piece of meaningless 'chance'. It would be a *real* although never a logically demonstrable absurdity.

Yet where was his consistency? His theory was that phenomena *were* loose and separate *although* they clung together in our minds. He also held, however, that the phenomena were themselves in the mind. But surely if phenomena are *phenomenally* united they *are* united, not merely *quoad nos*, but in their only possible reality. If they *were* 'loose' they would be loose in the mind (where alone they reside), and this looseness would be just another name for what Hume called 'chance'. In short, Hume said that experience itself was loose and also that it was not loose. *Qua* sceptic he admitted the inconsistency; but why was he so certain that the alternative was either to accept uniformities *everywhere* without the least exception or else to accept no uniformities at all? And what in the world could his doctrine of 'secret' causes be? In later life he wrote (G. III. 249 in the year 1770): 'It is a maxim in all philosophy that causes which do not appear are to be considered as not existing.' A 'secret' cause, however, would have to be a phenomenal or apparent uniformity that *did not appear*—or in other words, a piece of nonsense.

Hume's further arguments concerning freedom in the *Treatise* were (*a*) that ' liberty of spontaneity ', or the power of doing what we like, frequently occurred but was not at all opposed to determinism (407 *sq.*), (*b*) that we often felt a certain ' looseness ' (408) regarding our own actions, but (*c*) that, without determinism, the connexion between character and conduct, together with the whole practice of penal responsibility, would be unintelligible (408 *sqq.*).

Of these arguments, the first is obviously sound, and the third is one of the strongest among the stock arguments in favour of determinism (Hume was clearly right when he said that the argument applied to divine retribution in the same sense as to human). The second, however, although probably (as Hume said it was) quite futile, was rather curious in the form in which Hume stated it. According to him, A had to infer that B had a mind *at all* on the ground that B's body was visibly similar to A's which (as A knew from his own experience) was a mind-body system. It was therefore very odd that A, who felt the ' looseness ' in himself, should refuse to attribute a similar looseness to B.

In the *Enquiry* there was little substantial difference in Hume's argument; and even the language of the *Treatise* was reproduced to an unusual extent. (There is a slip here in Sir L. A. Selby-Bigge's edition, where it is said (E. xviii) that ' nothing corresponds in the Treatise ' to ' the development of the religious aspect of the question, Enquiry, §§ 76–81 '. On the contrary, a large part of § 76 was quoted verbatim from the *Treatise* (410 *sq.*) and § 77 was not in principle new. The rest of the argument (§§ 78–81) was, in a sense, new, and was also provocative. But it arose, very naturally, from what went before.) There was, however, a greater fullness in the detail of Hume's account of many of our inferences concerning human action, with special reference to history and to the thesis (E. 83) ' that human nature remains still the same '.

Along with history goes testimony; and Hume's celebrated section on miracles in the *Enquiry* was principally an essay on the credibility of testimony.[1]

Hume's attitude was intransigent. Every ' man of sense ' in the ' age of enlightenment ' concluded, he said, ' like a just reasoner ', that evidence of a miracle ' carries falsehood upon the very face of it ' and was ' more properly a subject of derision

[1] Testimony and its relations to miracle were the subjects of the concluding chapters of the *Port Royal Logic*.

than of argument' (E. 124). Sensible men therefore declined to believe that Lazarus and the Shunamite woman's son rose from the dead; and the celebrated physician De Sylva, who 'reasoned, like a man of sense, from natural causes' (E. 345) refused to accept the supernatural cures at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, despite the abundance of legally cogent evidence.

This attitude of Hume's was perfectly intelligible. As Hume later said in his *History* (ch. 20), in the course of a spirited and sympathetic account of Joan of Arc and her visions: 'It is the business of history to distinguish between the *miraculous* and the *marvellous*; to reject the first in all narrations merely profane and human; to doubt the second; and when obliged by unquestionable testimony, as in the present case, to admit of something extraordinary, to receive as little of it as is consistent with the known facts and circumstances.' An intelligible attitude, however, is one thing, a philosophical demonstration quite another thing; and Hume, in attempting to supply the latter, gave, in fact, one of the weakest 'demonstrations' ever perpetrated by a major philosopher on a serious issue.

His chief contention was that 'experience' established 'the laws of nature' and was therefore opposed to any 'violation of the laws of nature' or miracle (E. 114); that our acceptance or rejection of testimony was also based wholly on 'experience' (the truth or falsity of narratives being effects of which the witness was the efficient cause); that 'experience' yielded either full proofs (when it gave complete assurance) or conjectural probabilities (when there was a conflict); that in the latter case we should subtract the favourable from the unfavourable evidence (thus obtaining something less than complete proof); that consequently if, *per impossibile*, we had 'proof' of a 'miracle' we should have to subtract one certainty from another certainty, and so be in utter doubt; but that the evidence in favour of a 'miracle' could never approach proof, since men's love of the marvellous, their darkened minds in unenlightened ages, and the temporal advantage they were likely to reap from miraculous credentials—in short, the 'known and natural principles of credulity and delusion'—gave a far more plausible account of all such alleged 'proofs'. Along with this went a parallel, but more complicated, argument which depended upon an amended definition of the word 'miracle'. Defined as amended, a miracle was 'a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent' (E. 115 n.); and

Hume inferred that any testimony in favour of *non-natural* causation, even with regard to events not apparently astonishing in themselves (E. 115 n.), was to be rejected just as peremptorily as the other, more spectacular 'miracles'. His discussion ended (*a*) with a curious attempt to indicate the limits within which testimony to some very marvellous event might nevertheless be credible (E. 127 *sqq.*), and (*b*) with a statement, probably meant to be thoroughly offensive, to the effect that the Christian faith *compelled* belief in miracles, that is to say, in the very absurdities that 'the judicious and knowing' (E. 127) who knew what's what, rejected with scorn.

Clearly, Hume's principal *argument* (whatever may be thought of his *attitude* and of many of his subordinate arguments) was an outrageous *petitio principii*. When he was told that certain witnesses professed to have *observed* the raising of a dead man to life, he said: 'O, *that* has never been observed in any age or country' (E. 115). When, according to his own principles (testimony being a species of evidence obtained from experience), he ought to have balanced the conflict of evidence, between testimony to the miraculous on the one hand, and the general presumption of the non-miraculous on the other, he deliberately called the presumption *certain*, and the counter-testimony *absurd*. Forgetting that the 'experience' on which the laws of nature is based must itself, very largely, be testimony, he calmly accepted all enlightened 'reasoning' and rejected all contrary *testimony* without inquiry. And when he was told that many Christians found non-natural agency conformable with *their* experience, he replied that 'experience' knew nothing of non-natural causes. He may have been right, but his argument was contemptible. By his own showing a *prima facie* conjuncture (nothing more abstruse) was the sole evidence of causal connexion. Why then reject the *prima facie* conjuncture of non-natural with natural? Again, by his own showing, the 'judicious' belief in causes was only an inexplicable natural propensity. Why, then, reject out of hand the *other* natural propensity to believe in marvels?

Indeed, Hume's argument in these latter respects was so obviously feeble as to be interesting principally because of the light it threw upon the stubborn condition of his own mind. As we have seen so often, he believed that it was in some odd sense *reasonable* for him, despite his ultimate scepticism, to side *entirely* with the judicious and the enlightened, and to reject all vulgar propensities incontinently.

In later life—the year was 1761 (B. II. 115)—Hume returned to his friend, the Rev. Dr. Hugh Blair of Edinburgh, the manuscript of Dr. George Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles* which, he said (*ibid.* 117), Blair was at liberty to communicate to Campbell; and these comments, along with a letter from Hume to Campbell dated 1762, were printed in the Preface to the later editions of Campbell's book (I quote hereafter from the third edition, Vol. I). These remarks of Hume's were not written expressly for publication principally because, as Hume said (p. 7), 'I had fixed a resolution, in the beginning of my life, always to leave the public to judge between my adversaries and me, without making any reply'; and they professed to be the comments of one who had 'long since done with all inquiries on such subjects, and . . . become incapable of instruction' (p. 22). The comments, however, were too significant to be omitted here; and it is to be remembered that Hume expressed a very high opinion of Campbell's candour and acuteness (p. 13), carefully distinguishing between him and persons like Warburton (p. 14).

The following were the principal points that emerged:

(*a*) Campbell, like Reid and the other Scottish philosophers, maintained that testimony is a principle of belief independent of, and even prior to, causal 'experience'. 'The earliest assent', he said (pp. 39 *sq.*), 'which is given to testimony by children, and which is previous to all experience, is in fact the most unlimited; . . . by a gradual experience of mankind it is gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds. . . . Accordingly youth, which is inexperienced, is credulous: age, on the contrary, is distrustful.' He added that it was irrelevant to object that the 'original' principle of testimony might be corrected by experience, since memory might also be so corrected, and no one could say with significance that *memory* could be 'derived' from 'experience'. Hume's answer was that testimony was but one instance of 'human actions'; and that there was no more difficulty in understanding why children were impressed by the 'principles, sentiments and passions of their elders' than in understanding why clay was impressed by a hammer (pp. 15 *sq.*).

(*b*) Campbell, very justly, pointed out the ambiguity of the term 'experience' in Hume's argument, showing that, if *personal* experience (p. 65) were meant, it would be nonsense to say that *such* experience could legislate concerning 'what has never been observed in any age or country' (p. 68); and

that it was absurd to suggest, as Hume did suggest (E. 109), that 'the miracles of our Saviour' contradicted the evidence of his *own* eighteenth-century senses. Hume replied curtly, and perhaps inadequately: 'No man can have any other experience but his own. The experience of others becomes his only by the credit he gives to their testimony; which proceeds from his own experience of human nature' (p. 16).

(*c*) To the objection that he had no right to reject the alleged evidence in favour of miracles *without examination*, Hume replied (pp. 17 *sq.*): 'Does a man of sense run after every silly tale of witches, or hobgoblins, or fairies, and canvass particularly the evidence? I never knew anyone, that examined and deliberated about nonsense, who did not believe it before the end of his inquiries.'

(*d*) To certain objections of Campbell's concerning the relation between the certainty of *some* causal experience (according to Hume) and the mere conjectural probability of *other* causal experience, Hume answered (p. 17): 'I find no difficulty to explain my meaning, and yet shall not probably do it in any future edition. The proof against a miracle, as it is founded on invariable experience, is of that *species* or *kind* of proof, which is full and certain when taken alone, because it implies no doubt, as is the case with all probabilities; but there are degrees of this species, and when a weaker proof is opposed to a stronger it is overcome.'

In reality, with one small exception (p. 3) Hume made no alterations in subsequent editions (apart from his habitual exercise of polishing phrases and correcting misprints and Scotticisms); and the essay on miracles came to be regarded as a classical target for the faithful (as in De Quincey's long-range sniping in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1839). The problem of conjectural probability, however, leads us back to the *Treatise*.

vii. Conjectural Probability

Hume was anxious to show that an independent analysis of conjectural probability corroborated his theory of causal inference.

'Probability', he once said (444), 'is of two kinds, either when the object is really in itself uncertain, and to be determin'd by chance; or when, tho' the object be already certain, yet 'tis uncertain to our judgment, which finds a number of proofs on each side of the question.' In his main discussion

of the question, however, Hume accepted, or at least did not dispute, the ' philosophical ' view that there was no such thing as chance *in rerum natura* (125, cf. E. 56), but asserted that if *we* were ignorant of the relevant ' secret ' causes, we were ' undetermined ' or ' indifferent ' (125) just as if there were ' uncertainty of nature ' (131) or a ' contrariety of events '. *For us*, a cause implied that we were ' determined ' to believe so and so. Chance, *for us*, was indetermination or the ' native indifference of the mind ' (125). Indeed, Hume seems to have held (125 *sq.*) that ' chance ' in the strict sense could only be supposed to occur when there was a sort of ' mixture of causes among the chances ', as in games of hazard (e.g. in the sort of artifice according to which a die *must* fall on one of its six sides although it is so constructed that, so far as we know, there is no special reason, in any given instance, for it to fall on any one side rather than on any other).

Hume proceeded, then, to consider the ' superior combination of chances ', e.g. the greater probability of a throw of black if a die had four black faces and only two white ones. He affirmed (127) that the superior probability of black being thrown was neither more nor less than another way of saying that, among the indifferent alternatives, there were more black than white. In other words, he denied the usual inference that *because* the die had more black faces than white ones, *therefore* a throw of black was more likely than a throw of white; and he believed that this discovery of an identical proposition in place of an inference supported his general theory of causal ' reasoning ' (126). (In a later essay (G. III. 175) he took a statistical view of probability, stating that ' any byass however small ' would reveal its presence in a great number of throws, although not in a small number, and (speaking of mankind) that ' those principles of causes, which are fitted to operate on a multitude, are always of a grosser and more stubborn nature, less subject to accidents, and less influenced by whim and private fancy, than those which operate on a few only '.)

His general conclusion was that the mind was determined by causal association to conclude that a die *must* fall on one of its six sides, but that the associative impulse was ' divided ' into six, when the indifference of the six sides was remembered; that the image of each side thereupon acted separately, the images which agreed (e.g. the four black ones) strengthening one another, although with a vivacity impaired by the contrary

agreement (e.g. of the two white ones) ' as far as their strength goes ' (130, cf. E. 111). He compared this predicament with the gradual growth of belief in causal connexion in the early stages of the repetition of similars (130).

This account of the probability of ' chances ', however, was only a prelude to his section on ' the probability of causes '; but, unfortunately, his exposition at the beginning of the latter section is not altogether clear since Hume's ' *secondly* ' (134) may succeed the ' First ' of the preceding paragraph or an earlier ' First ' (132). I take him to have meant, however, that when there is a ' contrariety in our experience and observation ' we obtain ' a kind of hesitating belief for the future ' (132) in two distinct ways. In the first way there is a weakened or imperfect transition which transfers the conflicting proportions observed in past experience to the future. Here Hume found a parallel to the ' probability of chances '. For he held that the impulse to expect was ' broke into pieces ' (134) and that it ' mixed ' the pieces in the old proportions. (He illustrated the point, very illogically, by saying (134) that if we know from past experience that one ship out of twenty that go to sea is lost, we infer, seeing twenty ships in harbour, that one will not return.)

Hume held, however, that this first way (in which experiments (133) were carefully weighed) was not the common way, and that what usually occurred was a second way in which we ' extract a single judgment ' (134), and, in an ' oblique manner ' (133), united the divided images. In this second way, the single judgment must be regarded as compounded of separate parts (cf. his view (141) that a desire for £1,000 is compounded of 1,000 desires for £1). In the compound effect, however, the similarities concurred and the weaker ones passed into unnoticed opposition; the result being a slightly damaged confidence, but still a felt and apparently *single* likelihood.

Hume obviously enjoyed the ' abstruseness ' (138) of his reasoning at this point, and remarked in triumph that it was straining at a gnat to complain of subtlety, if his reasoning concerning causes had once been swallowed. It is not very clear, however, what precisely his conclusion was. On the whole, he seems to have meant that a ' probable ' judgment (in this sense of probability) was always hesitating, never assured; but much in his argument suggests that his ' single ' case was really regarded as the victorious case, in which the *cons* were set aside, as after the verdict of a jury, although the fact

that there had been *cons*, kept the affair from ever being entirely certain. And it is to be feared that he confused between a ' single ' judgment and a judgment *about a particular case*.

Again, when one considers the popularity, in Hume's day, of discussions of the theory of chance in games of hazard, and especially the fact that De Moivre had written, it is a little surprising that Hume's discussion contained no attempt at even the simplest mathematical analysis, and no resolute examination of the nature of statistical inference. This historical situation calls for a brief explanation.

By general consent, serious work upon the theory of conjectural probability began with the contributions of Pascal and of Fermat towards the middle of the seventeenth century. Next Huygens's *De Ratiociniis in Ludo Aleae* appeared in 1657,[1] and remained the best account of the subject for many years. Huygens's book was translated more than once into English, and in view of Hume's reference to backgammon (269), it is worth noticing that an English translation of the *De Ludo Aleae*, of the date 1738, contained a few remarks upon ' Hazard and Backgammon ' appended by the translator John Ham.[2] For Hume may surely be credited with some theoretical interest in the games he played—and he also played whist.[3] In the early eighteenth century the *Ars Conjectandi* of James Bernoulli (1713), the *Essai* of Montmort (1708), and De Moivre's *The Doctrine of Chances* (1718) greatly advanced the science of the subject, and appear to have been accompanied, although at a distance, by a good deal of popular discussion. Because of Hume's stay at La Flèche there is some interest in the circumstance that the Jesuit John Caramuel did something, in his *Mathesis Biceps* (1670), to redeem the lean years between Fermat and James Bernoulli; and also that the celebrated French philosopher Nicole contributed a memoir on the subject to the French Academy (published in 1732).

viii. The ' Impression ' of Mental Determination

As we saw in our synopsis of Hume's argument, the search for, *and the discovery of* the ' impression '—which turned out to be an ' impression of reflection '—from which the idea of necessary connexion was derived, governed Hume's exposition

[1] Todhunter's *History*, p. 22. [2] *ibid.*, p. 49.

[3] He was capable of losing his temper at *post mortems* on whist: and ' was proud of his abilities at whist and cookery ' (Greig, p. 383).

from its inception to its close. He began 'regularly' by searching for the impression (74). He announced its discovery (156), and emphasized its importance by recapitulations. And he did the same thing in the *Enquiry* (E. 73 *sqq.*). Nothing could be clearer than this.

Nevertheless, critics of eminence seem to have neglected these striking and repeated assertions altogether. 'If the notion of causation does not appear in the vivid series [of impressions]', Cook Wilson said,[1] 'obviously it cannot appear in the weaker *replica* of that series, the ideas. Moreover, Hume, contrary to his own criticism of Locke and his own theory, was here allowing to the mind a power of originating an idea, which did not arise from any impression.' It would be difficult to misinterpret Hume more grossly and more callously; but a statement of Mr. Whitehead's seems little better, the statement, namely, that 'it is difficult to understand why Hume exempts "habit" from the same criticism as that applied to the notion of "cause". We have no "impression" of "habit", just as we have no "impression" of "cause". Cause, repetition, habit, are all in the same boat'.[2]

On the contrary, Hume's argument precisely and emphatically was that when a habit of expectation was formed we *did* have an 'impression' of 'cause', because we had a new and 'original' *feeling of necessitation* in our own minds; our only mistake was that we illegitimately transferred this new feeling to objects. The repetition could neither produce nor discover anything new in the *things*; it did produce something new in *us*, viz. a new 'impression of reflection'.

In saying these things, Hume (however defective his argument may otherwise have been) was clearly describing a genuine psychological fact. It is undeniable that x feels different in the cases (*a*) in which it is a stranger to us, (*b*) in which it is a familiar friend that has always been accompanied by y in past experience. Equally clearly, we do not expect any *particular* companion (say y) in the first case, and we do strongly expect the *determinate* companion y in the second case. Obviously, therefore, there is *some* difference of the kind Hume tried to describe; but it may significantly be asked whether, in terms of his own theory or of any other, Hume *correctly* described this new circumstance as an 'impression of reflection'.

[1] *Statement and Inference*, II, 616. [2] *Process and Reality*, p. 196.

I think it is evident that Hume's argument should have led him to conclude that the fresh psychological fact which emerged after repetition was, in his own language, a *manner*, and neither an ' impression ' nor an ' idea '. In one passage, indeed (305), he said so. ' 'Tis evident ', he said, ' that the association of ideas '—including, as the context showed, causal association—' operates in so silent and imperceptible a manner, that we are scarce sensible of it, and discover it more by its effects than by any immediate feeling or perception. It produces no emotion, *and gives rise to no new impression of any kind*,[1] but only modifies those ideas, of which the mind was formerly possess'd, and which it cou'd recal upon occasion.' This, which he once said, he should always have said. For what, according to Hume, could the novel feeling of ' determination ' or necessitation be except a constrained associative transition which compelled *belief*? Yet Hume said, again and again, that belief, or assurance of existence, was *not* an impression or idea *additional* to the nature of what is conceived, for the very good reason that it was a ' firm ', ' steady ' and, ultimately, an indefinable *manner* of conceiving. Hume's entire philosophy was a philosophy of ' manner ' as much as of ' impressions ' and of ' ideas ' ; but if a ' clear ' idea of causality (168) must be derived from a clear ' impression ', we have to say that Hume *did not* discover any such clear impression, although he so often professed to do so.

Another accusation of Mr. Whitehead's calls for remark. ' Hume ', he says, ' has confused a " repetition of impressions " with an " impression of repetition of impressions ".'[2]

Hume was prone to this type of equivocation, and confused, e.g., an idea of infinity with an infinite idea, and an idea of length with the length of an idea. I think, however, that he did not equivocate in the present instance, and that he did distinguish, with sufficient clearness, between the repeated experiences upon which the new ' impression of reflection ' was based, on the one hand, and that new impression itself on the other. His governing statement in this matter ran as follows: ' Tho' the several resembling instances, which give rise to the idea of power, have no influence on each other, and can never produce any new quality *in the object*, which can be the model of that idea, yet the *observation* of this resemblance produces a new impression *in the mind* which is its real model ' (164 *sq.*).

[1] Italics are mine. [2] *op. cit.*, p. 188.

If Hume, however, was not the victim of this particular fallacy, he obviously dug another pit for himself by the very way in which he evaded the fallacy. Again and again he said that the repetition *produced* the new feeling of determination, and *caused* us to regard nature causally. All that he was entitled to say, however, was that the repetition was associated with the new feeling in an inexplicable way, not that it produced the new feeling in an intelligible way. As regards this particular question, there could be no difference in principle whether *we* were caused to feel in a certain way or *objects* were caused to behave in a certain way; and although (I think) Hume might have re-written his book in such a way as to avoid this palpable contradiction, it has to be confessed that the re-writing would have been very extensive.

A more general question may now be considered. Does repetition, in fact, have the importance for induction that Hume so persistently assigned to it?

According to Bosanquet,[1] 'repetition of the same datum, *qua* the same (i.e. assuming that it was completely and correctly observed at first, which is *never true*), can add nothing to what it proves. But every further datum which can be connected with the first goes to develop the content of that agent or principle which both the data prove'. In other words, all inference deals with connexions of content. It marries universals, and therefore, although variety of instances may be instructive, mere repetition of them cannot yield any inference whatsoever. It might habituate, as Hume said it did; but such habituation, *pace* Hume, could not be inference at all—or rather, for Bosanquet, could not be relevant to the 'spirit of totality' which Bosanquet preferred to the traditional 'inference'.

It will be convenient to deal with this question in connexion with what Hume said about 'analogy'.

ix. Analogy

In the *Treatise* Hume remarked (142, cf. 147) that the resemblance in repeated instances need not be exact, although the inference became weaker in proportion to the inexactitude of the resemblance. His 'experimental method', however, was very largely analogical, since he persistently tried to show the ultimacy of 'operations of the mind' by citing parallel, though different, principles. Illustrations of this were his

[1] *Logic*, II, 177 *sq.*

doctrine of abstract ideas (especially 22 *sqq.*), and of the sentiment of belief (209 and 624).

In the *Enquiry* (E. 104) it was stated that ' all our reasonings concerning matter of fact are founded on a species of analogy ' and a distinction was drawn between the conclusiveness of a ' perfect analogy ' (e.g. the weight of bars of iron) and the lesser evidence of imperfect analogy (e.g. in inferences from the anatomical resemblance of different animal species). The theological question of the legitimacy of arguing from human to divine contrivance regarding vastly different data was mooted (E. 143 *sqq.*) ; and the question of anthropomorphism was discussed much more fully in the *Dialogues*, pursuant to the general declaration, ' *Like effects prove like causes.* This is the experimental argument. . . . Now it is certain that the liker the effects are, which are seen, and the liker the causes, which are inferred, the stronger is the argument. Every departure on either side diminishes the probability, and renders the experiment less conclusive. You cannot doubt of the principle: neither ought you to reject its consequences ' (G. II. 411). On the other hand, a passage in the *Enquiry* (E. 36) which has particularly interested Mr. Keynes [1] seems dubious in its import. ' Nothing so like as eggs ', this passage ran, ' yet no one, on account of this appearing similarity, expects the same relish and taste in all of them. It is only after a long course of uniform experiments in any kind, that we attain a firm reliance and security with regard to a particular event.' The likeness of eggs was indeed proverbial. ' Eggs are entirely like eggs, and bees like bees,' said Cicero (*Acad. Qu.* II. xvii) ; and their similitude seems to have been used as an alternative to the fable of Buridan's donkey who died of starvation because there was nothing to tell him which of two equal and equally accessible bundles of hay should be munched the first.[2] But surely the example indicated that experience teaches us that there are differences even in eggs, and not that we have to eat a great many eggs, with never a bad one, before we suspect that eggs may taste as well as look alike.

In general, however, it can scarcely be denied that Hume's acceptance of the principle of analogy tacitly recognized, despite his official theory, that there really was systematic interconnexion in nature of a scientific quite as much as of a

[1] *A Treatise on Probability*, p. 217.
[2] See Law's translation of King, p. 250 n.

vulgar kind. It may even be fair to object to him, with Mr. Stout,[1] that 'we ought to prefer the account given by physics and chemistry of what takes place when a candle burns to that of pre-scientific Common Sense. We must not, as Hume does, take as typical examples of the relation of cause to effect the fact that fire burns or that bread nourishes, as these facts may appear to the child or the savage'. In any case it seems necessary to consider with some care how far Hume's principle of analogy was consistent with his vigorous advocacy of the governing importance of repetition.

Mr. Keynes asserts that the *number* of instances (which he calls the 'principle of pure induction') *has* a probative force, provided that the instances are independent, but that this principle is combined, in causal inference, with another and much more important principle, viz. the 'principle of analogy'. His general contention, in his *Treatise on Probability*, Part III, is to the effect that *if* a hypothesis of specific interconnexion has some initial finite degree of probability, an increase in the number of uncontradicted and independent favourable instances increases the probability of the hypothesis. On the other hand, he argues that the repetition of instances in actual inductive procedure would yield only an absurdly slight probability if we were not entitled to *presume* a relatively determinate ground-plan of systematic interconnexion in nature. For, if there were no such reasonable presumption, and if the blackness of crows or the tendency of ice to freeze were to be regarded initially as an indifferent 'chance' like the drawing of balls at random from an urn, the proportion of the observed to the unobserved instances in nature would be so ridiculously small as scarcely to justify a plausible guess, much less to 'approach certainty without limit' when past experience had always been the same.

While this doctrine superficially owes something to Hume, and appears to stand, in certain ways, midway between the extremes of Hume's theory and Bosanquet's, it is also, and more importantly, opposed to Hume's in nearly all critical respects. Hume insisted upon regarding all events as 'loose and separate', precisely like the balls in the urn. He flatly denied the *reasonableness* of any antecedent presumptions regarding any quasi-specific ground-plan of nature, holding emphatically that 'to consider the matter *a priori* any thing may produce any thing' (247, cf. 173, 466, E. 27, E. 164).

[1] *Mind and Matter*, p. 124.

He denied that repetition increased probability *in any intelligible sense*, although he held that it 'produced' non-rational expectation; and he maintained that conjectural probability had as little *reason* in it as any other variety of sensitive opinion. The fact that he allowed himself, like other 'philosophers', to reject the appearance of miraculous multiformity, and to accept 'an absolute fate' or complete necessity in physics is a puzzle in his pages, and not their message.

It would seem, however, that contrary views like those of Mr. Keynes indicate a line of argument that Hume did not consider sufficiently, and with later discussions to help us, it is not unreasonable to suggest, in a general way, that many of Hume's difficulties might have yielded to a flank attack, and even that causality, while it never could be matter of *knowledge* in Hume's traditional, but narrow, sense of that term, need not therefore be wholly irrational.

Hume, as we have seen, said that a cause was 'necessary because uniform'. Bosanquet and Kant would say that it was uniform because necessary. In any case, however, the uniformity was admitted; and if 'experience' in any way suggested that all events *might* have uniform antecedents—even if there were a 'native indifference' in the mind, *a priori*, regarding the alternative assumptions of uniformity and of multiformity—it would surely be rational to conclude that the rapidly increasing experience of uniform sequences (with no exceptions certainly known to be such) favoured the assumption of general uniformity. And although specific uniformities could not be deduced from general uniformity, our uncontradicted experience of specific uniformities, and of pervading analogies too, would be amenable to the same logic.

In other words, although, as Hume said, the uncontradicted repetition of x-followed-by-y neither discovers nor produces anything new *in the individual instances* (since these, *ex hypothesi*, remain the same), it may nevertheless give us relevant evidence *about* them. Hume's critical analysis was restricted to showing (*a*) that the nature of x, considered in itself, does not logically imply the nature of y, and (*b*) that the perceptible qualities of x, taken alone, do not include a 'power' of producing y. These assertions regarding the private constitution of the x's or the y's, however, affirm nothing about the possibility or impossibility of acquiring indirect, and largely *epistemic*, evidence *about* x and y. Their constant conjunction might very well be such evidence, i.e. we might reasonably conclude

that the constant conjunction itself would be a miracle *unless* they were interconnected in Nature, *although* such interconnexion could never be seen by mere inspection of individual instances or by mere abstract comparison of their natures. Hume's own statement that ' were ideas entirely loose and unconnected, chance alone would join them ; and 'tis impossible the same simple ideas should fall regularly into complex ones, etc.' (10), indicated the need for a principle of objective interconnexion, not, as he thought, for a subjective ' uniting force '.

x. The Historical Situation

Hume's originality in this matter of causes is undeniable. It does not follow, however, that his theory was born after the fashion of Minerva.

A student of Hobbes, Hume must have pondered such sayings as ' men that know not what it is that we call *causing*, that is, almost all men, have no other rule to guess by, but by observing, and remembering what they have seen to precede the like effect at some other time, or times before, without seeing between the antecedent and subsequent event, any dependence or connexion at all : and therefore from the like things past, they expect the like things to come ' (III. 97).[1]

Hume was an even closer student of Locke, and Hutchinson Stirling cited twenty-six relevant passages from Locke[2]— ' than whom ', he said, ' it is doubtful to me whether Hume knew, at least well, any philosopher else '—in order to show that Locke's account of our acquaintance with the co-existence of the properties of substances was the model of Hume's causal theory, even with regard to the place of ' custom ' in the theory. As it happens, these references to ' custom ' in Locke were much too general to prove Stirling's contention—indeed Stirling gently ' cooked ' the evidence in this respect by making the quotation that appeared most apposite (No. 25) apply only to ' cause and effect ', although Locke applied it generally (II. xxv. § 2) to all correlatives. The general significance of Stirling's quotations, however, is unmistakable ; and it may suffice, here, if I quote but one of them. ' The things that, as far as our observation reaches, we constantly find to proceed regularly, we may conclude do act by a law set them ; but yet by a law that we know not : whereby, though causes work steadily, and effects constantly flow from them, yet their

[1] Hobbes, of course, contrasted such ' prudence ' with ' science ', e.g. III, 35.

[2] *Mind*, O.S., ix, 534 *sqq.*

connexions and dependencies being not discoverable in our ideas, we can have but an experimental knowledge of them' (IV. iii. 29).

Again, although Hume rejected Berkeley's view that we experienced active power in our volitions, he doubtless remembered Berkeley's negative contentions very well, even if (as I think) he preferred to consult Malebranche rather than Berkeley where the two agreed. Among such possible recollections on Hume's part we may note the following:

'That food nourishes, sleep refreshes, and fire warms us . . . all this we know, not by discovering any *necessary connexion* between our ideas, but only by the observation of the *settled laws* of nature [i.e. its uniformity, § 62]; without which we should be all in uncertainty and confusion' (P. § 31). 'When we perceive certain ideas of sense constantly followed by other ideas, and we know this is not of our own doing, we forthwith attribute power and agency to the ideas themselves, . . . than which nothing can be more absurd and unintelligible' (§ 32). 'As to the opinion that there are no corporeal causes, this has been heretofore maintained by some of the Schoolmen, as it is of late by others among the modern philosophers . . . These men saw that amongst all the objects of sense there was none which had any power or activity included in it; and that by consequence this was likewise true of whatever bodies they supposed to exist without the mind, like unto the immediate objects of sense' (§ 53). 'The connexion of ideas does not imply the relation of *cause* and *effect*, but only of a mark or *sign* with the *thing signified*. The fire which I see is not the cause of the pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me of it' (§ 65, cf. T.V., § 147). 'A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it; insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do anything; neither can it be the resemblance or pattern of any active being' (§ 25, cf. §§ 102 *sqq.* where the principle was applied to gravitation and the Newtonian philosophy).

More generally, Hume himself, with a scholarly assiduity relatively unusual in his time, was careful to show that his conclusions were connected with the great debates of philosophers concerning the efficacy of causes (156 *sqq.*).

All the Pyrrhonists, although they had practical faith in causality, were sceptical concerning the theoretical foundations of that relation as they were sceptical concerning everything else; and Hume, who had studied Cicero and Bayle, to mention no others, was certainly aware of the circumstance. Many at least of the atomists admitted a difficulty concerning the com-

munication of motion, and Bayle's *Dictionary* would have informed Hume of the general speculative perplexities of this order in the movement from Bruno to Gassendi (and, in a sense, to Leibniz). He must also have known of the Cartesian doctrine of the necessity for continuous creation from moment to moment, and thence must have inferred that to-morrow, according to some philosophies, was, metaphysically speaking, precarious (Art. Pyrrhon, Rem. B).

Not unnaturally, it is also possible to find 'anticipations' of Hume's argument in authors that Hume, in all probability, knew little or nothing about. Thus, if Hume had been acquainted with Jewish philosophy he might have found some such 'anticipations' among the Arabian philosophers whom Maimonides attempted to refute.[1] Again, if he had had an exact acquaintance with the controversy between the Scotists and Occamists, of the one part, and the Thomists, of the other part, he might have heard of such authors as Robert Holkot and Nicholas de Ultricuria (or Autricuria)* in the fourteenth century.

Mr. Meyerson says that Holkot was a precursor of Hume, but does not give his reasons,[2] referring instead to Gonsalez, *Histoire de la philosophie*, p. 408. Rashdall,[3] on the other hand, made a genuine effort to prove in detail that the thirty-two errors with which Nicholas was charged show that Nicholas felt 'all the philosophic doubts' (p. 4) of Berkeley and Hume. Many of these 'errors' had to do with causation; and the following may deserve to be quoted:

'From the fact that one thing exists, it cannot by any evidence, derived from a first principle, be deduced that another thing exists.' 'The inference from the proposition "A is and formerly was not" to the proposition "something different from A is" is not evident with an evidence deduced from a first principle.' 'We have no evident knowledge that there can be, or is, any efficient natural cause.' 'Whatever conditions we take to be the cause of any effect, we do not evidently know that, these conditions being posited, it follows that the effect must be posited also.' 'There cannot be any demonstration simply by which, through the mere existence of anything, the existence of an effect is demonstrated.'

Accordingly, had Hume been a medievalist, he might have found a certain dry and abstract anticipation of some of his

[1] See Meyerson, *De l'explication dans les sciences*, II, 385.
[2] *Identité et réalité*, pp. 90, 334.
[3] *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1906–7, pp. 1 *sqq.*

most characteristic opinions in scholastic literature. It seems clear, however, that he was not a medievalist, and that, like Bacon (*N.O.* I, Aph. 66), he confused all the scholastics with the peripatetics who darkened all experimental inquiry with their occult qualities and other such *notiones vagae nec bene terminatae*. In short, he spoke of them just as Malebranche spoke of Aristotle's ' galimatias impertinent et ridicule ' (VI. Pt. II, v) ; and Hume relied on Malebranche very definitely indeed regarding what he said of them. For in his principal reference to scholastic theory in this matter he gave chapter and verse in Malebranche (158), and Hume's sentence beginning, ' There are some who maintain . . .', which immediately succeeded this reference to Malebranche, was a *literal* translation from Malebranche's *Éclaircissement* xv (near the beginning), ' Il y a des Philosophes qui assurent. . . .'

Accordingly, Hume openly borrowed what he called the Cartesian (i.e. Malebranche's) criticism of scholastic pseudo-principles ; and also (158 *sqq.*, E. 69 *sqq.*) much that Malebranche had to say to the detriment of ' second ' or natural causes ; although he differed from Malebranche by applying the same logic to the ultimate efficacy of deity. That, Hume said, was a voyage into fairyland (E. 72). There is some interest therefore in investigating Malebranche's statements concerning these matters. (Malebranche himself learned much from Cordemoy and from La Forge, but it is unnecessary for our present purposes to inquire into the antecedents of Malebranche.)

Thus we find :

(*a*) and (*b*), as we have already observed, that Malebranche denied any self-evidence to the communication of movement, illustrating his point from the shock of billiard-balls (III. Pt. II, iii), and defending it on the ground of the passivity of extended substance (III. Pt. II, viii, Sect. 2) ; and also that he denied the efficacy of the human will, on the ground that it, like other ' second causes ', contained no ' liaison nécessaire ' (VI. Pt. II, iii).

(*c*) That Malebranche treated the inferences regarding second causes as a species of ' conviction sensible ' (*Éc.* xv) in accordance with his general principle that the senses were given to men for the guidance of their lives, but not for the purpose of revealing truth (I. iii. and *passim*).

(*d*) That he said (II. Pt. II, viii) ' Il faut presque toujours plusieurs expériences pour bien conclure une seule chose '.

(*e*) That he began an important chapter (VI. Pt. II, ix) with the statement 'Les corps sont unis ensemble en trois manières, par la *continuité*, par la *contiguité*, et par une troisième manière qui n'a pas de nom particulier, et que j'appellerai du terme général d'*union*', and pursued the division in detail.

(*f*) That the terms in which he denied the efficacy of 'second' causes were precisely Hume's favourites. Thus Malebranche said (*Éc.* xv) that if efficacy were evident, he, like other men, ought to be able to perceive it, but that 'quelqu' effort d'esprit que je fasse, je ne puis trouver de *force, d'efficace, de puissance*, que dans la volonté de l'être infiniment parfait' and went on to say, very shortly afterwards (*ibid.*), 'Il est vrai que dans tous les siècles cette puissance a été reconnue pour réelle et véritable de la plupart des hommes; mais il est certain que ç'a été sans preuve; je ne dis pas sans preuve démonstrative, je dis sans preuve qui soit capable de faire quelque impression sur un esprit attentif.'[1]

Hume, of course, had Newton, as well as Bacon and Malebranche, on his side when he denied 'occult causes and virtues'. The Preface to the *Principia*—'The moderns, laying aside substantial forms and occult qualities'—and the *Opticks*—'Such occult qualities put a stop to the improvement of natural philosophy, and therefore of late years have been rejected' (p. 377)—sufficiently indicate Newton's attitude.

Again, both the Cartesians and the Newtonians regarded the entire doctrine of 'second' causes, for theological reasons, as dealing with something not *quite* self-subsistent, and therefore as something that could not be self-evident, even under the most favourable conditions. Thus Robert Boyle's insistence on the necessity of God's concurrence was in itself an admission of the *insufficiency* of *natural*, or mechanical necessitation. For Boyle believed in the Scriptural miracles. The existence of regular laws in nature, he said, did not imply 'that the fire must necessarily burn Daniel's three companions or their clothes . . . when the author of nature was pleased to withdraw his concourse to the operation of the flames' (*Works*, IV. 162). Again Boyle said that when he considered the vastness and variety of the world, he could not 'but suspect that there may be less of accurateness, and of constant regularity, than we have been taught to believe in the structure of the universe' (IV. 216). A secularist like Hume, who had more than a

[1] Cf. (*l.c.*) the statement that the peripatetic 'proof' of 'efficace' in the case of 'fire burning', etc., 'fait pitié'.

Baconian 'savour of the nature of things' (*N.O.* I, Aph. 63) might well conclude that natural causation was *not* metaphysically necessary, however firm our expectations might be.

Concerning the future, also, Hume may have been encouraged by the celebrated statements in Newton's *Opticks* (pp. 373 *sq.*) that 'motion is much more apt to be lost than got, and is always upon the decay', that it must be 'conserved' and 'recruited' by 'active principles' such as 'the cause of gravity' and the 'cause of fermentation'; and that 'if it were not for these principles the bodies of the earth, planets, comets, sun, and all things in them would grow cold and freeze, and become inactive masses; and all putrefaction, generation, vegetation, and life would cease, and the planets and comets would not remain in their orbs' (376).

Lastly, Hume's repudiation of Malebranche's attempt to ascribe all efficient causality to God would, in other hands than his, have been regarded as the very opposite of impious. Bacon himself, long before Malebranche, had said that the exponents of a similar view had sought 'to gratify God with a lie' (*N.O.* I, Aph. 89). Yet if second causes were but problematical, and if God were not gratified by Malebranche's philosophy, something very like Hume's theory would have emerged.

xi. The Experimental Methods

Hume prefaced his account of these 'Rules by which to judge of causes and effects' by the curious remark that because '*a priori* any thing may cause any thing' 'it may be proper to fix some general rules by which we may know when causes really are so' (173).

His first three rules (*ibid.*) were rules of definition. There must be, he said, (*a*) spatio-temporal contiguity—although he later withdrew the requisite of spatial contiguity regarding unextended perceptions such as smell and taste (236)—(*b*) priority of the cause, and (*c*) constant 'union' or conjunction between cause and effect.

His fourth rule (*d*) was much more considerable, for it stated, in effect, that 'same cause, same effect' and 'same effect, same cause' were *both* true, i.e. it denied plurality of causes and plurality of effects. 'This principle', Hume said, 'we derive from experience, and is the source of most of our philosophical reasonings' (173); and he cited the conclusiveness of 'any clear experiment' in confirmation. Since, how-

ever, the fact that x has always been followed by y is no evidence whatsoever that z may not also have been always followed by y, it is clear that Hume, in saying these things, was not entitled, without much further argument, to say them.

From the fourth rule Hume deduced (*e*) that if several different objects produced the same effect, they must do so in virtue of some common quality, and (*f*) that if two similar objects produced different effects the reason must be found in some difference in the causes.

Hume's seventh rule (*g*) was that if there is correspondent increase or diminution (i.e. concomitant variation) in causes and in their effects, the phenomena in question must be regarded as compounded of parts which are present or absent in the ascertained proportions. This rule, although more precise than Hobbes's rule to the same general effect (I. 123), was reminiscent of Hobbes, and Hume's remark that the law of such variations may hold only within narrow limits (e.g. in the increase of pleasure with increase of warmth) was a necessary correction of Hobbes's too general statement. On the other hand, Hume's assumption of the literal divisibility of the numerable was, as usual, somewhat naïve, and his caveat regarding the pleasure of warmth concerned the *range* of the concomitant variations rather than, as he said, the small number of the experiments (174).

Hume's last rule (*h*) was taken directly from Hobbes (I. 122 *sq.*), and stated a consequence of Hobbes's terse remark that 'in whatsoever instant the cause is entire, in the same instant the effect is produced'.

Commenting upon his eight rules taken together, Hume said (175) that they supplied all the 'logic' he intended to use although 'our scholastic headpieces and logicians' pretended to greater elaborateness; that a sound understanding could master all the logic that was requisite; that all such rules were much easier to invent than to apply, so that, even in natural philosophy, the utmost persistence and the utmost sagacity [1] was needed in order to eliminate the superfluous and cling to the essential (cf. 148); and that in 'moral' inquiries the complexity of the phenomena made the difficulty of applying the rules proportionably greater.

These comments would have been admirable—had Hume been entitled to use any logic at all in what, according to his principles, was a sensitive and alogical affair. So far as I can

[1] Locke's term (IV, ii, § 3).

see, however, the only way in which Hume could *consistently* have justified his use of 'logic' would have been to regard *all* the rules, not merely the first three, as *definitions* of the causal relation, or as obvious logical deductions *from the definitions*; and it is clear, from his explanation regarding rule (*d*), as well as from his general view that what was based on experience was quite different, in point of validity, from superstitious or prejudiced associations, that he meant to assert something much more important than a set of definitions. If, however, the rules had been definitions and nothing more, it would have been competent for Hume to draw up 'tables' of presence and absence, exclusions, etc., in the Baconian manner, in order to show what observed natural sequences had conformed, in the past, to the definitions. Regarding future and all other unobserved instances, however, all that could legitimately be inferred from such definitions would be that if instances of sequence hitherto unobserved differed from the sequences that, in terms of past experience, might consistently have been regarded as causal, these instances could no longer be so regarded.

Therefore Bacon was more philosophical than Hume in this matter. For Bacon's 'tables and arrangements of instances' (*N.O.* II. 10), his 'table of essence and presence' (II. 11), his 'exclusion or rejection of natures' (II. 18), his 'prerogative instances' and his other 'supports of induction' (II. 21 *sqq.*) recorded *what had actually been observed*. According to him, the collection of such instances *preceded* induction (II. 15); and although he may have exaggerated the ease by which an army of observers might from a comprehensive set of 'tables' set about the work of true induction—i.e. (II. 16) 'the rejection or exclusion of the several natures which are not found in some instance where the given nature is present, or are found in some instance where the given nature is absent, or are found to increase in some instance when the given nature decreases, or to decrease when the given nature increases'—his general conception of the process was not unsound. In essentials he framed a 'first vintage' (and nothing more) from his tables of instances, and *then* proceeded 'to examine and try whether the axiom so established be framed to the measure of those particulars only from which it is derived, or whether it be larger and wider' (I. 106). Hume, by a persistent although not an invariable (e.g. 87) confusion between 'experience' and 'generalizations from experience', entangled the logic of

the question, even granting that in other respects (e.g. in what he said of 'sagacity' (175) or the need for scientific insight and inspired guesswork) he may have been a better experimental logician than Bacon.

From Hume's reference to 'our scholastic headpieces and logicians' together with the fact that he himself conducted psychological experiments with great precision (101 *sqq.*, cf. 332 *sqq.*) according to the formal rules of 'natural philosophy', it might be inferred that Mill's celebrated 'methods of experimental inquiry' (*System of Logic*, III. viii)—or something very like them—were not only practised, but had been explicitly formulated in the logic books, even before Hume's time. I have, however,[1] been unable to obtain verification of this conjecture; and consequently have referred only to the obvious influence of Bacon and of Hobbes (together, of course, with 'natural philosophy' itself).

[1] Even Locke's admirer 'Clericus' (J. Le Clerc)—see his *Logica, Ontologica et Pneumatologia*, 4th ed., Cambridge, 1704, gave very strigose rules. His three axioms (pp. 240 *sqq.*) were, (*a*) that there must be a *necessarius nexus*, between cause and effect (this nexus not being rationally evident in 'second' causes); (*b*) that the cause must be prior to the effect; (*c*) that there could be nothing in the effect that had not been in the cause. He further remarked that some logicians distinguished between causality *eminenter* and *formaliter*.

In the traditional and Scholastic-Protestant manuals, e.g. Burgersdicius *Institutes* (Cambridge, 1680), Gordon's *Introduction to the Art of Logick* (London, 1701), Heerebord's compendia of Burgersdicius, Keckermannus *Systema Logicae* (Cologne, 1640), Scheiblerus *Introductio Logicae* (Marburg, 1628), the governing distinctions of causes were into proximate and remote, instrumental, etc., and of course, final efficient, material and formal. Some axioms concerning efficient causes might be extracted, e.g. from Gordon's book (pp. 91 *sqq.*), but with difficulty. (The treatment of Heineccius, *Elementa Philosophiae* (Amsterdam, 1730), was, broadly, similar.)

The following 'axiom' occurs in Keill's *Introduction*, etc., p. 90: 'If two things are so connected together, that they perpetually accompany each other, that is, if one of them is changed or removed, the other likewise will be in the same manner changed or removed; either one of these is the Cause of the other, or they both proceed from the same common Cause.'

The Cartesian Logics, e.g. the *Port Royal Logic*, proceeded on the assumption that instead of employing 'reason as an instrument for acquiring the sciences . . . we ought to avail ourselves of the sciences as an instrument for perfecting our reason' (*P.R.L.*, p. 1) and were therefore not interested in experimental canons even when dealing with physics (e.g. *op. cit.*, Pt. iv, ch. ii). The same is true of the *New Treatise of the Art of Thinking* of Crousaz (English translation, London, 1724), e.g. in its analysis of the prismatic colours (II, 344 *sqq.*). On

In this connexion, there is some interest in recalling Reid's remark (*Works*, Hamilton, p. 200) that ' the best models of inductive reasoning, which I take to be the third book of the *Principia* and the *Opticks* of Newton, were drawn from Bacon's rules ', and that Herschel, whom Mill followed very closely, formulated his rules [1] upon an exact study of Bacon. There is no evidence that Mill paid special attention to Hume in this affair, or that Herschel had consulted Hume ; and it should be noted that Herschel (whatever may have been true of Mill) regarded the use of these methods, in the Baconian way, as the *first* stage, not as the ' higher degree ' of inductive inference. Herschel, indeed, made such very Baconian remarks as the following : [2] ' Such is the tendency of the human mind to speculation, that on the least idea of an analogy between a few phenomena, it leaps forward, as it were, to a cause or law, to the temporary neglect of all the rest ; so that, in fact, almost all our principal inductions must be regarded as a series of ascents and descents, *and of conclusions from a few cases verified by trial on many.*' Hume omitted any adequate account both of the process of trial and of the process of verification—although, of course, his experimental *method* exemplified both.

xii. The Reason of Animals

After these concessions to logic, Hume proceeded, very handsomely, to give the alogical its due by maintaining that human habitual expectations were but animal ' instinct ' in the end.

What he said, in brief, was (*a*) that the external actions of many animals resembled human actions so closely that, on any reasonable analogy, we must accept the similarity of the internal principles of the two (176 *sq.* ; and, more fully, E. 104) ; (*b*) that causal beliefs were held by children and peasants (with the consequence that no theory of causal belief could possibly be true if it were over-subtle) ; (*c*) that animals learned by experience to dread the fire and avoid the whip,

Vol. I, p. 485, Crousaz gave the axiom : ' If an effect is only owing to a certain cause, it will appear when that cause is to be found, and it will not appear when that cause is not observed.'

Gassendi's *Syntagma Philosophicum*, which began with logic and its history, contained a section (I, ch. x) entitled *Logica Verulamii*, but his *De Methodo* dealt with ' resolutio ' and ' compositio '.

[1] *Preliminary Discourse*, Cabinet Cyclopaedia, 1831, Pt. i, ch. vi.

[2] *ibid.*, pp. 164 *sq.* Italics mine.

just as, in principle, human beings did; and therefore (*d*) that our vaunted 'reason' was but 'a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls' (179) comparable to the 'more extraordinary instances of sagacity' among nesting birds which showed 'all the precaution that a chymist is capable of' (177).

Hume regarded these arguments as a 'touchstone' for the testing of every species of inductive philosophy (176). It is therefore to be regretted that his own application of the criterion was not very lucid.

He did not deny a certain difference between some men and all brutes. 'Men', he said (610, cf. 468 and the elaborate note E. 107), 'are superior to beasts principally by the superiority of their reason.' If, however, it is undeniable that custom, rather than reason, operates in the case of brutes (178), it surely does not follow that the respect in which men *differ* from brutes is irrelevant. Again, even when it is granted (1) that the burnt dog and the burnt peasant dread the fire in the same alogical way, and (2) that the logical refinements of natural philosophers, with their experimental methods, make no difference to the principle of any of our expectations, there is still a great, if not an insuperable, difficulty in Hume's contention in the form in which he stated it. For Hume *contrasted* the wonders of instinct, as exemplified in the extraordinary operations of nest-building, with mere vulgar expectation acquired in the course of experience. The former, he held, were a mark of *original nature* antecedent to experience. The latter pertained to second nature, and were picked up in the course of experience.

Hume's proper conclusion should therefore have been some doctrine of innate ideas, i.e. he should have held that men are equipped with an instinct of 'reason' before experience, just as birds are equipped with a nest-building instinct. And this, of course, was quite precisely what he denied. Yet what he said scarcely made sense. It was, in substance, that men did *not* 'reason' about matters of fact, because, although they *did* 'reason' about such matters, the 'reason' they employed was an inexplicable natural endowment, just like an instinct; and again, that although there *was* the greatest possible difference between what was acquired through experience and what was prior to all experience, nevertheless the way in which *original* nature gave rise to *second* nature was just as unintelligible as anything else in 'nature's' operations. Since 'reason', *ex vi termini*, must be a principle of *intelligibility*, it is easy to see

why Hume said some of these things; but it seems impossible to accept the consistency of his whole account of them.

Nevertheless, Hume retained some such doctrine to the end; for the *Dialogues* affirmed (G. II. 422 *sq.*): 'In this little corner of the world alone, there are four principles, *Reason, Instinct, Generation, Vegetation,* which are similar to each other, and are the causes of similar effects. . . . Reason in its internal fabric and structure, is really as little known to us as instinct or vegetation; and perhaps even that vague undeterminate word *Nature* to which the vulgar refer every thing, is not at bottom more inexplicable. The effects of these principles are all known to us from experience: but the principles themselves, and their manner of operation, are totally unknown.' At other times, however, Hume recognized plain distinctions well enough, as when he said (214): 'There is a great difference betwixt such opinions as we form after a calm and profound reflection, and such as we embrace by a kind of instinct or natural impulse, on account of their suitableness and conformity to the mind.'

Hume's excursus concerning the animals, was a violent, if not a very unusual, antidote to the Cartesian paradox that brutes are machines. It may be compared with Locke's statement (II. xi. § 11): 'If brutes have any ideas at all, and are not bare machines (as some would have them), we cannot deny them to have some reason. It seems as evident to me that they do reason, as that they have sense; but it is only in particular ideas, just as they received them from their senses.'

The celebrated articles 'Rorarius' and 'Pereira' in Bayle's *Dictionary* were naturally fresh in Hume's mind.

CHAPTER V

BODIES AND MINDS

THE remainder of the first book of the *Treatise* was concerned with Pyrrhonism or scepticism with respect, firstly, to reason, secondly, to the firm and approximately universal belief in the existence of physical bodies and of immaterial minds. Postponing the problem of 'reason' I intend, in this chapter, to give an account of Hume's analysis of bodies, minds, and their relation.

§ I. Bodies

As with causes, so with bodies. According to Hume, we believe in both at Nature's bidding (187, 206, E. 151), but, if we are philosophers, we should not forbear examining whether there are sufficient reasons for these beliefs.

As we have seen, Hume held that he had shown that external existence could not be 'specifically' distinct from our perceptions (68), but had reserved consideration of the question whether a difference in 'relations, connexions and durations' might not constitute a genuine, although non-specific, distinction.

Accordingly he proceeded to discuss the question whether 'objects' or 'perceptions'—there was no need, he thought, initially to discriminate between the terms—might have a *continued* existence when absent from the senses—or might have a *distinct* existence, and therefore be, in some intelligible sense, 'external to' or 'independent of' the percipient. These questions, he said, stood or fell together. If a perceived object could continue to exist unperceived, it would therefore, he affirmed (correctly), be independent of the perceiving process. Again, if it were independent, it *must*, he said (plausibly although probably incorrectly), continue to exist unperceived. This being understood, Hume argued, firstly, that such continued or distinct existence could not be part of the testimony either of our senses or of our reason.

Since the continued existence of objects means their exist-

ence *after* they have ceased to be perceived, it was obvious to Hume that the senses could not vouch for any such continuance (188). But what of distinct existence? (189 *sqq.*). Might it not be true that we perceived an image or representation of an independent object?

If so, said Hume, there would be a duality in sensation itself; for, *ex hypothesi*, the image perceived would *also* 'convey' the independent object which it represented. We always, however, perceived a single, not a double fact; and our sense-impressions, being only appearances, must be just what they seemed to be. The only genuine problem, therefore, was whether the single phenomenon that we sensed was, on the one hand, a 'mere impression', or, on the other hand, a 'distinct object' (189); and that was a question of the 'relations and situation' of the single phenomenon, principally to ourselves, since 'independent' *meant* independent of ourselves.

Hume argued that the senses could neither convey nor suggest any such independence of ourselves, for the following reasons:

(*a*) That personal identity was an abstruse affair, and that the senses could not be abstruse since they operated very efficiently in common, rude and animal life. (He did not even consider whether there might not be a common, rude and animal presentation of selfhood.)

(*b*) That every perception, external or internal, was 'originally' on the same footing, and infallibly what it seemed to be. Here Hume's inference was that since *some* perceptions, e.g. pains, were obviously 'internal', *all* perceptions must be 'internal'. (Since, however, other apparent objects or perceptions, e.g. the sun or the moon, seem equally obviously to be 'external' something that seems obvious must be relinquished; and, as we saw, it is more reasonable to hold that 'internality' and 'externality' are derived from a primitive *neutral* condition than that colours and the like 'originally' were and appeared to be 'internal', although they now seem 'external'.) At this point, however, Hume abandoned his abstract argument and asserted roundly that the senses did not, in fact, present independent objects. He therefore maintained:

(*c*) That the 'external' existence of perceived objects must be delusive, the fraud being due to the fact that tables, walls, etc., appeared to be 'exterior' to our *bodies*, although,

on examination, we could see (1) that such exteriority concerned our *perceived* bodies (i.e. certain impressions), (2) that admittedly unextended impressions, such as smells and sounds, were similarly delusive, (3) that outness, or the third dimension, was not an object of vision. (These arguments seem weak. At the present stage of the argument Hume was dealing with 'perceptions' *or* 'objects', i.e. with impressions all the time. It was therefore begging the question to say that our *perceived* limbs and members were 'mere' impressions. Similarly, the third dimension is *apparently* outward or 'external' to our apparent bodies, although Berkeley, in his enthusiasm, denied the fact (T. V., § 45 and § 50).)

Finally, (*d*) Hume remarked that the *independence* of sense-impressions could never be conveyed by the senses, and so 'concluded with certainty' (192) that the senses taught us nothing of the sort. He then repeated what he had said concerning the original internal footing of all impressions, and added, non-phenomenalistically, that all perceptions were 'confest' to arise 'from the particular configurations and motions of the parts of body' (a confession that would seem to make the previous arguments quite unnecessary).

Accordingly, having disposed of the senses, Hume affirmed, in a brief and unsatisfactory paragraph, that reason could not prove the independence of bodies, because 'philosophers' had shown that the vulgar opinion in this matter was untenable. Later, however, he returned to the point, in a slightly different connexion.

The only remaining faculty, therefore, was the Imagination. Could the Imagination beget the illusion of the existence of bodies?

Impressions, said Hume (194), *were* and *appeared* 'internal'. Moreover they *were* and *appeared* to be 'perishing' (i.e. *not* continued). Nevertheless, with very dubious consistency, Hume argued that their *directly contrary appearance*, in some instances, might be explained by a detailed comparison between those impressions 'to which we attributed a distinct and continued existence' and the others that we regarded as 'internal and perishing'.

Like Berkeley (P. § 41), Hume held that the involuntariness of sensations did not, as Locke had thought (IV. ii. § 14), prove external existence; for many pains, admittedly internal, were involuntary. So, passing to more solid arguments, he pointed out (*a*) that certain recurrent impressions had a

peculiar *constancy* (194). If I glanced intermittently at the trees outside my window, I saw them apparently unaltered, just as if I had gazed continuously at them. Again, when our impressions changed, there was often a peculiar *coherence*. If I left my room and returned after some hours, I perceived what I called a dying fire, i.e. I perceived precisely the change that I should have perceived had I remained in the room and left the fire alone.

Hume admitted that changes in bodily feeling might evince a similar constancy. I might still feel the same old aches and pains after my attention has been temporarily diverted from them. He asserted, however, without even the appearance of argument, that it was not 'necessary' (195) to suppose that the pains had a continued existence. Things were quite otherwise, he thought, in the world of common belief, where the receipt of a letter, say, presupposed the continued existence of ferries, postmen, etc., unperceived by the recipient. Hume even said that the hypothesis of such continued existence was the *only* one (197) that made the world of common belief at all intelligible.

Notwithstanding such assertions, Hume maintained that there was a relevant difference between our causal expectations and the imaginative illusion of 'bodies'. The causal habit, he now affirmed, conformed to, but did not exceed the uniformity of actual experience. Our belief in bodies, on the other hand, was a belief in the *un*interrupted existence of what, in fact, was interrupted. (Here he was inconsistent, and also guilty of an important oversight. His doctrine of causality was a doctrine of association *beyond* actual experience, more particularly as regarded 'general rules' and 'secret causes'. Therefore he was inconsistent. Again he omitted from his analysis of the receipt of the letter the important circumstance that a firm conception of the postman's *present* existence was not enough, if in fact I believed that I could only receive the letter if several postal officials *had* existed while the letter was in transit.) Indeed, Hume may have been aware of the weakness of some of his arguments at this point, for he expressed the fear that the imagination might be too weak to support so vast an edifice. He therefore had recourse to a 'very profound' (199) piece of reasoning.

The illusion of distinct or independent existence, Hume said, was only a consequence of the fundamental illusion of *continued* existence; and it was the *constancy* in the character

of our interrupted perceptions that cheated us into the belief that they continued without interruption. Now:

(*a*) The identity or 'sameness' of things was always a puzzle, since, even in the simplest of its alleged forms, it implied a certain multiplicity in the supposed unchanging unity. We only disguised the difficulty by 'supposing' a variation simply in the *time* during which the object remained invariable and uninterrupted.

(*b*) It was not very difficult to explain why the vulgar believed in the continued existence of bodies. In their view (202) a hat or a shoe was an impression which, although it was immediately perceived, was also believed to persist. The illusion of persistence (for philosophers knew that it was an illusion) was due to a *double* operation of resemblance. The constant character of the interrupted perceptions in the case of a reputedly identical shoe was one resemblance. The similarity of the 'operations' or 'acts' (205 n.) of the mind in viewing (1), an identical object, (2) a repetition of similar although actually interrupted perceptions, was a second resemblance. For there was association of 'dispositions' as well as of 'ideas' (203); and in the present instance, the similarity of the ideas commingled with the similarity of the dispositions in so forcible a fashion that the 'unphilosophical part of mankind' took the 'very image' present to their senses to be a 'real body'.

(*c*) Therefore, Hume went on to say, it was easy to understand why the vulgar had a propensity to feign [1] a union in what was really broken. For contradictions are unpleasant; and so we disliked the clash between *de facto* interruption and our propensity—or natural instinct (E. 155)—to feign continuance. Nevertheless, the interruptions being undeniable, and 'the *appearance* of a perception in the mind and its *existence*' being 'at first sight entirely the same', it might be doubted whether we could ever assent to so palpable a contradiction, and 'suppose a perception to exist without being present to the mind' (206). Yet 'almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves for the greatest part of their lives' did suppose that they perceived continuing bodies.

[1] Cf. Descartes's 'une très grande inclination à croire', and Malebranche as quoted by Mr. Church, *A Study, etc.*, p. 107: 'It is true that we are extremely inclined to believe that there are bodies which surround us. As to that, I am in accord with M. Descartes; but this inclination, entirely natural as it is, does not force us into that belief by evidence, but only by our impressions'.

Careful examination showed, Hume said, that what 'at first sight' seemed 'a palpable contradiction' was not necessarily so. For the *supposition* of a perception existing when not present to the mind contained no contradiction (208). The reason was that the mind itself was only a 'connected heap' of perceptions (207), and that the very meaning of 'seeing', 'hearing' and the like was simply that some given perception became part of the connected heap. Hence Hume inferred that there was no logical contradiction whatsoever in supposing that some particular perception might be detached from the 'connected heap', and therefore exist unperceived. (In short, he indicated, at this point, the outlines of the doctrine that is now called 'neutral monism'.)

(*d*) Hume ended this part of his argument by showing that the plain man's *belief* in the continued existence of bodies —for it was *belief*, not mere *supposition* that had to be explained —tallied admirably with his general theory of the nature of sensitive conviction. According to his general theory, belief occurred when there was a smooth transition from some impression; and the 'propensity to feign' in the present instance was itself a smooth transition arising from impressions, and from memories which might also be regarded as impressions.

Hume's argument now took a fresh turn. Continuance, he remarked, implied possible independence, but such independence was 'contrary to the plainest experience' (210). It was necessary, therefore, to withdraw some of the concessions he had formerly made (including neutral monism) and at the same time to examine certain 'very curious opinions' that had been prevalent (especially in the sciences and among philosophers).

The independence of perceptions, Hume asserted, was impossible in fact, even if the conception had not been self-contradictory, because our perceptions varied concomitantly with physiological changes. Pressure on the eyeball yielded double vision; a receding object appeared smaller because it was farther away *from us*; sickness and distempers altered the sensible appearances of 'things'. (Hume might, no doubt, have attempted a phenomenalistic interpretation of this physiology; but he did not. Again, modern critics would press him to explain precisely why he assumed so readily that physiology non-suited neutral monism.)

For these reasons, Hume maintained, philosophers had

formed the very curious and wholly indefensible opinion that there was a *double* existence, i.e. that there were permanent (physical) objects which caused, but were different from, the perishing (mental) impressions. Here the philosophical cure was worse than the vulgar disease. The only evidence for the existence of *any* 'objects' was the existence of the perceptions. If the latter could not be permanent, neither could the former. Again, there were additional and quite gratuitous difficulties peculiar to the philosophy of double existence. For:

(*a*) Our perceptions alone were present to us, and all our causal inferences (since they were based upon a conjunction of *perceptions*) must yield expectation of *perceptions* and of nothing else. There was no logical passage from a perception to an (imperceptible) object (212). (Obviously this argument would also apply to the nerves, animal spirits, and other physiological causes of our perceptions—as Hume had formerly said (191). But Hume was a sceptic, and therefore there is no reason to suppose that he had temporarily forgotten this cardinal circumstance.)

(*b*) The philosophical hypothesis of double existence was not the natural product of the human imagination. The imagination operated in the vulgar fashion already explained, and could not stumble upon this fantasy of a double existence. (In short, Hume returned very skilfully to the fundamental assertion in his exordium to this discussion (189), viz. that 'a single perception can never produce the idea of a double existence'.)

Therefore, he concluded, the philosophy of double existence was a mere fiction (215) devised in desperation to enable us to retain the vulgar imaginative belief in the continuance of perceptions despite the obvious fact (attested both by experience and by natural philosophy) that perceptions were in fact perishing. 'Nature is obstinate' (215) and would have nothing to do with the 'scepticism' that denied continued existence. She therefore concealed, even from philosophers, the plain truth that the device of double existence was a monstrous hybrid. The fancy 'borrows' all its ideas from some precedent perception' (216). Nothing except perceptions could be lent, or intelligibly conceived. 'We take it for granted, that every particular object resembles that perception, which it causes' (217) for no better reason than a strong imaginative tendency 'to compleat every union'.

The philosophy of double existence was utterly bankrupt. For the reasons given, it could only invent ' a new set of perceptions ' (218). Yet we did believe in bodies, argue how we might, and any scepticism induced by argument vanished as soon as we ceased to apply ourselves to the business of arguing. ' Carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason I rely entirely upon them; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and internal world ' (218).

Hume supplemented his general argument with sections concerning the ' antient ' (219 *sqq.*) and the ' modern ' philosophy (225 *sqq.*). The fancy of the ancients, he said, led them beyond continuing bodies to the chimera of a ' substance ' (in the sense of *ὕλη* or first matter) which was supposed to unite various sensible qualities into one thing, and, being regarded as homogeneous, was further supposed to require specific ' substantial forms ' to account for the existence of heterogeneous substances. The peripatetics also dreamed of ' accidents ' in relation to substances, and added ' occult qualities ' and ' faculties ', along with ' sympathies, antipathies and horrors of a vacuum ' (224) to their fantastic collection. Like children, they leapt, in imagination, into the void. A sober imagination had a strong imaginative ' propensity to feign ' a union and continuance of the properties of *bodies*. These ancient enthusiasts, translating the ' union ' into a bare unintelligible *simplicity* and the ' continuance ' into a preposterously empty *identity*, called the result a *substance*.

This attack upon the alleged puerilities of the ancients was in the usual Cartesian-Newtonian vein. Hume next turned, however, to the Cartesians and Newtonians themselves, and more generally to the ' modern ' or mechanical philosophy of nature which reduced physical reality to space, time, and motion. His conclusion was that the modern philosophers, while less childish than the ancients, were not much more philosophical. The ancients built upon the ' changeable weak and irregular ' properties of the fancy. But did the moderns, like true experimentalists, build upon that in the imagination which was ' permanent, irresistible and universal ' ? (225).

The great alleged discovery of the moderns was that the *secondary* qualities, such as colour, taste or smell, were mere

mental impressions caused by non-mental, and purely spatio-temporal objects (defined as impenetrable and movable) which they did not resemble in any way. For this opinion, said Hume, there was only one solid reason, viz. the concomitant variation of the 'secondary' appearances with the conditions and situation of our bodily organs (226). In terms of this argument it followed that there was no reason to suppose that external objects were coloured, sonorous, etc., and it 'seemed to follow by an easy consequence' that 'figure, motion, gravity and cohesion' constituted the entire reality of physical objects (227).

Nevertheless, according to Hume, this philosophy of nature (accepted, e.g. by Newton and by Locke) renounced its own logical basis. For motion as well as 'solidity' (i.e., impenetrability) presupposed a physical body, and (as Hume took himself to have shown) extension and the occupation of extension had no meaning whatsoever unless there were sensible minima 'disposed' after the 'manner' of extension. In a word, the modern philosophy of nature was built upon mere *relations*, although it expressly assigned a 'secondary' and physically *unreal* status to everything that *could be related* spatio-temporally. 'Thus there is a direct and total opposition betwixt our reason and our senses; or, more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body. When we reason from cause and effect, we conclude that neither colour, sound, taste, nor smell have a continu'd and independent existence. When we exclude these sensible qualities there remains nothing in the universe, which has such an existence' (231).

Hume's careful and prolonged discussion of these questions in the *Treatise* shrunk, in the *Enquiry*, to very exiguous dimensions (E. 151 *sqq.*). He may have thought that it was unnecessary for him to refine upon arguments which, in their main purport, were sufficiently well known and perhaps a trifle stale. The weakness of the 'proof' of the existence of the material world in the sixth meditation of Descartes had evoked voluminous comment. Locke's curious vacillations concerning the 'confused' idea of substance were commonly regarded as a polemic against that conception. Berkeley's sustained diatribe against non-mental 'matter'—to say nothing of the similar views of Law, Collier and Green—had been conducted with immense and formidable precision.

Was it not enough, then, to state the matter generally, and refer to Berkeley in a footnote? (E. 155). Berkeley's arguments, Hume said, 'admit of no answer and produce no conviction'. They formed 'the best lessons of scepticism, which are to be found either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted'.

Regarded from the standpoint of policy, the plan adopted in the *Enquiry* may have been the better; but we of the twentieth century, who have returned, especially in England, with such enthusiasm to a minute analysis of the problem of perception, have every reason to be grateful to Hume for his free, prolonged and independent discussion in the *Treatise*. In particular, his brief encounter with what is now called neutral monism, and his criticism of the 'modern philosophy' are peculiarly interesting to-day.

Hume's fundamental arguments, it is true, were almost precisely those that Berkeley's Philonous argued against Hylas, viz. that sensible things are 'the things we immediately perceive by our senses',[1] that 'an idea can be *like*[2] nothing but an idea; a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure' (P. § 8) and consequently that there could not be two sorts of sound or of any other perception, 'the one vulgar, or that which is heard, the other philosophical and real'.[3] Neither Berkeley nor Hume, in other words, could accept the opening sentences of Sir Arthur Eddington's *Nature of the Physical World*: 'I have settled down to the task of writing these lectures and have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. Two tables! Yes: there are duplicates of every object about me—two tables, two chairs, two pens'—the one 'substantial' (!), the other 'scientific'.

Nevertheless, Hume's very un-Berkeleian 'neutral monism' when he allowed that there was no absurdity in supposing that 'perceptions' might exist in detachment from the 'connected heap' that was the perceiving mind, indicated a negligent acceptance of the possibility, not indeed of 'two tables', but of a non-mental table which yet might become a 'perception' without ceasing to be what it was. It is true that much of the rest of Hume's exposition seemed definitely to accept the opposite, or Berkeleian, view; but, even if Hume was inconsistent, he recognized, when definitely confronted with the problem, that the possibility of perceiving something not in its own nature 'mental' had to be denied, if at all,

[1] Fraser's (1901) edition, I, 389. [2] Italics mine. [3] *op. cit.*, I, 391.

not because the very conception was nonsensical, but because our perceptions varied in a way that conflicted with what we commonly believed to be true of 'things'. And some may think that if a 'thing' is a name not for what is perceived as invariant, but for that which may be *differently* apprehended at different times in non-exhaustive and highly selective perceptual glimpses, the vulgar may be much more reasonable in their assured beliefs on this subject than Hume was ever disposed to own.

Again, Hume's criticism of the 'modern' philosophy is not less effective now than when it was written. The so-called primary qualities *were* in essentials regarded as 'relations' which (if the secondary qualities were abandoned) either related nothing or related figments.[1] Moreover, it should be a burning question to-day whether this objection holds of 'classical' physics only, or whether it also applies to the modish 'revolution' in that subject.

Hume's *éloge* of Newton in his *History*, formerly quoted, seems to have expressed his considerate and balanced opinion of the mechanical philosophy, Newton being regarded as an incomplete mechanist. On the other hand, he said in *The Natural History of Religion* (G. IV, 316): 'Could men anatomize nature, according to the most probable, at least the most intelligible philosophy, they would find that these causes [of hope and fear] are nothing but the particular fabric and structure of the minute parts of their own bodies and of external objects; and that, by a regular and constant machinery, all the events are produced, about which they are so much concerned.'

§ II. Minds

I intend, now, (i) to give an account of Hume's discussion of the immateriality of the soul and of the identity of the self, (ii) to consider some of the aspects of the historical situation out of which his discussion arose, and (iii) in a sparing way, to suggest certain criticisms.

i

Speaking as a complete phenomenalist, Hume began his discussion (232) by saying that our minds, although infinitely obscure, could not, like the supposed world of bodies, contain actual contradictions. He then proceeded to deal (*a*) with

[1] Cf. Stout, *Mind and Matter*, p. 280.

the alleged immaterial substance, (*b*) with the local conjunction of spatial with non-spatial, (*c*) with the reputed spatial (or material) causes of immaterial (or spaceless) phenomena.

(*a*) Hume had proved, as he thought, that physical *substance*, that is to say the simple and indivisible 'subject of inhesion' of occult 'forms' and 'qualities' was a puerile, if ancient, superstition. Similarly, he affirmed that an *immaterial* 'subject of inhesion' was equally fabulous; for no impression could authenticate it (233).

Again, it was impossible, he said, to evade this conclusion by defining substance, in the Cartesian way, as a *res per se subsistens*. For every perception could intelligibly be conceived as a solitary existent. And that, for him, was the end of *substance*, material or immaterial. Whatever might be true of bodies and of minds, 'substance' was a metaphysical sham.

(*b*) There were, he said, only three conceivable views of local conjunction, viz. (1) that some entities had *no* place, (2) that all entities were spatial (at least to the extent of occupying a 'mathematical point'), (3) that some entities, although unextended, were *totum in toto ac totum in qualibet parte*; and Hume held the first view to be obviously true, the others plainly false. For only what was visible and tangible, he said, was, strictly speaking, extended. Passions, tastes, smells and the like, were non-spatial. You could not significantly ask whether a taste was circular, or whether a moral reflection was to the right or the left of a passion (236). What happened, therefore, was only that we added an illusory spatial union to the causal and temporal union. We spoke, indeed, as if the relish of a fig permeated the entire fruit. But tastes had no shape; and although common sense might seem to use the language of *totum in toto ac totum in qualibet parte*, reason and reflection showed that such language was quite unmeaning.

In one sense therefore, Hume inferred, the materialists were plainly wrong. There *were* unextended perceptions *which existed nowhere* (235), and were therefore 'immaterial' if 'matter' were identified with the 'extended'. On the other hand, there *were* extended impressions: 'That table which just now appears to me, is only a perception, and all its qualities are qualities of a perception. Now the most obvious of all its qualities is extension' (239). Consequently, if an immaterial thing, the soul, were that in which these

extended perceptions appeared, we should have to ask whether the soul was extended, stood to the right or to the left of an unextended perception, was *totum in toto, etc.*

Hume supported this *tu quoque* argument by an elaborate demonstration that certain immaterialists (such as Bayle) had attempted to refute the 'hideous hypothesis' of Spinoza by arguments which destroyed their own case. Spinoza held that all individual things were modifications of a single, indivisible and simple substance (240). Now we could have no *positive* ideas of objects except those that mimic our impressions. Therefore there could be no relevant difference between Spinoza's assertion that the sun, the earth, this tree, were modifications of the indivisible divine substance and the assertion of Spinoza's opponents that the *perceived* sun, the *perceived* earth, this *perceived* tree were modes of an indivisible, simple, human soul (242 *sqq.*).

Hume pursued the point. According to Bayle, he said, Spinoza ought, in the modern way, to have identified 'substance' with 'mode' at least in the sense that the properties of a mode must also be properties of its substance. Therefore, if any mode were extended, so would its substance be. Similarly, Spinoza should have held that the modes of matter were its *parts*, each of which might be a *res per se subsistens*; and Hume had shown that all perceptions were isolable entities in that very sense. Spinoza should have said that his substratum, by supporting, say, a circular mode, became circular; that similarly, by supporting a square mode, it became square; and hence that the 'simple' divine substance was both round and square. But the same arguments, according to Hume, held of any simple soul-substance in which round and square *perceptions* inhered as modes.

The term 'action', Hume went on to say, although 'modish' (244), could not mend the matter. An 'action' designated an abstract mode, and could not be separated from that of which it was the action. Indeed even convinced immaterialists—Hume was thinking of Malebranche—admitted that we could not deduce the soul's actions, in the way of perceiving, from any definition of the soul-substance.

(*c*) The principal argument commonly adduced in favour of immaterialism, Hume said, was that matter and motion could give rise to nothing except matter and motion. It was therefore impossible that 'the shocking of two globular particles should become a sensation of pain' (246). He

argued, however, that the seeming strength of this argument was quite delusive. Even motion caused motion only in the sense that we had a blind association of that kind; and *any* repeated conjuncture of the most diverse entities might arouse a similar causal association. Therefore, relinquishing the nonsense of 'substance' (248), and considering (as we should) only *de facto* sequences and customary expectations, we had, he said, simply to accept the fact that we *did* expect 'dispositions of our body' to affect our thoughts (*ibid.*). If we renounced this opinion we should have no sort of evidence that there were any causes at all—even in the case of Malebranche's too active Deity; and that would be comforting if we wanted to avoid the impious conclusion, vigorously although illogically denied by Malebranche, that the Deity was responsible for all our volitions (however sinful) as well as for everything else. In this third respect, therefore, the materialists had the best, not the worst, of the argument.

So much for immaterialism. Hume turned next (251 *sqq.*) to the problem of personal identity.

He began characteristically, and very trenchantly, by denying that there could be any simple identical self, or any genuine idea of self *in that sense*. For whence could such an idea come? Its only adequate origin would have to be a *single permanent impression*; and there was none such.

Again, this simple indivisible self, if it existed, would make a mock of our empirical personality, i.e. of our particular perceptions (252). These, Hume thought he had shown, might exist without any 'support'. Their connexion with any simple indivisible self, additional to, and separate from them, would therefore be hopelessly obscure. And perceptions *were* the very stuff of our being. Introspectively, we always found them, and we found nothing else. When they were absent in sleep, there was no evidence that *we* existed. If they ceased when we died there could be no better evidence of complete annihilation. As Hume later said in the *Dialogues* (G. II. 407): 'A mind, whose acts and sentiments and ideas are not distinct and successive; one, that is wholly simple, and totally immutable; is a mind which has no thought, no reason, no will, no sentiment, no love, no hatred; or in a word, is no mind at all.'

Accordingly Hume asserted (252) that we were 'a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual

flux and movement. Our eyes cannot turn in their sockets without varying our perceptions. Our thoughts are still more variable than our sight'. All that remained, therefore, was to account for the fiction of the simplicity and identity of the self.

Here, Hume said (253), we should distinguish between our identity, intellectually regarded, and this same identity 'as it regards our passions, or the concern we take in ourselves'. Keeping exclusively to the former point, we found, he averred, that identity, in the strict sense, meant the continuance of an object 'without variation or interruption', but that when objects were united in some close relation we tended to ascribe an illusory identity to them. In the case of 'bodies' (as he had proved) we first disguised, and then denied, the undeniable fact of the interruption of our perceptions. Similarly, we disguised, and finally denied, the fact of personal *variation* by embracing the fiction of an identical self-soul, or substance (254); and when the action of a soul seemed over-bold, as with the 'identity' of plants, we imagined some mysterious 'sympathy' in its stead and ranted about it like my Lord Shaftesbury in his *Moralists* (254 n.).

Hume therefore denied that the dispute was merely verbal. A definite fiction, he thought, was engendered, or at least a propensity towards one (255). There was real resemblance in the facts, but a palpable mistake in the interpretation, due to smoothness of the imagination. How, then, did the fiction come about?

We should notice, Hume said:

(1) That in the case of material objects, we ascribed identity when there was a *small* alteration of the constituent parts, or, rather, a small proportionate alteration, (2) that *gradual* change provoked the same interpretation, (3) that if the constituents had a common *end* (even in inanimate things as when we spoke of 'the same ship' after extensive repairs) we tended to assert identity, and the more so (4) when, as in the case of vegetables or of animals, we were inclined to believe in a *sympathy* towards the common end. (Thus we spoke of the identity of acorn with oak although no single particle of the acorn could be found in the oak, and spoke of the 'same' church when it was re-built, because of a common relation to the parish, and of the 'same' river, because of natural expectation.)

According to Hume, these were the common fictions and

artifices that we employed (for the most part, unwittingly); and he regarded personal identity as an artifice of the same order. This conclusion, he said, might be further enforced by an accurate analysis of personality. There could be no perceptible bond among our perceptions (259), which were therefore diverse, not identical, their union being associative, not real. Indeed, he said, the association was association by *resemblance*, and by *causation*; by resemblance because an outside observer (if there could be one) would find in the resemblance of memory the most plausible evidence for personal identity (as we ourselves did when we were spectators of ourselves), and by causation because the self was a 'system' of causally united perceptions and should be compared to a 'republic or commonwealth in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts' (261). (Incidentally, therefore, the self, according to Hume, was a 'connected heap' of a very special self-propagating kind, and very different indeed from a mere bundle.)

This alliance of memory with causal union, Hume said (and here he had Locke in his mind), enabled us to decide the question whether memory *produced* or *discovered* personal identity. In this matter, Hume's conclusion was that memory was the fundamental basis of personality, but that 'causality' enlarged the memory-basis so extensively that, in the result, it was more accurate to say that memory *discovered* than that it *produced* our (fictitious) identity 'by showing us the relation of cause and effect among our different perceptions' (262).

He further asserted that we had no accurate standards in this affair, and consequently that we could not decide nice and subtle philosophical questions on the subject. Our fictions, he held, were elastic and vague; but our general tendency was to proceed from similarity to a feigned simplicity, and thence to a supposed substantial 'bond' of simplicity.

In this entire discussion Hume adopted the standpoint of an intellectual spectator, and did not discuss the *other* problem he had mentioned (and that greatly occupied Locke), viz. the evidence, if any, that could be derived from our passions and from the 'concern' that we took in ourselves. And in his account of the passions, his *theory* of self did not enter at all. There, he allowed himself to speak like any one else.

' 'Tis evident ', he said (317, cf. 320), ' that the idea or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that anything can in this particular go beyond it.' Here, it would seem, the privilege of thinking with the learned and speaking with the vulgar was quite definitely abused.

In the Appendix to the *Treatise* Hume confessed, very candidly, to a certain disquietude regarding his analysis of the self—he was silent about it in the *Enquiry*—although he did not retract the negative part of his argument in any way at all. It remained clear to him, he said, that we had no idea of the self in the sense of an immaterial substance, simple and individual (633), or as the subject of inhesion (634). The self, not being simple, was composite; it would cease if our perceptions ceased. In short, it was *not* distinct from our perceptions, and philosophers who had begun to reconcile themselves to the denial of bodies [1] should similarly reconcile themselves to the denial of minds in the traditional sense.

This conclusion, Hume further maintained, left our perceptions ' loose '; for philosophers themselves (e.g. Locke and Malebranche) admitted that we only *felt* and did not *see* a certain obscure ' determination of our thought ' in this matter (for that was what Locke meant when he ascribed identity to ' consciousness '). The ' promising aspect ' of such reflections, however, disappeared altogether when we asked whether there was a genuine unity to account for this ' feeling ' or ' consciousness '. And Hume admitted his final dissatisfaction with any positive explanation that he or any one else had ever suggested.

Some one, he said, might arise who would explain how, although all our perceptions appeared to be distinct existences, they could form a genuine unity despite the fact that ' the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences ' (636). But Hume himself had to plead a sceptic's privilege. If there were a subject of inhesion, he said, or if a bond of connexion could be observed there would be no insoluble philosophical problem. Yet Hume could not admit that either of these familiar philosophical opinions had any solid basis in fact.

[1] Without being Pyrrhonists ?

ii

In his discussion of immaterialism, Hume seems to have thought principally of the two philosophers to whom he referred specifically in footnotes, viz. Bayle and Malebranche.

To use Bayle's terms, it was something to be more 'zetetic' and 'ephectic' (Art. Pyrrhon, Rem. A) than Bayle himself. But Hume was thoroughly dissatisfied with Bayle's anti-materialistic arguments, as set forth, e.g. in the Art. Leucippe, Rem. E, the Art. Dicearque, Rem. C, or the Art. Simonide, Rem. F. Thus in the Art. Leucippe [1] Bayle argued that there was an

'objection insurmontable à quoi est sujette l'opinion de ceux qui soutiennent que la matière peut penser, c'est à dire avoir des sentiments et des connoissances. Cette objection est fondée sur l'unité, proprement dite, qui doit convenir aux êtres pensans; car si une substance qui pense n'étoit une que de la manière qu'un globe est un, elle ne verroit jamais tout un arbre; elle ne sentiroit jamais la douleur qu'un coup de bâton excite. . . . Si vous me répondiez que chaque partie de l'ame communique ses passions aux autres, je vous ferois deux or trois répliques qui vous replongeroient dans le bourbier. Je vois dirois en I lieu qu'il ne paroît pas possible que les parties d'un globe se communiquent leur douleur, qu'il est possible qu'elles se communiquent leur mouvement. . . . Cette sensation semblable produite tout de nouveau n'est elle pas reçue dans un sujet divisible a l'infini? . . . Vous ne pouvez trouver votre compte qu'en supposant une chose inconcevable, c'est que l'image d'un cheval, et l'idée d'un carré, étant reçues dane une ame composée d'une infinité de parties, se conservent toutes entières dans chaque partie. . . . C'est une absurdité beaucoup plus grande que celle de ces Docteurs qui disent que l'ame est toute dans tout le corps, & toute dans chaque partie. . . . Chacun de nous connoît par expérience qu'il n'y a en lui qu'une chose qui sait qu'elle lit, qu'elle a faim, qu'elle sent de la douleur, ou de la joie &c. . . . L'étendue et la dureté remplissent dans nos idées toute la nature d'un atôme. La force de se mouvoir n'y est pas comprise; c'est un objet que nos idées trouvent étranger et *extrinsèque* a l'égard du corps & de l'étendue, tout de même que la connoissance.'

(I find, however, in the Index to the *Dictionary*, unfortunately with the reference wrongly given, that Bayle *did* compare man to a small republic with a perpetual change of magistrates.)

Again, it was Bayle's account of Spinoza, with a very faithful attention to all the principal points in Bayle's Rem. N, in his article on that philosopher, that Hume referred to; and

[1] Specially mentioned in Law's notes on *King*, p. 37 n.

although other British authors of the time had read Spinoza carefully (see e.g. Clarke, *Dem.* VII, or Berkeley's *Commonplace Book*, items 836–9), there is no evidence that Hume had done so. Indeed, since Bayle, according to his own statement (Rem. DD), based his decisive refutation of Spinoza upon a disputable interpretation of a *single* proposition (*Ethica*, I. vi), and could not have known the whole of Spinoza's *Ethics* since he denied (Rem. E) that Spinoza *could* have believed that virtue was its own reward, it seems not unlikely that what Hume knew of Spinoza (like what Maclaurin [1] knew), was simply what Bayle had said.

The phrase *totum in toto*, etc.,[2] which, with its variants, Hume seems to have liked (40, 238), was frequently mentioned by Bayle (e.g. Art. Leucippe in the quotation given above or Art. Simonide, Rem. F). M. Gilson (*Index Scholastico-Cartésien*, p. 302) mentions five passages [3] in Descartes where it was used, and also shows its scholastic origin by quoting from Tolet (p. 106) and from Aquinas (p. 302).[4] Edmund Law, in his notes on King's book (p. 34 *sq.* n.), quoted Cudworth (*Intell. Syst.*, 823–32) in defence of the theory expressed by the phrase, and Cudworth's statement in this excerpt may have influenced Hume (235).[5]

On the other hand, Hume's reference (244) to the 'more ancient and yet more modish' preference of '*action*' to 'mode' may refer to Locke and his followers, as regards the modishness, although Malebranche (*Éc.* 2) had said something similar. Thus Buffier in his *Traité des premières vérités* (1717) complained (Pt. ii, ch. 17) that although 'we hear philosophers speak and dispute of nothing but *acting* and *action* . . . in no one of them, not excepting Mr. Locke himself . . . can we discover that they have anywhere thought of explaining the nature of *action*'. The 'more ancient' doctrine, however, was the subject of Averroistic disputes about the active and the passive intellect; and persisted in the criticisms of occasionalists such as La Forge, Cordemoy and other Cartesians.[6] Hume's statement, however (245), that action was an 'abstract mode' may have been derived from Hobbes (I. 32 *sq.*).

The influence of Malebranche upon Hume's discussion of

[1] *Account of Newton*, p. 81 n.

[2] Cf. Hobbes (III, 676) who asked: 'Can any man think that God is served with such absurdities?'

[3] Adam et Tannery, III, 434; VII, 86; VII, 389; VII, 448; XI, 351.

[4] Cf. his *St. Augustin*, p. 60.

[5] See Bréhier, *Histoire de la philosophie*, II, Pt. i, pp. 120 *sqq.*

immateriality was naturally very pronounced. Hume's arguments concerning local conjunction, for example, seem plainly reminiscent of Malebranche's ' on peut par une ligne droite couper un carré en deux triangles, en deux parallélogrammes, en deux trapèzes; mais par quelle ligne peut-on concevoir qu'un plaisir, qu'une douleur, qu'un désir se puisse couper? et quelle figure résulteroit de cette division? ' (IV. ii. Sect. iv). Hume's solution, however, ' that an object may exist and yet be nowhere ' (235)[1] had been domiciled in England, for Dr. Isaac Watts maintained that spirits ' have no such Relation to *Place* as *Bodies* have and therefore it may be philosophically said *they exist or reside nowhere* '.[2]

When we turn from immaterialism in general to personal identity, we also find marked traces of Malebranche's influence upon Hume. Thus Hume's ' inconceivable rapidity ' with which the perceptions succeeded one another in the mind was just Malebranche's ' vitesse inconcevable ' (III. Pt. ii. ch. ii), where Malebranche, like Hume, referred to the rapid sequence of *visual* perceptions.

Malebranche's influence, moreover, was not confined to a phrase, and Hume might readily have reached his own conclusions by what would have seemed to him an obvious emendation of Malebranche's theory. Malebranche was not at all satisfied with the ordinary Cartesian view that the soul was better known than the body, and that secondary qualities, not being properties of extension must be ' in ' the mind because there was nowhere else for them to be. Malebranche did not, indeed, deny the latter propositions, but he explained them in a sense whose significance Hume could not have missed. For Malebranche maintained that we had no clear idea of mind, and therefore could not tell by direct inspection that secondary qualities *were* mental (I. xiii. Sect. ii). Again, Malebranche held (III. Pt. ii. vii) that we were acquainted with our own minds, not by ideas, much less by clear ideas, but only by ' sentiment intérieur ' or ' conscience '; and he further asserted (*a*) that by *pensée, manière de penser*, and *modification de l'âme* he meant only what was felt (without any intelligible reason) to be *au-dedans de l'âme* (III. Pt. ii. i); (*b*) that such facts were

[1] In opposition to Hobbes's ' in no place, that is to say no where, that is to say, nothing ' (III, 394).

[2] Philosophical Essays, Essay VI, p. 162 (cf. p. 164) of the third edition (1742). An earlier edition in 1734—I assume the first. See Bodleian Library Catalogue.

known by experience only (*ibid.*, vii) ; (*c*) that the soul could not exist without such modifications (VI. Pt. i, ii) ; and (*d*) that if we had not felt pain or pleasure we could not know that the soul had any sentient capacity at all (*Ec.* xi). Finally, he denied, just as Hume did, that we could perceive any ' rapport ' between the various modifications of the soul : ' L'on n'a donc point d'idée claire ni de l'ame, ni de ses modifications ; et quoique je vois ou que je sente les couleurs, les saveurs, les odeurs, je puis dire, comme j'ai fait, que je ne les connois point par idée claire, puisque je ne puis en découvrir clairement les rapports ' (*ibid.*).

In the main, however, Hume's discussion of personal identity was designed to contribute to the controversy that had arisen ' of late years in England ' (259). This controversy started from, and was debated in terms of, Locke's opinions. As Bishop Butler said in the dissertation on personal identity appended to his *Analogy* : ' Some of [Locke's] hasty observations have been carried to a strange length by others ' who held that ' since it is not substance but consciousness alone which constitutes personality . . . consciousness, being successive, cannot be the same in any two moments, nor consequently the personality constituted by it.'

The chief of the ' others ' was Anthony Collins, and Butler was thinking principally of the Dodwell controversy. ' The learned Mr. Henry Dodwell,' having tried to prove the ' natural ' mortality of the soul, Dr. Clarke entered into the fray and drew the fire of Collins who argued, as quoted in Clarke's *Defence* (1707) (p. 6), that ' thinking is an action which may commence after the existence of its subject and may perish or cease to exist, its subject still remaining '. Clarke, in his *Second Defence*, replied that ' the spirits and particles of the brain being loose and in a perpetual flux cannot therefore be the seat of that consciousness by which a man not only remembers things done, . . . but also is conscious that he himself, the same individual conscious being, was the doer of them ' (pp. 51 *sq.*). In his third letter the Doctor further said that if consciousness were a ' fleeting transferrible mode ' as Collins had said, ' then I say you make individual personality to be a mere external imaginary denomination, and nothing at all in reality, just as a ship is called the same ship after the whole substance is changed by frequent repairs ; or a river is called the same river though the water of it be every day new ' (pp. 64 *sq.*). The obdurate Collins, however, replied to this

Third Defence (in 1711) that 'No man has the same numerical consciousness to-day that he had yesterday' (p. 43), that 'we are not conscious that we continue a moment the same numerical being' (p. 44) and that when Clarke 'sees the impossibility of *the same numerical consciousness* continuing a moment in a finite being, but that every moment's consciousness is a new action and nothing but bringing the idea of a past action into view; he may perhaps see the needlessness of contesting whether self or personal identity must inhere in the same or different beings at different times' (pp. 65 *sq.*).

There seems indeed to have been a profound opposition between Locke's dogmatic assertion (IV. ix. § 3) that each of us had an intuitive knowledge of himself and his very 'zetetic' discussion of personal identity (II. xxvii). Indeed, Hume may be said to have pitted the latter part of Locke's philosophy against the former. The thesis that Hume was anxious to refute (251) was, in effect, an assertion of 'intuitive knowledge' of the self; and Hume's counter-argument, although even more metaphysical than the zetetic part of Locke, followed Locke very closely indeed.

The main points that emerged successively in Locke's celebrated chapter on Identity (II. xxvii) were that Locke defined *perfect* identity as absence of variation (in parcels of matter, etc.), and inferred (§ 3) that the *diversity* in trains of succession, e.g. of motion or thought, was obvious; that he held, nevertheless, that a 'mass of matter' and a 'living body' were 'identical in quite different senses, since, in the latter case, the identity was that of a 'disposition of parts' or of a 'continuity of insensibly succeeding parts united to a living body' (§ 5) which 'fit organization or construction of parts to a certain end' (§ 6) was also the 'identity' of brutes. It followed, said Locke, that this identity of *life* was not identity of substance (§ 7), for although it was probable that identity of consciousness (in so many ways similar to identity of life) was 'annexed' to 'one individual immaterial substance' (§ 25) it was clear that a 'succession of several substances' (§ 10) might be the bearers of this continuous *organization*. (Locke pursued this point with great pertinacity, especially the logical implications of a reincarnation of Socrates in the Mayor of Queenborough.)

Personal identity, however (according to Locke), was not simply the same continued *life* as in a vegetable. It was an identity of consciousness, and consciousness included a *reflex*

act, 'it being impossible for anyone to perceive without *perceiving* that he does perceive'—and that he *had* perceived (§ 11).[1] The self, accordingly, was said to consist of whatever it *reflexively* acknowledged, irrespective of any question of its 'substance'; and, for reasons that Locke did not make very plain, was further said to include pleasure-pain and even bodily sensations, so that 'we *feel* when [our bodies] are touched and are affected by and conscious of good and harm that happens to them, are a part of ourselves' (§ 11).[2] And Locke's general conclusion, sometimes expressed with some diffidence (§§ 13 and 27) but, in the main, very firmly, was that personal identity lasted only *so long as* the same continued consciousness lasted. 'That with which the consciousness of this present thinking thing *can* join itself, makes the same person and is one self with it . . . and so attributes to itself, and owns all the actions of that thing, as its own, so far as that consciousness reaches, and no further' (§ 17). Such reflex appropriation, it would seem to many of us, need not be identical with explicit memory. Locke, however, interpreted it in no other sense, even forensically (§ 26)—if genuine justice prevailed.

In further illustration of the thought of the times (not, of course, as evidence available to Hume) it may be noted that Berkeley, before he formulated his theory of the essential activity of all spirit, frequently entertained opinions very similar to Hume's. This we know from his *Commonplace Book* where (along with contradictory opinions) we find such statements as the following: 479. 'How is the soul distinguished from its ideas? Certainly, if there were no sensible ideas there could be no soul, no perception, remembrance, love, fear, etc.; no faculty could be exerted.' 583. 'The very existence of ideas constitutes the soul.' 584. 'Consciousness, perception, existence of ideas seem to be all one.' 585. 'Consult, ransack your understanding. What find you there except several perceptions or thoughts? What mean you by the word mind? You must mean something that you perceive, or that you do not perceive. A thing not perceived is a contradiction. We are in all this matter strangely abused by words.' 586. 'Mind is a congeries of perceptions. Take away perceptions and you take away the mind. Put the perceptions and you put the mind' (cf. 593

[1] Fraser's edition, Vol. I, p. 449 (at this point the numbers of the paragraphs are confusing). [2] Fraser, I, 452.

and 620). In view of these jottings the following entries have also an exceptional interest: 725. '*Mem.* Carefully to omit defining of person, or making much mention of it.' 860. 'I must not say that the understanding differs not from the particular ideas, or the will from particular volitions.'[1]

iii

Regarding metaphysical, that is to say, metaesthetic or ultra-perceptible 'substance', Hume's attitude, of course, was just phenomenalism *à outrance*, understood in terms of his own special atomistic interpretation of 'phenomena'. Every phenomenon was an isolable entity; and since there were no perceptible 'bonds' between the 'loose' atoms, there could be no bonds at all. Therefore 'substance' was an invention of an infantile fantasy. Even in the concrete there could not be sufficient evidence, however inescapable our belief to the contrary might be, for the existence of genuine *continuants*, since real continuity, even of the barest strung-along order in time, would require a 'bond'.

In other words, Hume had nothing but contemptuous denial for the philosophical thesis that substance is apprehended by intellect, not by sense, that it is required to explain sense, and that even Hume's arguments concerning 'constancy' and 'coherence' would prove the *reality* of concrete substances, or coherent continuants, although they did not begin to prove, and should not have been meant to prove that 'substance' could ever be sensibly perceptible.

It seems useless, here, to debate so fundamental an opposition in any other way than by considering, in the large, whether Hume's phenomenalism did not weave a rope to hang itself; and so I propose to ask whether, when Hume was allowed to

[1] I do not know what precisely Messrs. Hone and Rossi mean when they say (*Bishop Berkeley*, p. 178 n.) that 'Baxter anticipated Hume's famous amplification of Berkeley's argument to "show spiritual substance to be a contradiction as well as matter".' Nothing more unlike an 'anticipation' of Hume could well be imagined that the *proof* of the 'immateriality of the soul' which *was* Baxter's *Enquiry*. It is true that Baxter began his attempted refutation of Berkeley (II, 256) with the words 'Some men deny all *immaterial*, and others all *material* substance: so that between them they leave *nothing at all* existing in nature'; but his aim was to show that scepticism was absurd on both counts. On the other hand, his statement that Berkeley was a sceptic and therefore (in logic) an atheist (II, 284) did anticipate Hume's similar statement in the *Enquiry* (E. 155 n.).

lay down the rules in this matter, his arguments, judged by his own standards, were entirely satisfactory.

As it seems to me, Hume conformed, quite strictly, to his rules, when he dealt with the immaterial substance, and with the question of 'local conjunction' between extended and unextended. It is more doubtful, however, whether his partial agreement with the 'materialists' (granting it to have been *ad hominem* as well as impishly provocative) conformed to his own rules, especially with regard to the causal influence of body and mind. At the risk of some repetition, it seems advisable to consider this question in special connexion with Mr. Whitehead's recent criticisms,[1] already briefly noticed.

According to Mr. Whitehead, Hume's statement, that all impressions 'arise from unknown causes' was only make-believe, Hume's 'real conviction' being that 'the causes are not a bit unknown' as he showed when he said that we see '*by* the eyes' (16) or that 'matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation' (250).

The alleged 'make-believe', however, was surely very thorough. Certainly, Hume had a 'real conviction' in the reality of bodies, though not in the reality of bodies 'specifically different' from our perceptions; but the point, philosophically speaking, was not what his 'real convictions' *as an agent* were (cf. E. 38), but what rational proof could be discovered in the affair. The 'make-believe' was just Hume's philosophy.

From self-*observation*, Hume argued, it was possible to say, as a simple statement of fact, that certain sensations of ocular movement had been regularly conjoined in the past with sensations of vision. This is all that he need have meant when he said that we saw '*by* the eyes'; and he 'inferred' or expected, in the way of causal association, that bodily stimulation *always* preceded visual and other sensations whether or not such stimulation had been observed. Therefore, in terms of his own theory, he had to say that causes of this kind could be 'inferred' in the same way as anything else that went *beyond* past experience, that is to say would be expected, with the firmest possible assurance in a non-rational, sensitive and associative way.

The important question therefore is whether Hume did not surreptitiously introduce into the very idea of physiological and other such 'causes', properties that, according to his own

[1] *Process and Reality*, pp. 240 *sqq.*; *Symbolism*, p. 60.

theory, must have been non-existent and even meaningless. There are grounds, I think, for holding that he did so in this instance.

The ' materialists ' did not merely believe in the existence of *extended* entities (which might very well be extended impressions and ideas). They believed in the existence of spatial bodies which could, and frequently did, exist unperceived. They even believed that matter existed *before* there were any sensitive organisms at all, that is to say before even ' impressions ' were conceivable occurrences. In other words, they *did* infer something ' specifically different ' from impressions, and did not merely, as in legitimate sensitive expectation, expect unobserved *sensations* to be similar to *sensations* observed in the past. Hume's transient salutation to ' neutral monism ', it is true, would have allowed him to evade this objection. If perceptions, without alteration, could become detached from the ' connected heaps ' that we call our minds, the ' causes ' of organisms need not be ' specifically different ' from ' impressions ' and there would be no difference between psycho-physiological inferences of a causal sort and any others. But Hume himself argued that ' experience ' itself demolished neutral monism. It therefore demolished the ' materialists '.

Hume's critique of personal identity had two principal parts, viz. (*a*) that ' identity ', strictly interpreted, meant uninterrupted existence without the smallest variation in quality, (*b*) that the self, if there were one, would have to be an *identical* ' impression ' in the above strict sense of identity.

(*a*) According to Humian principles what we called ' things ' (including selves) were not invariant entities, but permitted of change either (α) because some alteration happened within their contour (as when a ' table ' became chipped or faded) or (β) because they were what we called developing things (which *grew* according to a recognizable pattern). Like all atomists, phenomenalistic or otherwise, Hume held that such ' things ' could not be genuine continuants, but were resoluble into fluctuating if patterned constellations of changeless items whose interrelations altered.

His opponents would reply that patterned or developing continuity is an entirely intelligible sort of ' thinghood ', although it is not atomic identity. Hume's ' fictions ', they would say, are genuine relations ; and if the word ' identity ' gives offence, an easy alternative is to affirm that there are several different species of *individuality*, each of which may be

clearly defined. The individuality of a river is different from that of a tree ; neither type illustrates atomic identity ; but the patterned unity of each is fact, not fiction.

Some such view might even be read into Locke's account of this subject ; but any one who holds it must refuse to tamper with it, and must never, like many misguided people, say that a changing thing is *the same* because part of it continues invariable, yet is *different* because other parts alter. In all such statements the relation between the changing and the unchanging parts becomes utterly mysterious, and the doctrine as a whole refutes itself by its covert assumption that nothing but atomic identity (in the unchanging part) explains the individuality. To parody Hume, if we accept the patterned unity as constituting individuality, *we really do accept it.*

The individuality of the self, it is true, may be held to contain a further difficulty, especially if, like Locke and Hume, we deny that there is any self in the absence of conscious experiences. In that case we have to say that the patterned individuality of the self is interrupted during sleep and trances ; and so that the self seems to be a pretty feeble sort of continuant.[1] Nevertheless, Locke held (correctly, I think) that the continuity of each man's *waking* self was a genuine and highly important type of individuality.

It is necessary to ask, however, whether, if we renounce any such doctrine of continuants, utter scepticism results.

According to Hume, the only existing entities were perishing *occurrences*, all very brief (although some might last longer than others). Permanent atomic identity was therefore impossible throughout nature.

All that seems strictly to follow, however, from this view is that the language we use when we speak of atoms, or of ' things ', remaining ' the same ' requires radical revision. An ' atom ', to choose the simplest instance, should now be regarded as an uninterrupted succession of *occurrences* each of which is *qualitatively* identical with its predecessor. This fact, if it were a fact, would not be a fiction ; and I do not see why we should not be quite unsceptically content with it. At any rate, as Mrs. Nickleby said : ' So far as it goes, and to a certain extent, there is a great deal in this sort of thing.'

(*b*) It may reasonably be asked whether the visible continuity of personality was sufficiently admitted in Hume's theory. He said that when he tried to examine himself he

[1] Cf. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 32.

always stumbled upon a heap of loose perceptions, and upon nothing else—although he sometimes talked of the ' connected heap '.—But did he ?

Many philosophers would deny his assertion upon what they believe to be wholly empirical grounds. The empirical truth, they would say, is always that ' I feel ', ' I see ' and the like. It is always false to assert that feelings feel or that perceptions perceive. Consequently, any one who stumbles upon perception, i.e. upon ' seeing ' or ' feeling ', necessarily stumbles upon himself. If he does not admit the fact, so much the worse for his perspicuity. They further argue, in a way that seems over-confident, that they are likewise entitled to affirm that the self that sees *this*, also sees *that*; and so that, if I remember so and so as having occurred yesterday, it follows that I know that *I* existed yesterday, since otherwise I could not have seen what I *now* remember I saw.

Supposing, however, at least for argument's sake, that these philosophers are rash, it may still be observed that Hume's description of the relevant facts was obscure if not actually self-contradictory.

The ' connected heap ' (207) or ' system ' (261) of perceptions was a very special sort of heap. A consistent phenomenalist, one would suppose, should have said that if the heap *looked* connected it *was* connected. Alternatively the alleged ' looseness ' of the members of the bundle only meant, that, if we tried, we could imagine the members in isolation. The ' looseness ' therefore was the child of a difficult introspective experiment. It was not the stubborn *given* fact that had to be explained.

More in detail, Hume seems to have meant that the self appeared to be a connected heap although reflection proved that the constituents of the heap were ' loose '. There was only an *apparent*, not a real, connexion due to resemblance (in memory) and to causation (in the self-propagation of our thoughts).

Now memory is not simply the fact of resemblance. A does not *remember* B's thoughts when he picks up yesterday's newspaper that once had been read by B. On the contrary, A *seems*, at least, to remember *his own* past only.

In other words, Hume totally neglected the respect in which Locke (and Butler [1] also) patiently distinguished the *reflexive* unity implied in ' consciousness ' from the similarity

[1] *Analogy*, Diss. I.

that a hypothetical external observer might notice ; and surely there is, to say the least, a quite special type of *given reflexive* continuity implied in our self-acquaintance, even when it is undiscriminating. There is *some* empirical sense in which, to use Ferrier's [1] language, whatever I consciously experience, is experienced *mecum*.

Regarding ' causation ', Hume's description was still more obscure. For him ' causes ' were only associative expectations. Therefore the mental ' heap ' could not really be connected *by causation* in the same objective sense as the constituents of the heap might *resemble* one another. Yet what other intelligible meaning could be read into Hume's statement (261) that our ' different perceptions are link'd together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence and modify each other ' ?

Again, since ' the system of the memory and senses ', according to Hume, ' peopled the world ', that is to say, *constituted* the world *quoad nos* (than which we could conceive no other world), it seems clear that the mental ' heap ' must differ in some empirical way from the ' world ' itself. The ' neutral monists ' of the present time say that one type of association of ' neutral ' entities is a ' physical ', and *another* type a ' mental ' series. This doctrine may or may not be intelligible. It would, however, be wholly unintelligible if *no* such distinction were drawn. And Hume drew none.

It is further to be noticed that Hume's account of the self did not attempt to discriminate between what was ' internal ' (cf. 319) and what was apparently ' external ' in the heap of perceptions. When he distinguished between ' impressions of sensation ' and ' impressions of reflection,' or when he spoke, as we have often noticed that he spoke, of the ' operations of the mind ', he surely referred to something ' internal ' ; and he should have distinguished the same from ' external ' bodies. It is therefore to be regretted that no specific account of what is commonly reputed to be the peculiarly ' subjective ' aspect of our being is to be found just where it was most needed, that is to say in Hume's description of the self.

[1] *Institutes of Metaphysics*, Sect. I, Prop. ii.

CHAPTER VI

NATURE AND SCEPTICISM

IN this chapter we have to examine Hume's prelude to his sceptical and naturalistic conclusion (180 *sqq.*) and that conclusion itself (263 *sqq.*).

§ I. THE SUICIDE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF 'REASON'

Hume's negative argument on this topic contained two parts: (*a*) the proof that 'reason' compelled 'knowledge' to degenerate into probability, (*b*) the proof that 'reason' deprived 'probability' of all claim to rational evidence.

(*a*) According to Hume, the rules in all the demonstrative sciences were 'certain and infallible' (180), but the application of the rules was not; for experience showed that errors crept in. Mathematicians ran through their proofs repeatedly, sought corroboration from others, and even then could not be entirely certain. Merchants, similarly, being aware of the mistakes that are apt to occur in reckoning long accounts, devised special, although not infallible, checks, in their methods of book-keeping. Therefore, Hume said, although knowledge and probability were of 'contrary and disagreeing natures' (181)—and he had chosen his examples from *arithmetic*, whose claim to have the *nature* of knowledge he had never disputed (71)—'knowledge' itself must, in the end, be admitted to be only 'probability'.

This argument was curious. If knowledge and probability differed *in their natures*, knowledge could not *become* what it never could *be*. The most that could be argued was that 'knowledge' could never be applied with certainty. Again, it might surely be objected to Hume that experience shows that men have made mistakes about rules as well as about the application of rules. Even in mathematics pseudo-intuitions have not been at all uncommon. Indeed, it would seem that this part of Hume's argument should be explained historically rather than on its merits. Hume was recalling an argument of Malebranche's (VI. Pt. II, vi) who had said that even

a *deus deceptor* could not deceive regarding ' connoissances de simple vue ' such as 2 and 2 making 4, ' mais, lorsque je raisonne, ne voyant point évidemment les principes de mes raisonnemens, & me souvenant seulement que je les ai vus avec évidence, si ce Dieu trompeur joignoit ce souvenir à de faux principes, comme il pourroit le faire s'il le vouloit, je ne ferois que de faux raisonnemens '.

(*b*) Hume's denial of rational evidence in probability rested on the following argument: Every judgment (as shown by his former reasoning) fell short of certainty. But the faculty of judging was itself fallible; and similarly our judgments about our fallible judgments were fallible too. Therefore, since ' no finite object can subsist under a decrease repeated *in infinitum* ' all claims to probable *evidence*, in the strict sense, must eventually be reduced to *nothing* (182). And Hume corroborated this abstract argument with the reflection that ' a man of solid sense and long experience ought to have, and usually has, a greater assurance in his opinions ' than others, but that such authority ' is never entire ' (*ibid.*).

Here, whatever may be true of the corroboration, the abstract argument was very feeble. If in the series ' Judgment, Judgment about the judgment, Judgment about the judgment about the judgment ', etc., *the same* fractional allowance had to be made in each case for the possibility of error, we should indeed have a series of the type $1 - x$, $1 - 2x$, $1 - 3x$, etc., and the series would approach 0, however small x might be. If on the other hand the successive decrements were of the type x, x^2, x^3, etc., the allowance for error would have to be as large as one-half if the sum of x, x^2, x^3, etc., were to have unity for its limit; and it would surely be possible, at least, that the allowance for error, in these strained and remote applications of the ' judgment ', should proportionately diminish in some such way. Again, as Hume admitted by implication (182), we might reasonably attempt to diminish the chance of error by exercising greater care, and so would *not* have a *constant* fraction to reckon with. In any case, however, Hume's argument concerning our fallibility was *inductive* since it depended on the proportion of past failures. Therefore it was not at all clear why the allowance for error should be made more than once, in *any* series that we chose to contemplate.

According to Hume the downfall of reason led, not to anarchy (as the ' fantastic sect ' (183) of sceptics alleged), but to a change of government. *Nature* took the reins that *reason*

had constrained herself to drop. 'Nature by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel' (*ibid.*); but these 'judgments' of nature were *sensitive* and not *cogitative*. If belief depended on rational evidence 'it must infallibly destroy itself' (184). Since it persisted, it must be thoroughly alogical—as Hume had always said it was when it dealt with matter of fact. It must be 'of the same nature with that evidence, which we employ in common life' (181); and all that had to be explained was precisely why, if *all* 'evidence', including what we called 'reason', were of this nature, we seldom or never proceeded with the ruinous infinite process aforesaid.

Here Hume thought, the answer was plain. It was simply a question of our tenacity (185). In history, politics, and other such sciences we were quite satisfied with common-sense arguments, and did not strain our faculties with abstruse logical difficulties. When we succumbed to a philosophical fever, however (as some men very frequently did), we proceeded with these sceptical reasonings; but our capacities in this direction were not inexhaustible. The strain told very quickly, and sooner or later (but usually pretty soon) led to a natural reaction or, in other words, to 'nature's' supervening upon philosophical exhaustion. We could judge about our judgment, then judge about our judgment about our judgment, etc. (184), but not for ever; and 'dogmatism' like scepticism (for both pre-supposed a false ideal of 'reason') 'vanishes away into nothing by a regular and just diminution'.

Hume very properly denied (186) the 'expeditious' refutation of scepticism, i.e. that 'reason' must be strong if the sceptical arguments were weighty, and that, if the sceptical arguments were slight, they could be neglected. His ground was that there would be a complete *impasse* if reason, by purely rational arguments, could effectively undermine itself.[1] In that case, he said (186 *sq.*), all that followed would be that sometimes reason, sometimes its insidious enemy appeared to prevail. (Hume may have remembered the quotation from Lactantius in Bayle's Art. Arcesilas, Rem. F, to the effect that these warriors perished like the Spartans 'quia gladium habent, scutum non habent'.)

[1] Cf. Diogenes Laertius as quoted by Baxter, II, 273: 'They *affirm* and *maintain* that their arguments, after they have overthrown all other arguments, at length overthrow themselves, like a dose of physick, which last of all purges itself off.'

Although Hume's phrases were not altogether decisive, he may have meant to say that the reason for this fatigue was that each successive step in judging about a judgment, etc., became progressively tired and dragging. If so, his argument was weak, since, as he himself had contended, it was possible to see whither the infinite series led without taking an infinite number of steps. If, however, he referred more generally to the atmosphere of unreality that hovered round all abstruse arguments once the moment of philosophical enthusiasm had passed, he was speaking, as on later pages, of his own experience. He had 'fairly got the disease of the learned' (B. I. 33). And there can be little doubt, as we shall see, that Hume seriously believed that the more profoundly a man philosophized the more Pyrrhonian he became.

In the *Enquiry*, however, Hume condemned all 'Cartesian' doubt, i.e. any *antecedent* distrust of our faculties on the ground that we *had* to trust these faculties even in our self-criticisms (E. 149 *sq.*). Reason, he there said, could be destroyed only on grounds *consequent* to scientific and philosophical researches. And Hume, with some diffidence (E. 158 n.), suspected difficulties of this serious order in the use of the 'infinite' in the demonstrative sciences of quantity and number (E. 156 *sqq.*). He further asserted, regarding 'moral' (or probable) evidence, that the 'popular' arguments founded upon the natural weakness of our understanding, errors in the past, etc., were 'but weak' (E. 158); and therefore he renounced a very large part of what he had argued in the *Treatise*.

Despite his study of Bayle, Hume did not attempt, in either work, to pursue the traditional arguments which endeavoured to subdue 'reason' in order that a becoming 'faith' might prevail (cf. Montaigne's 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond' and much in Bayle). Neither Hume's 'naturalism' nor his 'scepticism' showed any traces of humility.

§ II. The Conclusion of the Matter

In the *Treatise*, having settled 'reason's' business, and having shown, in his 'miscellaneous'[1] way (263), that bodies and minds were but irresistible illusions of the 'imagination', Hume proceeded to sum up his conclusions with an intention as much prospective as retrospective. He was about to study 'the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and found-

[1] Shaftesbury's phrase, *Characteristicks*, 'Treatise VI, viz. Miscellaneous Reflexions, etc.'

ation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations which actuate and govern me' (271), and he wanted to know 'upon what principles I proceed' (*ibid.*). Since he meant to give 'a different turn' (273) to the speculations of philosophers concerning 'human nature, the only science of man, yet hitherto the most neglected' (*ibid.*), he had to consider profoundly where he stood. For he had estranged himself from 'metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians' (264).

Strictly, he said, his principles left no place for conviction except the *present* testimony of the senses, and such liveliness as might spring from the imagination. The senses could not testify to anything beyond a momentary impression; even the memory was but a lively *present* feeling; and nothing remained but a '*strong* propensity to consider objects *strongly* in that view under which they appear to me' (265). Even the imagination was suspect; for it impelled belief in permanent bodies, and also in natural causes and effects. Yet causal reasoning *destroyed* the evidence for permanent bodies, and it also destroyed all evidence for genuine efficacy *in nature*, since examination showed that 'necessity' was only a feeling in our own minds (265 *sqq.*).

That was bad enough, but worse was to follow. We could not, without grave peril, accept 'every trivial suggestion of the fancy' (267) and should accept, instead, 'the general and more established principles' (*ibid.*) of the imaginative 'understanding'. Yet it would be absurd, and even inhuman, to confine ourselves to what was 'easy and natural' in the understanding since 'refined and elaborate' speculations were an inevitable part of human curiosity.

Therefore, said Hume, we should oscillate between refined and metaphysical moods, and moods that were gross and anti-metaphysical. We should permit 'nature' to settle the matter for us, blindly submitting to instinct and to custom when so disposed, and yet, when in the vein, yielding to speculative curiosity and the charms of refined reasoning. Let us hold that fire burns when it is natural to believe so. When, as for some minds, it is natural to examine the evidence for any such belief, let us follow this other inclination of our nature. Hence Hume's philosophy (271).

Again, according to Hume, since we always did pass beyond the ordinary routine of life, in some at least of our thoughts, the choice lay between philosophy and superstition; and the

natural folly of philosophy, in *some* minds, was less dangerous than the natural folly of superstition in *any* mind. To be sure, men of the world, especially in England, were not prone to yield to the imaginative folly called philosophy; and even philosophers might be the better of 'a share' of their common sense. Yet if philosophy learned to renounce 'hypotheses' (as Newtonian science had professed to do) and if human nature were studied experimentally, perhaps a 'satisfactory' philosophy of human nature might arise capable of 'standing the test of the most critical examination' (272).

This dream of a 'satisfactory' experimental philosophy of human nature, to be advanced, if not securely established, in the rest of the *Treatise*, was, in a sense, curious; for Hume remained a complete Pyrrhonian regarding all *ultimate* principles. 'The conduct of a man', he said (273), 'who studies philosophy in this careless manner' [i.e. only when the man's curiosity took hold on him] 'is more truly sceptical than that of one who, feeling in himself an inclination to it, is yet so overwhelm'd with doubts and scruples, as totally to reject it. A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction; and will never refuse any innocent satisfaction, which offers itself, upon account of either of them'. The true sceptic might *say* ''tis evident, 'tis undeniable' and the like, but only in the heat of argument (274). Therefore ultimate and imperturbable *intellectual* 'satisfaction' was out of the question. On the other hand, Hume seems to have thought that the 'mitigated' satisfaction attaching to Newtonian physics, or to what was accepted as proof in the law courts, might very well be within the compass of his philosophy of human nature; and it was his intention to help to establish precisely such a philosophy. There would be an element of doubt, he affirmed, if we asked improperly metaphysical questions (although in some moods we were bound to ask them) such as whether we could *demonstrate* that Caesar existed, or that Sicily was an island; but we might establish politics, ethics, criticism and other such sciences upon evidence quite as plain as the proverbial pikestaff. And thus, as the *Enquiry* said, 'We must submit to this fatigue [of metaphysics] in order to live at ease ever after' (E. 12).

Before taking leave of the first Book of Hume's *Treatise* we should glance at the Pyrrhonian tradition in philosophy in the form in which it had come down to Hume's age. The logic of Hume's scepticism, indeed, may have been a development of

the sensationalistic parts of Locke, or again, may be represented (as by Reid) as implicit in the fundamental assumptions of Cartesianism (whether or not Reid was right in tracing the root of the matter to the *single* Cartesian doctrine of representative perception). But if Hume had not written there would have been Bayle; and Bayle's followers, such as the Marquis d'Argens,[1] would have found missiles in Locke. Again, if Bayle had not written there would have been Montaigne;[2] and both Bayle and Montaigne quoted freely from the sceptics of antiquity, including such works as Cicero's *Academic Questions* which, pretty certainly, had been part of Hume's early studies in that author.

In the *Academic Questions* Hume must have heard much about Philo the sceptic (I. iv; II. iv; II. vi; II. xxi), of Socratic humanism (I. iv) and the alleged 'Socratic doubt' (II. v), of the way in which 'Socrates, Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles and nearly all the ancients asserted that nothing could be ascertained or perceived or known for certain; that the senses of men were narrow, man's mind feeble, the course of his life brief; that truth, as Democritus said, was sunk in the depths, and that all depended on opinion and established custom' (I. xii); that 'the mind itself was the source of sensations and itself was sense' (II. x); that Cicero, speaking as an 'opinator' not as a 'sapiens', assented perforce from the violence of impressions (II. xx); that Metrodorus of Chios had maintained, 'I deny that we know whether we know anything or whether we know nothing. I say that we do not even know what is ignorance and what knowledge; that we have no knowledge whether anything exists or whether nothing does' (II. xxiii); that even Carneades had admitted that man might *know* nothing, and yet be guided by opinion (II. xxiv) or by probability (II. xxiv); and that Clitomachus had written four books on the subject of withholding assent, his thesis being that man, having a body and a mind, was influenced by his

[1] See his 'Le solitaire philosophe ou Mémoirs de M. le M de Mirmon' (Amsterdam, 1736) and 'La philosophie du bon sens ou réflexions philosophiques sur l'incertitude des connaissances humaines a l'usage des cavaliers et du beau sexe' (Londres, 1737). A translation called *The Impartial Philosopher, or The Philosophy of Common Sense*, from 'the last edition', was published in London in 1749. (D'Argens later collaborated with Frederick the Great in producing an abridgement of Bayle's *Dictionary*.)

[2] Treated as a typical Pyrrhonist in the *Port Royal Logic*, Discourse I.

intellect and senses, so that many things appeared to him to be true, although they lacked any infallible criterion of truth—'insignis illa et propria percipiendi nota'—and consequently that the wise man did not assent to these things 'because it is possible that something false may exist of the same kind as this true thing' (II. xxxi).

Montaigne's debt to Cicero was apparent. The 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond', in particular, abounded with quotations from the *Academic Questions*, the *De Natura Deorum*, and the *Tusculan Disputations*; and although Montaigne's direct influence upon Hume may be doubtful, his influence upon Bayle is indisputable. Some quotations, all from the Apologie [1], are therefore appropriate here:

'The profession of the Pyrrhonians is ever to waver, to doubt and to inquire; never to be assured of any thing.' 'Take the best and strongest side, it shall never be so sure but you shall have occasion to defend the same, to close and combat a hundred and a hundred sides. Is it not better to keep out of this confusion?' 'Their sacramental word is ἐπέχω; which is as much as to say as I hold and stir not. . . . Whosoever shall imagine a perpetual confession of ignorance, and a judgment upright and without staggering to what occasion soever may chance, that man conceives the true Pyrrhonisme. I expound this fantazy as plaine as I can, because many may deeme it hard to be conceived.' (Quoting Cicero) 'Ut potero, explicabo: nec tamen, ut Pythius Apollo certa ut sunt et fixa quae dixero; sed ut homunculus, probabilia conjectura sequens' (i.e. the more moderate 'academic' as opposed to the extreme Pyrrhonian attitude).[2] 'Thou seest but the order and policie of this little cell wherein thou art placed. The question is, whether thou seest it.' 'For us to go according to Nature, is but to follow according to our understanding, as far as it can follow, and as much as we can perceive in it.' (Of the dogmatists) 'They must tell me if what I think I feel, I feel the same in effect: and if I feel it, then let them tell me wherefore I feel it, and how and what. Let them tell me the name, the beginning, the tennons and the abuttings of heat and of cold, with the qualities of him that is agent, or of the patient: or let them quit me their profession, which is neither to admit nor approve any thing but by way of reason. It is their touchstone to try all kinds of essayes. But surely it is

[1] In Florio's translation.

[2] Cf. *Port Royal Logic*, Discourse I—a discussion to which Hume afterwards referred (G. II. 387)—and Crousaz, *New Treatise*, II, 121: 'In vain did too light a Tincture of the Sciences, and too great a Precipitation in them, make *Cicero* take the Part of this Uncertainty: He often returned to himself, and the Voice of Nature, and owned some Truths were irresistible.'

a touchstone full of falsehood, errors, imperfection and weaknesse; which way can we better make triall of it than by itselfe?' (Of the differences between Academics and Pyrrhonians) 'The Pyrrhonian's advise is more hardy, and therewithall more likely. For this Academicall inclination, and this propension to one rather than another proposition, what else is it than a recognition of some more apparent truth in this than in that.' 'Whosoever can force me to contradict my senses hath me fast by the throate, and cannot make me recoyle one foote backward. The senses are the beginning and end of humane knowledge.'

In Bayle's *Dictionary* Hume might have read (Art. Aristote, Rem. H) that, as Suidas had said, all philosophers 'doivent tremper leur plume dans le bon sens', and that dialectic tended to become self-destructive (e.g. Art. Chrysippe, Rem. Q, quoting Cicero De Orat., II. xxxviii: 'Dialectici ad extremum ipsi se compungunt suis acuminibus, & multa quaerendo reperiunt non modo ea quae jam non possint ipsi dissolvere, sed etiam quibus ante exorsa & potius detexta prope retexantur'), that reason (Art. Hipparchia, Rem. D) had been given us 'pour nous adresser en bon chemin; mais c'est un instrument vague, voltigeant, souple, et qu'on tourne de toutes manières comme une girouette'. He would also have found several discussions of the traditional question whether a consistent Pyrrhonian ought to get out of the way of a chariot in full career, the said Pyrrhonian having no good reason for asserting that collisions with racing chariots were dangerous (e.g. Art. Lacyde, Rem. F and Art. Pyrrhon., Rem. D).

In particular, there was little in the entire Art. Pyrrhon. that (as we must suppose) did not influence Hume; and a *coup d'œil* over that celebrated article seems necessary for our purposes here.

In the body of the article it was stated that 'l'art de disputer sur toutes choses, sans prendre jamais d'autre parti que de suspendre son jugement s'appelle le *Pyrrhonisme*; c'est son titre le plus commun'.

In Rem. A, Bayle quoted Aulus Gellius to the effect that the Academics denied that anything could be known as it seemed to be known, the Pyrrhonians that anything could even *seem* to be true. He said, however, that the doubts of both of them presupposed that truth might conceivably be ascertained 'On les a nommez Sceptiques, Zetetiques, Ephectiques, Aporetiques, c'est a dire *examinateurs, inquisiteurs, suspendans, doutans*. Tout cela montre qu'ils supposoient qu'il étoit

possible de trouver la vérité, & qu'ils ne décidoient pas qu'elle étoit incompréhensible '.[1]

In Rem. B, Bayle said that very few physicists were not convinced ' que la Nature est un abîme impénétrable ', but that, in civil life, speculative doubts were of little practical moment; that in general the grace of God, the force of education, ignorance and ' le penchant naturel à décider ' opposed Pyrrhonism; but that religion sought certainty, with the result that ecclesiastics were its obdurate enemies.

Bayle proceeded to narrate an imaginary conversation between two abbés when the first asserted that Arcesilaus would be a greater terror to modern theologians (if he returned) than to the ancient dogmatists. The abbé's reasons were (*a*) that Gassendi had revived the forgotten lore of Sextus Empiricus, and (*b*) that the Cartesians had put the finishing touches to the affair. For they asserted, regarding secondary qualities, that all that a man could say was ' I feel hot ' when there is fire, and not that the fire is hot as it seems to be. If, however, bodies may seem hot without being so, why may they not seem extended or in motion without being so? Accordingly, we might have all our sensations as at present if there were no bodies.

Bayle likewise argued that the Cartesian doctrine of continual creation implied that the future need not resemble the past; for new types of substances might be created.

In Rem. C he tried a new line of argument, quoting from La Mothe Le Vayer (*De la vertu des paiens*) and from ' L'abbé Foucher sur la philosophie des Academiciens '. Reason's discomfiture, it was now alleged, was faith's opportunity. Sextus Empiricus had shown that Pyrrhonism was the extreme height of subtlety attainable by the human mind. Pyrrhonism, however, refuted itself by proving that it was *certain* that we ought always to doubt—or that we should doubt whether we should always doubt. The more subtle it became, therefore, the more manifestly reason destroyed itself; and the proper humility described by Pascal or by Calvin was the obvious moral.

In Rem. D we read[2] that Antigonus stated that Pyrrho had to be constantly guarded by his friends, since he would

[1] ' *Scepticks* or *Scrupulists* ', Shaftesbury, III, 109. Cf. Baxter's distinction between the ' examining Academist ' and the ' doubting Sceptic ' (II, 355 n.), where the usual rôles were perhaps reversed.

[2] In a quotation from Le Vayer.

not get out of the way of a chariot, etc.; but that Aenesidemus, a better authority, told a different story. And why shouldn't Pyrrho get *out* of the way of chariots as well as *into* their way? In Rem. F he suggested that it was a good thing to reason magisterially 'selon la passion qui est de tour'. So why try to be consistent on different days?

Plainly, Hume's *Treatise* entered thoroughly into the spirit of this tradition. He was an 'examinateur' and an 'inquisiteur' *when he reflected*; and, so long as the '*intense* view' of philosophy was present to him, he doubted or suspended judgment (268). That was what he *meant* by scepticism, viz. a doubt *based upon intellectual difficulties*. His considered opinion was that the more profoundly he examined, the less he was disposed to assert that indefectible certainty, or even rational probability, was anywhere to be found.

On the other hand, he held, quite consistently, that unless all human conviction should be regarded as the consequence of rational demonstration, there was no reason why unreflective people, and reflective philosophers too, *when they were not reflecting*, should not believe in a sensitive, non-cogitative way. Such sensitive belief was due, either to irrational 'nature' and instinct, or to irrational 'second nature' or custom. Again, in matters of action, since it was absurd to say that men acted only when they had scientifically demonstrated their expectations, there was no reason why sensitive belief should not influence Pyrrhonians as well as other people. The trouble about Pyrrho and the advancing chariot (if there had been trouble) was that Pyrrho stopped to reflect. As a 'natural' man he would have avoided the chariot very briskly; and in crude, alogical fact he would have run no risk of being mangled.

Consequently, there was no conflict of any kind between Hume's scepticism and his 'naturalism'. According to Hume, it was 'natural' for some men to reflect at some times, and also natural for every one to 'judge' and 'believe' in a sensitive way for most, at least, of his life. If a man reflected *hard* he became sceptical; and the reflective part of his nature might conflict with the conclusions of his sensitive beliefs, or at least unsettle them. If so, the rest of the man's nature rose up and restored the balance. If a man did not reflect, or employed his reason at the behest of his sensitive nature only, he thought and acted in an ultimately 'non-cogitative' way. While agreeing with much in Mr. Kemp Smith's important

articles on 'The Naturalism of Hume',[1] I cannot agree with Mr. Smith's 'general conclusion' that 'the thorough subordination of reason to feeling and instinct' was 'the determining factor in Hume's philosophy'.[2] Whatever may have been the lesson of Hume's ethics, the thesis of Hume's general philosophy was simply that 'reason' took its place among other natural forces. The fact that it could discern its own unintelligibility, if it was sufficiently acute, had, in Hume's opinion, no bearing on the question at all.

Hume's argument in the concluding Section of the *Enquiry* showed broad similarities to the argument of the *Treatise*, although, with some loss of consistency, he inclined towards the 'mitigated scepticism' of the academic sceptics and no longer aspired to being the truest Pyrrhonian of them all (273). Asking 'What is a sceptic' (E. 149) he immediately replied by asking another question, viz. 'How far is it possible to push these philosophical principles of doubt and uncertainty?' He then dismissed Cartesian or '*antecedent* doubt', but went on to say that 'the profounder and more philosophical sceptics will always triumph' when, '*consequent* to science and inquiry' (E. 150), they proceeded to show that our instinctive belief in permanent physical bodies had no rational foundation. Similarly, the troubles concerning infinite divisibility, unless saved by some improved theory of 'abstract ideas', would destroy the best established of the abstract sciences; and the theoretical foundations of the 'moral' sciences were also faulty. It was 'action and employment, and the occupations of common life' (E. 159), not reasoning, that allayed philosophical scruples concerning these matters. A Pyrrhonian 'must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish were his principles universally and steadily to prevail' (E. 160). (On Humian principles this statement would be correct only if the Pyrrhonian declined to *act* when his judgment was in suspense.)

Hume therefore suggested that 'a small tincture of Pyrrhonism' might usefully abate the pride of the learned (E. 161); and that although 'nothing can be more serviceable than to be once thoroughly convinced of the force of the Pyrrhonian doubt' (E. 162) a '*mitigated* scepticism or *academical* philosophy' might be more 'durable and useful' because it would correct the 'undistinguished doubts' of '*excessive*' scepticism 'by common sense and reflection'. This compromise, like

[1] *Mind*, N.S., Vol. XIV, Nos. 54 and 55. [2] No. 54, p. 150.

most of its kind, was only a decision, not an argument; and Hume's well-known conclusion that volumes of divinity and of school metaphysics should be 'committed to the flames', and that libraries should be stocked only with works on mathematics and on experimental reasoning—including, as one must suppose, the 'particular' reasonings of history (E. 164) as well as the 'general' reasonings of politics and natural philosophy (E. 165)—could be justified only on the ground that school metaphysics and school divinity[1] dealt with subjects that necessarily transcended the competence of human faculty.

This final aspect of the question was naturally prominent in the discussion of scepticism in Hume's *Dialogues*, as we shall see when we come to examine that work. Here, however, it may be proper to quote a footnote in the *Dialogues* (G. II, 459) where Hume, speaking *in propria persona* and not as an interlocutor, said: 'It seems evident that the dispute between the Sceptics and Dogmatists is entirely verbal, or at least regards only the degrees of doubt and assurance, which we ought to indulge with regard to all reasoning. And such disputes are commonly, at the bottom, verbal, and admit not of any precise determination. No philosophical Dogmatist denies that there are difficulties both with regard to the senses and to all science; and that these difficulties are, in a regular, logical method, absolutely insolveable. No Sceptic denies that we lie under an absolute necessity, notwithstanding these difficulties, of thinking, and believing, and reasoning with regard to all kind of subjects, and even of frequently assenting with confidence and security. The only difference, then, between these sects, if they merit that name, is, that the Sceptic, from habit, caprice, or inclination, insists most on the difficulties; the Dogmatist, for like reasons, on the necessity.'

[1] Cf. Hobbes, III, 672: 'These metaphysics which are mingled with the Scripture, to make school divinity.'

CHAPTER VII

THE PASSIONS

HAVING, as he believed, explained and established the experimental method in philosophy, Hume proceeded to apply the method to human nature, and selected, in the remainder of the *Treatise*, the springs of conduct (i.e. the passions) and ethics, humanistically interpreted, as the field for deploying the method. In his opinion, the fact that insoluble philosophical difficulties might ultimately be discovered in *all* the sciences, did not matter in any way. As he later said in his *Dissertation on the Passions* (G. IV. 166): 'I pretend not to have here exhausted this subject. It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy.'

The *Dissertation* was a short résumé, largely consisting of extracts given verbatim, of the corresponding part of the *Treatise*; and the process of condensation had squeezed the life out of it. The *Treatise*, on the other hand, was full of vitality in its account of the passions. A part of its interest, of course, was due to the subtlety and insight of many of Hume's special observations upon men and manners. He was a keen observer, as well as a deft psychologist. Certain portions of his treatment, again, retained the attention of subsequent philosophers, even if these philosophers had little interest in the rest of it, or, for that matter, in Hume (this holds pre-eminently of Hume's analysis of the human will, its 'slavery' to the passions and more generally in Hobbes's phrase (iii. 38), its relation to 'the Interiour Beginnings of Voluntary Motions, commonly called the Passions'). For Hume himself, however, the governing question was highly abstruse and technical. He directed all his art to showing that his analysis of the passions was a triumphant vindication of the soundness of his general philosophical method, and a corroboration of his account of the understanding.

He was concerned, he said, with the widest uniformities in human nature (447 *sq.*). Therefore he avoided minutiae (*ibid.*) and the more complicated 'rebounds' of the passions (365). Like a 'skilful naturalist' he used the principle of parsimony (282), and he looked for 'some general quality that naturally operates on the mind' (281), not for a motley throng of 'original' instincts (like the 'moral sense' school). And essentially he relied upon his grand discovery of the attraction, or association, of ideas in the imagination, and of passions in the soul. The smooth transitions of this kind (whether of ideas (283), emotional impressions (*ibid.*) or dispositions), together with the solidity and enhanced vivacity due to the mingling and to the mutual support shown by the different types of smooth transition, were his fundamental theme. Through association, he asserted, our more durable sentiments, and the complexities of most of our emotions, were generated from a comparatively small number of ultimate human feelings; and the parallel between the passions and the understanding was far too striking to be overlooked. 'What is principally remarkable in this whole affair', he said, 'is the strong confirmation these phenomena give to the foregoing system concerning the understanding, and consequently to the present one concerning the passions; since these are analogous to each other' (319, cf. 360, 380, 427, 453). He was 'sure that this method of reasoning would be considered as certain, either in natural philosophy or common life' (370).

Hume began (275) with an account of the 'secondary' impressions of 'reflection' similar to the one he had formerly offered (7 *sq.*) In the first account he had said that such primary impressions of sensation as hunger and thirst, or (bodily) pleasure and pain generated what he later called the 'direct passions' of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which were impressions of reflection; and he indicated (8) that the process might lead to greater and still greater complications of the same kind. In the present account, he said that there must be *original* impressions appearing in the soul 'without any introduction' (275), although depending upon 'natural and physical causes', such as a fit of the gout (276) which turned up, to all appearance originally, 'in the soul or in the body, whichever you please to call it', and that the secondary or reflective impressions of grief, hope and fear were introduced by the 'original impression'. The point was that the 'copy' or 'idea' of pleasure or pain (8) induced new emotions which,

although derived or introduced in a way of which we might be entirely conscious, were nevertheless genuine *impressions*, since they were ' original facts and realities compleat in themselves and implying no reference ' beyond themselves (458, cf. 415). Unlike ideas, they were not ' copies ', although they were occasioned by a ' copy ' of pleasure or pain ; and they were non-representative.

It is evident that these amazingly brief explanations were more than a little enigmatic. If it was intelligible to say that an impression of sensation was ' original ' because it appeared ' without introduction ', although it had a natural or physical ' cause ', it was at least verbally inconsistent to call an impression of reflection ' secondary ' and *also* ' original '. The ' introduction ' was surely but partial. Again the bankruptcy of the theory that what was *derived* from impressions necessarily ' copied ' impressions, and so had its representative function explained, was quite absurdly apparent, when the impressions of reflection *were* said to be derived but *not* representative.

As we shall see, Hume's account of the impressions of reflection, and his virtual restriction of them to the passions in his accounts of their derivation, were borrowed from Hutcheson. It was a pity, however, that Hume did not (as Hutcheson did to some extent [1]) explain the relation of his ' impressions of reflection ' to what Locke had designated by that term. For Locke's sense was the familiar one both to Hume's contemporaries and to students of Hume at the present day; and it was principally in Locke's sense that Hume had spoken of the ' impression of necessity ' in his account of causation.

Locke believed in an inner mental zone composed (*a*) of the ' operations of the mind ' in willing and in perceiving, (*b*) of the passions and emotions (II. i. § 4). This inner zone, he maintained, was readily distinguishable from sense-impressions (whether or not these latter ' objects ' might, in a wider sense, be also ' mental '). He further believed that the inner zone was visible to introspection when any one chose to notice it (II. vi. and II. ix. § 1) ; and he called it ' reflective '—a better term would have been ' reflexive '—because it turned inward upon our mental acts. Hume, on the other hand, although he sometimes allowed himself to speak of the ' operations ' and ' internal impressions ' of the mind (e.g. 165), obviously did not believe in the introspective visibility of any such inner mental zone. He never supposed that one part of the mental bundle

[1] Tr. III, Preface, p. xi.

was engaged in inspecting either itself or some other part of the bundle. On the contrary, he regarded all the 'objects' which comprised the 'bundle' as mere presented visibilities. But his account of 'impressions of reflection' would have gained greatly in clearness had he discussed the meaning of his terms more fully.

In his 'division of the subject' Hume further explained that the passions should be subdivided into the calm and the violent, on the one hand, and into the direct and indirect, upon the other. The first of these subdivisions, he said, was inexact, 'vulgar and specious' (276), although convenient. The second was more important, and struck the keynote of his subsequent discussion. In terms of this subdivision, the correct logical order (which I shall follow in the present exposition) would have been to examine the direct passions first, and the indirect passions subsequently: (Hume did in fact choose this order in the *Dissertation*, although not in the *Treatise*).

Examining the direct passions (439, cf. 437) Hume distinguished between certain 'perfectly unaccountable' natural impulses, such as hunger, lust or revenge, which *produced* good and evil (i.e. pain and pleasure) and the passions that *arose* immediately *from* pain or pleasure (i.e. (cf. 277) grief and joy, fear and hope, aversion and desire). This admission of ultimate natural appetites [1] seems peculiar on the part of a philosopher who was anxious to exploit the resources of association in opposition to a facile multiplicity of instincts, and Green (G. II. 33) considered it 'curiously cool', on the ground that a philosopher so hedonistic as Hume should never have accepted a principle that refuted hedonism in at least one essential particular. The truth seems to be, however, that these unaccountable impulses did not interest Hume. He formally included them among the 'direct passions' and that was all. Even in his discussions of 'self-love' in the ethical part of his theory where (e.g. E. 281) an 'original propensity' [2] was admitted as a 'basis', it is doubtful whether Hume paid sufficient attention to Butler's cardinal distinction between 'particular appetites and passions towards external things themselves' and 'the pleasure arising from them' (Sermon XI); and the point is surprising since Hume's studies in

[1] Which Hume, very curiously, ranked along with 'calm' passions 'of the same kind' (417 *sq.*), such as 'calm' benevolence or (in reality) *principles* of conduct. [2] i.e. a 'calm' principle as in 417 *sq.*

Cicero should have called his attention to the fundamental difference between the Epicurean psychology of 'voluptas' (see *De Finibus*, I. ix) and the Stoic doctrine of 'quod esset natura appetendum' (see *De Finibus*, II. ii). Hume was very likely correct in believing that *desire* and *aversion* imply anticipation of pleasure or pain; but for that very reason the *appetites* presupposed by desire and aversion do not imply such anticipations.

Even if it has to be conceded, however, that Hume's perspicacity was at fault in this matter, it is quite plain what his procedure was in his account of the direct passions. Having formally included the 'unaccountable' natural impulses, he busied himself exclusively with joy, desire, hope and their opposites, i.e. with those passions which arose from some concern about pleasure and pain (mostly in prospect); and he was interested in these direct passions, not on their own account, but on account of the use he could make of them in constructing a 'system of the passions'. Indeed he did little more than define and enumerate the direct passions (439) in the single section he devoted to them; although, since hope differs from joy because of its uncertainty, he took occasion to offer a few comments upon the influence of uncertainty, together with the way in which our moods may be mixed and our minds divided.

Hume's governing interest, however, was in the 'indirect passions' and he set out incontinently to develop a highly complicated system of emotional association, with a view to explaining the genesis of our relatively stable and thoroughly complex sentiments. He began with what he called 'pride and humility'.

The 'object' of pride, he said (277), was self; but pride in ourselves was excited only when something not ourselves 'turns our view' (278) to ourselves. The stimulus to pride, he therefore argued, must lie in some distinctive 'quality' of the 'cause' that excited the pride.

These preliminaries accomplished, Hume said that it would be absurd to expect a separate natural instinct for each of the excitants of pride—so many of these being capricious and so many artificial—and proceeded to hunt for some general pride-producing quality in human nature. Men in all ages, he thought (281), had taken pride pretty much in the same things, and the uniform, or, in that sense (280), the 'natural' explanation was to be found in a double set of associations or

'attractions' (289), where each set supported the other. As he put the point tersely (288), 'anything, that gives a pleasant sensation, and is related to self, excites the passion of pride, which is also agreeable and has self for object'. In other words, Hume's theory was that we are proud of what we associate *in idea* with ourselves if the quality so associated is a pleasure, distinct from the pleasure of pride, but resembling that prideful pleasure, and associated with it by an association *of impressions*. The latter type of association, he said, occurred only by resemblance, and was, indeed, the ultimate tendency of similar emotions to blend or fuse together. 'Grief and disappointment give rise to anger, anger to envy, envy to malice, and malice to grief again, till the whole circle be compleated. In like manner our temper, when elevated with joy, naturally throws itself into love, generosity, pity, courage, pride, and the other resembling affections' (283). (This explanation explained rather too much, since it made the *single* association of resembling impressions do the work which, according to Hume's theory, required a *double* association of impressions and of ideas—a theory much subtler than Hume's quotation from Addison [1] suggested.)

It soon appeared, however, that these explanations (in Hume's view) were much too general and needed a more delicate definition and limitation. He therefore pointed out that a very *close* 'relation' to self was implied in pride (291); that this relation must in some way be peculiar to ourselves or to our immediate circle (*ibid.*); that it must be obvious to others besides ourselves (292); that it must be durable, not fleeting (293, cf. 302); and that it was greatly influenced by customary opinion—here called (293) a 'general rule'—so much so, indeed, that it was easy to be proud from hearsay causes without being contented (294).

These formal assertions, Hume argued, could be corroborated by an analysis of the principal qualities of which men were proud; for resembling *pleasures* entered into them all. Thus (as he said) on *any* theory of ethics, virtue yielded a delight which fitted it to be an object of pride, just as shame, on any theory, was an uneasiness that generated humility. (Humility was the opposite of pride throughout Hume's discussion.) 'To approve of a character', Hume further maintained (296), 'is to feel an original delight upon its appearance'; and the same, in principle, was true of wit or good humour where the

[1] (284) 'The Spectator', No. 412.

approval was as much aesthetic as moral. In the same vein he argued that 'beauty is such an order and construction of parts, as either by the primary constitution of our nature, by custom or by caprice, is fitted to give a pleasure and satisfaction to the soul' (299); and that, even if the pleasure-theory of pride were apparently disputable in such cases, it became fully established when we remembered that men took pride in 'whatever in themselves is either useful, beautiful or *surprising* (300, cf. 311); for there could be nothing except the *pleasure* of surprise that could lead us to value it.

This argument was succeeded by sections on 'external advantages and disadvantages', on property and riches (analysing (314) the power of procuring the pleasures and conveniences of life) and on 'the love of fame' (which was traced primarily to 'sympathy'). The argument as a whole was rounded off with an account of the pride and humility of animals. 'The very port and gait of a swan, or turkey, or peacock show the high idea he has entertained of himself and his contempt of all others' (326).

It seems best to postpone any comments on this 'system' until we have discussed Hume's account of love and of hatred which he held to be precisely parallel to pride and humility. At this point, however, we may conveniently raise the question whether what Hume called 'pride' was pride at all.

According to Hume (277), pride and humility were 'simple and uniform impressions', indefinable but very well known to everybody; and he frequently, as in the instances of the swan and the peacock, identified 'pride' with 'vanity', although (E. 314 n.) he complained of 'a great confusion in Rochefoucauld' on this very matter. In the main, however, he described what he meant by 'pride' most accurately when he called it 'self-value' (G. IV. 161, cf. E. 265). 'The most rigid morality', he said (298), 'allows us to receive a pleasure from reflecting on a generous action.' But even a lax morality might jib at a *vanity* thus arising.

When this point is appreciated, however, it surely becomes doubtful whether 'pride' (i.e. self-esteem, self-approval, or self-value) could properly be described as a 'simple and uniform' passion. How could it be *simple* when it was hedged about and qualified by so many *essential* limitations (e.g. the sympathetic support of others)? Indeed, such 'pride' would not seem to be *a* passion, but rather, to use modern psychological terminology, a system or organization of passions in a

'sentiment'. Many philosophers, again, would maintain that questions of *value*, as opposed to mere liking or pleasure, are not, or at least are not *simply*, emotional questions at all. In this matter, as we shall see, Hume would have entered a very strong *caveat*; but even Hume admitted that 'approval' was a very special type of 'pleasure', having highly peculiar conditions and implications.

Love and hatred, the other 'indirect passions' that Hume elaborately anatomized, were, he said, precisely parallel to pride and humility, the difference being simply that the former had other people for their 'objects' while the latter were directed upon the self (e.g. 332).

This principle (which had the important consequence of putting self-regard, and regard for others, upon an equality) seems correctly to describe the relations between self-esteem and esteem for others, but to be a highly dubious description of the relations between vanity and tender emotion. Yet Hume, in his initial explanations (329), equated the term 'love' with 'tender emotion' (explaining (*ibid.*) that self-love, and (331) the so-called 'love of abstractions' were not strictly 'love' at all) although (with a qualification later to be mentioned) he treated love and/or esteem as equivalent.

Indeed, just as Hume normally thought of self-respect when he spoke of 'pride', so he normally thought of respect and admiration for others when he spoke of 'love'. Tender emotion, for example, can surely be fleeting and whimsical (cf. 350); but Hume insisted, again and again, that 'love' responded to durable qualities only (e.g. 335, 349, 353). Yet he also retracted certain parts of this theory in a way that was scarcely explicable unless the terms of it were ambiguous. For he did not *invariably* hold either that *valuable* qualities were essential to love, or that we always admired in others precisely what we admired in ourselves.

Thus he said that 'when we have contracted a habitude and intimacy with any person, tho' in frequenting his company we have not been able to discover any very valuable quality, of which he is possessed; yet we cannot forbear preferring him to strangers, of whose superior merit we are fully convinced' (352). (Had Hume pursued the question, as Hutcheson did,[1] he might have seen that it cut very deep, and showed that a father could, and should, love a disreputable son, and that a

[1] Tr. II, pp. 218 *sqq.* Cf. Shaftesbury, II, 241: 'Tell me, I beseech you, is it to those only who are *deserving* that we shou'd do good?'

very general (and also the highest) human charity goes out to sinners and down-and-outs). Again Hume said (392) that generosity and good nature had ' a peculiar aptitude to produce love in others, but not so great a tendency to excite pride in ourselves '.

It is true, however, that Hume did explain that respect and contempt were more complicated than simple love and hatred, on the ground that ' there is a mixture of pride in contempt, and of humility in respect ' (390, although, since we were much more prone to pride than to humility (*ibid.*, cf. 354 *sq.*), there was much more pride in contempt than humility in respect).[1] This qualification was said to be the result of a ' tacit comparison ' (390).

Hume's insistence on the influence of comparison on our sentiments was recurrent, and was sufficiently important in itself to deserve separate discussion. Since a digression concerning it seems somewhere to be necessary, it may be convenient to discuss it now along with a still more important question that frequently recurred in Hume's pages, i.e. his doctrine of ' sympathy '.

Hume maintained that ' every thing in this world is judg'd of by comparison ' (323) and that ' comparison is in every case a sure method of augmenting our esteem of any thing ' (315 *sq.*). He also said (294) that ' custom and practice have settled the just value of every thing '. Such estimates, he affirmed, were non-rational. ' So little are men govern'd by reason in their sentiments and opinions ', he said (372), ' that they always judge more of objects by comparison than from their intrinsic worth and value.' The tendency so to judge, he further argued, was an original property of the soul, and had the inevitability of certain common illusions of the senses (such as the same water seeming both hot and cold to hands of different temperature) where the fraud was invincible (372 *sq.*). Indeed, Hume suggested that a common norm, by tacit reference to which such estimates were habitually made, was

[1] A rather casual footnote (608 n.) was more profound. ' Love and esteem ', Hume there said, ' are at the bottom the same passions, and arise from like causes. The qualities, that produce both, are agreeable and give pleasure. But where this pleasure is severe and serious ; or where its object is great, and makes a strong impression ; or where it produces any degree of humility and awe ; In all these cases, the passion, which arises from the pleasure, is more properly denominated esteem than love. Benevolence attends both : But is connected with love in a more eminent degree.'

'an impression which secretly attends every idea' (375), although, it would seem, only in cases in which the 'objects' compared were near enough, in range or position, to invite an obvious comparison (370, 377, 393). He even said (392) that 'objects always produce by *comparison* a sensation directly contrary to their *original* one'.

(It was not easy to hold all these things together. If objects *had* 'an intrinsic worth and value', if they had 'shining' as opposed to 'trivial' qualities (304, cf. 449), Hume's subjective and associative theory of esteem would have been meaningless. And the very idea of a 'secret impression' should have been anathema to a sound phenomenalist.)

'Sympathy' in this part of Hume's theory was even more important than comparison, for besides being one of the chief *general* propensities of human nature, it was said to be second only to association itself in extricating the philosophy of the passions from a jungle of special instincts (e.g. 369).

Hume regarded sympathy as our propensity to receive by communication the inclinations and sentiments of others (316). 'The human mind, he said in one of his essays' (G. III. 248), 'is of a very imitative nature;[1] nor is it possible for any set of men to converse often together, without acquiring a similitude of manners, and communicating to each other their vices as well as virtues. The propensity to company and society is strong in all rational creatures; and the same disposition, which gives us this propensity, makes us enter deeply into each other's sentiments,[2] and causes like passions to run, as it were by contagion, through the whole club or knot of companions.' It arose, he said, because the countenance and conversation of other men excited an idea of their affections, which idea presently became an impression (317, cf. 354); and we divined the sentiments of others by a sort of *presensation*[3] (332), although always in terms of our own immediate experience. Indeed, although sympathy was imaginative (386, cf. 370 and 427)—for we might easily pity others who did not pity themselves—it was always far more than a *mere* idea, because it was suffused with the vivacity of an impression.[4]

Since these principles would apply, on the face of them, to a lively idea of some one else's toothache (which nevertheless is scarcely comparable to the sufferer's experience), it is regrettable that Hume did not introduce certain 'limitations' into

[1] Cf. 398.
[2] Cf. 319.
[3] Shaftesbury's phrase, II, 307.
[4] 320, cf. 358.

this part of his system; and the same comment might be made upon his generous invitation to take 'a general survey of the universe' (like Shaftesbury [1]) 'and observe the force of sympathy thro' the whole animal creation' (363). (For this gregariousness, or 'general desire of company' is not incompatible, in that semi-gregarious animal which is man, with an intense desire for privacy and even for prolonged solitude.) On the other hand, Hume's insistence upon the disinterestedness of sympathy was at least very important. In sympathy, he said, our attention was fixed altogether upon the other party, not at all upon ourselves (340); and the *disinterestedness* which accompanied this sympathetic extroversion of the attention was regarded by Hume as something wholly indisputable, and illustrated by the deference we paid to the dead, or to prisoners of war of high rank, or to the opulent in general company where no personal advantage could conceivably be expected even by the greediest (361). These simple facts, Hume thought (*ibid.*), ruined the 'selfish theory'. As he later said in his History (ch. 22) 'a man wholly interested is as rare as one entirely endowed with the opposite quality' (cf. 487).

Let us return, however, to the 'anatomy' of love and hatred.

Hume endeavoured to confirm his general position by an elaborate series of experiments conducted in the Newtonian manner (332 *sqq.*) [2]; and he discovered that intricate special questions arose; for although he found that the double association of ideas and passions was always discernible, he also found that each associative train had individual and variable peculiarities. The imagination, he said, passed smoothly from faint to lively, but with difficulty in the opposite direction. Therefore it was more usual to pass from love to pride than from pride to love—for no idea was comparable to the idea of self in the constancy and intimacy of its presence (340). Again, although the direction (or, in modern phrase, the 'sense') of the association *of ideas* was from small to great, the association *of the passions* had normally the opposite 'sense' (343 *sq.*). The union of these associations, therefore, had scope for variety and also for a considerable internal contrariety and tension (338 *sqq.*).

Hume next pointed out that the intentional actions of other men aroused love or hatred, not simply because they were

[1] *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, Bk. I, Pt. ii, Sect. 1.

[2] Probably taking s'Gravesande for his model.

intentional, but primarily because the intention was evidence of a *durable* disposition (349); for deformity also aroused dislike, although it was certainly not intended. He then examined our love of our kindred and our esteem for the rich and powerful. (This was principally due, he thought, to our 'sympathy' with the rich man's joy, in his gardens, equipages, and apparel.) And so he came to the second main topic of this part of the discussion, viz. the 'compound affections which arise from the mixture of love and hatred with other emotions' (347). Here (366 *sqq.*) he began with a discussion of benevolence and anger.

In the first instance, he took benevolence to mean the *active* desire to benefit others (367, cf. 382) as opposed to the merely passive emotion of love (367); and he similarly interpreted anger as the desire to hurt and *not* as internal passive resentment. (The distinction was important, and therefore it was unfortunate that Hume contradicted himself, and it, when in one passage (387) he described benevolence as passive, not as active. His general view, in this place, however, was that active tendencies were *expressions* of the emotions (368) and were not the emotions themselves.)

Thereafter he made two statements, one of which was plainly false, the other too emphatic. The false statement (367) was that pride and humility (unlike love) 'rest in themselves' without directly producing any active tendencies. The too emphatic statement was that there was no *logical* connexion, but only an 'original' and 'inexplicable' conjunction, between (passive) love and (active) benevolence. Hume saw 'no contradiction in supposing a desire of producing misery annex'd to love, and of happiness to hatred'[1] (368). In support of this contention, it is true, he might have found (but did not look for) empirical evidence. There is often a tendency to tease and even to hurt those whom we love, as well as the more usual tendency to do them a kindness, and there is a very human desire to deflate the supposed self-confidence of those who are esteemed. On Hume's own principles, however, the connexion between love and benevolence was very far from being arbitrary. According to him, we took pleasure in the prosperity of others, and indeed 'loved' them on account of their splendid equipages and pleasant gardens. Granting, then, that we had a 'general appetite to

[1] Cf. Descartes, *Med.* VI, on hunger and the impulse to eat: 'je n'en pouvais rendre aucun raison sinon que la nature me l'enseignait de la sorte'.

good' (417), the proper direction of our activity was surely apparent. Indeed, if Nature had 'annexed' anger to love instead of to hate, we should be eternally distraught if we did not subdue 'Nature' by some resolute artifice.

Having supplemented his account of benevolence by a short examination of compassion or pity (368 *sqq.*), Hume went on to treat of malice and envy, first by themselves (372 *sqq.*), and secondly in their 'mixture' with benevolence and anger.

Sometimes (369 and perhaps 376) Hume described malice as a *passive* emotion taking delight in the suffering of others, and therefore as a sort of 'pity reverst' (375) analogous to the 'irregular appetites' of remorse or the way in which we might be ashamed of our own good spirits when we knew that a friend was miserable (376). Since appetites are active, not passive, these statements betrayed a certain confusion, and it is therefore not surprising that, on the next page, Hume defined malice as the 'unprovok'd desire of *producing* evil to another, in order to reap a pleasure from the comparison'. On the same page, he explained that envy was 'excited by some present enjoyment of another, which by comparison diminishes our idea of our own'.

It was in his account of the 'mixture' of these various 'passions', however, that Hume was most resourceful. The 'mixture', he confessed (381), 'seems at first sight to be contradictory to my system. For as pity is an uneasiness, and malice a joy, arising from the misery of others, pity shou'd naturally, as in all other cases, produce hatred; and malice love'. To meet the objection (with, it must be owned, a puzzling reference to the distinction between passive emotion and active appetites and desires (382), and a slip (*ibid.*) in which benevolence was said to be only *similar* to *itself*), Hume argued, firstly, that pity may mingle with benevolence, and malice with anger, because of their 'parallel direction' (384) since ''Tis not the present sensation or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the general bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end' (384 *sq.*); and secondly, in effect, that 'benevolence arises from a great degree of misery, or any degree strongly sympathiz'd with; hatred or contempt from a small degree, or one weakly sympathiz'd with' (387).

Hume's elaborate discussion of the 'indirect passions' gave him a sufficient opportunity for testing the resources of that 'experimental method' which he professed to follow so

faithfully. It seems necessary, therefore, to consider whether the method was technically successful—even at the cost of some repetition.

The method was Associationism, and Hume distinguished at least three types of association, viz. (*a*) the association of ideas, (*b*) the association, by resemblance, of similar passions, (*c*) the association of dispositions. (The last of these may perhaps include the surprising doctrine of the 'parallel direction' (381, 384, 394) and the 'general bent and tendency'.)

Ideas, Hume said (366), were 'endow'd with a kind of impenetrability' and could not mix. In other words, he defined their association (incorrectly but very firmly) as the clustering of psychical atoms. On the other hand, he maintained that the 'association' of impressions was non-atomic. 'Impressions and passions are susceptible of an entire union; and like colours, may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself, and contribute only to vary that uniform impression which arises from the whole' (*ibid.*).

Accordingly, Hume spoke of 'association' in two fundamentally distinct senses, viz. (*a*) the clustering of unmodified entities, and (*b*) a fusion where the constituents lost their former identities and became indistinguishable in the new total fact. It was surely misleading to call such different processes by the same name; and since what Hume set out to explain was the *apparent* simplicity and integrity of various *compound* passions, he necessarily relied upon fusion more than upon atomic association. Further, since, according to his theory, the association *of ideas* was always necessary (say in pride) *as well as* the fusion of impressions (of reflection), it was impossible that such fusion should be complete, if the *ideas* in question retained their 'impenetrability'. Again, Hume's third type of 'association' seems quite extravagant in terms of his own theory (however little he may have thought so). 'Custom', Hume said (422), 'has two *original* effects upon the mind, in bestowing a *facility* in the performance of any action or the conception of any object; and afterwards a *tendency* or *inclination* towards it.' The 'facility', however, was the only 'inexplicable' fact that he needed. The 'tendency' was but a 'hypothesis' to account, illegitimately, for the recurrent 'facility'.

Again, it should be remembered that passions are not wholly blind. We are always pleased *with* something; and if the emotional tone of *ideas* affected *their* association, in such a

way that pleasant ideas 'introduced' other pleasant ideas and shunned ideas that were painful, Hume's elaborate theory of the *double* association might readily be replaced by a theory of a simpler type.

And finally (as we have seen so frequently) Hume's careless and habitual equivocation between 'relation' and 'association' seriously impaired the accuracy of his 'method'.

He said, for example, that there was a 'close relation' in pride (291) because we took pride in what was *ours*. This 'relation', in any ordinary sense, was surely a connexion of fact, not a mere association; and granting that we take pride in things when we *imagine* them 'ours' (cf. 315 and especially 322), whether they are truly 'ours' or not, we at least *think* them 'ours', that is to say, attribute to them an objective connexion with ourselves. It was in this objective sense that Hume called relations 'close' and 'near' (291, 300, 340), described them as 'ties' (356 *sq.*, 378) and compared them to consanguinity (337 *sq.*, 355), which surely was a matter of fact. And the reader who is not convinced by these and other passages we formerly noticed in this connexion (e.g. 354, 355, and 378) may be invited to make what he can of Hume's statement (322) that 'relations are requisite to sympathy, not absolutely consider'd as relations, but by their influence in converting our ideas of the sentiments of others into the very sentiments, by means of the association betwixt the idea of their persons, and that of our own'.

The third and last part of Hume's account of the passions began with a discussion of the will, its necessity, and its influencing motives; for the 'will', according to Hume, was a 'direct passion' (399, 439), and a simple indefinable impression (399). Indeed, his descriptions of it were highly questionable, for they included (399) *agency* (whose reality he had expressly denied in his account of causes), and an apparent limitation to the achievement of pleasure or avoidance of pain (439) which, to say the least, was very obscurely related to the 'unaccountable' impulses and instincts, many of which would usually be considered voluntary.

Having already discussed Hume's deterministic theory in a former chapter, we may proceed at once to consider the most celebrated of all his arguments in this part of his philosophy, viz. his attack on what he regarded as a rationalistic legend that had pervaded 'the greatest part of moral philosophy, ancient and modern'. The truth was, he said, that 'reason'

alone could not influence the will and therefore could not oppose what did move the will, viz. passion.

Nothing could be simpler in appearance than Hume's negative argument in this affair. 'Reason', he said, pertained wholly to the understanding (413); and was either demonstration (through the comparison of ideas) or probable reasoning (concerning matter of fact). But the understanding could not move us. What did move us was the prospect of pleasure or pain. And if reason could not move us *at all*, it could not oppose passion. Hume therefore concluded (415) that 'reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.' (I cannot agree with Mr. Joseph[1] that Hume's introduction of the word 'ought' into this celebrated statement was at all obscure. Hume's point was, surely, that any theory of obligation would be mythical if it represented reason as other than it was.)

Explanations followed. The passions, Hume said, were wholly non-representative, and therefore, unlike reason, had no concern with truth or falsehood (415), since truth meant the agreement, or copying of objects by ideas. Again he urged that if judgments accompanied, and in a sense were relevant to passionate action, it could only be the judgments, not the actions, that were reasonable or unreasonable. Such relevance might occur in two ways: (*a*) when we discovered that we had been seeking an impossibility, (*b*) when we made mistakes about the means to ends. But it was not the information, *per se*, that moved us in such cases.

Positively, Hume had to explain the origin of the traditional error. His solution was that what tradition *called* 'reason' was actually a 'calm' passion, the confusion being due to the false notion that every passion must show a sensible violence. More specifically our *interest* (i.e. the 'general appetite to good, and aversion to evil considered as such') *was* the 'calm' passion, so often miscalled 'reason'.[2] There was a genuine and important contrast between this calm and settled pursuit of interest and sudden tempestuous passions, which, like resentment, frequently opposed our true interest. But that was not a contrast between 'reason' and 'passion' (417 *sq.*).

Here we may remark:

(*a*) That Hume begged the question. He *defined* 'reason'

[1] *Some Problems in Ethics*, p. 19.

[2] Although there were other 'calm' passions (417).

as ' a conclusion only of our intellectual faculties ' (437), i.e. as *not* practical, although the rationalists held that there was a practical as well as an intellectual employment of ' reason '.

(*b*) That Hume's hedonism also begged the question. Hume's opponents affirmed that the apprehension of duty and of the fitness of things pertained to reason and *did* affect conduct. Hume's statement that only the prospect of pleasure or pain moved us was mere counter-assertion. (And Hume did speak of the notion of duty as an active although a readily conquerable force (421) and admitted the influence of natural impulse as well as of *interest*.)

(*c*) That Hume's argument invited the retort that although reason *alone* might not move us, reason allied with passion might be very efficacious indeed. Here, however, the answer was obvious. Hume never meant to deny the ' oblique ' (459) influence of reason, but, on the contrary, asserted it. He regarded reason as an astute family solicitor rather than as an ordinary sort of ' slave '. Reason's ' mediate ' (462) function in selecting means to ends, and in quenching the desire for impossibilities (by showing the impossibility), were not at all negligible (cf. 459). Indeed he said (493) that human nature was ' compos'd of two principal parts, which are requisite in all its actions, the affections and understanding ' ; and he was not at all disposed to accept ' the blind motions of the former, without the direction of the latter ' (493).

In short, Hume was much less revolutionary and intransigent in this matter than is commonly supposed.[1] In his accounts of the passions and of ethics he accepted ' reason ' positivistically just as he accepted the ' self ' and ' causes '. He differed from Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, Mandeville and a host of others [2] in declining an alliance between metaphysical scepticism and psychological anti-rationalism (which Montaigne attributed to the Peripatetics [3]). All he meant to do, as we shall see, was to put Hutcheson's point pointedly. The phrase ' the slave of the passions ', no doubt, was forcible ; and Mandeville had used it (*Origin of Honour*, 1732, p. 31). But Hume did not say, as La Rochefoucauld had said (Maxim 102), that reason was the *dupe* of the passions ; and he was averse to the inferences commonly drawn in this way of philosophizing, e.g. Glanvill's (*Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661, p. 119) ' Every

[1] e.g. by Mr. Bonar, *Moral Sense*, p. 124.

[2] See the quotations in Mr. Kaye's edition of Mandeville, especially pp. lxxx *sqq.*

[3] As quoted by Kaye, *l.c.*, p. lxxx.

man is naturally a *Narcissus* and each *passion* in us no other but *self-love* sweetened by milder Epithets', or Mandeville's (I. 39) 'I believe man . . . to be a compound of various passions, that all of them, as they are provoked and come uppermost, govern him by turns whether he will or no'.

(We may argue, indeed, that the traditional practice of regarding 'reason' and 'passion' as separate ingredients in motivation was probably mistaken. But if, following the clue of Aristotle's *βουλευτικὴ ὄρεξις*,[1] we attempt to think of patterns or schemata of motivation, we are bound to admit that such schemata do attain the level of reflection (and therefore of 'reason') although they are *also* emotional.)

(*d*) That Hume's statement that 'calmness' and 'rationality' were commonly confused was not at all plausible. 'Reason' need not be calm and may be a consuming flame. It often is. Again our appetite for good may be so little 'calm' that it makes crusaders and zealots of us, as it did in the instances of Bentham and J. S. Mill. Hume's inclusion of the 'original instincts' of 'benevolence, resentment, love of life and kindness to children' among the 'calm' passions (417) obviously (cf. 418) increased his difficulties under this head.

The remainder of Hume's examination of the passions was rather desultory. He discussed the violence of passion (418 *sqq.*), the pleasure of a moderate and the staleness of an excessive habituation (422 *sqq.*),[2] the effect of the imagination upon the passions with special reference to Time's Arrow and to the way in which distance, height, and the golden aura of the past induced the sentiment of sublimity (424 *sqq.*). An account of the direct passions followed; and his final Section dealt with scientific curiosity.

This final Section was a particularly charming example of Hume's more detailed discussion of these questions, and, for that reason, the substance of it may be briefly narrated here. Truth, said Hume, did not satisfy simply because it was truth 'but only as endow'd with certain qualities'. We must have the delight of overcoming obstacles by our genius, and we must cherish the conviction that the truths we tried to reveal

[1] *Nic. Eth.*, Bk. III, ch. iii Conclusion.

[2] In this connexion Hume referred to 'a late eminent philosopher' who had said that 'custom increases all *active* habits, but diminishes *passive*'. This 'late', i.e. *recent*, not *deceased*, 'philosopher' was Butler. *Analogy*, Pt. i, ch. v. Green's note (G. II. 202) was quaint.

had some definite importance. How came it, then, that men destroyed their health and dissipated their fortune in the pursuit of 'important' scientific projects, although, in any ordinary sense, they had little public spirit?

Hume's answer was that without this sense of the importance of the truth investigated, the investigator would become careless and allow his attention to wander, just as 'a man of the greatest fortune, and the farthest remov'd from avarice, tho' he takes a pleasure in hunting after partridges and pheasants, feels no satisfaction in shooting crows and magpies; and that because he considers the first as fit for the table, and the other as entirely useless' (451). Indeed, Hume thought, scientific investigation was very like hunting, and not at all unlike a game. There had to be a 'remote' sympathy with some object of importance, if only to engross our attention and withdraw it from the tiresome scene of ordinary human affairs. Some men, however, had an entirely disinterested curiosity, like the gossips who could not expect anything to their own advantage from discussing their neighbours' affairs, and could not flatter themselves that it took genius to come by their information. In their case, we had to say that the hesitation and uncertainty of doubting was in itself unpleasant; and so that the gossips were anxious to be rid of that special uneasiness.

I shall conclude this chapter by referring to the historical situation in which Hume found himself.

In the continental tradition (to which Hobbes also belonged) the practice was to treat the passions as a separate field of investigation, and to proceed from that investigation to the conduct of the passions and to ethics generally; and Hume came nearer to this tradition than the other British moralists of his time, although the ethical theories of Shaftesbury and others were framed in accordance with a humanism so wide as to make any such difference much smaller than it appears.

We do not know whether Hume had studied Descartes, but he had certainly studied much that came from Descartes.

In *Les Passions de l'Ame*, Descartes's discussion was dominated by his theory of the mind-body relation. The passions, he held, although semi-mental, had a bodily *origin* 'in accordance with the constitution of nature' (art. 137); and also (art. 112) had bodily expressions and effects (as in the pallor of fear). Thus they were largely 'imaginative'; for imagination was the confused mental result of a 'fortuitous' rush of animal spirits into certain pores of the brain (art. 21). Accord-

ingly all *passions* had to be sharply distinguished from the *actions* of the rational soul.

Neither this psycho-physical theory, nor Galen's doctrine of the temperaments (with which it was sometimes allied) seem to have played a very effective part in Hume's theory of the passions, although Hume, arguing as a mitigated phenomenalist in this part of his work, was prepared to speak of Nature's contrivances in a semi-physiological way (287, cf. 275 and particularly 373). On the other hand, Hume's theory owed much of its plausibility to his tacit and largely unconscious acceptance of such assumptions. His doctrine of the *spreading* tendencies of the passions, for example (e.g. 283), was natural enough in terms of a Galenian theory of temperaments, constitution and 'complexion' but was otherwise disputable and forlorn. Again Hume's readiness to 'annex' ultimate active tendencies to passive emotions according to the mere 'constitution of our nature' was what any one would say about a dog wagging his tail, but had not the same apparent inevitability in an analysis of the relations between tender emotion and active benevolence.

In many other respects the atmosphere of Descartes's discussion was similar to the atmosphere of Hume's. Descartes endeavoured to explain man's whole emotional life in terms of the six primitive passions of wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness (art. 69); his 'generosity', i.e. 'what causes a man to esteem himself as highly as he legitimately can' (art. 153), was pretty much Hume's 'pride'—although Descartes distinguished this self-value from vicious pride (art. 157)—; and one of Descartes's definitions of desire, i.e. (art. 86) that it was 'an agitation of the soul caused by the spirits which dispose it to wish for the future the things which it represents to itself as agreeable', was also very like Hume's.

There was, of course, the closest historical continuity between Descartes and Malebranche; and Hume, like Hutcheson (Tr. III. 28 n.) had studied Malebranche very carefully.

Malebranche distinguished between the inclinations and the passions. Of the inclinations he said that the first and greatest was 'l'amour du bien en général' (IV. i) given to man by God to lead man to God, the second was 'l'amour propre' (IV. v) and the third an 'amitié' towards other men. These inclinations of the mind corresponded to movement in bodies, and Malebranche's principal intention was to reduce the apparent multiplicity of inclinations to a single governing

principle, just as, in physics, the scholastic multiplicity of active powers and faculties had to give way to a unitary scheme.

Similarly, regarding the passions, Malebranche renounced any ultimate multiplicity, and looked for a governing principle. From the nature of the case, he said, all the passions were psycho-physical; for being *passions* they were not pure mind, but, on the contrary (V. i), 'les émotions que l'ame ressent naturellement, à l'occasion des mouvemens extraordinaires des esprits animaux'. 'Nous sommes unis par nos passions', he said, 'à tout ce qui nous paroît être le bien ou le mal de l'esprit, comme à tout ce qui nous paroît être le bien ou le mal du corps' (V. ii).

Malebranche's general position was (V. vii) 'que l'amour et l'aversion sont les passions mères, qu'elles n'engendrent point d'autres passions générales que le desir, la joie et la tristesse; que les passions particulières ne sont composées que de ces trois primitives; et qu'elles sont d'autant plus composées, que l'idée principale du bien ou du mal, qui les excite, est accompagnée d'un plus grand nombre d'idées accessoires, ou que le bien ou le mal sont plus circonstanciés par rapport à nous'. The three 'primitives', he further explained (V. ix), were distinguished simply because a good or a pleasure possessed was joy, absent but hoped for was desire, absent and impossible was sorrow.[1] On the other hand, Malebranche also held that 'les passions ne tirent pas seulement leur différence de la différente combinaison des trois primitives, car de cette sorte il y en auroit fort peu; mais leur différence se prend encore des différentes perceptions, & des différens jugemens qui les causent ou les accompagnent. Ces différens jugemens que l'ame fait des biens & des maux, produisent des mouvemens différens dans les esprits animaux' (V. x).

In short, the essence of the theory was that the seminal passions of joy, sorrow and desire took different forms, according to the way in which they were 'circumstanced', and that they were circumstanced psycho-physically, all passions being confused not purely mental. Further, Malebranche's view was that the judgments which circumstanced the particular passions were imaginative, and partially false. 'Les jugemens qui précèdent et qui causent les passions', he said (V. x), 'sont presque toujours faux en quelque chose; car ils sont

[1] Cf. the stoic 'libido' and 'laetitia' in present good 'metus' and 'aegritudo' for the future. Cic., *Tusc. Diss.*, IV, vi.

presque toujours appuyés sur les perceptions de l'ame en tant qu'elle considère les objets par rapport à elle, et non point selon ce qu'ils sont en eux-mêmes '.

What was still more important from Hume's point of view was that these 'judgments' were 'circumstanced' by a psycho-physical '*liaison des idées*' (V. viii)—in other words, by what Hume was content to regard phenomenalistically as 'association'.

Accordingly, Malebranche's form of the Cartesian theory must be supposed to have encouraged Hume very sensibly in his attempt to show that a few direct passions, by means of association, might yield 'indirectly' the whole range and variety of the passions in human experience. It is therefore scarcely necessary to mention the specific resemblances in detail between much that Hume said and much that Malebranche had said; but we may note that Malebranche pointed out that our passions carried us from the idea of a beloved person to the idea of all around him (V. vi), that we participated sympathetically in the sentiments of others (V. vii), and that we delighted in novelty and in surprise (*ibid.*).

Among British authors, Hume was indebted chiefly to Hutcheson. This debt was obvious in their agreement regarding 'public' or disinterested desires (Tr. III. 21), and regarding the nature of sympathy (Tr. III. 14); but also in other very striking ways.

(*a*) Hutcheson, as his colleague and biographer Leechman said, 'was convinced that . . . a true scheme of morals . . . must be drawn from proper observations upon the several powers and principles which we are conscious of in our own bosoms, and which must be acknowledged to operate in some degree in the whole human species'.[1] In other words, Hutcheson had a general Newtonian conception of psychological method; and he was not averse to the principle of association. Among other passages to this effect (e.g. Tr. III. 10, 94, 121) the following may be cited: 'What is apprehended as good, thro' an association of foreign ideas, shall be pursued for those we love, as well as what is really good for them' (Tr. III. 96 *sq.*).

(*b*) Hutcheson's theory was intermediate between Malebranche's psycho-physical doctrine (which he tried to adapt) and Hume's (slightly mitigated) phenomenalism. Thus in

[1] In the *Life* prefixed to Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*, p. xiv. Quoted by Kuypers, *Studies, etc.*, p. 95.

distinguishing 'calm' joy from 'confused' sensation Hutcheson attributed the latter to 'violent bodily motions' (Tr. III. 29, cf. 47, 62) although, in the main,[1] he was content to 'let physicians explain' such matters in terms of 'fluids and solids' or of (Galen's) 'temperaments' (Tr. III. 56). Similarly, regarding active propensities Hutcheson said that 'this part of our nature'—even where there was no rational desire—was 'as intelligible as many others universally acknowledged' (Tr. III. 64)—and illustrated the point by referring to reflexes like winking or sucking.

(*c*) Hume's account of 'impressions of reflection' was borrowed directly from Hutcheson who maintained (Tr. III. 27 *sqq.* and 59 *sqq.*) that 'natural good' or pleasure (Tr. III. 34) was a *sensation*; that 'reflection upon the presence or certain futurity' (Tr. III. 61) of any such primary sensation raised the further and different sensation of joy, which was therefore a genuine, although secondary, *sensation*. Hutcheson's doctrine, indeed, was clearer than Hume's, since he took a step that Hume ignored, viz. that our reflection on natural good aroused a desire that was *not* a passion but an 'affection' or 'propensity', and that the new sensation was generated retroactively by this active propensity. It must be admitted, however, that Hutcheson vacillated on the point owing to his reluctance to deny outright that desire, as Locke had said, always implied some 'uneasiness' (Tr. III. 43).

(*d*) Hume's greatest debt to Hutcheson, however, was derived from Hutcheson's account of the office of 'reason'.

According to Hutcheson, *election* and *approbation*, which were quite distinct, were simple ideas known to our consciousness (Tr. IV. 206); and all *exciting* reasons (i.e. elections) presupposed instincts and affections, while all *justifying* reasons (i.e. approbations) presupposed the moral sense (Tr. IV. 216). As he said: 'What reason excites us? All the possible reasons must either presuppose some affection, if they are exciting, or some moral sense, if they are justifying' (Tr. IV. 221 *sq.*). Or, again: 'Let us once suppose affections, instincts or desires previously implanted in our natures, and we shall easily understand the exciting reasons for actions. . . . He acts *reasonably* who considers the various actions in his power, and forms true opinions of their tendencies; and then chuses to do that which will obtain the highest degree of *that* to which the in-

[1] Shaftesbury had ridiculed 'these Physiologists' (I, 291) and Descartes's account of 'the Passion of *Fear*' (I, 294).

stincts of his nature incline him with the smallest degree of those things to which the affections in his nature make him averse' (Tr. IV. 223 *sq.*).

Negatively, Hutcheson maintained in opposition to Clarke's Boyle Lectures, 1705, and to Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, 1722 (both of which had enormous contemporary influence), that reason, in strictness, could mean only the power of finding out true propositions (Tr. IV. 213), and that speculative decisions could not influence the will. 'As if, indeed', he said (Tr. IV. 217), 'reason or the knowledge of the relations of things could excite to action when we proposed no *end*, or as if ends could be intended without desire or affection.' And Hutcheson believed himself to be no innovator, but only the restorer of the truth according to Aristotle (Tr. IV. 217) in opposition to the muddled extravagance of 'ways of speaking' recently 'introduced' (Tr. IV. 211).

Hutcheson also tried to explain the whole mistake made by these innovating rationalists. Commenting upon the fact that even kindly affections, through their tendency to become infatuations, may lead to disaster, he said (Tr. IV. 278 *sq.*) that 'this indeed may give some ground for distinguishing between passionate actions and those from calm desire or affection which employs our reason freely. But can never set rational actions in opposition to those from instinct, desire or affection. And it must be owned that the most perfect virtue consists in the calm impassionate benevolence rather than in particular affections'.

Hume also owed something to Mandeville. In particular, it seems likely that his account of pride owed almost as much to Mandeville, as to the Cartesian and other sources upon which both Hume and Mandeville drew. Thus Mandeville said that 'The meanest wretch puts an inestimable value upon himself, and the highest wish of the ambitious man is to have all the world, as to that particular, of his opinion' (I. 54). Again he said that 'The humblest man alive must confess, that the reward of a virtuous action, which is the satisfaction that ensues upon it, consists in a certain pleasure he procures to himself by contemplating on his own worth; which pleasure, together with the occasion of it, are as certain signs of pride as looking pale and trembling at any imminent danger are the symptoms of fear' (I. 57). Similarly, Mandeville's frequent references to equipages, furniture, gardens and palaces (e.g. I. 130) as causes of pride, seem to have lingered in Hume's memory.

The same may be true of Mandeville's references to comparison—e.g. his quotation from Seneca's *Troades* 1033, *Nemo est miser nisi comparatus* (II. 115) or his pleasant remark that it was not the coachless, but the owner of a coach and four, who envied the owner of a coach and six (I. 136). Again, Mandeville's many references to the power of education and of custom—e.g. 'Remember what I have said of education, and the power of it; you may add inclinations, knowledge and circumstances; for as men differ in all these, so they are differently influenced and wrought upon by all the passions. There is nothing that some men may not be taught to be ashamed of' (II. 90)—and Mandeville's professed phenomenalism (slightly corrected by his medical physiology)—e.g. 'I never reason but from the plain observations which every body may make on man, the phaenomena that appear in the lesser world' (II. 128)—may be presumed to have appreciably affected this part of Hume's philosophy.

CHAPTER VIII

ETHICS AND THE SENSE OF HUMANITY

HUME'S ethical theory revolved round two principal questions, viz. the *nature* of approval and the problem of *what we approve*. In a sense it was very bookish since Hume seldom lost sight of the contentions of contemporary and of earlier moralists.

His answer to the first question was that approval was an affair of the moral sense, *but* that the moral sense, in its various applications, was not an ultimate, God-given faculty. On the contrary, it was something whose origin and development could be explained in a secular way. His answer to the second question was that we approved the *utile* and the *dulce* (i.e. qualities immediately agreeable or useful to ourselves or to others) to which all alleged ultimate rights and duties, such as the (moral) 'laws of nature' could, and should, be reduced.

In examining his theory, I shall deal (i) with the *Treatise* (Book III), (ii) with the *Enquiry* (*Concerning Morals*), (iii) with Hume's other ethical pieces. As a preliminary, however, it seems advisable to give a short account of the moral sense theory in the particular form (Hutcheson's) that Hume had chiefly in his mind.

According to Hutcheson, the human mind was possessed of certain reflex and 'superior' powers of 'perception', and received a refined but natural, authentic and original pleasure from beholding the harmony of things (Tr. I. II). This pleasure, he held, was a sort of taste, not knowledge; and in the instance of beauty could be sharply distinguished 'from any knowledge of principles, proportions, causes or of the usefulness of the object' (*ibid.*).

Hutcheson had a harder task in elaborating Shaftesbury's conception of a moral as well as an æsthetic taste, but maintained that virtue was amiable and lovely on the mere survey, that it was esteemed and aroused active beneficent tendencies, that it was disinterested because when we approved a virtuous

man we approved *him* and not the 'small' (Tr. II. 130) pleasure of approbation in our own breasts; and so that it was quite distinct from utility. (Air, sunshine and other inanimate agents might be *useful* to us, but we did not love esteem or feel goodwill towards them.) Similarly, the prudent pursuit of self-interest, and such natural abilities as a penetrating judgment, were also, he said, non-moral, although 'we seem to have a natural relish for them distinct from moral approbation' (Tr. II. 186). Further, while admitting with a frankness rather uncommon among the moralists of the age that there had been a 'vast diversity of moral principles' (Tr. II. 204), Hutcheson argued for the universality of the moral sense (Tr. II. 217) as well as for the obvious truth that custom and education could not produce morality (as Mandeville had suggested) from a conjurer's hat, if there were not fundamental moral tendencies in human nature itself.

On these general lines Hutcheson believed that he could defend the existence of 'a fixed humanity or desire of the public good of all' (Tr. II. 194) [1] without having recourse to what he regarded as the fantastic employment of 'reason' by Clarke and other opponents of Hobbes's 'selfish' theory.

§ I. The Treatise

Hume began his system of morals with an elaborate attack upon Clarke, Wollaston, and those parts of Locke's *Essay* (e.g. III. xi. § 16, and IV. iii. § 18) in which morality had been said to be capable of demonstration.

Hutcheson had conjoined 'approbation' with 'election' (i.e. with motivation) in his *definition* of the moral sense (Tr. II. 105), and Hume, without distinguishing the two, maintained that moral distinctions must *move* us to different actions. He therefore repeated in substance his former doctrine concerning the influencing motives of the will; but more elaborately than before.

In particular he gave a very detailed criticism of the 'relations and habitudes' presumed by the rationalists, and argued

[1] Cf. Shaftesbury, 'Sense of Public Weal, and of the Common Interest; Love of the Community or Society, natural Affection, Humanity, Obligingness, or that Form of Civility which rises from a just Sense of the common rights of mankind, and the natural Equality there is among those of the same species' (I, 104). 'A publick Spirit can come only from a social Feeling or Sense of Partnership with human Kind' (I, 106). See also the impressive list of classical synonyms of 'humanitas' in Grotius, *De Jure*, etc., II, xix, § 4.

(*a*) that his own exhaustive list of the demonstrative 'connections of ideas' did not include moral habitudes (464); (*b*) that the rationalists did not have the effrontery to pretend that virtue or vice *consisted in* relations (464 n.) and yet that this was what they should have said had they meant anything; (*c*) that there were no peculiar moral *relations*, but, on the contrary, that what was peculiar in morality was that the human will and character were essential *terms* in any moral situation, the other term being either some external thing or some other person (465). (Thus (467) when a young tree growing up in the shade of its parent tree eventually killed the parent, there was the same *relation* as in parricide, although there was all the difference in the world between the crime of parricide, which pertained to the will and personal character,[1] and the non-moral behaviour of the tree); (*d*) that the 'relations' on which these moralists based their theories would have had to be causal relations; yet Hume had shown in his analysis of causation that *such* relations were necessarily non-demonstrative (466).

These arguments certainly proved that Clarke and his friends had left their moral theory in a state of great vagueness; and many British moralists of the present time would agree with Hume's short but pregnant criticism (469 *sq.*) that his opponents in this matter had illegitimately attempted to deduce *ought* from *is*, without in the least understanding the *sort* of premises required in any such transition. On the other hand, Hume's assertion (460) that the truth or falsity of a judgment of right presupposed a 'real right and wrong' independent of the judgment was one of the things that Clarke (*On Natural Religion*, I. and *passim*) as well as Butler (*Analogy*, Pt. ii, ch. viii) had stated very emphatically indeed. As we shall see, however, Hume drew a totally different conclusion from Clarke's or Butler's.

Having trounced the rationalists, Hume instantaneously accepted the moral sense theory. 'Virtue and vice', he said, were not 'qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind' (469). They were personal sentiments of pleasure or uneasiness (*ibid.*) and although of a contemplative order were due, not to logic, but to the mere constitution of our nature. Indeed, Hume's argument was: *Either* Clarke *or* Hutcheson;

[1] Unlike Mr. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 111, I think the rationalists should have spent some sleepless nights over this objection.

not Clarke; therefore Hutcheson—or, rather less inadequately; Either an original and quasi-sensory 'impression' (456 *sq.*) or a 'relation of objects' through 'comparison of ideas'; not a relation of objects; therefore an impression—in this case a sense of 'humanity', capable of being developed into a contemplative and 'general' *approval* of personal merit.

The moral sense came into operation, Hume said (475, cf. 469, 471), when 'any action or sentiment, upon the general view or survey, gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness'. More in detail, it was (*a*) concerned with personal character, and (*b*) general.

(*a*) It was 'self-evident', Hume said (575), that 'if any action be virtuous or vicious 'tis only as a sign of some quality or character . . . *durable* enough to affect our sentiments concerning the person'. The moral sense, therefore, did not apply to impersonal objects destitute of moral character, as Clarke's 'relations' should logically have done (471).

(*b*) The 'pleasure' of the moral sense was highly distinctive and could not be compared with the pleasures, say, of good music or of good wine (472); and its distinctive pleasure was in various ways 'general'. For it was concerned with a personal character (472; cf. 575 *sqq.*) 'considered in general without reference to our particular interest', and was 'a general calm determination of the passions' founded upon some distant view or reflection (583, cf. 417) which consequently simulated 'reason' in two of the current but improper uses of that misleading term, viz. 'calmness'—including 'stability' (581)—and a distance or aloofness which enabled us to apprehend the 'general and more discernable qualities of good and evil' (536, cf. 581 *sqq.*). Again, it was 'general' because it implied a *public* point of view, and 'appears the same to every spectator' (591). It was also akin to love or hatred, pride or humility (473).

Modern readers, indeed, may doubt whether in analysing 'esteem' (i.e. self-value and the respect for others) in Book II of the *Treatise*, and the 'moral sense' in Book III, Hume had not unwittingly done the same thing twice over, yet in ways not the same. Such readers may perhaps think, also, that there is no *single* 'moral sense' equipped with this formidable list of implications, but that its 'generality' and other unsense-like properties indicate the need for a very different analysis.

Hume, however, was anxious to give a more plausible and

more elaborate account of the ' moral sense ' than Hutcheson had done ; and his theory differed markedly from Hutcheson's (although Hume must have thought it *different* rather than inconsistent).

Hume's prologue (473 *sqq.*) to his more elaborate inquiry stated that our multitudinous duties could not be referred to so many original and natural instincts (cf. G. IV. 309), but that nature was frugal in the number of principles from which she generated her immense variety (cf. 578). In short, he was not disposed to regard the moral sense as exempt from the anatomist's knife (cf. B. I. 112 *sq.*), whether or not Hutcheson (as his critics averred) had been too compliant in this matter. Accordingly (perhaps with Butler's theory in his mind, although he might have gone back to the Greeks and the Stoics) Hume denied that there was any important sense in which virtue was ' natural ' and vice unnatural (475). For, said he, the ' natural ' meant either the non-miraculous, or the usual, or the non-artificial (474). But vice as well as virtue was non-miraculous and also deplorably common, while if artifice meant ' design and intention ' many of the virtues were plainly artificial.

With these explanations Hume embarked upon the second main object of his discussion, viz. his examination of the (moral) ' laws of nature ' and, in general, our *officia* or duties. He subdivided these into ' natural ' and ' artificial ' and began with the latter because they interested him the most. I propose, however, to reverse this order of exposition, and to choose the more orderly plan of considering the ' natural ' virtues first.

Before doing so, it seems necessary to examine the fundamental contention which governed Hume's entire expostion. This was the ' undoubted maxim ' (479) that ' no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality '.

Hume had found this argument in Cicero's *De Finibus* (B. I. 115) and he clung to it tenaciously. ' No action ', he said (480, cf. 478, 483), ' can be virtuous, but so far as it proceeds from a virtuous motive. A virtuous motive,[1] therefore, must precede the regard to the virtue.' We should land ourselves in an infinite regress if we maintained the contrary (518 n.) ; and similarly in other passages.

[1] ' Motive or impelling passion ' (483).

In other words, instead of assuming with Clarke and Butler a 'real right and wrong' which made actions right if they conformed to it, Hume asserted that our sense of what we ought to do must ultimately depend upon an originally virtuous motive which made our *sense* of virtue intelligible. Rejecting the very idea that duties could be self-justifying, Hume asserted with vigour and much repetition, that nothing could be right, or virtuous, or a moral obligation, unless it were a *motive*. Nothing except motives, he said, were morally approved (477). Again 'external performance has no merit' (*ibid.*); but we commended a man's virtue when circumstances were unkind, and nothing came of his virtuous efforts (*ibid.*, cf. 584).

Hume's eventual conclusion was that the ultimate virtuous motive was either a kindly affection (i.e. a 'natural virtue'), or else a motive which, through artifice, had been grafted upon a kindly affection or upon one of its derivatives. This conclusion, however, required a further premiss, frequently concealed in Hume's pages, but assumed by most of his contemporaries including Hutcheson—the premiss, namely, that virtuous conduct coincided (in extension) with public-spirited action. In the light of this premiss Hume's argument was readily intelligible. Without it, much that he said seemed peculiarly arbitrary.

Let us turn then to Hume's (rather jejune) description of the 'natural virtues' (574 *sqq.*). His theory was, in brief, that our motives were moral or virtuous when they were humane or kindly, but that most moral or virtuous motives had to be moralized by 'sympathy', and that 'sympathy' was always needed in order to make our approval 'general', extensive, and stable. We 'naturally approve of' (578) anything that 'renders a man a proper member of society', Hume said, either when this was its obvious immediate tendency (as in humane feelings and propensities), or when we came to see (or to assume as the result of education) that there *was* such sociality in the (more artificial) virtues. As Hume said in a later essay (G. III. 454 *sq.*):

'All *moral* duties may be divided into two kinds. The *first* are those, to which men are impelled by a natural instinct or immediate propensity, which operates on them, independent of all ideas of obligation, and of all views, either to public or private utility. Of this nature are, love of children, gratitude to benefactors, pity to the unfortunate. . . . The *second* kind of moral duties are such as are not supported by any original instinct of nature, but are

performed entirely from a sense of obligation, when we consider the necessities of human society, and the impossibility of supporting it, if these duties were neglected.'

In the result, Hume concluded that the motives we approved by the moral sense were those which were either (1) *useful* (*a*) to ourselves or (*b*) toothers; or (2) *immediately agreeable* (*a*) to ourselves or (*b*) to others; and that 'reflections on the tendencies of actions have by far the greatest influence, and determine all the great lines of our duty' (590).

When Bentham read this part of the *Treatise* he said that he 'felt as if scales had fallen from his eyes. . . . That the foundations of all *virtue* are laid in utility is there demonstrated, after a few exceptions made, with the strongest evidence; but I see not, any more than Helvétius saw, what need there was for the exceptions.'[1]

The comment seemed very natural, if, in Bentham's odd way, 'utility' was taken to mean 'the greatest happiness principle'. For according to Hume the *utile* was a means to the *dulce* and the *dulce* was pleasure, our own or others'. Nevertheless, Bentham missed the point of Hume's argument. Hume held, indeed, that *what* we approved was pleasure (our own or others', immediate or deferred). Yet the essential question that Hume set himself to answer was not Bentham's question but the different and subtler question *why* an action *for the sake of* immediate or deferred pleasure was *moral*; and Hume's answer was that an action was moral if it flowed from an impulse that was or could become extensively 'humane' because the moral sense *implied* this extensive 'humanity'.

According to Hume, the 'natural' motives to action (so far, at any rate, as the motivation of pleasure or of pain was concerned) were either selfish or instances of a *limited* generosity (586, cf. 486, 495). Such limited or confined generosity was indeed very real. 'So far from thinking, that men have no affection for any thing beyond themselves, I am of opinion, that tho' it be rare to meet with one, who loves any single person better than himself; yet 'tis as rare to meet with one, in whom all the kind affections, taken together, do not overbalance all the selfish' (487). Yet 'being thus acquainted with the nature of man, we expect not any impossibilities of him; but confine our view to that narrow circle, in which any person moves, in order to form a judgment of his moral character' (602).

[1] As quoted by Sorley, *History of English Philosophy*, p. 219.

Nevertheless, it would seem that 'sympathy', in Hume's theory, was called upon to perform this very impossibility. The 'desire for company' and the tendency to be depressed when others were pulling long faces, was now proclaimed to be *the* moralizing agency which replaced 'confined' or 'natural' generosity by an extended, steady and disinterested 'humanity' (487, cf. 602). To it the 'love of mankind, merely as such', was due (487). Sympathy was the generalizing agent which imparted to the pleasure of approval that reflective cast which so many moralists had strangely mistaken for 'reason'; and its 'general rules' were obtained by a process which contained the germs, and something more than the germs, of the theory of the 'impartial spectator' later developed by Adam Smith in his *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. Our sympathy, according to Hume, made an *unlimited* imaginative cast, and by a sort of pooling of all men's sentiments (through sympathetic participation) attained a neutral and impersonal point of view (591) from which we could survey ourselves with the same impartiality as we surveyed others. Even Adam Smith's cardinal distinction between the amiable virtues (in which the spectator summoned a little warmth into his aloofness) and the awful virtues (in which the sufferer damped his passions into quieter channels where the spectator could 'go along with him') was anticipated in Hume's explanations (605 and 608 n.)—a circumstance which made Smith's laudatory but critical comments on Hume (*op. cit.*, Pt. IV, ch. i) more than a little curious.

In the end, therefore, Hume's theory was that moral approval was aroused only when the motive that was approved chimed in with a general imaginative sympathy that carried us beyond all local and temporal partiality. This conclusion was not unplausible if 'sympathy' could really have the enormously extensive functions with which Hume endowed it. On the other hand, the very success of Hume's theory of the 'impartial spectator' (if success it was) involved his *general* moral theory in a marked internal contradiction. Hume had set out from the assumption that a generous or kindly motive was *eo ipso* virtuous, and that every other motive, including all motives of self-interest, were non-moral. The theory of the 'impartial spectator' explained quite readily how various forms of *self-interest* could be moralized, and the 'ancient moralists' vindicated when they put prudence 'at the head of the cardinal virtues' (609); but the theory *also* involved a thorough revision

of Hume's original acceptance of the 'natural virtues' of generosity and benevolence in their 'natural' or '*confined*' form. For Hume admitted that there might be, and that there often was, a contradiction between our 'confined' natural benevolence for our friends (583, cf. 581) and the extensive point of view of 'humanity' (478). *Therefore* an impulsive, but unwise or too narrow 'benevolence' need not be morally admirable. It was necessarily subject to final revision from the standpoint of humanity at large; and it could not consistently be dissevered from the general good of society, or, in that sense, from utility and advantage. As Hutcheson had remarked, our mere natural kindliness was only 'a lower kind of goodness' (Tr. II. 195).

Hume does not seem to have considered the possibility of objections of this type, and thought, instead, that the major objection that could be brought against his account of the natural virtues had to do with 'natural abilities' such as intelligence or courage. These, it was clear, might be useful or agreeable, although, like anything else, they might be abused. Hence it should follow that we ought to approve them morally unless they were frankly malignant. But Hume admitted that we did not commonly condemn stupidity in the same righteous spirit as we condemned prevarication.

The difficulty had puzzled Hutcheson who concluded that 'we seem to have a natural relish for [these abilities] distinct from moral approbation' (Tr. II. 186); and Hume conceded that 'it might be pretended' that our approbation, in such instances, was 'inferior and also somewhat different' (607). He asserted, however, that these different approbations 'agreed in the most material circumstances' (606), and that the task of distinguishing between them belonged to a grammarian rather than to a philosopher (610). Historians, he said, praised the 'industry, perseverance, patience, activity, vigilance, application and constancy' of the great (613); and if it were argued that moral approval should be restricted to *voluntary* activities then (*a*) these natural abilities were frequently voluntary and (*b*) 'I wou'd have any one give me a reason why virtue and vice may not be involuntary, as well as beauty and deformity' (608). He also said that 'faults are nothing but smaller vices' (611); or, in other words (as his theory required him to do), he drew the boundaries of morality at a different place from the usual one. This may or may not be an objection to his theory.

Let us turn back, however, to his account of the artificial virtues and of the 'laws of nature'.

This latter phrase sounds strange in modern ears. We think of it, nowadays, in terms of physics, not in terms of ethics; and, except in the phrase 'natural rights'—which itself is something *démodé*—we have to make an appreciable effort of thought in order to understand the very language of the controversy with which Hume was concerned.

According to the deists, 'natural religion' could and should be developed along two different lines. It could prove that the universe had a Great Artificer; and it could prove the moral government of the universe in accordance with the 'natural' moral obligations of reason which (it was supposed) were evident to, and binding upon, all rational beings (including God Himself) antecedently to any positive civil government or social customs. The physical means that the Great Artificer employed to keep the stars in their courses yielded 'laws of nature', in a sense of the term that we still employ; but the other and *ethical* sense of the 'laws of nature' is now obsolete; and although the ethical sense might well be held to assert God's commands, it could also be understood in a secular or 'natural' sense, independent of theological assumptions. Indeed, the neo-Stoic jurists, having perforce to acknowledge a *jus gentium* within the Roman Empire—that is to say, principles of administration governed by general equity instead of by multitudinous local customs and positive laws—had given an air of secular and concrete reality to these apparently abstract conceptions.[1] Thus Hume referred to Justinian's

[1] Cf. Heineccius, *A Methodical System of Universal Law*, said by Turnbull, the translator, in his Preface (1741), to be 'an attempt to introduce the experimental way of reasoning into morals, or to deduce human duties from internal principles and dispositions in the human mind'. (The book was obviously well known before the English translation appeared; and the *Logic* (i.e. *Elementa Philosophiae*) of Heineccius was in use in Professor Stevenson's class in the University of Edinburgh in 1736. See Carlyle's *Autobiography*, p. 42.) 'The law of nature doth not differ from the law of nations, neither in respect of its foundation and first principles, nor of its rules, but solely with regard to its object' (I. i. § 22). Heineccius defined the 'law of nature' as 'the natural rule of rectitude . . . a system of laws promulgated by the eternal God to the whole human race by reason' (*l.c.*, § 12) or as (*l.c.*, § 5) 'an evident *criterion* by which *good* and *ill* may be certainly distinguished'. He further defined *good* (*l.c.*, § 1) as 'whatever tends to preserve and perfect man', and *obligation* as 'a connection between motives and free actions' (*l.c.*, § 7).

Institutes (512 n.), and to lawyers [1] as well as to philosophers (562).

It is probable, indeed, that Hume was tolerably well acquainted with the works of the principal writers on these laws of nature, such as Grotius, Cumberland, Pufendorf and Cudworth; but in the main he had Hobbes and Locke in his mind, and Locke more than Hobbes. It seems advisable, therefore, to give a short account of the position of these philosophers.

According to Hobbes, man was a rational egoist. *Qua* egoist, his rapacity was boundless. It was also highly inconvenient. For men, being very nearly equal in their powers (III. 110), were in constant peril from one another's rapacity, and therefore in a hypothetical 'state of nature'—for there may not have been such a state (III. 115)—would be perpetually at war and miserable. *Qua* rational, however, man could not but perceive the necessity for 'convenient articles of peace'; and the 'articles' of this peace were the 'laws of nature' (III. 116).

In Hobbes's view there could be no right or wrong, justice or injustice, in the hypothetical state of nature. 'Where there is no common power there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties, neither of the body nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude' (III. 115). Nevertheless, with an inconsistency at least verbal, Hobbes maintained that each man, in himself and antecedent to society, had an inherent *right* to self-preservation (III. 116), and that, as a rational being, he exercised the right, in the only intelligent and intelligible way that was possible, by entering into a covenant of mutual security with his fellows.

Accordingly, for the sake of peace, each man laid down his 'right' to all things, or to do 'any thing he liketh' (III. 118) on the express condition that 'other men lay down their right as well as he' in terms of the 'law of all men *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*' (*ibid.*). This, variously formulated, was the only possible 'law of nature', that is to say, the only device by which a rational and predatory being could obtain, not all he wanted, but all he was likely to get. And Hobbes argued, for reasons that could never convince, that each man

[1] Mr. Greig conjectures that Hume had attended Law Classes in Edinburgh University and that he may have been specially interested in Professor Charles Mackie's lectures (p. 65).

should irrevocably surrender *all* his transferable [1] rights to an *absolute* political authority.

The compact [2] having been made, the 'law of nature' also prescribed that it should be rigidly kept. Here Hobbes ran against at least two serious theoretical difficulties. Firstly, he made the political security which was the object of the compact depend upon the *moral* duty of covenant-keeping, although his fundamental tenet was that all our moral obligations were but the ways in which this necessary and reasonable device for ensuring personal security worked. Secondly, he did not make it clear whether the political device was *merely* a pooling of individual forces (and therefore a matter of *mere* force in the end), or was *also* obligatory on other grounds. Indeed, it seems plain that much of the undoubted impressiveness of Hobbes's argument was due to his own and his readers' acceptance of the 'laws of nature' in an old-fashioned ethical sense quite foreign to Hobbes's ostensible theory.

Enough has been said, however, to indicate the general lines on which Hobbes proceeded, and the importance he attached to the 'laws of nature'. Hobbes even believed that mutual accommodation, the admission by each man that every other man was his equal, the appointment of arbitrators, the common enjoyment of indivisible things, and other very specialized social arrangements, took their place, by right of clear logical derivation, in a set of nineteen 'laws of nature' (III. 116 *sqq.*). Hobbes also maintained that the laws of nature were obligatory *in foro interno* as well as externally (III. 145); that they were immutable and eternal (*ibid.*); and that 'the science of [them] is the true moral philosophy' (III. 146).

[1] At this point, however, the relations between what Hobbes called the 'right' and the 'law' of nature became very strained. Among other passages the following may be noted: (III, 141) 'As it is necessary for all men that seek peace, to lay down certain rights of nature; that is to say, not to have liberty to do all they list; so it is necessary for man's life, to retain some; as right to govern their own bodies; enjoy air, water, motion, ways to go from place to place; and all things else, without which a man cannot live, or not live well.' (III, 208) 'The obligation of subjects to the sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no covenant be relinquished.' (III, 297) 'It is manifest . . . that the right which the commonwealth . . . hath to punish, is not grounded on any concession, or gift of the subjects.'

[2] On the general theory of the social contract and its early history see O. Gierke, *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, III, and *Johannes Althusius*.

In Locke's *Civil Government*—an essay whose political importance in the years succeeding the glorious Revolution would be hard to overestimate—there was a different application of principles partly like, and partly very unlike, those of Hobbes. Both Locke and Hobbes were extreme individualists (for both accepted this part of the message of Protestantism). Both agreed that free, independent and rational persons had contracted out of the 'state of nature' by consent or covenant—for the social covenant, according to Locke, was much more than a pictorial fancy, even if it was a trifle dubious when regarded as a piece of simple history (cf. C.G. § 101); and we saw what Hobbes had said on this point. Again both agreed that the social contract was a covenant for the sake of personal security.

Yet they diverged. In the first place, Locke held that the state of nature was not a state of war, but a state of virtue and innocence (e.g. § 111), the two states being 'as far distant as a state of peace, good-will, mutual assistance and preservation, and a state of enmity, malice, violence, and mutual destruction, are from one another' (§ 19). Secondly, so far from holding that moral obligations depended upon the original contract, Locke maintained that they were laws of natural reason that had been binding in the state of nature. 'The state of nature', he said, 'has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another, in his life, health, liberty or possessions' (§ 6). Thirdly (as might have been anticipated), Locke argued for a limited and revocable sovereignty (e.g. § 139).

Locke's view was that 'the first commoners' (i.e. those who enjoyed what Grotius had called the *prima communio rerum*[1] (cf. E. 307 n.)—did not need or think of civil government. They were quite capable of dealing privately with such transgressions as arose (§ 7). Each could appropriate what he had 'mixed his labour with' so long as he was content to appropriate only what he could use and enjoy, since, in these ancient days of sparse population and of relatively bountiful nature, 'there was still enough and as good left' (§ 33) for every one else. With the invention of money and the hoarding of it, however (the principal cause of possessing much more than

[1] See, e.g., *De Jure*, etc., II. ii. 2, where 'tribes in America' and the 'Essenes' were mentioned, and Macrobius and Tacitus quoted.

could be used), these simple conditions could no longer prevail. Robbers sprang up, and foreign foes. Therefore a body politic had to be organized, and in primitive societies such unions were usually for limited purposes. For instance, the chief function of the judges in Israel was to be captains in war (§ 109).

Granting, however, that primitive families, clans and societies (§§ 77 *sqq.*) could exist, and had existed, without civil government, there were important reasons, even apart from 'the corruption and viciousness of degenerate men' (§ 128), for the establishment of a legislature and of other departments of civil government. It was desirable to have 'an established, settled, known law' (§ 124)—even if it were only the law of nature *studied*—'and' a known and indifferent judge' (§ 125) with 'power to back and support the sentence when right' (§ 126).

Accordingly, civil government was a deliberate voluntary compact of free and equal individuals 'for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name property' (§ 123). Except contingently, it did not create any moral duties, for these were morally obligatory, at all times, upon every action, social or individual. And the compact was for the self-advantage of each citizen, 'for law, in its true notion, is not so much the limitation, as the direction of a free and intelligent agent to his proper interest, and prescribes no farther than is for the general good of those under that law' (§ 57). And Locke (§ 135 n.) quoted Hooker in support (*Eccl. Pol.*, I. i. Sect. 10):

> 'Two foundations there are which bear up public societies, the one a natural inclination, whereby all men desire sociable life and fellowship, the other an order, expressly or secretly agreed upon, touching the manner of their union in living together. . . . Laws politic, ordained for external order and regiment amongst men, are never framed as they should be, unless presuming the will of man to be inwardly obstinate, rebellious and averse from all obedience to the sacred laws of his nature; in a word, unless presuming man to be, in regard of his depraved mind, little better than a wild beast, they do accordingly provide, notwithstanding, so to frame his outward actions, that they be no hindrance unto the common good, for which societies are instituted. Unless they do this, they are not perfect.'

Hume's account of the artificial virtues took a middle course between Hobbes's theory and Locke's.

Beginning with an analysis of 'justice' Hume argued that 'the sense of justice and injustice is not deriv'd from nature,

but arises artificially, tho' necessarily, from education and human conventions' (483). By 'justice' Hume meant 'property',[1] and he tended to think of property in the narrower rather than in Locke's wider sense. At a later time, it is true, Hume said that Harrington had 'carried the matter too far' when he 'made property the foundation of all government' (G. III. 111); but in the *Treatise*, Hume, even when he spoke of 'equity' (e.g. 483), did not attempt to regard 'justice' at all broadly. It 'required the support of the twelve judges' (G. III. 114).

At the present day we should not think it necessary to show by a formal proof that the rules of property, and the very fact of property, had to be planned and designed; but the matter seemed much more obscure to an age in which Locke could write of men having a 'substance' prior to the compact of government, and of the necessity for the community's respecting such antecedent 'rights' (C.G. § 138). Hume therefore argued (*a*) that the public interest, taken in its largest sweep, was not a natural impulse being always 'too remote' and 'too sublime to affect the generality of mankind' (481); (*b*) that private benevolence might very well conflict with the public interest (482)—as nepotism had shown in all ages—and (*c*) that the point became indisputable when the origin of society was examined.

Echoing Mandeville (I. 346), Hume pointed out that man had immoderate wants combined with great individual infirmity (484 *sqq.*). Man therefore needed society which, although it increased his wants, augmented his abilities to an even greater extent, especially after the 'partition of employments' (or division of labour); indeed, at the foundation of all societies, even the stupidest family could not have overlooked the advantages of co-operation. Now the greatest advantage of social combination was security of property—for nothing else aroused cupidity—and it was preposterous to suppose that 'our narrow uncultivated ideas of morality' could be other than 'heedless', 'impetuous' and very 'partial' in this important matter (489). 'The remedy, then, is not deriv'd from nature but from *artifice*; or, more properly speaking, nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding,

[1] Cf. Hobbes, III, 329 *sq.*: 'Of things held in propriety, those that are dearest to a man are his own life, and limbs; and in the next degree, in most men, those that concern conjugal affection; and after them, riches and means of living.'

for what is irregular and incommodious in the affections' (*ibid.*).

This artifice, Hume went on to say, must have sprung from rudimentary beginnings. It could not have been, at the first, a formal promise or covenant; and it was logically as well as historically improper to speak of 'right' or of 'property' as in any sense pre-social. Man in 'his very first state and situation may justly be esteemed social' (493); and the 'state of nature' was as much of a fiction as the Golden Age. The reality was that nature had been niggardly to man (who had therefore to work for his living), and that man had been known to rob his neighbours (who had therefore to unite for self-protection) and to let strangers starve (man's natural benevolence being 'confined'). If nature had given us all that we wanted for the asking, if it had imbued us to the very marrow of our being with perfect benevolence or unquenchable ardour for the good of humanity, property and its rules would have been meaningless.[1] In fact, however, property must be stable and must be fixed by general rules (497); and the first rudiments of stable possession had to be elaborated very artificially indeed. Hence the need for man's 'understanding' if not for his 'reason'; hence the absurdity of the 'eternal and immutable' fitnesses of the 'laws of nature'. 'Justice' varied with conditions, and was a function of the scarcity of goods together with their possible insecurity of possession. It was also a function of *enlarged* self-interest, augmenting its strength by agreement to combine (498).

After raising a further point, whose consideration I shall defer, Hume remarked that no odium should attach to his philosophy, since he was not defending injustice but merely stating that property or justice would have had no meaning in the 'state of nature'. It therefore seems to me to be incredible that Hume, as his Oxford editor says (E. xxviii), 'meant to be offensive' in this part of his argument. On the contrary, he was affirming that the tepid Hobbism involved in his theory was a Hobbism without offence. Was he not dealing, as he later said in his History (ch. 11), with 'the equal distribution of justice and free enjoyment of property; the great objects for which political society was at first founded by men, which the people have a perpetual and unalienable right to recall, and which no time, nor precedent, nor statute, nor positive institution, ought to deter them from keeping ever

[1] Cf. Hobbes, III, 155.

uppermost in their thoughts and attention'? And did he not say in the *Treatise* (484): 'Tho' the rules of justice be *artificial*, they are not *arbitrary*. Nor is the expression improper to call them Laws of Nature; if by natural we understand what is common to any species, or even if we confine it to mean what is inseparable from the species.'[1]

In short, a necessary artifice was just as 'natural' as anything could be in an 'inventive species' (*ibid.*), and Hume's account of the special rules of property (by occupation, succession, prescription and the like) showed the need for artifice and even imagination (508 n.). Again, Hume's important argument that justice decided, not the particular utility of the individual instance, but the utility, indeed the social necessity, for the inflexible observance of a *rule*, '*plan*' or '*scheme*' (497, cf. 502) showed of itself that design, and not mere natural impulse, was required.

Many virtues, therefore, and particularly 'justice' were artificial, and the artifice had social convenience for its aim. Therefore Hume set himself to prove that covenants themselves, and our sense of duty or obligation in keeping them, were also founded upon social expediency; in other words, that the 'law of nature' on which the whole theory of the social contract was based was not an eternal and immutable moral intuition, but itself an instance of the 'social' theory of morals. Accordingly, Hume asked the apparently simple question, 'What is a promise?'

A promise, he pointed out (516 *sqq.*), was not merely a *resolution* to act in a certain way, but an entering into the specific *obligation* called a covenant. We *bound* ourselves to do so and so.

This proved, he said, that a promise was artificial. The reason why we should keep our promises was that we had covenanted ourselves into a certain duty or obligation. But Hume had shown (as he maintained) that duty (i.e. the *sense* of obligation) could never be an original or natural motive to action, but must always (whether we know it or not) presuppose some motive distinct from the sense of its morality (518 *sq.*). There could therefore be 'no peculiar act of the mind' in promise-keeping; and since the sole apparent motive to promise-keeping was the sense of duty, there must be an 'oblique' motive of quite another kind entrenched behind the apparent motive. This oblique motive was just 'the necessi-

[1] And was he not expressly contradicting Shaftesbury (I, 111)?

ties and interests of society' (519), an 'agreement to be true to one's word' with the expectation 'never to be trusted any more' if one's word was broken.

It may well be doubted whether Hume's argument proved what it was designed to prove. He usually thought of a promise as a formal and quasi-legal compact; and even suggested that promises came rather late in social development (519 *sqq.*), that they were *subsequent* to justice or property and were invented to deal with the time-factor in business transactions—'Your corn is ripe to-day; mine will be so to-morrow' (520)—*after* stable possession had 'render'd men tolerable to each other'. It might well be maintained, however, that these formal and semi-legal promises were themselves a development from a much more primitive trustfulness, and that trustfulness was a natural and even an infantile motive.

Again, although a promise involves at least two persons—for we cannot, strictly, make a promise to ourselves—it need not, in theory, involve *more* than two persons, unless it covertly invokes, from the outset, all the sanctions of a social régime. Accordingly it might be possible to defend a certain individualism *within* societies, and to argue that fidelity to one's word *was* binding, for reasons of human dignity and the 'fittingness' of equity, irrespective, in principle, of the 'utility' that refers to what we call 'credit' in human societies. Hume's dilemma, '*Either* a natural motive that can somehow be pressed into the service of an "extensive humanity", *or* eternal and immutable nonsense', was hardly exhaustive.

As we shall see, the consequences of this argument concerning promises were particularly important for Hume's theory of civil government. He chose, however, to delay his exposition in order to make some further reflections about justice; and he argued (*a*) that the *constans et perpetua voluntas suum cuique tribuendi* [1] was one of the most circular definitions ever invented, since the *suum*, or property, was itself 'justice' (526 *sq.*); (*b*) that 'justice', in the courts, had nothing to do with 'half-rights and obligations' (although the facts were often of this tangled nature) but, by a necessary practical artifice, gave *decisive* verdicts 'in order to terminate the affair one way or other' (531); and (*c*) that, as formerly observed, 'justice' had to follow rules that were inflexible and universal, and to accept the consequence that, in particular instances, definite harm might be done.

[1] Ulpian, *Dig.*, I, 10; *Inst.*, I, 1 pref.

Turning, then, to the theory of government and to the duty of allegiance, Hume maintained (540 *sq.*) that a small and rudimentary society might exist without government, although never without the three fundamental social arrangements antecedent to formal government, viz. stability of possession, transference of property by consent, and promise-keeping. He agreed, indeed, with Locke in supposing that some *unorganized* condition of society must have existed for a long time,—indeed, until foreign aggression or other causes led to the institution of determinate civil government, usually monarchical at the first. Therefore, he said, the 'creed of a party amongst us' was correct in one particular. The *first* obligation of obedience to organized government came from a definite historical bond, contract, or promise.

But *only* the first obligation. The members of a rude, ungoverned society voluntarily subordinated themselves, say, to the authority of a captain in war; but the theory of 'consent' could not be applied to their descendants.[1] 'It never was pleaded as an excuse for a rebel, that the first act he performed, after he came to years of discretion, was to levy war against the sovereign of the state' (548). Consequently, it was sophistical of the 'political writers' (549) who (like Locke and the Whigs) defended the doctrine of the 'original contract' to argue that the free and independent subjects might *withdraw* a consent they never personally gave. Hume accepted the conclusion, indeed, that men might be justified in revolting against tyranny for the protection of their liberties; but not for Locke's reasons. The genuine reason, according to Hume, was that public utility, although men might not know it (552), was the ultimate basis of *everything* in this sphere, property, promise-keeping, civil allegiance, and all the rest. Tyranny forced men back upon the ultimate facts of social existence, and not upon a transparent fiction like the voluntary consent of people who, without being consulted, had been *born* into some particular community.

[1] Hobbes, in the Leviathan at least, was rather reticent about tacit consent. He maintained, however (III, 274), that Abraham's seed were a 'party' to Abraham's covenant (see also III, 705). An instance of the contemporary applications of the doctrine may be seen in the following solemn extravagance of Pufendorf's: 'It is rightly presumed that, if an infant had had the use of reason at the time of its birth, and had seen that it could not save its life without the parents' care and the authority therewith connected, it would gladly have consented to it, and would in turn have made an agreement with them for a suitable upbringing' (*De Officio Hominis et Civis*, II. iii. § 2).

Another of Hume's objections to Locke was equally serious. The ' laws of nature ', Hume said, could not have been binding upon, because they could not have been intelligible to, primitive man. Justice, promises and the like, although rather obvious expedients in a developed condition of society, were unintelligible *except* as social or political expedients. Our understanding of them, therefore, must be supposed to advance *pari passu* with the development of society and of government. Indeed, *because* the *first* origin of *government* was an explicit voluntary promise, it followed that promises had had a meaning, and had been recognized as obligatory, before governments could have been formed. And in this matter Hume appealed, not like Locke to immutable and rational ' laws of nature ', but to the slow growth of what, for him, was literally a social sense. Hume's individualistic way of speaking, and to some extent of thinking, became progressively subordinated to the conception that men's minds came slowly to be permeated by a subtle sociality which defined the very meaning of our duties and of duty itself.

Unlike many modern sociologists, Hume never dreamed that our conception of *individuality* might have been evolved from a primitive communal attitude. Therefore he regarded primitive society, as well as civilized government, as an association for mutual benefit. And of course he was pre-evolutionary. Nevertheless, from the genetic point of view, he showed himself to have a much firmer grasp of social realities than either Hobbes or Locke had had. Hobbes, in so far as he was consistent at all, presupposed that predatory primitive man could see, by mere natural reason, that a formal binding covenant would increase his power, although it reversed almost all his natural impulses; and in the very act of doing so, Hobbes assumed a degree of social insight that would have been miraculous without ages of social development. Locke, in principle, committed the same fallacy, although (by supposing primitive man to be both sociable and acquainted with the eternal laws of right and wrong) his theory was, in some respects, superficially more plausible than that of Hobbes. Hume (at least partially) worked himself free from these absurdities, and went a very long way towards recognizing the main implications of a *developing* social sense. He was not content to point out, as any critical and careful student of Mandeville could have seen, that a Hobbism transformed by the admission of custom and education and the way in which ' the

moral virtues'[1] might appear to be 'the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride', was not nearly sufficient, since morality and allegiance could not be built out of *nothing* (500 and 546). On the contrary, Hume set himself to examine the gradual permeation of men's minds by social loyalties, and by a social sense.

The phrase 'social sense' would be culpably vague if it were not equivalent, even in its vagueness, to Hume's 'moral sense'; and I have now to explain the question whose consideration I deferred on p. 228, that is to say, the *morality* of Hume's theory.

As we have seen, Hume based justice, promise-keeping and the other 'artificial' virtues upon self-interest. They were devices which took a long time to be extended to a large organized community (or to humanity at large?). But the object of the device in all cases was to increase the power and security of each member of the society. The device, however, was non-moral in origin, since self-interest, according to Hume, was non-moral. How, then, could it ever be moralized?

Hume's answer (498 *sqq.*) was that any such device became moral when it was approved by the moral sense. Among civilized men, such approval was always *immediate*, and was therefore quite properly called a 'sense'. When we approved we did not commonly think of the reasons for our approval; and when the motive approved was the public interest we *were* moral.

According to Hume, it was sympathy that brought about this development of the moral sense. Without it, our motives could never have been moralized. On the other hand, sympathy, by itself, could never explain the specific forms that duty assumed, and *natural* sympathy would not extend beyond the visible circle of a few friends. The nature of property, promises, and other duties had therefore to be explained by their *de facto* tendency to promote the interest of each, and therefore, collectively, the interest of all. None the less, such actions were *moralizable*, because our sympathy might be gradually and wisely trained to agree with the requirements of an extensive humanity, and when it came to be allied with what *was* for the public benefit we *were* moral. To be sure, the moral man would not, in general, know how and why his sympathy had taken this turn. All he knew, and all he needed to know (unless he were a moralist as well as a moral person) was that he immediately approved something or other.

[1] Mandeville, I, 51.

The moralist could see that the course approved was of advantage to the public. And Hume emphasized the point repeatedly. According to him, it explained the *sense* of duty generally, and, in particular cases, explained our immediate and often quite unintelligent approval of promise-keeping (546), or the fact that every one, by a sentiment that was 'in a great measure infallible' (546), recognized the duty of allegiance to government. Hume even said (546 *sq.*) that 'the distinction of moral good and evil is founded on the pleasure or pain, which results from the view of any sentiment, or character; and as that pleasure or pain cannot be unknown to the person who feels it, it follows, that there is just so much vice or virtue in every character as every one places in it, and that 'tis impossible in this particular we can ever be mistaken'.

In an earlier part of this chapter I have explained that, in my opinion, Hume tended to assume a 'moral sense', conceived broadly on Hutcheson's lines, rather uncritically, and indeed as a datum which any tenable theory had to accept. If this was his plan, he must be admitted to have achieved considerable success. He gave a plausible appearance, at least, to the view that the moral sense was a reality and yet that its apparently ultimate decisions might have a subtle, sinuous, and largely forgotten social origin. On the other hand, one rather peculiar consequence of his argument would appear to be that the moral sense, although a reality, was *not* indispensable for what we call right or moral conduct. According to Hume, the ultimate basis of actions which made for the good of society might always be enlightened self-interest. 'The same self-love', he said (543), 'which renders men so incommodious to each other, taking a new and more convenient direction, produces the rules of justice, and is the *first* motive of their observance.'

If so, it would seem that any one who acted from enlightened self-interest would do precisely what a moral sense, trained unwittingly along the paths of an 'extensive humanity', would direct him to do—although from entirely different motives. Therefore if, as Hobbes and Mandeville had said (although they often argued their case very badly), virtue was *either* the reasonable behest of self-interest for men who could not be solitary, *or* something which men could be educated or even duped into accepting as a means to their self-interest, a selfish motive to it might be evolved just as readily as by way of Hume's disinterested 'sympathy'.

I can find no evidence that Hume ever seriously contemplated the possibility of a man's private interest being utterly and for ever dissimilar from the public interest. He held, it is true, that we immediately approved what was useful or agreeable to others without any thought of our own self-interest, and that others immediately approved what was agreeable or useful to us without any thought of *their* self-interest; but each such approval referred directly or indirectly to the advantage of *all* (i.e. of ourselves *and* others). Again, Hume admitted that a man might be 'the cully of his own integrity' (535) if he conformed to high moral standards when the surrounding moral standard was low; and also that inflexible justice might hurt particular individuals. 'Judges take from a poor man to give to a rich; they bestow on the dissolute the labour of the industrious; and put into the hands of the vicious the means of harming both themselves and others' (579). Hume's inference, in the first case, however, seems to have been that men, under such circumstances, should *not* be 'cullies' or 'contradict, in so sensible a manner, their natural principles and propensities' (536); and in the second type of case, his usual line of argument seems to have been that the alternative was between general anarchy and the occasional hardship of the judge's decision, so that even an unfortunate litigant ought to prefer the latter to the former state. It seems to me, therefore, that Hume's 'moral sense' was a sort of natural luxury, real, undeniable, but unnecessary for its purpose.

The rest of Hume's argument in the *Treatise* was political rather than ethical except for the short sections in which he dealt (*a*) with international morality and (*b*) with chastity. Regarding the former, his conclusion was that princes (who were technically in a 'state of nature') *did* have moral obligations in their princely capacity (e.g. in solemn treaties), but that international duties were, in the main, of lesser force than the duties of individuals within the community, since there was not the same necessity for close co-operation between nations as between citizens. From the standpoint of 'humanity' this conclusion seems questionable; but Hume regarded it as a plain vindication of his moral theory (which made the 'laws of nature' vary with circumstances) and a refutation of Locke's theory of absolute and immutable moral laws. (In the *History*, however, Hume said (ch. 13): 'That neglect, almost total, of truth and justice, which sovereign states discover in their transactions with each other, is an evil universal

and inveterate; is one great source of the misery to which the human race is continually exposed; and it may be doubted whether, in many instances, it be found in the end to contribute to the interests of those princes themselves, who thus sacrifice their integrity to their politics.')

Regarding chastity, Hume tried to show that the rules of 'modesty', which prescribed so differently (in practice) for the two sexes, were 'artificial', principally because the evidence of maternity was always so clear, and the evidence of paternity so doubtful. Here Hume agreed with Mandeville's doctrine (I. 65) that 'the modesty of women is the result of custom and education, by which all unfashionable denudations and filthy expressions are rendered frightful and abominable to them'; and although much that Hume said was obviously true, he may have meant to be mildly 'offensive'.

§ II. The Enquiry

As we saw, Hume said himself that his 'Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals' was 'of all my writings, historical, philosophical or literary, incomparably the best' (G. III. 4); and certainly, to quote one of his own phrases (E. 269), 'so much ingenious knowledge, so genteelly delivered' is unusual in this species of composition. Again, the work was a model of lucid arrangement and of proportionate balance—unless the device of relegating the supposedly harder parts of the discussion to a series of four appendices should be considered a blemish.

Nevertheless, I am of opinion that the ethical parts of the *Treatise* were more important than the so genteel *Enquiry*; and I am certain that if the *Enquiry* is studied as a finished product, without regard to those historical antecedents which leap to the eye in the *Treatise*, it cannot be adequately understood.

Hume's attempt to combine a moral sense theory with a predominantly utilitarian one was, in reality, an intricate and complicated enterprise. It would seem, however (E. 268), that he had persuaded himself, or half-persuaded himself (E. 278), in the *Enquiry* that the simplicity of his theory was its greatest merit. The reality of moral distinctions, he said, could be disputed only by the disingenuous (E. 169 *sqq.*); their true origin could be revealed by 'the experimental method' (E. 174); and what was required was simply an analysis of personal merit (E. 173). Now every one agreed that the social affections

were morally approved, but, since an arbitrary and ill-judged benevolence deserved at the best indulgence and not esteem (E. 181), it was plain that the 'interests of our species' (*ibid.*), or public utility, was the principal characteristic (E. 180) of such benevolence as was morally admirable. Again 'justice', i.e. 'covenants' (E. 185), a judicature (E. 188) and (its principal part) 'property', had public utility for its *sole* justification (E. 183).

Therefore, said Hume, the personal merit that was praised was *largely* based upon public interest; and if we asked *why* we praised it, the answer was that we had a 'humanity or a fellow-feeling with others' (219 n.) and that 'human happiness or misery excites in our breast a sympathetic movement of pleasure or uneasiness' (E. 221). There was therefore no difficulty, in principle, in combining our incontestable moral sense with a theory of morals 'founded chiefly on general usefulness' (E. 229 n.). Again, the fourfold division of personal merit into qualities either useful or immediately agreeable to ourselves or to others, had only to be stated to be completely persuasive (E. 268). There was nothing else that we approved morally, and our moral approval went out to *all* such qualities, at any rate if we were 'men of sense' not 'delirious and dismal fanatics' (E. 270) and could ignore 'verbal' disputes about the question whether natural abilities were moral virtues (E. 312 *sqq.*).

This general statement of Hume's position should be sufficient to show that the *Enquiry* gave a very deft and plausible account of the essential thesis of the *Treatise*, in a form likely to appeal to an average, educated, and but mildly philosophical reader. Indeed, *some* differences between two works with a decade between them might have been expected, even granting that the later work contained a small number of literal transcriptions from the earlier—(e.g. E. 310 n. from 511 n., E. 317 n. from 608 n., E. 247 from 361). On the other hand, I do not think that Sir L. A. Selby-Bigge was right in maintaining that the second work, at least in its change of tone, was 'really and essentially different' from the first (E. xxiii); and since the points he mentioned dealt with some of the more important theoretical questions in Hume's ethical system, I propose to deal with the more important of them in some detail.

(*a*) In the *Enquiry*, this high authority said (E. xxiv), Hume had taken Hutcheson's warning to heart (Tr. III. x) and had declined to pursue the marshlight of a false simplicity, although

in the *Treatise* he had done that very thing in order to get rid of a mob of ultimate moral impulses. Hume, however, protested against 'ten thousand different instincts' in the *Enquiry* (E. 201; his warning about over-simplification (E. 298) was directed against the *recondite* simplicity of the selfish theory (E. 299); and it was followed by the explanation that a frank acceptance of native kindly impulses in mankind was the simpler, and the least forced hypothesis (E. 300). Indeed, Hume explicitly accepted 'Newton's chief rule of philosophizing' (E. 204), i.e. the principle of parsimony.

(*b*) Benevolence, according to this editor, was regarded in the *Treatise* as a 'confined' kindliness towards friends and neighbours, in the *Enquiry* as a general feeling for humanity; and it seems clear that Hume, in the later work, found it inconvenient to restrict the term to 'confined' generosity. On the other hand, he distinguished clearly in the second work (e.g. E. 188, E. 225 n., E. 229 n., E. 298 n.) between 'partiality to our friends' and 'general philanthropy'. It may therefore be doubted whether a tendency to use 'benevolence' as a general term comprising two distinct species, instead of as the name for one of these species only, had any considerable theoretical importance; and the doubt is strengthened by the reflection that Hume neglected, in both works, to face the fundamental difficulties that the distinction implied for his theory. We noted these difficulties when we examined the *Treatise*, and we find them again in the *Enquiry*. If we gave a 'natural and unforced' approbation to 'a parent flying to the relief of his child' (E. 303), we ought, on Hume's principles, to *revise* our approbations, sometimes very drastically, if, for example, the law had given custody of the child to some one else. Again, it seems clear that when Hume spoke of 'humanity' he was really thinking of a rather limited community, and was not seriously concerned about the souls of Hottentots, as if he had been a Christian missionary. Indeed, he remarked very properly that it was better for the general interest of mankind that men should aim at 'a duly limited object' than that they should be prompted by 'loose indeterminate views to the good of a species' (E. 225 n.). Yet Hume's 'humanity' *was* 'loose and indeterminate'.

(*c*) This editor was probably right in maintaining that 'sympathy' in Hume's *Treatise* was 'a solvent to reduce complex feelings to simpler elements' (E. xxvi), whereas, in the *Enquiry*, it became natural philanthropy or fellow-feeling (e.g. E. 260),

that ' particle of the dove ' (E. 271) which might overcome the ' elements of the wolf and serpent ' (*ibid.*). The mere fact that traces of the earlier doctrine of sympathy remained (e.g. E. 224, E. 229, E. 257) would not invalidate this view. On the other hand, this editor's suggestion that Hume became intentionally reticent concerning the ' machinery ' of sympathy is difficult to sustain.

Even if Hume had wished to be reticent, he had no explanation except the ' force of many sympathies ' (E. 276) for the process by which a man might become a disinterested spectator (E. 277) of himself as well as of others and so attain the ' generality ' implied in moral approval. Indeed, the difficulties of Hume's earlier account of this matter were at least as great in the *Enquiry*. In the later work he held that he had a sufficient foundation for his theory if the ' particle of the dove ' was as tiny as you please (E. 271, cf. E. 226, E. 234 n.). Yet, according to him, the ' generality ' of approval implied a sentiment which was (1) *common* to all, or to most, of mankind (E. 272) ; (2) comprehensive of all human actions (*ibid.*) ; (3) directed co-operatively towards a common good (E. 277). It was surely difficult to believe, with Hume, that a *minute* particle of the dove in every human breast could be developed into a *universal* moral sentiment, having each of these three aspects of generality.

(*d*) This editor's statement (E. xxvii) that ' self-love ' was ' much more fully and fairly dealt with in the *Enquiry* than in the *Treatise* ' need not indicate a change of theory. Certainly Hume's most careful account of the matter in the later book (E. 295 *sqq.*) was a beautiful example of detached and fair-minded philosophical criticism. In it Hume had no difficulty at all in showing that Mandeville's view that ' the hunting after this Pulchrum et Honestum [of Shaftesbury] is not much better than a Wild Goose Chace ' (I. 331). He also explained very clearly that the subtler view of the Hobbists and the Epicureans was much harder to refute, the view, namely, that our kindly impulses, however disinterested and spontaneous they might seem to be in the eyes of every fair-minded on-looker, including their possessors, might nevertheless be compounded out of selfishness ' by a philosophical chymistry ' (E. 297) which transmuted their appearance but could not affect their constitution.

Yet the same difficulties affected both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* in this instance also. As long as the question was

whether, in fact, we *did* approve impulses that seemed to be 'benevolent', and, in all probability, really were so, Hume had no difficulty (following Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Butler) in showing that the better moralists, both ancient and modern, were wholly correct in saying that such impulses were definitely a part of human nature. When, on the other hand, the question was whether the 'disinterested' moral sense, or an enlightened self-interest, was the proper moral ground for promoting the general interest, the logic of Hume's position was not so clear. Hume could appeal, no doubt, to the heart and to ingenuous natures (e.g. E. 283). But what had he to say to the head? He could not appeal to a 'reason' or to 'laws of nature' which prescribed dignity, duty, and the propriety of things when, in exceptional cases, honesty was *not* the most expedient policy; and it is not clear that he had anything relevant to say regarding this important difficulty.

'Those philosophers', he declared (E. 218), 'were excusable, who fancied that all our concern for the public might be resolved into a concern for our own happiness and preservation.' And again: 'What theory of morals can ever serve any useful purpose, unless it can show, by a particular detail that all the duties which it recommends, are also the true interest of each individual' (E. 280). In view of such statements it is hardly surprising that Hume came to be regarded as an advocate, not of the moral sense, but of utilitarianism. Indeed, a writer who took the pains that he took to prove that the sense of beauty—whose analogy to the moral sense Hume accepted just as Hutcheson did (cf. 297, 300, 576 *sq.* and E. 173)—was, in essentials, a superficial show inspired by a concealed utility (e.g. 364, E. 212 *sq.*, E. 244), might have argued with at least equal plausibility that the hypothesis of an un- or semi-conscious utilitarianism was preferable to the alleged 'natural and unforced' interpretation of the 'moral sense'.

(*e*) The contention (E. xxviii) that Hume was 'more tolerant to the claims of reason' in the *Enquiry* seems to me to be quite untenable. The doctrine of the *Enquiry*, viz. that reason and sentiment 'concurred' and were hard to disentangle (E. 172) but that the 'final sentence' belonged to sentiment (E. 173) was more urbane and less polemical than the corresponding statements in the *Treatise*, but did not differ in substance. And the *Enquiry* had its polemic too. Hume was so nervous about the term 'relation' in ethics that he even complained (E. 197 n.) that the 'illustrious Montesquieu'

(whose *Esprit des Loix* had appeared in 1748) had followed a will-o'-the-wisp in his doctrine of 'rapports' or relations, although, in fact, Montesquieu had used the term 'rapport' as a mere description of the concomitant variations of laws, on the one hand, and climate, manners, etc., on the other. But Hume's subsequent remarks were much less finicking, and were very similar indeed to what he had said in the *Treatise*. 'Father Malebranche', Hume observed (*ibid.*), 'as far as I can learn, was the first that started this abstract theory of morals, which was afterwards adopted by Cudworth, Clarke and others; and as it excludes all sentiment, and pretends to found everything on reason, it has not wanted followers in this philosophic age.' Whatever may be thought of the historical accuracy of these observations, it is plain that Hume, in the *Enquiry*, had the same opponents principally in his mind as he had had in the *Treatise*, and that his chief concern, in both works, was with a controversy that had been started *of late* (E. 170).

The *Enquiry* was embellished, perhaps over-ornamented, with a multitude of quotations and learned references drawn from a very wide field. These were the methods of Hume the essayist; but they show very clearly how much study of the classics, the French, the historians, as well as of English literature and philosophy, had become part of Hume's mental equipment. It is a fair conjecture, however, that a good deal of Hume's sedulous study in the years succeeding the publication of the *Treatise* was a return to old favourites, and it is not improbable that in re-casting his ethical theory Hume cited passages from authors whom he had either paraphrased or had but half-forgotten when he wrote the earlier book.

A point of some interest concerns the influence of Cicero. Writing to Hutcheson in September, 1739 (B. I. 114)—i.e. before the third volume of the *Treatise* was published—Hume had remarked that 'upon the whole I desire to take my catalogue of virtues from Cicero's *Offices*, not from *The Whole Duty of Man*',[1] and had gone on to argue (p. 115) that Cicero had shown that virtue implied goods other than itself. This remark, in substance, was repeated in the *Enquiry* (E. 319 n.) in a context in which the ancient moralists were explicitly

[1] Published 1659, and ascribed to Richard Allestree and Dr. Fell. In the fable at the conclusion of Bolingbroke's *Dissertation on Parties*, the point of the jest was the multitude of sins in 'that most excellent treatise', *The Whole Duty of Man*.

said to be 'the best models' (E. 318, cf. E. 330). Hume therefore cited Aristotle (E. 319),[1] Epictetus (*ibid.*), Plutarch (E. 227, E. 253) as authorities on his side, as well as Bayle (E. 200), St. Evremond (E. 237, E. 252), Montaigne (E. 264) and Fontenelle (E. 299). But Cicero was obviously his favourite since there were at least nine references to him, often detailed. (E. 177, E. 179, E. 189 n. *sq.*, E. 241, E. 265, E. 266, E. 292, E. 318, E. 319.) Of these references two were to the *De Officiis*, but the others covered a wide range—the *Epistles*, the *Philippics* and other speeches, the *De Natura Deorum*.

There is therefore some interest in noticing the Ciceronian flavour of Hume's ethical theory (in common with Hutcheson's), and so I shall mention some of the more important parallels. (Here I shall refer to the *De Officiis*[2] unless I state the contrary.)

(*a*) *The Moral Sense.* 'Moral goodness and propriety is pleasing to us by and of itself, and touches all our hearts both by its inward essence and by its outward aspect' (II. ix).—Cf. *De Legibus*, I. xvi: 'Common sense has impressed on our minds the first principles of things and has given us a general acquaintance with them, by which we connect with virtue every honourable quality, and with vice all that is disgraceful. But to think that these differences exist only in opinion and not in nature is the part of an idiot.'—It was clear that 'communitas' or the social instinct (I. xliii), and 'humanitas' (III. xxiii) were closely connected with the moral sense.

(*b*) *Natural and Artificial.* Cicero held that there was no private property by nature, but only by occupation, conquest, etc. (I. vii). He also said (II. iv): 'In consequence of city life, laws and customs were established, and then came the equitable distribution of private rights and a definite social system'; or again (II. xxi): 'For although it was by Nature's guidance that men were drawn together into communities, it was in the hope of safeguarding their possessions that they sought the protection of cities.'

(*c*) *Justice.* Its fundamental principle was 'Primum ut ne cui noceatur, deinde ut communi utilitati serviatur' (I. x). It was 'ad hominum consociationem accommodata' (I. xxviii) or to 'conciliatio et consociatio' (I. xli). Again, Cicero held that 'it was the peculiar function of the state and of the city to guarantee to every man the free and undisturbed control of his own property' (II. xxii). Justice, he said (I. xiv), regulated

[1] Also E. 264.

[2] For the most part, as in the Loeb translation.

even ' benignitas ' and took precedence over knowledge (I. xliv).

(*d*) *Natural Abilities and their Merit.* Cicero included wit (lepos) and gentlemanliness, indeed (I. xxxix) all the things ' quae pertinent ad liberalem speciem et dignitatem '.—Cf. *De Fin.* (V. xiii) concerning the talents of the mind. The mind, Cicero there affirmed, had many virtues, both voluntary and non-voluntary, including the non-voluntary virtues of docilitas, memoria and of that which was of talent (*ingeniosi*). Similarly, in the *Tusculan Dissertations* (V. xv), health, strength, beauty, and keenness of the senses were numbered among the virtues.

(*e*) *The Right and the Expedient.* Cicero said (II. iii) that there could be no more pernicious doctrine than that the right and the expedient ever differed (cf. III. viii).

(*f*) *Utility.* Cicero spoke of ' hominum utilitas qua nihil homini esse debet antiquius ' (I. xliii), of ruling justly and legally *utilitatis causa* (I. iv) and said (III. iii) : ' Dubitandum non est, quin numquam possit utilitas cum honestate contendere.'

§ III. Other Ethical Writings

In the piece entitled ' A Dialogue ' Hume argued that, both in morals and in æsthetics, ' the original principles of censure or blame are uniform, and that erroneous conclusions can be corrected by sounder reasoning and larger experience ' (E. 336). Like others in the eighteenth century Hume showed a surprising confidence in the correctness of *its* sentiments.

Beginning with a fanciful picture of Oriental Society—where Usbek was one of the heroes as in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721), and the *Lettres chinoises* of the Marquis d'Argens as well as La Bruyère's Introduction to his translation of Theophrastus (B. I. 324) may have been in Hume's mind—Hume showed the similarity between the crimes approved in his fictitious state of Fourli, and the deeds of Harmodius and Aristogiton at Athens, or of Brutus and Cassius in Rome. Nevertheless, he contended that the ancient approval of such deeds did not conflict with his own fundamental theory. Circumstances altered cases. ' The Rhine flows north, the Rhone south ; yet both spring from the *same* mountain, and are also actuated, in their opposite directions, by the *same* principle of gravity ' (E. 333). Therefore, although a modern Frenchman's idea of merit might differ vastly from an ancient

Athenian's, and a modern Englishman's from an ancient Roman's, 'the principles upon which men reason in morals are always the same' (E. 335), even granting that the English were proud of their resemblance to the Romans, and the French of their resemblance to the Athenians (E. 333).

Of this piece Hume said: 'I have scarcely wrote any thing more whimsical or whose merit I am more diffident of' (B. I. 321). It appeared in 1751[1]; and its principal thesis was dubiously consistent with the opening paragraphs of the essay 'Of the standard of taste' (1757) where Hume suggested (G. III. 267) that men's common approbation of virtue was largely a *verbal* agreement, since virtue *connoted* praiseworthiness, and therefore that 'this variety of taste' might be 'still greater in reality than in appearance' (G. III. 266). At a later stage in the essay, however, Hume professed to know with confidence what the 'eternal blemishes' were (G. III. 284, cf. 278).

Among the earlier essays which were, rather wisely, withdrawn in later editions, there was one on 'Moral Prejudices' curiously illustrated by a letter which, if it was fanciful, did some credit to Hume's invention. Another essay described the intellectual and moral advantages of a middle station. An essay 'Of impudence and modesty' regretfully admitted that 'nothing carries a man through the world like a true genuine natural impudence' (G. IV. 381); and a tedious allegory followed. Another essay 'Of love and marriage' defended equality between the sexes in the interests of matrimonial harmony and again appended a dullish allegory. The same theme reappeared in one of the essays *not* withdrawn, which contained a temperate and well-argued defence of monogamy together with some animadversions on facile divorce (G. III. 231 *sqq.*). In another essay not withdrawn entitled 'Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature' (G. III. 150 *sqq.*) it was argued that exaggerated standards of comparison were principally responsible for our divergent opinions in this matter, and that the partisans of self-love had misunderstood their business.

By far the most important of Hume's minor ethical pieces were the sketches called 'The Epicurean', 'The Stoic', 'The Platonist', 'The Sceptic'. In these, as he explained (G. III. 197 n.), he tried not so much to set forth the tenets of any particular sect as to delineate a certain natural temper to

[1] As an appendix to the *Enquiry*.

which a particular type of philosophy appealed. And so he showed that happiness might be sought in different ways—in Epicurean natural enjoyment (not necessarily vicious), as the Stoic reward of labour (including industry and self-mastery) and in the idealistic (or Platonic) pursuit of *mind* and of the contemplation of the most perfect object.

In these three essays Hume succeeded in expressing, gracefully and sympathetically, some of the greatest attractions to the human spirit, but his essay on the 'Sceptic' was a more considerable contribution to general moral theory. Human nature, Hume said, was too various to be explained by *any* restricted set of principles (G. III. 213 *sqq.*). Nature, not artifice, should guide us (G. III. 224 *sqq.*); and the consolations of philosophy (especially the Stoical) could not, and often should not (G. III. 225 *sqq.*), be efficacious. '*Your sorrow is fruitless, and will not change the course of destiny.* Very true; And for that very reason I am sorry' (*ibid.*).

Again, the essay proceeded to be rather more sceptical than Hume generally permitted himself to be on ethical subjects. The burden of it was that 'beauty and worth are merely of a relative nature, and consist in an agreeable sentiment, produced by an object in a particular mind, according to the peculiar structure and constitution of that mind' (G. III. 217). Hume explained, indeed (G. III. 219 n.), that this 'secondary' or (in modern terms) this 'tertiary' status of beauty and worth did not affect their reality in human experience, and also that 'there is a sufficient uniformity in the senses and feelings of mankind to make all these qualities the objects of art and reasoning'. Nevertheless, he laid emphasis upon the subjectivity at the root of the theory. 'Vary the structure of the mind or inward organs, the sentiment no longer follows, though the form remains the same' (G. III. 218). In short, again to use modern terms, value and worth were not *constitutive* of any real objects. 'Euclid has fully explained every quality of the circle, but has not, in any proposition, said a word of its beauty. The reason is evident. Beauty is not a quality of the circle. . . . It is only the effect, which that figure produces upon a mind' (G. III. 219).

This last statement, it is true, was quoted verbatim in the *Enquiry*—but not as a proof of a *variable* subjectivity. And sometimes, at least, Hume admitted a desire for a moral principle that was not confined to human sentiment, even of a universal human cast.

'I wish from my heart', he wrote to Hutcheson (B. I. 119), 'I could avoid concluding, that since morality, according to your opinion, as well as mine, is determined merely by sentiment, it regards only human nature and human life. This has been often urged against you, and the consequences are very momentous. . . . If morality were determined by reason, that is the same to all rational beings; but nothing but experience can assure us that the sentiments are the same. What experience have we with regard to superior beings? How can we ascribe to them any sentiments at all? They have implanted those sentiments in us for the conduct of life like our bodily sensations, which they possess not themselves.'

In his *History* Hume was often *very* moral. Thus, writing of Somerset, he said (ch. 47): 'The favourite had hitherto escaped the inquiry of justice: but he had not escaped that still voice which can make itself be heard amidst all the hurry and flattery of a court, and astonishes the criminal with a just representation of his most secret enormities.'

CHAPTER IX

POLITICS, ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND CRITICISM

HUME, in the Introduction to the *Treatise*, said that in '*Logic, Morals, Criticism and Politics*, is comprehended almost every thing, which it can in any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind' (xx). We must now consider how far his design of a science of human nature was completed, in the fullness of time, with regard to the latter part of this programme.

§ I. Politics

According to C. E. Vaughan, 'the first thing to strike us' about Hume's political theory was that it 'is firmly embedded in his moral theory: that, unlike Locke and other champions of individual rights, he makes no attempt to separate the one thing from the other'.[1]

This judgment seems curious. Locke expressly said (C.G. § 131) that the 'peace, safety and public good of the people' was the *sole* end of government which (§ 134) was itself subject to natural (i.e. to moral) law. Similarly, Harrington said (*Oceana*: The Preliminaries) that 'there is a common right, law of nature, or interest of the whole, which is more excellent and so acknowledged to be by the agents themselves, than the right or interest of the parts only'; and he quoted Hooker and Grotius in confirmation. In short, Hume's predecessors *did* believe in the ethical foundation of all government; and Hume *contrasted* the moral foundations of political allegiance with the moral foundations of other virtues.

To expand what, in part, we have already seen, Hume's argument in the *Treatise* was briefly as follows:—The advantages of government for enforcing 'the universal and inflexible observance of the rules of justice' (534) were obvious even to the rudest mind that 'has had experience of society' (*ibid.*). Men, however, suffered from an *ineradicable* (537) tendency to

[1] *Studies in the History of Political Philosophy*, I, 307 *sq.*

snatch at a *near* good, and so had to adopt the expedient of submitting to governors whose interest it was to take longer views. Such rulers, however imperfect (cf. G. III. 105), might be expected to execute the laws, and to decide puzzling cases, with greater impartiality than any one else, and also to undertake public works (such as the building of bridges and of harbours) where the remuneration was too slow to attract private enterprise (538 *sq.*).

While promise-keeping, like property, Hume thought, was antecedent to organized government, it was a serious mistake (he contended) to base political allegiance upon a covenant. Since governments were *first* instituted by formal contract, its *first* founders had the duty of keeping their word; but for all others the duty of allegiance was *another* implication of that very 'interest of the public' that was itself the foundation of promise-keeping (543). Therefore *both* promise-keeping *and* allegiance were means to the end of general welfare, and the two means were 'perfectly distinct' (544). Indeed, men frequently bound themselves under *legal* penalties to perform their *moral* duty of covenant-keeping (544 *sq.*). 'Tacit' promise-keeping or *implied* consent was sheer fiction. Men accepted allegiance to the established government as a plain obligation without any thought of what some coterie among their ancestors might or might not have promised. Again, tyranny justified rebellion, not because a strained prerogative broke an old-world promise, but because tyranny was a social nuisance (although it was easy to understand how some men's consciences (551) fell into the extravagance of passive obedience).

Again, the distinction between the *original* institution of government (by consent) and the acceptance of an *established* government (without consent) solved problems that were quite intractable to the theory of the social contract. Social stability was a great part of social security (555). Therefore revolutions should be rare (554); and many social rules might be very useful although they were 'frivolous' on their merits. Thus succession in a newly instituted régime (Hume was thinking probably of Richard Cromwell) depended on a 'frivolous' imagination (cf. 566). Long possession, present possession, and conquest were good *practical* reasons and nothing more. And a subtle casuistry in these affairs was the very worst way in which men could employ their wits. 'In this particular the study of history confirms the reasonings of true philosophy;

which, showing us the original qualities of human nature, teaches us to regard the controversies in politics as incapable of any decision in most cases, and as entirely subordinate to the interests of peace and liberty' (562, cf. G. III. 462).

This discussion in the *Treatise* (distressingly attenuated in the *Enquiry*, E. 205 *sqq.*) is the fullest *philosophical* statement of Hume's political theory that we possess.[1] His most influential writings on the subject, however, were the political disquisition in his *Essays*.

In the Preface to his first volume[2] of essays (1741) Hume said: 'Most of these Essays were wrote with a view of being published as Weekly-Papers and were intended to comprehend the designs both of the *Spectators* and *Craftsmen*' (G. III. 41), and Hume may originally have thought of publishing them in a periodical like the *Thistle* or the *Patriot* that assiduously reported Bolingbroke's arguments to an Edinburgh public.[3] In any case, Hume stuck closely, although not at all obsequiously, to the heels of Bolingbroke's argument in the *Craftsman*, later republished in 1748 as the *Dissertation on Parties*.

[1] Except the *History* taken as a whole.

[2] This volume contained the following political essavs: 'Of the Liberty of the Press', 'That Politics may be reduced to a Science', 'Of the first Principles of Government', 'Of the Independency of Parliament', 'Whether the British Government inclines more to Absolute Monarchy or to a Republic', 'Of Parties in General', 'Of the Parties of Great Britain', 'Of Liberty and Despotism'. The second volume (1742) further contained 'A Character of Sir Robert Walpole' (later a footnote to the second of the above). These essays along with 'Of National Characters' (1748) and 'Of the Origin of Government', added in the last edition, are to be found in the collection commonly known as *Essays, Part I*. The collection called *Essays, Part II* contained 'Of some remarkable Customs' (in politics), 'Of the Original Contract' (Hume's fullest account of this particular theory), 'Of the Protestant Succession', 'Of Passive Obedience', and (in Harringtonian vein) 'Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth'. The essays on 'Passive Obedience' and on 'The Original Contract' were first published in 1748 along with an essay 'Of National Characters': that on the 'Protestant Succession' in 1752. The essay entitled 'Of the Coalition of Parties' was first published in 1758.

This note refers only to the political, and not to the philosophical, literary or economic essays, although some of the economic essays and also the essay 'Of the Rise and Progress of Arts and Sciences' (which appeared in the 1742 volume) have affinities with political theory. The reader who is interested in questions of the dates of the editions should consult R. Metz, *David Hume, passim*, and J. Orr, *David Hume* (1903), Appendix, as well as T. H. Grose (G. III, 15–86).

[3] M. S. Kuypers, *Studies in the Background of Hume's Empiricism*, p. 109.

Bolingbroke attacked the Walpole régime on behalf of the country party. 'To corrupt and to divide', he began (*D.P.*, Letter I), 'are the trite and wicked expedients by which some ministers in all ages have affected to govern.' Such methods, he said, were far worse than the mere 'oiling of the wheels of government' (*D.P.*, X), since they were commingled with the immense increase in the revenues and dependents of the crown (*D.P.*, XVIII).

In opposition to the court party, therefore, Bolingbroke (with what degree of sincerity need not here be considered) represented the country party as being so constitutional and so patriotic as not to be a party at all. 'A country party', he said, 'must be authorized by the voice of the country. It must be formed on principles of common interest. . . . A party thus constituted is improperly called a party. It is the nation speaking and acting in the discourse and conduct of particular men' (*D.P.*, IV). The country party was the defender of the constitution, i.e. of 'the assemblage of laws, institutions and customs, derived from certain fixed principles of reason directed to certain fixed objects of public good, that compose the general system according to which the community hath agreed to be governed' (*D.P.*, X). The real division in England was between the court faction and the patriots, and not between the mixed groups called Whigs and Tories, as the anomalous alignment of the dissenters, and of Whigs and Tories at the Revolution, had clearly showed.

Thus Bolingbroke professed to defend the 'Magna Charta of the Revolution Settlement'—the 'delicious and wholesome fruit' (*D.P.*, XII) of our ancient liberties now happily matured —which depended upon *contract*. 'Our constitution', he said —and also the balance of power between the three estates of the realm—'is in the strictest sense a bargain, a conditional contract between the prince and the people, as it always has been and still is between the representative and collective bodies of the nation' (*D.P.*, XIII). For Bolingbroke loved the glamour of the *original* contract, and was not content with the pretty definite 'bargain' between the Hanoverians and the British Parliament.

Encouraged by the success of the *Craftsman*, Hume seems to have thought that a detached philosopher, applying the political principles of the *Treatise*, might also make a bid for popular favour. 'I hope this design', he said, 'will be acceptable to the moderate of both parties; at the same time that,

perhaps, it may displease the bigots of both' (G. III. 41 *sq.*). And, again: 'For my part I shall always be more fond of promoting moderation than zeal; though perhaps the surest way of producing moderation in every party is to increase our zeal for the public' (G. III. 107).

On certain points Hume agreed with Bolingbroke. The distinction between court and country, he thought (G. III. 134, cf. 140), *was* more fundamental than the boundaries between Whig and Tory 'which confound and distract our government' (G. III. 137); and his examples were similar to Bolingbroke's (G. III. 140 and 142: cf. the *History*, ch. 70, regarding the dissenters). Hume was apprehensive concerning contemporary finance and the national debt (G. III. 354, cf. 476). And he did not worship Sir Robert Walpole who, he said, 'would have been esteemed more worthy of his high station had he never possessed it; and is better qualified for the second than for the first place in any government. His ministry has been more advantageous to his family than to the public, better for his age than for posterity, and more pernicious by bad precedents than by real grievances' (G. IV. 396).

In the main, however, Hume was critical of Bolingbroke. The immoderate party men, he conceded, were likely 'to change a good constitution into a bad one' (G. III. 109). Nevertheless, there must be *real* factions or parties, based on divergences of interest, principle or affection (G. III. 130). Again the *influence* of the crown with regard to offices and placemen (*l.c.*, 121 n.) was necessarily great, and was quite different from the 'corruption' of private bribery. In general, Hume said, it was no bad thing, and probably inevitable that the British Government should develop towards its euthanasia in monarchical absolutism (G. III. 126). The alleged advantages of free government had probably been overpraised (G. III. 156 *sqq.*), and, historically speaking, the English had been an absolute government 'in a great measure . . . till the middle of the last century, notwithstanding the numerous panegyrics on ancient English liberty' (G. III. 99 n.). (This sentence was subsequently withdrawn: the last part of it very early, the rest in 1770.)

Regarding more general questions, Hume seems to have vacillated concerning the status of political theory. At one point he claimed quasi-mathematical certainty for a part of the science (G. III. 99), and particularly for the principle

(G. III. 101) that 'an hereditary prince, a nobility without vassals, and a people voting by their representatives, form the best monarchy, aristocracy and democracy'. For the most part, however, Hume's argument led him quite the other way. 'The world', he said (G. III. 156), 'is still too young to fix many general truths in politics, which will remain true to the latest posterity.' 'All political questions are infinitely complicated' (G. III. 475). And plain anomalies, like the Athenian custom of indicting retrospectively the proposer of a law which had been passed, and had proved disastrous in its working, or the British press-gang, forced us to consider 'all general maxims in politics' as things to be received 'with great caution' (G. III. 374).

Regarding the relations between ethics and politics, we should note that Hume's sharp division between 'opinion of interest' and 'opinion of right' (G. III. 110), was scarcely consistent with his general ethical theory; and may also mention some points on the borderline between ethics (widely interpreted) and politics.

In the essay 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences' (G. III. 174 *sqq.*) Hume argued that 'law, the source of all security and happiness', was 'the slow product of order and of liberty' yet was 'a hardy plant' which 'when it has once taken root . . . will scarcely ever perish' (*l.c.*, 185). On the other hand, he maintained that the liberal arts 'and also good breeding and good manners' since they depended 'on a fine taste or sentiment' were 'easily lost' (*ibid.*). He also said (G. III. 300 *sqq.*) that happiness was compounded of three ingredients, action, pleasure and indolence (*l.c.*, 300). The *History* (ch. 2) contained the very characteristic statement that 'good morals and knowledge are almost inseparable, in every age, though not in every individual'.

§ II. Economics

In the Scottish University tradition, the subject of economics, along with politics and jurisprudence, pertained to the Chair of Moral Philosophy. Thus Hutcheson in his posthumously published *Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (1747) dealt with the balance of trade, governmental regulation, and 'the values of goods and of coin', under the general heading of the 'law of nature' and with special reference to contracts. Hume, however, went a long way towards giving these subjects an independent status, and, on the whole, was correct in opining that it was unusual to employ 'refined and subtle' principles

'on such vulgar subjects' (G. III. 288) as commerce, luxury, money interest, the balance and jealousy of trade, taxes, public credit and population, i.e. upon the subjects of his 'Political Discourses' (1752), later known as his *Essays, Part II.*

He was singularly well equipped for advancing this branch of inquiry since, besides being a first-rate dialectician and social philosopher, he had very extensive historical knowledge, and belonged to a circle greatly interested in economic questions. Evidence of the last of these points may be found in his correspondence with Oswald of Dunnikier (B. I. 301 *sqq.*) and in his connexion with the Select Society.

I shall divide what I have to say about Hume's economics under four heads.

(*a*) Regarding what may be called the philosophy of economics, Hume admitted that there might be a contrariety between the greatness of a state and the happiness of its members, since the labour that was not needed for subsistence might be employed to equip and maintain fleets and armies (G. III. 290). He held, however, that with regard to trade and manufactures 'the greatness of the sovereign and the happiness of the state are, in a great measure united' (*l.c.*, 294).

In the last analysis, he said, 'everything in the world is purchased by labour; and our passions are the only causes of labour' (*l.c.*, 293). Similarly, 'trade and industry are really nothing but a stock of labour' (*l.c.*, 294, cf. 315). When a society emerged from savagery (i.e. from subsistence upon fishing and hunting) it had to devote itself almost exclusively to agriculture (*l.c.*, 289). But proficiency in agriculture soon yielded a superfluity, and then the society had either to become indolent or to employ the hands not wanted for agriculture in manufacturing 'all the commodities which are necessary or ornamental to human life' (*ibid.*).

Manufactured goods were therefore, Hume said, to be regarded as reservoirs of convenience or of enjoyment, and they increased the happiness of a community enormously, provided that their distribution was not grossly inequitable. 'A too great disproportion among the citizens weakens any state. Every person, if possible, ought to enjoy the fruits of his labour, in a full possession of all the necessaries and many of the conveniences of life' (*l.c.*, 296, cf. 294). Hume condemned slavery[1] (*l.c.*, 385 *sqq.*) and viewed the redistribution

[1] Cf. Pufendorf, *De Officio Hominis et Civis*, II. iv. § 5: 'Humanity bids us never forget that a slave is nevertheless a man'.

of property with equanimity. 'In 500 years', he said (*l.c.*, 367), 'the posterity of those now in the coaches, and of those upon the boxes, will probably have changed places, without affecting the public by these revolutions.' Similarly in the *History* (ch. 17) he said that he could not 'but regard with some degree of approbation' the verses:

> When Adam delv'd and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?

Again he argued that foreign trade, by giving employment to the export trades and by importing what was serviceable, increased the 'stock' of the community, and was therefore heartily desirable (*l.c.*, 295). Mandeville, it was true (*l.c.*, 308 n.), had propounded the silly paradox that luxury was a vice and yet to the advantage of mankind. But luxury, said Hume, was 'a word of uncertain signification'—indeed Hume altered the title of the essay 'Of Luxury' to 'Of Refinement in the Arts' in the 1770 edition. Certainly, he admitted, there might be excess of 'luxury', but, in the main, 'refinements' in the liberal and in the mechanical arts marched together. Even 'luxury' was 'in general preferable to sloth and idleness, which would commonly succeed in its place, and are more hurtful both to private persons and to the public' (*l.c.*, 309); and humanity gained both in liberty and in delicacy of enjoyment. (Of the connexion between civil liberty and extensive commerce Adam Smith said (*W. of N.*, Bk. III. ch. iv): 'This, though it has been the least observed, is by far the most important of all their effects. Mr. David Hume is the only writer who, so far as I know, has hitherto taken notice of it.')

(*b*) Hume's main contributions to technical economic theory depended on his analysis of money. Money, he said, 'is none of the wheels of trade. It is the oil which renders the motions of the wheels more smooth and easy' (*l.c.*, 309 and 320). In an isolated state, say somewhere in the Pacific, money would be only a 'method of rating' (*l.c.*, 312) which would register the proportions between marketable commodities and circulating coin (*l.c.*, 316). 'Men and commodities are the real strength of any community' (*l.c.*, 319); and their price in money, in an isolated community, could not matter except temporarily—for Hume conceded that an increase in the coin in circulation gave a temporary fillip to industry, up to the time that prices adjusted themselves to the new supply of money (*l.c.*, 313 *sqq.*). No doubt, an isolated state was differ-

ent from a state that traded with its neighbours; but money, like water, would always find its international level. If prices in any state were higher than in neighbouring states, a foreign purchaser could not be induced to buy. If prices were relatively low, the foreigner would buy; and therefore pay. 'I should as soon dread', Hume said (*l.c.*, 331, cf. 333), 'that all our springs and rivers should be exhausted as that money should abandon a kingdom where there are people and industry.'

It seems an understatement to describe this theory, in Gide's words,[1] as a *hint* at Ricardo's doctrine of the automatic regulation of the balance of trade by variations in the value of money; and Hume's analysis was certainly far clearer than Locke's, who said that gold and silver had received an 'imaginary' value by general consent,[2] that 'though they serve for few, yet they command all the conveniences of life, and therefore in a plenty of them consist riches' (p. 12) and inferred, like a complete mercantilist, that 'riches do not consist in having more gold and silver, but in having more in proportion than the rest of the world' (*ibid.*, p. 13). Nevertheless, Hume does not seem to have stated sufficiently clearly that money, like oil, was itself a commodity, and that no community would exchange goods *for money*, unless it *wanted* money rather than goods. (Hume's later explanation to the Abbé Morellet was that gold and silver had 'intrinsic value' (B. II. 426) but that *minted* money consisted of white or yellow tokens.)

Indeed, if Hume had consistently regarded money as *only* a method of rating it is hard to see what (except prejudice arising out of the failure of Law's banking schemes) led him to say that paper money was 'artificial' (*l.c.*, 311), a 'counterfeit' (*ibid.*) and a proof of our 'infatuation' (*l.c.*, 337 n.), or why he denied that money-changers might perform a useful social function. '*Merchants*', he said (*l.c.*, 324), as well as 'husbandmen and artisans' were 'one of the most useful races of men'. But bankers were in a different case (*l.c.*, 339); and as for money-jobbers; 'What possible advantage is there which the nation can reap by the easy transference of stock from hand to hand? . . . What production we owe to Change Alley, or even what consumption, except that of coffee, and pen, ink and paper, I have not yet learned' (*l.c.*, 363 n.).

[1] Gide and Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines*, p. 165.

[2] *Considerations of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money*, p. 22; *Works*, Vol. V (ed. 1801).

On the other hand, Hume effectively refuted the type of economic opinion commonly known, since Adam Smith's day, as 'The Mercantile System'.

Except in France, Hume said (*l.c.*, 331), it was generally known that it was bad business to prohibit the export of a valuable commodity, such as corn, when the production could meet the foreign as well as the home demand; but even in nations 'well acquainted with commerce' (*ibid.*) there remained a very singular prejudice in favour of the monetary 'balance of trade'. Apart from expenses of transport, however (Hume said), there was no *natural* economic cause that could conceivably affect the proportional level of money 'to the commodities, labour, industry and skill which is in the several states' (*l.c.*, 335 n.). Taxes on imports, he admitted, might legitimately be levied to encourage home or colonial manufactures (*l.c.*, 343); but, in the main, 'a government has great reason to preserve with care its people and its manufactures. Its money, it may safely trust to the course of human affairs, without fear or jealousy' (*l.c.*, 345).

The 'jealousy of trade' was therefore absurd. 'Nature, by giving a diversity of geniuses, climates and soils, to different nations, has secured their mutual intercourse and commerce, as long as they all remain industrious and civilized (*l.c.*, 346). Staple industries, if there were any, indicated 'some peculiar and natural advantages for raising the commodity' (*l.c.*, 347). In short, the interchange of goods was a gain of real wealth, and the emulation and imitation of our neighbours was our principal safeguard against sloth and barbarism. Even a people like the Dutch who had few natural advantages might preserve their high commercial standing for a considerable time *if their neighbours flourished*; but the 'malignant' game of trying to beggar one's neighbour, could, if successful, have no other effect than to choke us with coin, and leave our international trade entirely forlorn.

From the premiss that money was but the measure of wealth, Hume inferred that abundance of money could not lower the rate of interest. Interest, he said, was an adjustment between lenders and borrowers, and it followed the laws of supply and demand (*l.c.*, 322 *sq.*). The habits of a people determined borrowing (e.g. (*l.c.*, 328) building a house or portioning a daughter), and although an extensive commerce 'by producing large stocks' (*l.c.*, 327) increased the resources of the lenders, the rate of interest would be low only if the lenders had to compete with one another.

Hume also discussed taxation and public credit. Of the former he said that the 'new' maxim that taxation, by stimulating industry, could always bear any burden imposed on it (*l.c.*, 316) had obviously a very limited application. For exorbitant taxes produced despair (*l.c.*, 358 n.). He also remarked that a 'duty upon commodities' (especially luxury commodities) 'checked itself' (*ibid.*) and prevented a people from being entirely ruined; but that 'arbitrary' and poll-taxes were emphatically to be condemned.

Regarding public credit, Hume held that 'it would scarcely be more imprudent to give a prodigal son a credit in every banker's shop in London, than to impower a statesman to draw bills, in this manner, upon posterity' (*l.c.*, 362), that 'public stocks, being a kind of paper-credit, have all the disadvantages attending that species of money' (*l.c.*, 365), that in the growing powers of stock-holders 'the seeds of ruin are scattered with such profusion as not to escape the eye of the most careless observer' (*l.c.*, 367); that a Capital Levy was impracticable (*l.c.*, 370 *sq.*); that voluntary bankruptcy of the state, which need not be very disastrous (*l.c.*, 372), might seem too violent a remedy to our statesmen, and therefore that Britain might be doomed. 'These seem to be the events', Hume said (*l.c.*, 374), 'which are not very remote, and which reason foresees as clearly almost as she can do any thing that lies in the womb of time.' (In his correspondence Hume frequently referred to this topic (H. 130). A striking example was a letter of 25 October 1769 (H. 114) where he said: 'I am of a very sanguine disposition. Notwithstanding my age, I hope to see a public bankruptcy, the total revolt of America, the expulsion of the English from the East Indies, the diminution of London to less than a half.')

(*c*) Mr. Bonar has called Hume 'the founder of British economics' (*Theories of Population*, p. 174). In *Palgrave's Dictionary of Political Economy*, on the other hand, it is stated (Art. Hume) that Hume had been forestalled by Barbon and by Sir Dudley North in his views concerning the precious metals and the balance of trade, and that Barbon and Massie had anticipated his theory of interest. It seems difficult to accept Dr. Bonar's opinion without reserve in view of the very close similarity between Hume's *Political Discourses* and Nicholas Barbon's (very brief) discussions, 'A Discourse of Trade' (London, 1690), and 'A Discourse concerning coining the new Money lighter; In answer to Mr. Lock's Considerations about raising the Value of Money' (London, 1696).

In the first of these 'Discourses' Barbon held that the stock of a nation was infinite, and that the staple of each country was the foundation of its foreign trade (p. 6); that money was the *measure* of value, 'a change or pawn for the value of all other things' (p. 21); that 'money hath a certain value because of the Law; but the value of gold and silver are (*sic*) uncertain, and varies their price, as much as Copper, Lead or other metals' (p. 25); that 'the importation of raw silk is more profitable to the government than gold or silver; because there are more hands employed in the throwing and weaving of the first, than there can be in working the latter' (p. 30); that 'trade provides the magazines of war' (p. 40); that 'the two chief causes of the decay of trade are the many prohibitions and high interest' (p. 71); and that, not necessity, but 'the wants of the mind' made trade. In his second Discourse, Barbon argued against Locke that there was no intrinsic value in silver; that money, and not silver, was the instrument and measure of commerce 'by the authority of the government where it was coined' (The Contents); that gold and silver were commodities as well as lead or iron (p. 7); that the doctrine of the Balance of Trade rested on the false supposition 'that gold and silver are the only riches' (p. 36); and concluded that 'a trading nation is made rich by traffic and the industry of the inhabitants, and that the native stock of a nation can never be wasted', with the consequence that 'no sort of commodities ought to be totally prohibited, and that the freer the trade is, the better the nation will thrive' (p. 59).

Hume's reputation as an economist was,[1] and remains, greater on the Continent than in his own country, and was less thoroughly eclipsed by the flooded light of the *Wealth of Nations*. This was partly due to the international outlook of Hume's *Political Discourses*, and to the care Hume had taken to study such works as Melon's [2] 'Essai politique sur le commerce' (1734) and Dutot's [3] 'Réflexions politiques sur le commerce' (1738).[4]

[1] Greig (p. 255) cites d'Argenson, de Noailles, Maupertuis, Mirabeau, and Duclos in confirmation.

[2] G. III. 289 n., 314 n., and 363 n. [3] G. III. 314 n. and 363 n.

[4] Melon wished to raise the value of money artificially in the interests of the king. Dutot endeavoured to refute him. Dutot further agreed with Law that money was only an instrument, and that banks should help the instrument to work. He tried to explain Law's actual failure. Hume also referred to P. de Verney (G. III. 314 n.) and an early note in his handwriting (B. I. 131 and 365) shows that he had consulted Vauban's *Projet d'un dime royale*, 1707 (cf. G. III. 326).

In his later years, Hume corresponded fairly continuously with eminent French economists, including Turgot; but Hume was no physiocrat. His criticism of the single-tax on land (G. III. 359 n.), it is true, referred to Locke, not to Quesnay or to Turgot; for Hume wrote before these physiocrats; and Locke had said (*Considerations*, p. 60): 'It is in vain, in a country whose great fund is land, to hope to lay the public charge of the government on any thing else; there at last it will terminate. The merchant (do what you can) will not bear it, the labourer cannot, and therefore the landlord must.' But Turgot, in correspondence, could not persuade Hume to change his views concerning the relations between commerce and agriculture; [1] and in a letter to the Abbé Morellet (B. II. 427) Hume called the physiocrats 'the set of men the most chimerical and most arrogant that now exist, since the annihilation of the Sorbonne'—although Morellet came very near to being one of them.

(*d*) Hume's discussion of the population question in his long essay 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' aroused great contemporary interest, as may be seen from the prominence given to it in the *Monthly Review* of 1752; and Wallace, an Edinburgh clergyman who, during Hume's absence from Edinburgh,[2] and probably about 1750, had read a paper on the subject to the Philosophical Society there, published his *Dissertation*, with an appendix criticizing Hume's conclusions, in 1753. (Keith, the titular Earl Marischal, in a letter to Rousseau, said that Hume not only encouraged Wallace to publish his dissertation, but revised the proofs.)[3] The main interest of this essay of Hume's depends, it is true, upon an increment only partially earned because Malthus, in his celebrated *Essay*,[4] said he had deduced his fundamental principle from 'Hume, Wallace, Dr. Adam Smith and Dr. Price'. Hume's essay, however, had an immediate influence upon the Continent, where Süssmilch [5] and others gladly accepted his refutation of Montesquieu's strangely confident assertion (G. III. 383) that the world had contained fifty times as many inhabitants in Julius Caesar's time as in 1748.

Hume's discussion was, of course, entirely secular. He had no interest, for example, in Derham's attempt to prove the influence of a divine hand in the 'sufficient stock' of proper

[1] *Letters of Eminent Persons*, etc., p. 147.
[2] See Bonar, *Theories*, etc., pp. 175 *sqq.*
[3] Bonar, p. 176.
[4] The Preface.
[5] Bonar, *op. cit.*, pp. 167 *sq.*

inhabitants of the earth [1] (Boyle Lectures, 1711–12); and Hume did not deal with the statistical computations which Derham, following Graunt and Petty, had employed; for the excellent reason that he held (and tried to prove, very learnedly, in the second part of his essay) that the ancients had not shown 'exactness and care' (G. III. 414 n.) in their numerical estimates.

In default of adequate statistics, all that could be done, Hume said, was to attempt an inquiry into the general causes of populousness (*l.c.*, 413 *sq.*), and, even so, a decisive answer in this dispute between the partisans of the ancients and of the moderns could scarcely be expected. 'What can we do but amuse ourselves by talking *pro* and *con*, on an interesting subject, and thereby correcting all hasty and violent determinations?' (*l.c.*, 400).

One at least of Hume's statements sounds decidedly Malthusian. 'The prolific virtue of men', he said (*l.c.*, 398, cf. 384), 'were it to act to its full extent without that restraint which poverty and necessity imposes upon it, would double the number every generation.' On the whole, however, despite this explicit reference to the 'geometrical ratio', it is probable that Malthus deduced more from Adam Smith's statements that 'every species of animals multiplies in proportion to the means of their subsistence and no species can ever multiply beyond it', and that 'poverty, though it does not prevent the generation, is extremely unfavourable to the rearing of children' (*W. of N.*, I. ch. viii), than from Hume. For Hume, although he assumed that 'improvements and refinements' by procuring the 'easy subsistence of men', consequently procured men's 'propagation and increase'; that the happiness (i.e. the prosperity) 'of any society and its populousness are necessary attendants' (*l.c.*, 388 n.); and that 'where there is room for more people, they will always arise' (*l.c.*, 384 n.); did not assert either that man's prolific virtue was (speaking broadly) *inevitably* exercised, or that the increase of prosperity must always be so much slower than the increase of population, that there must always be a large and highly uncomfortable proportion of the earth's inhabitants waging an unequal war with an inadequate subsistence.

On the contrary, Hume's argument was that 'every wise, just and mild government, by rendering the condition of its subjects easy and secure, will always abound most in people,

[1] Bonar, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

as well as in commodities and riches' (*l.c.*, 384. Cf. Hume's continuation of the apparently Malthusian passage (*l.c.*, 398) quoted above). Hume did not suggest that there were implacable limits to the powers of government in this particular, and therefore he cannot be cited as a witness favourable to Malthus's refutation of the too easy optimism of Godwin and Condorcet.

Indeed, the emphasis of Hume's argument—as was natural in one who agreed with Montesquieu (*Esprit des Loix*, XXIII. xix *sq.*) that Europe was still in a state that required laws which favoured the propagation of the human species (cf. G. III. 440 n. and B. II. 482)—was on the great advantage of small holdings, small commonwealths, equality of fortune (*l.c.*, 398), good trade (*l.c.*, 410), and the like. Hume admitted, it is true, that 'war, pestilence and famine' were 'the three great scourges of mankind' (*l.c.*, 383); but he regarded the first of these causes as political (and therefore avoidable), the second—e.g. small-pox and 'venereal distempers' (*l.c.*, 382)—as quite simply plagues. In other words, he did *not* say that war and pestilence were themselves due, in some oblique fashion, to over-population. On the contrary, in a very balanced argument, Hume argued that the greater loss of life in ancient wars (civil as well as foreign) in comparison with modern combats was a *political* depopulating cause not less important than ancient poverty, and that the habits of the Romans in discouraging breeding among their slaves was a political check upon the population which (because the slaves were so numerous) was a greater check to population than the obstacle implied in the circumstance that, in modern society, 'our lackeys and house-maids do not serve much to multiply their species' (*l.c.*, 392).

§ III. History

'No one now reads Hume's *History*.' So it was written in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* in the year 1913 (Vol. X. p. 287); yet some twenty years earlier the 'pemmicanized' *Student's Hume* had been Mr. Winston Churchill's boyhood's manual (*My Early Life*, p. 124), and in the middle of the nineteenth century a *Quarterly* reviewer, who seems to have been a shrill-voiced parson, and certainly was venomously hostile to Hume, was willing to admit (March 1844, p. 541) that 'all who, since Hume, have earned any commanding reputation, are more or less his disciples; and all our juvenile and educational histories, and conversations, and outlines, are, in the main, composed out of Hume's material'. Simi-

larly, Macaulay in his essay on 'History' (*Edinburgh Review*, May 1828), although deploring Hume's 'insidious candour' (p. 360), called Hume 'the ablest and most popular of his class'—the 'class' apparently being that of 'the best historians of later times' (p. 359). In Hume's own day, it is true, the best observers might have agreed with Lord Charlemont (Hardy's *Memoir*, I. 237) that 'his philosophical principles certainly constituted the discriminative features of his character'; but when Hume at the end of his life saw 'many symptoms of my literary reputation's breaking out at last with additional lustre' (G. III. 7) it must have been the *History* that so encouraged him.[1] And Hume is still described as 'the historian' in the catalogue of the British Museum.

Hume spoke of his 'historical projects' in a letter written in 1746 (B. I. 221), and in January 1728 he wrote: 'I have long had an intention in my riper years of composing some history' (B. I. 236). Indeed we could infer from his earlier works that he had had a lifelong interest in history and in 'gleaning up experiments' (xxiii) in human nature from it.

There are pervasive, though slight, indications of this in the *Treatise*, where Sallust (607), Guicciardini (379), Machiavelli (568 inferentially), De Retz (153), and St. Evremond (599) were mentioned as well as Rollin [2] (425); and a point regarding the nature of historical evidence was duly discussed (146); and in the first two volumes of his essays, Hume's historical references were even more profuse than was expected in an age which delighted to look for historical parallels to modern political movements, and to compare Great Britain with Venice, Poland, France and Holland. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Hume had been a pretty close student of Tacitus

[1] In the *Caldwell Papers*, I. 40 (as quoted H. 345), it was related that when the dying Hume gave a complete copy of his *History* to the widow of his former friend Baron Mure as a parting gift, the grateful lady said, 'O David, that's a book you may weel be proud o'; but before ye dee, ye should burn a' your wee bookies.' To which, raising himself on his couch, he replied with some vehemence, half-offended, half in joke, 'What for should I burn a' my wee bookies?'

[2] This reference to Rollin has some interest. Cicero (*De Off.*, III. xi) had mentioned the ethical implications of the debate between Aristides and Themistocles concerning the firing of the confederate fleet. Hume quoted the relevant passage from Rollin's *Ancient History*, Bk. VI. ch. ii. Sect. 13, at some length, making his own translation, although the *second* edition of the English translation appeared in the same year as the *Treatise*. In a letter to Hutcheson in 1739 (B. I. 113 *sq.*) Hume quoted from Guicciardini in Italian.

(G. III. 103, 135, 136, 179, 191), of Livy (*l.c.*, 106, 129), and of Polybius (*l.c.*, 121, 189); and it is significant that he referred to the memoirs of d'Argens and of Mme d'Aunoy (*l.c.*, 236), as well as to the Earl of Carlisle's evidence regarding Muscovy (*l.c.*, 193), and to Tournefort's regarding the Turks (*l.c.*, 235).

No one in Hume's day would ever have dreamed that a competent historian needed a prolonged and highly technical apprenticeship. Had he chosen, Hume might therefore have abandoned philosophy and turned historian at the age of thirty-two; and the two *Enquiries* (especially the second) together with the *Political Discourses* (especially the essay on population) demonstrated his growing erudition and his increasing interest in historical subjects.

Even if we did not have Hume's word for it (B. I. 378) we might infer from the *Political Discourses* that Hume had modelled his style, very largely, on the ancients; and his frequent references to Machiavelli (e.g. G. III. 351, 482 and B. I. 129, 130) as well as to Guicciardini (*l.c.*, 303) may indicate that these authors indicated his ideal of a polite historian. We should also note Hume's references to Spenser's *State of Ireland* (*l.c.*, 473), to Fontenelle's *Histoire des oracles* (*l.c.*, 442), and to Garcilasso de la Vega (*l.c.*, 329) as indications of the range of his interests. Boulainvilliers, whom Hume discussed in some detail (*l.c.*, 459 n., cf. G. IV. 331 and B. I. 127), is usually mentioned nowadays as a good example of a French philosopher-historian; but there is no sufficient evidence in the *Political Discourses* that Hume, in any marked way, imitated the French.

In the second *Enquiry* Hume gave some account of the impression that Thucydides, Guicciardini (cf. E. 321), Suetonius and Tacitus made upon a reader's mind (E. 223). And Polybius (E. 215, E. 240, E. 318) was obviously one of his favourite authors. He also mentioned Spenser (E. 255), and he quoted Plutarch—whom at one time he thought of translating (B. I. 415 and 417)—in some detail (E. 177, cf. E. 334). On the whole, however, the most significant passage in either *Enquiry*, in this connexion, was Hume's account of the nature of historical assumptions in the first *Enquiry*.

'Would you know the sentiments, inclinations, and course of life of the Greeks and Romans?' Hume asked (E. 83 *sq.*, cf. E. 90). 'Study well the tempers and actions of the French and English. . . . Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular.

Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour. These records of wars, intrigues, factions and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science, in the same manner as the physician or natural philosopher becomes acquainted with the nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects, by the experiments which he forms concerning them.'

As the context showed, these principles followed directly from Hume's determinism, as he understood it, combined with the assumption (E. 83) that 'human nature remains still the same'. If we add to the other assumptions, the doctrine of Hume's essay 'Of National Characters' that the character of a nation was due to moral not to physical causes (G. III. 244 *sqq.*; cf. G. IV. 408) or to 'the opinions of men on which all depends' (*History*, ch. 20), we obtain a very clear picture of Hume's general attitude as a historian. He held precisely the opposite of Montesquieu's dictum that 'the first of all empires is the empire of climate' (*Esprit des Loix*, xix, 14).

As we saw, Hume thought that his experience of courts, camps and diplomacy with General St. Clair (B. I. 221 and 236) might 'turn to account' and enable him to 'speak with judgment' on historical subjects. In this respect, therefore, he believed himself to have rather special opportunities, but his greatest opportunity of all, he thought, was the low standards that prevailed in the writing of history. 'You know', he remarked in 1753 (B. I. 378), 'that there is no post of honour in the English Parnassus more vacant than that of history. Style, judgment, impartiality, care—everything is wanting to our historians; and even Rapin, during this latter period, is extremely deficient' (cf. *ibid.*, 381). So Hume set to work to mend all that. He would, at least, produce a 'tolerable smooth, well-told tale' (B. II. 34); and, pluming himself upon his philosophical detachment, he even supposed, at first (B. I. 381), that, while he might be reproached with ignorance, he was bound to escape any suspicion of partiality. He also opined that 'scepticism was not in its place in an historical production' (B. I. 397).

From a literary point of view Hume was brilliantly successful. He inaugurated what he called 'the historical age' in Britain and (with Robertson a few years behind him) made Scotland,

for a time, 'the historical nation' (H. 155). 'The old reproach', said Gibbon, [1] 'that no British altars had been raised to the Muse of History, was recently disproved by the first performances of Robertson and Hume. . . . I will assume the presumption of saying that I was not unworthy to read them.' Again Gibbon said (of the time he published the first volume of the *Decline and Fall*): 'The candour of Dr. Robertson embraced his disciple. A letter from Mr. Hume overpaid the labour of ten years; but I have never presumed to accept a place in the triumvirate of British historians.' [2] Even Gibbon's editor, Lord Sheffield, only said that Gibbon was 'scarcely excelled' by these Scotsmen.[3] And for many, many years (cf. *Quarterly Review, l.c.*) it was held that Hume, whatever his errors might have been, contributed to British History precisely what British History needed, that is to say a literary art that Brady, Tyrrell, Eachard, Guthrie, Rapin, Salmon, and Carte, not to speak of the annalists and memoir-writers, wholly lacked—and this despite the fact that Hume's detractors (surely with great exaggeration) held that most of his work was a compilation from Brady, Tyrrell and Carte (*Q.R.*, p. 555).

The complaint, indeed, was heard, that Hume had borrowed the ideas of Voltaire and sat on an imported stool at the top of Parnassus. 'He is an echo of Voltaire,' said Johnson (H. 157 n.). 'His manner is imitated from Voltaire,' said Horace Walpole (H. xxvii n.).

Of this criticism Hume himself said: 'In this Countrey they call me his Pupil, and think that my History is an Imitation of his Siècle de Louis XIV. This Opinion flatters very much my Vanity; but the Truth is, that my History was plan'd, & in a great measure compos'd, before the Appearance of that agreeable Work.' [4]

This statement (in a letter to the Abbé Le Blanc) *may*, of course, have been thoroughly disingenuous. Voltaire's *Charles XII* had appeared in 1731, and portions of the famous *Essai sur les moeurs* (published in full in 1756) were in circulation shortly after 1744 when Voltaire became Historiographer of France. Even the *Siècle* (published in 1751) might have influenced Hume a good deal. It seems unnecessary to suppose, however, that Hume was disingenuous. Free-thinking philosophers who wrote on history would naturally be grouped together in

[1] *Autobiography* (Everyman), p. 92.
[2] *ibid.*, p. 145. [3] *ibid.*, p. 175 n.
[4] Printed by R. Metz in *Englische Studien*, Bd. 63, Heft 3, pp. 352 *sq.*

Johnson's mind, or in Walpole's; and Lord Morley seems to have been right when he said (*Voltaire*, pp. 310 *sq.*) that Hume's *History* should be 'counted rather the direct and independent outcome of the French philosophic spirit, than of the French historic spirit, which itself proceeded from the philosophy'. Indeed, as we shall see, Hume, although a much greater philosopher than Voltaire, was a much less philosophical historian. He was only a philosopher turned historian—a very different being.

Hume's choice of periods—Stuart, Tudor and pre-Tudor—and of their epochal boundaries showed pretty clearly that his general conception of British history, so far as he had one, was fundamentally political. He wanted to collect experiments bearing upon the pretensions of contemporary political parties, and, in a sense, to offer a justification and an enormous expansion of a footnote in the essays (G. III. 99) to the effect that the government of England had been in great measure absolute till Charles made absolutism unpopular, notwithstanding the current beliefs in an age-long heritage of British liberty. Hence many of Hume's early woes and of the later neglect (however long delayed) of Hume's tract for the times. To his contemporaries he seemed to be, because (despite his own opinion of himself) he *was*, a party writer. Horace Walpole, it is true, said of Hume's first volume, 'It is called Jacobite, but in my opinion is only not George-Abite' (H. 15 n.); but Walpole, later, called Hume a 'superficial mountebank' who 'mounted a system in the garb of a philosophic empiric, but dispensed no drugs but what he was authorized to vend by a royal patent'.[1]

Hume, on the contrary, believed that he had held the balance evenly between the factions (B. I. 409); that he was true to the ideal that 'the first quality of a historian is to be true and impartial' (*ibid.*), and that, although his views of *things* were more conformable to Whig principles, his representations of *persons* appealed more to the Tories (B. II. 11). He therefore continued on his 'impartial' course confident that the Whigs were 'constrained to allow all my facts' (B. II. 60)—especially when he had cited his authorities and put his account of the Stuarts 'beyond controversy' (H. 35)—and that he had made certainty doubly certain when he had shown the 'light and force' that the history of the Tudors threw on that of the Stuarts. 'Had I been prudent', he wrote to Robertson, 'I

[1] See Burton's note in *Letters to Eminent Persons*, etc., p. 2 n.

should have begun with it. I care not to boast, but I will venture to say that I have now effectually stopped the mouths of all those villanous Whigs who railed at me' (B. II. 50). Again he wrote to Dr. Clephane (B. II. 38 *sq.*) : 'I wish indeed, that I had begun there ; for, by that means, I should have been able, without making any digression, by the plain course of the narration, to have shown how absolute the authority was which the English kings then possessed, and that the Stuarts did little or nothing more than continue matters in the former track, which the people were determined no longer to admit.' And Hill Burton has shown in detail (B. II. 73 *sqq.*) how Hume fulfilled his boast that 'in above a hundred alterations which farther study, reading, or reflection engaged me to make in the reigns of the first two Stuarts, I have made all of them invariably to the Tory side' (B. II. 73).

Given such a tendencious frame of mind, even philosophy (and the reputation of it) could hardly be expected to yield genuine impartiality ; and Hume's view of the constitutional history of England, after a brisk bombardment by G. Brodie (in the Preface and Introduction to his *History of the British Empire*), and a severe independent trouncing by Hallam (e.g. *Constitutional History of England*, I. 279 n. and 284 n.) gradually yielded to reinterpretation based on more thorough historical methods.[1]

Even the presence of bias and of many technical errors, however, would not prove of themselves that Hume did not possess a profound and comprehensive grasp of the march of human events, or, in other words, that he was not a philosophical historian. We have therefore to consider this matter more fully.

Hume's central theme, if he had had one, would have been that of liberty in its relations to authority, and in the main civil rather than personal liberty (III. 304).[2] If so, his final

[1] Hume, as befitted one who proposed to produce a κτῆμα εἰς ἀεί (B. I. 378), prided himself upon his Gargantuan industry (B. I. 382, cf. B. II. 82) and upon his zeal for the tracking of facts. He compared himself (see H. xxvi) to a sportsman seeking hares 'who does not mind what sort of ground it is that he goes over further than as he may find hares in it'. Hume's standards of research may be inferred from the following statement : 'I assure you there is not a quotation that I did not see with mine own eyes, except two or three at most, which I took from Tyrrel or Brady, because I had not the books referrred to' (B. II. 133). He held (in 1758) that Camden was 'the most copious, judicious and exact of our historians' (G. III. 468).

[2] In the rest of this Section the references are to volume and page of Hume's *History* in the edition of 1796.

conclusion seems to have been (VIII. 323) that 'liberty, though a laudable passion, ought commonly to be subordinate to a reverence for established government' and that loyalty to the sovereign was a 'noble and generous principle, inferior only in excellence to the more enlarged and enlightened affection towards a legal constitution' (VII. 199). None the less, Hume painted a noble picture of the advance of liberty on a wide and splendid canvas, from the 'fierce and bold liberty' of the Germans 'drawn by the masterly pencil of Tacitus' (I. 198) and inherited by the Saxons, through 'inauspicious' and even 'invidious' instruments like the Earl of Leicester in 1265 (II. 211), to the 'rude' principles of that undaunted Puritan Peter Wentworth (V. 225) and finally to the Revolution itself.

It would be impossible to maintain, however, that the recurrent theme of liberty was really a thread of Theseus introducing intelligibility into Hume's mazy story of British history; and, granting that the ways of history are always untidy, perplexing and unexpected, we can hardly resist the conclusion that Hume had *no* guiding thread for his narrative. He 'pillaged pretty stories', to use one of his own phrases in a half-serious letter to Robertson (B. II. 85)—sometimes (e.g. V. 54) under the pretence that they showed the manners of the age,—he imputed motives and he delighted in character sketches. In short, he gave a pleasantly diversified narrative, reign by reign, in the hope that entertainment and instruction, judiciously blended, would justify him in the end. Very occasionally he was startled, as by the mingling of virtue with superstition in the character of Louis IX (II. 190, cf. 220), or by Cromwell's buffoonery at the signing of Charles's death-warrant, when Cromwell and Martin daubed one another's faces with ink (VII. 265). In general, however, Hume found little to disturb the complacent certitude of his verdicts; and most of his philosophical comments, while appropriate enough in themselves, were generalities and philosophical asides. He said, it is true, that history, like other sciences, must invent an 'art of abridgment' in order to retain what was material and drop what was frivolous and minute (II. 143), but beyond the unhelpful statement that 'What is only interesting during the time, or to the person engaged' was to be neglected (*ibid.*) he said nothing about the principle of the abridgement.

There was, however, one general principle, possibly borrowed from Voltaire, which made a periodic entry into Hume's pages like an honoured but unexpected guest. 'The chief use of

history,' he said (VII. 330), was that it afforded material for 'a general survey of the age, so far as regards manners, finances, arms, commerce, arts and sciences' (cf. VI. 157 and II. 472 where victories and defeats were said to be of little moment).

This was the burden of the Introduction to the *Siècle* and of much else in Voltaire. 'My object', Voltaire there declared, 'is to depict to posterity not the actions of one man, but the *mind of men* in the most enlightened of centuries.'[1] Voltaire, however, pursued his conception faithfully, and Hume did not. With Hume these 'materials' were tucked away in appendices, or mentioned among desultory notes at the end of a reign. Indeed, Hume did *not* regard the reigns of kings as only a convenient historical clock; and if the 'chief use' of history had really been its lessons concerning manners and commerce, Hume took a singularly devious and ambiguous way of appreciating the fact. Much, in his tale, to be sure, *did* illustrate manners; and calculations concerning prices, population or revenue were not infrequent in Hume's main narrative (e.g. II. 36 and 175 n. or V. 472 *sqq.*). In view of Hume's earlier interests it would have been strange had they been absent. But if Hume *had* been Voltaire's imitator, he would have bungled sadly, and would have introduced his 'principal object' as a mere afterthought. As Voltaire said: 'The enlightened spirit which now reigns among the principal nations of Europe requires that we should go to the bottom, where in former times a historian barely thought it worth while to skim the surface.'[2]

Hume might have pleaded, it is true, that liberty and good government were essential to knowledge and good manners, and therefore that, in a sense, he *had* gone to the root of things. Had he not said (G. III. 303) that 'knowledge in the arts of government naturally begets mildness and moderation, by instructing men in the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity, which drive subjects into rebellion, and make the return to submission impracticable, by cutting off all hopes of pardon'. In the *History*, however, his account of causes tended to go the other way, as when he said (III. 55) that 'the finishing blow to ecclesiastical power was reserved to a period of more curiosity, literature, and inclination for novelties', or asserted that Pym's or Hampden's zeal for liberty was greatly inferior to that of Cato and of other 'noble ancients' since the discourse of the former was 'polluted

[1] Quoted by J. B. Black, *The Art of History*, pp. 65 *sq.*, cf. 31 *sqq.*
[2] Correspondence, 1757. As quoted in Morley's *Voltaire*, p. 305.

with mysterious jargon' while the latter gave their entire leisure to 'Grecian eloquence and philosophy . . . polite letters and civilized society' (VI. 388).

According to modern ideas, there was at least one important respect in which Hume's attitude to the development of manners and of refinement was thoroughly unhistorical (and here Hume resembled Voltaire and the Age of Enlightenment generally). He did not believe that his own standards of refinement and of good government should themselves be regarded as transitional. Retrospectively, of course, he recorded development and remarked (I. 450) that 'all advances towards reason and good sense are slow and gradual'. Again in his essay 'Of the Original Contract', first published in 1777, he made an interesting assertion of the continuity of human development, viz. that the successive generations of men (G. III. 452) did not 'go off the stage at once . . . as is the case with silk-worms and butterflies', but that 'human society is in a perpetual flux, one man every hour going out of the world, another coming into it'. In essentials, however, Hume regarded the eighteenth-century standards of reason and of good taste as the perfection of their kind; and since these standards, in his view, were fundamentally those of the noble ancients (which barbarism had very nearly destroyed) he believed in a cyclical view of history (III. 298, cf. G. IV. 334, and the *Dialogues*, G. II. 418).

This complacent acceptance of the standards of the Age of Enlightenment determined Hume's attitude towards the Middle Ages. 'Almost all improvements of the human mind', he said (III. 297 *sqq.*), 'had reached nearly to their state of perfection about the Age of Augustus'; 'thenceforward men relapsed gradually into ignorance and barbarism'—which reached its lowest level in the eleventh century; but 'from that aera the sun of science, beginning to re-ascend, threw out many gleams of light, which preceded the full morning when letters were revived in the fifteenth century'. These gleams, he added, were principally legal, owing to the discovery of a copy of Justinian's *Pandects* at Amalfi about the year 1130.

In short the aspect of these times was 'horrid and deformed' and was of service only because 'we may thence learn to cherish, with the greater anxiety, that science and civility which has so close a connexion with virtue and humanity, and which, as it is a sovereign antidote against superstition,

is also the most effectual remedy against vice and disorders of every kind' (III. 297). The Dark Ages, to Hume, were very dark, and the crepuscular period that succeeded them only fitfully bright. He noted indeed—for was he not impartial?—that the clergy, even in 1137, taught men to pay regard to *some* principles (I. 357), that Stephen Langton was a protector of liberty (II. 78), that there were *certain* advantages in chivalry (II. 461), and that (VII. 41) 'whatever ridicule to a philosophical mind may be thrown on pious ceremonies, it must be confessed that, during a very religious age, no institutions can be more advantageous to the rude multitude, and tend more to mollify that fierce and gloomy spirit of devotion, to which they are subject'.

In the main, however, Hume thought, not of these small concessions, but of the papacy subsisting 'by absurdities and nonsense' (I. 333), of the 'fooleries' of the Catholic religion (IV. 179), of the 'dreaming and captious philosophy of the schools' (IV. 149), and of 30,000 young men in Oxford[1] (in 1344?) whose sole occupation was 'to learn very bad Latin, and still worse logic' (II. 499). Even when, after 1453, 'the useful as well as the more agreeable part of modern annals' began (III. 407) 'and men gradually attained that situation with regard to commerce, arts, science, government, police and cultivation, in which they have ever since persevered' (*ibid.*), the 'wretched composers of metaphysical polemics' (IV. 142) could not, from the very nature of their theme, aspire either to good taste or to good sense; and 'the gloomy enthusiasm which prevailed among the parliamentary party' was 'surely the most curious spectacle presented by any history; and the most instructive, as well as entertaining, to a philosophical mind' (VII. 332). Moreover (IV. 414), 'Human nature appears not, on any occasion, so detestable, and at the same time so absurd, as in these religious persecutions, which sink men below the infernal spirits in wickedness and below the beasts in folly.'

As we saw, d'Alembert was eager that Hume should write an *Histoire Ecclésiastique* painting 'au naturel notre mère Ste Église'. But Hume thought otherwise. 'I give you full authority', he wrote to Millar in 1762, 'to contradict the report that I am writing, or intend to write, an ecclesiastical history; I have no such intention; and I believe never shall. I am beginning to love peace very much, and resolve to be more cautious than formerly in creating myself enemies'

[1] Hume cited Speed's Chronicle as his authority for these figures.

(B. II. 130). Indeed he had written as early as 1756 (B. II. 10): 'I am convinced that whatever I have said of religion should have received some more softenings'—a conviction that bore singularly little fruit in the portions of the *History* that Hume composed after 1756.

Hume's portrait of Christianity 'au naturel' was drawn with the greatest simplicity. Catholicism meant bigotry and superstition; its later rival was bigotry and enthusiasm. 'The instrument . . . with which [the former] wrought, the ignorance and superstition of the people, is so gross an engine, of such universal prevalence, and so little liable to accident and disorder, that it may be successful even in the most unskilful hands; and scarce any indiscretion can frustrate its operations' (I. 330). 'All the wretched literature of the times was inlisted on that side: Some faint glimmerings of common sense might sometimes pierce through the thick cloud of ignorance, or, what was worse, the illusions of perverted science, which had blotted out the sun and enveloped the face of nature. . . . Folly was possessed of all the schools as well as all the churches; and her votaries assumed the garb of philosophers, together with the ensigns of spiritual dignities' (I. 417 *sq.*).

Of enthusiasm, and of its 'fanatical entertainments'[1] (V. 419), Hume could say little that was better. Its zealous innovations, he admitted (V. 154), might have helped the cause of liberty since 'all enthusiasts, indulging themselves in rapturous flights, ecstasies, visions, inspirations, have a natural aversion to episcopal authority, to ceremonies, rites and forms, which they denominate superstition, or beggarly elements, and which seem to restrain the liberal effusions of their zeal and devotion' (*ibid.*). But the *doctrinal* puritans —as opposed to the 'political' puritans and to the partisans 'of discipline' (VI. 272)—blotted out the sun with a cloud of 'theological disputes, first started in the north of Germany, next in Switzerland, countries at that time wholly illiterate' (V. 40), and were, in effect, a 'fanatical tribe' (VII. 310) who, like the Scots (VI. 426), united 'barbarous zeal' with 'theological fervour'. Even the excesses of the Restoration were perhaps an advantage to the English people. 'Whatever new vices they might acquire, it may be questioned,

[1] There is some evidence (Greig, p. 129) that Hume had heard Whitefield preach in Scotland in 1742 and that he declared it was worth going twenty miles to do so—for the oratory.

whether, by this change, they were, in the main, much losers in point of morals' (VIII. 331).

The philosophical exordium to Hume's account of the Reformation (IV. 29 *sqq.*) is appropriate in this connexion.

Superficially, Hume said, it might be thought that the 'interested diligence' of ecclesiastics might be left to the 'liberality of individuals who are attached to their doctrines, and who find benefit or consolation from their spiritual ministry and assistance'. That way, however, danger lay.

'Each ghostly practitioner, in order to render himself more precious and sacred in the eyes of his retainers, will inspire them with the most violent abhorrence of all other sects, and continually endeavour, by some novelty, to excite the languid devotion of his audience. No regard will be paid to truth, morals, or decency, in the doctrines inculcated. Every tenet will be adopted that best suits the disorderly affections of the human frame. Customers will be drawn to each conventicle by new industry and address, in practising on the passions and credulity of the populace. And, in the end, the civil magistrate will find that he has dearly paid for his pretended frugality, in saving a fixed establishment for the priests; and that, in reality, the most decent and advantageous composition, which he can make with the spiritual guides, is to bribe their indolence, by assigning stated salaries to their profession, and rendering it superfluous for them to be farther active, than merely to prevent their flock from straying in quest of new pastures.'

§ IV. Aesthetics and Criticism

Hume always regarded philosophy as a branch of literature, and history as something to be *read*, indeed as the successful rival of poetry (B. II. 421). Therefore, since he was a conscious as well as a great artist in both these fields, and since he had been widely acquainted with polite letters from his early youth, when he divided his affections between Cicero and Virgil and was 'mightily delighted' with Longinus (B. I. 16), it was natural for him to regard literary criticism as one of the regions in which his philosophy should be developed (xx). Posterity, however, has declined to admit his eminence in this domain; and Wordsworth, in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, called him 'the worst critic that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced'.

In the present brief discussion I shall refer, firstly, to Hume's analyses of beauty and of taste, that is to say, to his general aesthetic theory; and secondly, to his occasional excursions into the field of literary criticism.

Hume admitted that the philosophy of aesthetics contained something repellent. 'The anatomist', he said (620), 'ought never to emulate the painter. . . . There is something hideous, or at least minute, in the views of things which he presents. . . . An anatomist, however, is admirably fitted to give advice to a painter' (621).

As an anatomist, Hume set himself, in the *Treatise*, to analyse beauty and the sublime; and he reached a nicely balanced, if undistinguished, conclusion. The sublime, he thought, had a suitable 'greatness' (432) and 'elevation' (613); for the rest, it was simply an instance of beauty. Concerning beauty, Hume took some analytical trouble, although, very likely, not enough. Beauty, he said, was indefinable (299) and was discerned by a *peculiar* taste, or sentiment, or sensation (*ibid.*, cf. 297). It was therefore 'relative' (577) and similar to the moral taste (581). Hence its 'momentary appearance' might have to be 'corrected' (582) although, in general, the *pulchrum*, the *decorum* and the *honestum* were closely akin.

It was not entirely clear how these assertions were to be reconciled with Hume's distinction between the beauty of mere *species*, or appearance, of the one part, and the beauty that sprang from concealed utility (e.g. 617) of the other part; and it must be confessed that Hume tended to generalize, rather too readily, from a limited class of examples. Eager, very often, to exploit the hypothesis of concealed utility, he chose his illustrations from things trim and genteel, like gardens and equipages, indeed, in one passage from 'tables, chairs, scritoires, chimneys, coaches, saddles, ploughs' (364), and even in these instances oscillated between the theories (*a*) that the utility in question was something self-contained, like the balance and seeming security of good architecture (299, cf. 364), (*b*) that it was a diffused and dissembled sympathy with the *owner's* pride in his gardens, equipages and scritoires. Hume did not, however, invariably confine his attention to such instances. 'Most of the works of art', he said, 'are esteem'd beautiful, in proportion to their fitness for the use of man, and even many of the productions of nature derive their beauty from that source' (577); and he was prepared to admit that 'a plain, overgrown with furze and broom, may be in itself as beautiful as a hill cover'd with vines or olive-trees, tho' it will never appear so to one who is acquainted with the value of each' (364).

So the *Treatise*: the *Enquiry* contained some further developments. In it Hume accepted the maxim *De gustibus* (E. 171) although he held that 'reason' might destroy false relishes (E. 173). 'The blind but sure testimony of taste and sentiment' was said to be needed for the nuances of 'genteelness' and of the 'concealed magic' of personal character, but to require less niceness regarding external beauty (E. 267, cf. E. 336). Taste was said to be creative; it had 'a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation' (E. 294). Again the *Enquiry* (E. 291 *sq.*) contained the very important passage, already quoted, to the effect that a complete description, e.g. of a circle, would not contain *any* aesthetic predicates.

Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' was his most sustained contribution to general aesthetic theory, and its double thesis was expressed, not inadequately, in the sentence, 'Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely, the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty' (G. III. 278). Conformably to the first of these assertions, Hume said that general rules of art might be discovered 'either by genius or observation' (*l.c.*, 270), that it was ludicrous to prefer Bunyan to Addison (*l.c.*, 269), that 'Terence and Virgil maintain an universal undisputed empire over the minds of men' (*l.c.*, 280) although abstract philosophies came and went, that rank bad taste might be compared to a disease or disorder (*l.c.*, 271 *sq.*), and that 'men of sense' in a 'civilized nation' had 'never been found long to err' in their judgment of poetry (*l.c.*, 280). Conformably to the second assertion, he affirmed, in general, that judgment and good sense were required in order to correct natural prejudice (*l.c.*, 278) but that a nice judgment was complicated, rare and difficult. The critic had to have 'delicacy' (*l.c.*, 276, cf. 176) and had to try to think himself into the spirit of the age he was concerned with (*l.c.*, 276). He must sedulously practise the art of making just comparisons (*l.c.*, 275). He must re-peruse what he read and avoid the 'flutter or hurry of thought which attends the first perusal of any piece' (*ibid.*). He must do his best to mitigate the influence of the two great causes of diversity of judgment, the 'different humours of particular men' and the local or temporal station of the critic himself

(*l.c.*, 276). 'At twenty, Ovid may be the favourite author; Horace at forty; and perhaps Tacitus at fifty' [1] (*l.c.*, 281). But the honest critic should never begin to countenance bigotry or superstition. He should retain his moral convictions; and his rectitude should forbid 'complaisance to any writer whatsoever' (*l.c.*, 283).

Before turning to Hume's literary criticism in greater detail, we may glance at the range of Hume's aesthetic interests. These did not seriously extend beyond the higher forms of prose and of verse; but Hume did call 'The History of the Sevarambians' an 'agreeable romance' [2] (G. III. 232); and he said that 'the most vulgar ballads are not entirely destitute of harmony or nature' (G. III. 276, cf. *History*, I. 77). He had also a certain interest, probably bookish in the main, in architecture, for he referred to Palladio and Perrault regarding the proportions of a pillar (E. 292), knew that Zeuxis had been a statuary as well as a painter (E. 136), and was interested in Dr. Mead's and/or Bartoli's plans of ancient buildings (B. I. 298 and 316; G. III. 426). His statement (G. III. 217), 'You will never convince a man, who is not accustomed to Italian music, and has not an ear to follow its intricacies, that a Scotch tune is not preferable,' may have been autobiographical.

Regarding criticism, principally literary, it is abundantly clear, even from the *Treatise*, that Hume had a desultory but active interest in the relations between his philosophical theory and the philosophy of the arts. Thus he said that the sentiments in poetry or in music were analogous to the sensation of belief because of their vivacity (103), that a certain verisimilitude heightened artistic effect (109), and drew upon the steadier principles of association (*ibid.*), although, in general, the 'agility and unsteadiness' of the imagination was the decisive factor in all artistry (510, cf. 123); and that a man's genius consisted in the range of his associations (24). Concerning smaller matters, Hume said that cider, *teste* Philips, might be a poetical theme, although beer could not be (358) —with which may be compared his statement (E. 222) that Sannazarius made a mistake in trying to adapt pastoral

[1] He wrote semi-jocularly in 1763 (of his triumphal visit to France): 'I carried only four books along with me, a Virgil, a Horace, a Tasso and a Tacitus' (Greig, p. 283).

[2] Of *Tristram Shandy* he said (H. 256) that it was 'the best book that has been writ by any Englishman these thirty years (for Dr. Franklyn is an American) . . . bad as it is'.

poetry to the pursuits of fishermen. He also said that the rules of art forbade abrupt transitions (379) and that a certain executive and even physiological ease (e.g. in pronunciation) had subtle consequences for the literary art (585 *sq.*, cf. E. 224).

Hume's purely literary essays (apart from those that were withdrawn) dealt with 'Eloquence', 'Tragedy' and 'Simplicity and Refinement in Writing', together with a letter to the *Critical Review* (never re-published) concerning Wilkie's *Epigoniad*. (Hume's eventual repudiation of Macpherson's *Ossian* was based, in the main, upon historical improbabilities.)

Of these essays, the first deplored the decay of eloquence in modern times—the dispute between the ancients and the moderns had not subsided in Hume's day (G. III. 118 n.) —and the second tried to improve upon the theories of the Abbé Dubos and of Fontenelle in the analysis of the way in which the dramatist's art converted the painful themes of tragedy into something stimulating and subtly delightful. It contained, as we might expect, a severe criticism of the English stage for its 'shocking images' and its 'mingled brains and gore' (G. III. 265). The third essay was, on the whole, the most important. Accepting Addison's dictum that 'fine writing consists of sentiments which are natural without being obvious' and the canon of the imitation of nature in the straitest sense of 'copying' (G. III. 240), the essay pleaded for a judicious blend of refinement with simplicity (*l.c.*, 241) and gave the outlines of a scale of what was permissible in this regard by putting Pope and Lucretius at opposite extremities, and Virgil and Racine in the middle. It contained the curious statement, 'It is sufficient to run over Cowley once; but Parnell, after the fiftieth reading, is as fresh as at the first' (*l.c.*, 243)—a severe test for the *Hermit* and its polished company (Hume quoted Parnell (G. III. 239 n.), and had himself no talent for versifying if the few verses published by Hill Burton (B. I. 228 *sqq.*) were his own composition and a fair sample).

From Hume's 'Essays', perused generally, we extract the information that Swift was the first British author to write polite prose (G. III. 159), that 'Sprat, Locke and even Temple' knew too little of the rules of art, and that 'Bacon, Harrington and Milton' (in his prose works) were 'altogether stiff and pedantic' (*ibid.*). We also learn that Waller was inferior to Horace (G. III. 197); and we find Hume quoting from Tasso in Italian (G. III. 201). In one of the essays

subsequently withdrawn (G. IV. 379) Hume said that 'England must pass through a long gradation of its Spencers, Johnsons, Wallers, Drydens before it arrive at an Addison or a Pope', that Milton was a 'divine poet' (*ibid.*) and that 'Of the Greek poets that remain, Homer alone seems to merit this character [of *greatness*]: of the Romans, Virgil, Horace and Lucretius: of the English, Milton and Pope: Corneille, Racine, Boileau and Voltaire of the French: and Tasso and Ariosto of the Italians' (*ibid.*). Something may also be gleaned from the *Enquiry* with its admiration for Boileau and Longinus (E. 253) and its admiration of the 'elegant and judicious poet' Armstrong,[1] whose *Art of Preserving Health* (Book IV. lines 267–8) were duly quoted (E. 317)—as well as Virgil (E. 302 n.).

In general the frigidity and portentious correctness of Hume's opinions on these matters strongly suggest that Dr. Carlyle was right when he said that Hume's taste was 'a rational act rather than the instantaneous effect of fine feeling' (*Autobiography*, p. 283). Hume deduced from his preconceived idea that (certain) classical standards, together with the French models that he believed to conform to these classical standards, were all that good taste could mean. But Hume's occasional and very terse comments upon literature in his *History* are the most important evidence in this matter.

From the *History* we learn that, in Hume's maturest opinion, neither literature nor general philosophy was the finest flower of civilization, that distinction being reserved for mathematics and natural philosophy. Galileo and, perhaps, even Kepler were greater than Bacon (VI. 194). We also learn that as late as 1641 learning was 'rude as yet' (VI. 446).

Indeed, Spenser seems to have been the first of the English poets that Hume considered worthy of a paragraph, and Spenser, Hume said (V. 492), deserved a place on 'the shelves', not on 'the table'. Hume further stated that the 'first English writers' in the reigns of Elizabeth and of James 'were possessed of great genius before they were endowed with any degree of taste' (VI. 191). Therefore it had to be said of Shakespeare that, although often felicitously inspired, 'a reasonable propriety of thought he cannot for any time uphold' (VI. 192). Again, Ben Jonson's 'rude art' was rightly eclipsed by Shakespeare's 'rude genius' (*ibid.*); and 'some flashes of wit and ingenuity' in Donne's satires were

[1] A personal friend of Hume's (Greig, p. 249).

'totally suffocated and buried by the hardest and most uncouth expression that is any-where to be met with' (VI. 193).

With time, Hume believed, improvement came. Waller was 'the first refiner of English versification' (VI. 527, cf. VII. 345). Milton's 'poems are admirable, though liable to some objections; his prose writings disagreeable, though not altogether defective in genius. . . . More concise than Homer, more simple than Tasso, more nervous than Lucretius; had he lived in a later age, and learned to polish some rudeness in his verses; had he enjoyed better fortune, and possessed leisure to watch the returns of genius in himself, he had attained the pinnacle of perfection and borne away the palm of epic poetry' (VII. 343 *sq.*). But Cowley was 'extremely corrupted by the bad taste of his age' (VII. 345). Contrariwise Denham's 'Cooper's Hill' deserved high commendation (VII. 346).[1]

The coming of the later age which Milton so unfortunately had missed, was retarded, according to Hume, by the licentiousness of Charles II's reign (when the sciences flourished, but literature did not). Hume indeed spoke almost as a Puritan when he mentioned Dryden, Rochester and Wycherley (VIII. 336), although he quoted from Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (G. IV. 346) and from his *Aurungzebe* (G. II. 439), and said of him (VIII. 336) 'amidst this great number of loose productions, the refuse of our language, there are found some small pieces, his Ode to St. Cecilia, the greater part of Absalom and Achitophel, and a few more, which discover so great genius, such richness of expression, such pomp and variety of numbers, that they leave us equally full of regret and indignation, on account of the inferiority, or rather great absurdity of his other writings'.

[1] What Hume said of Hobbes in this place (VII. 346) may be quoted here: 'No English author in that age was more celebrated both abroad and at home, than Hobbes: In our time, he is much neglected: A lively instance, how precarious all reputations founded on reasoning and philosophy! A pleasant comedy, which paints the manners of the age, and exposes a faithful picture of nature, is a durable work, and is transmitted to the latest posterity. But a system, whether physical or metaphysical, commonly owes its success to its novelty; and is no sooner canvassed with impartiality than its weakness is discovered. Hobbes's politics are fitted only to promote tyranny, and his ethics to encourage licentiousness. Though an enemy to religion, he partakes nothing of the spirit of scepticism; but is as positive and dogmatical as if human reason, and his reason in particular, could attain a thorough conviction in these subjects.'

More generally, Hume's comparison between French and English literature was very interesting indeed.

'The productions of literature', he said (VIII. 335), 'still wanted much of that correctness and delicacy which we so much admire in the ancients, and in the French writers, their judicious imitators. It was indeed during this period chiefly that that nation left the English behind them in the productions of poetry, eloquence, history, and other branches of polite letters; and acquired a superiority, which the efforts of English writers, during the subsequent age, did more successfully contest with them. The arts and sciences were imported from Italy into this island as early as into France; and made at first more sensible advances. Spencer, Shakespeare, Bacon, Johnson were superior to their co-temporaries, who flourished in that kingdom. Milton, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Harvey were at least equal to their co-temporaries. The reign of Charles II, which some preposterously represent as our Augustan age, retarded the progress of polite literature in this island; and it was then found, that the immeasurable licentiousness, indulged or rather applauded at court, was more destructive to the refined arts, than even the cant, nonsense and enthusiasm of the preceding period.'

Hume's judgments concerning his literary contemporaries in Britain were undoubtedly biased by his enthusiasm over the revival of letters in Scotland, and by his prejudice against the English. Congratulating Gibbon upon the excellence of the *Decline and Fall*, he said (B. II. 484): 'I own that if I had not previously had the happiness of your personal acquaintance, such a performance, from an Englishman in our age, would have given me some surprise. You may smile at this sentiment but . . . I no longer expected any valuable production ever to come from them.' And Hume's generosity towards his literary friends in Scotland, doubtless explained, to some extent, his vigorous advocacy of the exceptional merits of Home's *Douglas* and of Wilkie's *Epigoniad*. Hume spoke with all the authority of Edinburgh behind him when he told Home that his *Douglas* possessed 'the true theatric genius of Shakespear and Otway, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one, and licentiousness of the other' (G. IV. 440). Nevertheless, Hume's admiration of these pieces was not merely a parochial assertion that Edinburgh, with the Rev. John Home for its poet, and the Rev. Dr. Robertson for its historian (B. II. 421), was giving the lead to all Europe. Hume sincerely believed that these Scottish authors had imitated the classical correctness and

delicacy at least as judiciously as the French, and therefore that their fame was secure. Of himself, Hume said: 'I make my work very concise, after the manner of the ancients' (B. I. 378). To John Home he wrote: 'For God's sake read Shakespere, but get Racine and Sophocles by heart. It is reserved to you, and you alone, to redeem our stage from the reproach of barbarism' (B. I. 419).

A word may be said of Dr. Johnson's opinion of Hume's literary style (as quoted H. 189 n.): 'Why, Sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French. Now the French structure and the English structure may, in the nature of things, be equally good. But if you allow that the English language is established, he is wrong.'

Assuming that these statements were intended to apply to Hume's later works, particularly the *History* (for there is no evidence that Johnson had studied the *Treatise* carefully if at all), they were probably just. It was dangerous to imitate the ancients through the help of the French; and it is further to be remembered that, according to the universal testimony of his contemporaries, Hume, whether or not he *wrote* English, never *spoke* it in his life.[1] The only tongue he could speak (for his colloquial French was indifferent) was a very broad Scots, in his native dialect of the Merse. Even Scottish ladies, like Lady Murray, ridiculed his talk about his *byeuks* (B. II. 447).

Pronunciation, no doubt, is one thing; style and vocabulary quite another; and Hume's nervous anxiety about Scotticisms—'I wonder', said Johnson, 'that *he* should find them' (quoted H. 8)—might have been all that followed from his odd predicament. But it is entirely possible, and indeed not unlikely, that Hume wrote English almost as a man writes a foreign language.

[1] Although the *words* he spoke were English not Scots (Greig, p. 116).

CHAPTER X

RELIGION

THERE is no doubt that religion, and the evidence for and against it, was one of the dominant interests of Hume's life; and it is not improbable that Hume was, or thought he was, 'religious when he was young', as he is reported to have said to a visitor[1] when he was dying. At any rate there is no reason to dispute his statement to his friend, Sir Gilbert Elliot, in 1751, that 'an old manuscript book, wrote before I was twenty' (which he had just burned) began with 'an anxious search after arguments to confirm the common opinion' but that 'doubts stole in' and a 'restless imagination' struggled 'against inclination, perhaps against reason' (B. I. 332). It is unnecessary, indeed, to infer with Mr. Hendel (*Studies*, pp. 26 *sqq.*) that speculation on the wider implications of the deistic controversy had directed Hume's attention to the problem of causal influence, and so to the design of the *Treatise*, i.e. in effect, that Hume's entire philosophy was but a prelude to the *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. On the other hand, what Hume called 'experimental theism' (G. II. 411), its presuppositions, its relations to morality and to statecraft, its hostility to bigotry and to superstition, comprised one of the major problems that was seldom quiescent in his active mind.

Writing to Henry Home from London in December, 1737, Hume said, *à propos* of the revision of the *Treatise* with which he was then engaged: '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 into the Doctor's hands' (B. I. 64). Since 'the Doctor' was Joseph Butler, to whom Hume then desired an introduction, and since Hume, in the earlier part of this same letter said that he enclosed 'some "*Reasonings concerning Miracles*" which I once thought of publishing with the rest,

[1] Boswell, see *Private Papers*, XII, 225–32.

but which I am afraid will give too much offence, even as the world is disposed at present', it is a fair inference that theological discussions were among the chief which were excised.

In any case, there was comparatively little in the *Treatise* that could be regarded as a direct and intentional contribution to the theory of experimental theism. *Even* natural religion, Hume said, was 'in a measure dependent on human nature' (xix); *even* theologians (264) might object to Hume's philosophy. But 'the order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind' (633 n.) and neither religion nor morals could suffer from the unavoidable imperfection of our ideas concerning the Deity (*ibid.*, cf. 160). Hume did, indeed, make certain *obiter dicta* about the Christian religion. The Catholics, he said, practised 'mummeries' (100, cf. 515); the remoteness of a future state, dulled our belief in it (115); a 'very celebrated argument against the Christian religion had been drawn (although falsely) from the cumulative weakening of the links in a chain of traditional testimony (145); theologians abused the word 'action' (246), and the Christian doctrine of humility was opposed to the 'well-regulated pride' that 'the world naturally esteems' (600). Essentially, however, Hume was very prudent indeed—unless his readers chose to draw their own inferences—and his letter to Hutcheson about the implications of a merely *human* 'moral sense' (which we quoted earlier) may have indicated a genuine concern, on his part, over the 'momentous consequences' of this part of his ethical theory. In the *Treatise*, however, although the theological implications of morality were sometimes mentioned (456 and 469), these particular 'momentous consequences' were not considered.

There were, indeed, only two considerable passages in the *Treatise* in which Hume abandoned his usual prudent reticence. These dealt with the simplicity of the soul, together with the relations of that problem to free-thinking materialism (234 *sqq.*), and the theological implications of determinism (409 *sqq.*). In the first of these, Hume boldly charged his opponents with an atheism comparable to Spinoza's. In the second he argued (*a*) that supposedly dangerous consequences were not a proof of falsity, and (*b*) that justice, both human and divine, would be outraged if men were punished although their actions did *not* flow from a permanent moral character.

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 performed upon the *Treatise*, and that

in ' re-casting ' his philosophy he might legitimately include the doctrine of miracles and other such topics.[1]

Since the nature of Hume's discussion of miracles has already been examined in the present narrative, it is unnecessary, here, to do more than remind the reader that, in Hume's opinion, prophecies had the same logical fate as miracles (E. 130 *sq.*), and that both rested upon a *faith* that stultified and subverted our understanding and all our experience (*ibid.*).

Much of the rest of the first *Enquiry*, however, dealt with theological topics, and, setting aside minor statements about our ' sublime idea ' of Deity (E. 19), the ' unexpected circuit ' of the Cartesian proof of the reliability of our senses *via* the veracity of God (E. 153), ' priestly dogmas invented on purpose to tame and subdue the rebellious reason of mankind ' (E. 156). Berkeley's scepticism (E. 155 n.), and the co-equal worthlessness of volumes on divinity and on school metaphysics (E. 165), we find rather elaborate theological discussions concerning Malebranche's theism (E. 70 *sqq.*) and concerning determinism (E. 96 *sqq.*) as well as an entire Section (E. 132 *sqq.*) originally entitled (1748) ' Of the Practical Consequences of Natural Religion ' but later called (i.e. after 1751) ' Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State '. (See G. III. 51.)

In the first of these Hume argued that when Malebranche robbed Nature to exalt its God, he went ' quite beyond the reach of our faculties ' and proclaimed a knowledge of God's attributes and efficacy concerning which experience, and any defensible inferences from experience, should be for ever silent.

In the second Hume expanded the similar argument of the *Treatise* by discussing the implications of determinism when God was believed to possess complete foreknowledge as well as omnipotent power. Here, Hume said, the first horn of an impious dilemma (i.e. that God was responsible for all that we called criminal) was but feebly opposed by those who maintained, with the Stoics and many other philosophers, that both physical and moral evil contributed to the splendour of a perfect whole. (In the *Dialogues* (G. II. 436 n.) Hume said that a similar sentiment ' had been maintained by Dr. King, and some few

[1] Mr. Greig (p. 161) quotes from a letter of Hume's to Oswald (2 October, 1747) : ' I think I am too deep engaged to think of a retreat. In the second place, I see not what bad consequences follow, in the present age, from the character of an infidel; especially if a man's conduct be in other respects irreproachable.'

others, before Leibnitz, though by none of so great fame as that German philosopher'.) This cosmic satisfaction could not comfort a man who was racked with the gout, and 'the qualities which disturb society' must necessarily be considered *wrong* by those whose happiness was destroyed by them. The other horn of the dilemma, however (i.e. that God, the omnipotent Creator, was, nevertheless, not the author of sin), was a mystery, Hume said, that 'mere natural and unassisted reason is very unfit to handle'.

In the third passage Hume embarked upon a dialogue which, in many ways, anticipated the *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. In it (like his Cleanthes in the later *Dialogues*) Hume pretended to the orthodox, if worldly-wise position, that morality and the peace of society were greatly strengthened by a belief in providence and in immortality. But he said he had a friend 'who loves sceptical paradoxes'; and this friend proceeded to expound his views.

In antiquity, according to the 'friend', philosophers, for the most part, lived at peace with their neighbours; for the vulgar embraced 'the established superstition', and could not understand the ideas of the 'learned and wise'. It was only in modern times that theologians had turned with furious and persecuting zeal against philosophy, having borrowed their weapons from speculative philosophy itself. But if Epicurus had had to defend himself against the Athenians (as, in fact, he had not) he might readily have persuaded them that his attitude towards the gods and towards a future life was quite innocuous.

In the imaginary oration that followed, Epicurus represented himself as a deist who accepted the Argument from Design, but claimed that in any reasoning admittedly based upon *effects*, no cause need or should be assumed except a cause *precisely adequate* to produce these effects. Accepting, therefore, the 'course of nature' as he found it, this imaginary Epicurus maintained that the 'religious hypothesis' was a mere possibility and a vain conceit if it pretended that the gods, in some obscure way, were kinder or more righteous than we were compelled to suppose from the mixture of good and evil that we actually found in the course of nature. If, initially, we assumed that the gods were immeasurably powerful and ineffably good, we might *then*, indeed, draw such inferences. But why make that initial assumption? The thing was uncertain, being too exalted for our faculties; and it was also useless,

since it afforded no ground, other than a bare possibility, for establishing ' any new principles of conduct or behaviour '.

To this the supposedly theistic Hume replied that the universe seemed to be an unfinished work which had promise in store; but his sceptical friend retorted that any such inference could be justified only in terms of the crude anthropomorphism which asserted that because we *knew* what God was, we could therefore infer how He was likely to continue His work. In fact, we did not know the ways or the character of this supermundane Architect. And the dialogue ended with Hume's assertion—he was speaking of course in his character as a theist—that ' religious doctrines and reasonings ' *might* influence men in a salutary way although, logically speaking, they *should* not; and that he himself was disposed to tolerate philosophers because, being without ' enthusiasm ', they could not, even if their opinions were pernicious, be ' very alluring to the people '. For himself, he said, he could not see how, if analogy with experience were the *only* basis of causal argument, there could be *any* such inference to a cause ' quite singular and unparalleled ' from an effect equally ' singular and unparalleled ', but that, if there could be such an inference (as the opponents of Epicurus had always maintained), the Epicurean arguments were at least worth considering.

In Hume's essay on ' Suicide ' the principal argument was that there was arrant superstition, and even blasphemy, in the notion that a wretch could not curtail his misery by suicide as well as by any other prudential act that Deity had put in his power. Hume also argued that the action, incidentally, was not prohibited in the Scriptures (G. IV. 414 n.), and that ' by retiring from society ' we need not hurt it, especially if we were a burden to it. In short, he believed that the ancient philosophers held saner views on this subject than the Christian bigots; and that suicide need not be an injury to God, to our neighbour, or to society at large (G. IV. 413).

This essay contained the interesting, and very fundamental, point that the motives to suicide need not be selfish; for Hume put the case of a man threatened by the rack, knowing that his weakness would lead him to betray his knowledge (which might be of a ' conspiracy for the public interest ') and therefore taking his own life in order not to betray the public interest. Hume's discussion of the question, therefore, was much more adequate than, let us say, Kant's (*Grundlegung*, Section II). But Strahan, the printer, in a letter written to Hume's

brother after Hume's death, in which he declined to publish the essays on Suicide and on Immortality, said that he and 'every one of your Brother's friends whom I know' were 'clearly of opinion' that these essays 'should never more see the light . . . for besides that the subjects of them are singularly unpopular, we do not think them equal to his other Works' (H. 362). It is perhaps an interesting comment upon the change in ecclesiastical opinion that Dean Inge, in his recent *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, mildly says that Hume was 'perhaps rather sophistical' when he argued that God's consent must be presumed to all voluntary actions, including voluntary suicide (p. 372); and that Lecky, like Hume, 'went too far' in contrasting the 'teaching of antiquity' with 'almost all modern moralists' (p. 369) since, in both instances, there were differences of opinion (e.g., according to the Dean (p. 370), there was a general condemnation of suicide in Greece).

Hume's essay on Immortality was very concise, and, *pace* Strahan, was undeniably powerful. It gave an epitome of three sets of arguments derived from the 'mere light of reason' (G. IV. 399). These were the metaphysical, the moral and the physical arguments.

Metaphysically speaking, Hume said, the notion of substance was 'wholly confused and imperfect'; cause and effect could not legislate *a priori*; and analogical or experimental arguments suggested that an immaterial as well as a material substance might readily lose memory and consciousness. Such arguments also suggested that man was one of the animals: and they proved pre-existence as clearly as they could possibly prove post-existence. 'The soul, therefore, if immortal, existed before our birth: And if the former existence noways concerned us, neither will the latter' (G. IV. 400).

Morally speaking, the 'interests of society' were the genuine criterion of ethics, and these did not need to be safeguarded by eternal and infinite punishments (which indeed would be infinitely excessive). The purposes of nature, so far as *we* could see, were wholly this-worldly; and we had no authentic moral standards, even for the Deity, except our own sentiments, obviously adapted to our terrestrial existence. 'The powers of men are no more superior to their wants, considered merely in this life, than those of foxes and hares are, compared to *their* wants, and to *their* period of existence.' Indeed it would be an iniquity in nature, if our powers, despite appearances, were

given us for some purpose outside the world we lived in. And nature denied the supposed 'probationary state' (G. IV. 403) by destroying so many infants before they became probationers. Again, 'the greatest part of mankind float betwixt vice and virtue'; and were therefore unfitted for heaven and also for hell.

Physically speaking—and physical arguments were the only philosophical ones regarding a question of fact (G. IV. 403)—'everything is in common betwixt soul and body'; and the analogy of nature was altogether against perpetuity. 'The world itself gives symptoms of frailty and dissolution: How contrary to analogy, therefore, to imagine, that one single form, seeming the frailest of any, and subject to the greatest disorders, is immortal and indissoluble.' Again, 'were our horrors of annihilation an original passion, not the effect of our general love of happiness, it would rather prove the mortality of the soul: For as nature does nothing in vain, she would never give us a horror against an impossible event' (G. IV. 405).

In short, Hume did *not* believe in human immortality. The kindest thing he could say about the doctrine was what he said to his friend Lord Charlemont. 'Why, troth, man, it is so pretty and so comfortable a theory, that I wish I could be convinced of its truth, but I canna help doubting' (Hardy's *Memoirs*, I. 233). And we have Boswell's evidence that the dying Hume was 'indecently and impolitely positive in incredulity', declining to be afraid of extinction, and opining, personally, 'that he would rather not be more, than be worse'.[1]

Hume's dissertation on *The Natural History of Religion* was, with the exception of the *Dialogues*, his only sustained contribution to the theory of religion.

The title was intended to show that Hume meant to examine 'the origin of religion in human nature' (G. IV. 309) and not the abstract rational proof of theism, regarding which Hume allowed (*ibid.*) that 'the whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author'. In pursuing this question of origin, Hume's purpose was in part historical, but, in the main, he thought of 'origins' in the way that Locke had thought of them. His method, at bottom, was analytical rather than historical, and he regarded the historical evidence that he collected—which he drew almost entirely from classical sources,

[1] *Private Papers*, XII, 225–32, recounting Boswell's interview with Hume on his death-bed.

with but a fleeting reference to a great body of French researches in incidental citations from Le Compte, Regnard, Brumoy, Fontenelle (*l.c.*, 321 n.), Boulainvilliers (*l.c.*, 331) and Bayle (*l.c.*, 340 n.)—as rather a confirmation of his analysis than as an independent historical inquiry. (The days of would-be scientific anthropology were not yet.)

Hume began, then, by arguing that if men's notions of Deity were derived from their scientific interest in accounting for the world, men would necessarily accept the simple hypothesis of a Single Designer (*l.c.*, 314) and could never, on such grounds, be induced to believe in ' polytheism or idolatry '. Nevertheless (he said) it was plain that even at the beginning of the Christian era, all mankind, with the exception of a few sceptical philosophers, and the (somewhat muddled) ' theism ' of ' one or two nations ' were polytheists. Hume therefore inferred that man's early approach to religion was *not* philosophical or scientific (*l.c.*, 315 n.) but was due to his hopes and fears regarding ' life and death, health and sickness, plenty and want ' (*l.c.*, 316).

In other words, superstition—clearly of an anthropomorphic cast—*was* primitive religion. The gods of early so-called ' religions ' were like ' the elves and fairies of our ancestors ' ; and, if theism meant an enlightened comprehension of the Argument from Design, our ancestors were *atheists* (*l.c.*, 320). It was easy, Hume thought, to confirm this opinion. Allegory and the deification of heroes were easy to understand if what Hume said was true. Otherwise, as theistic philosophers themselves maintained, these allegories, and the like, were mere inexplicable absurdities (*l.c.*, 325 *sqq.*). And although an idolatrous people, by straining its vocabulary to flatter and propitiate its own divinity, might, by chance, use the language of philosophical theism (*l.c.*, 330) and stumble upon the name of ' infinity ', the paucity of superlatives in early languages ought not to be reckoned for truth and philosophy. Indeed, among all who were not philosophers, there was a perpetual ' flux and reflux ' between an abstract and sublime conception of deity, on the one hand, and sensuous idolatry on the other (*l.c.*, 334 *sqq.*).

According to Hume, certain corollaries followed. Polytheism, he said, was tolerant ; monotheism intolerant ; and therefore, by a spreading corruption in what, in itself, was best, ' virtue, knowledge, love of liberty, are the qualities, which call down the fatal vengeance of inquisitors ' (*l.c.*, 339). The

'monkish virtues' of submission and abasement were apt to overwhelm individual and national courage. And reason herself was often travestied, although the *conception* of polytheism, that is to say, the belief in 'intelligent creatures, of more refined substance and greater authority' than any telluric beings, was, in itself, so far from being a mere absurdity that somewhere, in some other planet, such beings were even likely to exist. In theism, on the other hand, the very reasonableness of the fundamental assumptions was a temptation to enter into an alliance with philosophy,[1] and to ruin the philosophy of the subject by turning it into popular theology, or even, in order that mystery and amazement might not be banished, to look for 'whichever opinion is most contrary to plain sense' (*l.c.*, 342). 'The dogmatical imperious style of all superstition' (*l.c.*, 347 *sq.*), although implying a belief much less sincere than the 'solid' persuasions of common life, was, for that very reason, a thing that had to be actively enforced. Monotheism, therefore, tended to become an oppression precisely because it was all of a piece. It could not be cajoled into leniency by methods like Cotta's in the *De Natura Deorum*, when Cotta (i.e. Cicero) 'led the orthodox gradually, from the more momentous stories, which were believed, to the more frivolous, which every one ridiculed' (*l.c.*, 352).[2]

Therefore Hume maintained that all popular religions, whether 'traditional and mythological', or 'systematical and scholastic', tended to become both impious and wicked. The 'religionists', apprehensive and gloomy, made a shift to extol in the Deity actions they would condemn in their fellow-creatures (*l.c.*, 354) and 'it is certain that, in every religion, however sublime the verbal definition which it gives of its divinity, many of the votaries, perhaps the greatest number, will still seek the divine favour, not by virtue and good morals, which alone can be acceptable to a perfect being, but either by frivolous observances, by intemperate zeal, by rapturous ecstasies, or by the belief of mysterious and absurd opinions' (*l.c.*, 357). Accordingly, without disputing the force of the Argument from Design, Hume concluded that 'the whole is a riddle, an aenigma, an inexplicable mystery'; and he hoped that, by setting the various superstitions a quarrelling, we might 'make our escape into the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy' (*l.c.*, 363).

[1] A thesis of Shaftesbury's, III, 61.
[2] Cf. Shaftesbury, I, 18.

This concluding sentiment, perhaps, casts some doubt upon the intentions of Hume's entire argument. As we shall see, Hume, about the time when he wrote this dissertation—it was published in 1757 but written some years earlier—knew very well that ' experimental theism ' based on the Argument from Design, might be assailed very shrewdly. And if philosophical theism as well as popular religion had to be condemned, the conclusion would obviously be—unless, indeed, a good sceptic withheld assent from all conclusions—that *every* form of religion succumbed to analysis. On the other hand, Hume may have meant that there *was* a true or philosophical religion—he spoke in the *History* (IV. 31) of ' every religion except the true ' (i.e. the philosophical)—although, even in the true religion, much remained obscure.

In any case the contemporary critics of the *Natural History of Religion* and especially Warburton—who annoyed Hume very much (H. 21, 200, 205)—regarded Hume as a ' naturalist ' and defined ' naturalism ' as meaning ' the belief of a God, the Creator and Physical Preserver, but not Moral Governor of the World ' (*Remarks on Mr. David Hume's Essay*, etc., p. 9). In short, Warburton took Hume to be simply the latest dull and ordinary deist. ' Chubb, Morgan, Collins, Mandeville and Bolingbroke are names, which nobody hears without laughing. It is not for me, perhaps, to predict the fate of Mr. David Hume ' (p. 76).

And so we come to the proof that Hume was not an ordinary deist—that is to say, to the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

As we saw in the first chapter, the *Dialogues* were published in 1779 by Hume's nephew in accordance with the codicil of Hume's will (B. II. 494) which directed the nephew to publish them, as an act of piety, if, ' from whatever cause ', they were not published within two and a half years of Hume's death. Hume's opponents regarded these instructions as a singular instance of persistence in infidelity. Thus Principal Campbell wrote to Beattie : ' What most astonishes me is the zeal which this publication shows for disseminating these sceptical principles ' (Beattie MSS., Aberdeen University) ; and Beattie wrote to Campbell that ' Mr. Hume's nephew, who by his death inherited ten thousand pounds, and being it seems a brisk young man, declared he was determined it should be published though he should be obliged to print it in Holland ' (Beattie MSS.).

A full account of the occasion for this codicil has been given by Mr. Rae in his *Life of Adam Smith*, Chapter xix. Briefly, what had happened was that Adam Smith, in correspondence with Hume and otherwise, had shown quite plainly that he would not publish the *Dialogues*, as Hume had expected, in his capacity as Hume's literary executor. Smith's reluctance, Hume seems to have thought in their correspondence on the matter, was affected by his hopes of receiving some office (*ibid.*, p. 296); and Hume pleaded in vain [1] that Mallet was not 'anywise hurt by his publication of Lord Bolingbroke' (*ibid.*) and, concerning the *Dialogues*, that 'on revising them (which I have not done these five years) I find that nothing can be more cautiously and more artfully written. You had certainly forgotten them' (Rae, p. 300).

The date of this letter was ten days before Hume's death. Some two months earlier (8 June, 1776) Hume had written to Strahan:

'Some years ago I composed a piece, which would make a small volume in twelves. I call it *Dialogues on natural Religion*: some of my friends flatter me, that it is the best thing I ever wrote. I have hitherto forborne to publish it, because I was of late desirous to live quietly, and to keep remote from all Clamour; for though it be not more exceptionable than some things I had formerly published; yet you know some of these were thought very exceptionable; and in prudence, perhaps, I ought to have suppressed them. I there introduce a Sceptic, who is indeed refuted, and at last gives up the argument, nay confesses that he was only amusing himself by all his Cavils; yet before he is silenced, he advances several Topics, which will give Umbrage, and will be deemed very bold and free, as well as much out of the common Road. As soon as I arrive at Edinburgh, I intend to print a small edition of 500' (H. 330).

The phrase 'some years ago' is vague, and there is not sufficient evidence to determine the date at which the *Dialogues*, in their published form, were written, or how prolonged and how constant the process of revision had been.[2] What we do

[1] On 5th September, 1776 (*ibid.*, p. 306), Smith wrote to Strahan: 'I am resolved for many reasons to have no concern in the publication of the *Dialogues*.'

[2] Mr. Greig, relying no doubt upon sufficient grounds, although he gives none, summarizes the external evidence by saying (*a*) that 'at least four parts and very likely more' had existed in draft by 10th March, 1751, (*b*) that in 1761 Hume 'having nothing else in hand, took up the *Dialogues* again, revised them, and again consulted Elliot'

know is that as early as 1751 Hume had written a draft of *part*, at least, of the *Dialogues*, substantially similar to the work we now possess. For on 10 March of that year Hume wrote as follows to his friend Gilbert Elliot:

'You would perceive by the sample I have given you, that I make Cleanthes the hero of the dialogue; whatever you can think of, to strengthen that side of the argument, will be most acceptable to me. . . . I have often thought, that the best way of composing a dialogue, would be for two persons that are of different opinions about any question of importance, to write alternately the different parts of the discourse, and reply to each other; by this means, that vulgar error would be avoided, of putting nothing but nonsense into the mouth of the adversary; and at the same time, a variety of character and genius being upheld, would make the whole look more natural and unaffected. Had it been my good fortune to live near you, I should have taken on me the character of Philo in the dialogue, which you'll own I could have supported naturally enough; and you would not have been averse to that of Cleanthes. . . . I could wish Cleanthes' argument could be so analyzed as to be rendered quite formal and regular. The propensity of the mind towards it . . . will still, I am afraid, be esteemed a suspicious foundation. 'Tis here I wish for your assistance. . . . The instances I have chosen for Cleanthes are, I hope, tolerably happy, and the confusion in which I represent the sceptic seems natural, but—si quid novisti rectius, &c' (B. I. 331 *sqq.*).

Dugald Stewart (*Dissertation First* to the *Encyc. Brit.*, 7th ed., Vol. II, pp. 287 *sqq.*) stated that 'an unfinished draught of the letter to which the foregoing seems to have been a reply, has been preserved among Sir Gilbert Elliot's papers'; and printed it. Since the 'draught' was long, I cannot reprint it here, but I may refer to some points of interest.

One such point is that Elliot professed to be 'extremely

—who again advised against publication, (*c*) that Hume did not touch the manuscript again until 'a short while before his death' (Greig, p. 230). Mr. Greig then 'guesses' from internal evidence including an examination of the manuscript of the *Dialogues*, as well as from the external evidence and from a note to the printer in the handwriting of Hume's nephew at the beginning of Part XI, 'I have sent two leaves of the original manuscript, as I have not been able to get the copy compared with it,' that 'Hume wrote Parts I–V in the winter of 1750–1, and the remainder before the end of 1752. The whole was revised in 1761, and Part XII drastically. The manuscript that we possess, save for the two leaves referred to, and perhaps a few others, does not date back beyond 1761. The revision of 1776 concerned chiefly improvements in the style, and left the substance of the *Dialogues* unaltered' (*ibid*, pp. 230 *sq.*).

doubtful if the position which Cleanthes undertakes to maintain can be supported, at least in any satisfactory manner, upon the principles he establishes and the concessions he makes'. A second point is Elliot's reference to two illustrations in Cleanthes's argument (of which the second was the Vegetating Library), for this reference was evidence, to say the least, of a great similarity in detail between much that Hume had written in 1751 and what we now have. A third point is that Elliot would only admit *for once* 'that experience is the only source of our knowledge' and a fourth that he wanted a more general argument than that of Cleanthes'. As he said:

'To proceed then, experimentally and philosophically, the first question in point of order seems to be, what is the effect which the contemplation of the universe, and the several parts of it, produces upon a considering mind. This is a question of fact; a popular question, the discussion of which depends not upon refinement and subtlety, but merely upon impartiality and attention. . . . Tell me (to use the words of Cleanthes[1]) does not the idea of a contriver flow in upon you with a force like that of a sensation? Expressions how just! (yet in the mouth of a Cleanthes you must allow me to doubt of their propriety). . . . It seems to me, that we are scarce more assured of our own existence, than that this well-ordered universe is the effect of an intelligent cause.' Therefore 'it becomes the business of the philosopher to inquire, whether the conviction arising from these observations be founded on the conclusions of reason, the reports of experience, or the dictates of feeling, or possibly upon all these together; but if his principles shall not be laid so wide as to account for the fact already established upon prior evidence, we may, I think, safely conclude, that his principles are erroneous'.

I have given these quotations at some length because they have an important bearing upon the disputed question concerning Hume's intentions and sympathies in the *Dialogues*.

In their form, the *Dialogues*, which owed a very great deal to Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, professed to narrate, some time after they had occurred, a series of conversations between Cleanthes, Philo and Demea, the narrator being one Pamphilus, the young nephew of Cleanthes, who sent the story to his friend, a certain Hermippus. *Apud* Cicero (*D.N.D.*, I. xxvi), Pamphilus was said to be 'a certain disciple of Plato, at Samos'; and Hume's Philo and Cleanthes were represented in the Ciceronian way. Philo (of Larissa who went to Rome in 88 B.C. and greatly influenced Cicero) was frequently mentioned, as we

[1] G. II. 403.

saw, in the *Academic Questions*; and in the *D.N.D.* (I. vii) was said by Velleius, the Epicurean, to be familiar to Balbus, the Stoic, and to Cotta, the New Academic (i.e. Cicero himself), as the man who had taught that we should be certain of nothing. Cleanthes, the early Stoic, was represented by Cicero as having held that 'it is quite impossible for us to avoid thinking that the wonderful motions, revolutions and order of those many and great bodies, no part of which is impaired by the countless and infinite succession of ages, must be governed and directed by some supreme intelligent being'[1] (*D.N.D.*, II. v). In Hume's pages Cleanthes was Newtonian, deistic and up to date. Demea, to Hume and to his readers, must have suggested the principal character of Terence's *Adelphi*, a 'type' of orthodoxy, although Terence's Demea was a much more human as well as a much more dramatic character than Hume's, and, as the end of the play showed, was open to conviction by the logic of circumstances in a way that Hume's Demea never was. Indeed, in Terence, the stern parent Demea was made to say:—

re ipsa repperi
facilitate nil esse homini melius neque clementia.
id esse verum ex me atque ex fratre cuivis facilest noscere.[2]

In Hume's pages Demea was a person of negligible perspicuity who tamely submitted to the process vulgarly known as leg-pulling throughout the dialogues. His principles were: that the being of God was certain, His nature mysterious; that Malebranche was right—Demea (G. II. 390 n.) referred to the relevant chapter—when he said 'Ne l'humanisons pas'; that nevertheless God's existence might be proved *a priori*—Demea (*l.c.*, 430 *sqq.*) gave a pretty competent epitome of Clarke's *Demonstration*;—and that, although man's present condition was most miserable, his tribulation would be rectified at some future time. When Demea at last perceived that his 'vulgar theology' was being treated in jest, he left the company 'on some pretence or other' (*l.c.*, 454). In short, it is not at all surprising that one of the earliest counterblasts to the *Dialogues* should have concluded with the statement, 'I have taken no notice of Hume's Demea because I cannot find a feature of Christianity about him. Dr. Clarke's metaphysicks and the Gospel have, I think, no sort of connection.'[3]

[1] The Loeb translation. [2] Lines 860–2.

[3] *Gibbon's Account of Christianity considered, together with some Strictures on Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, by Joseph Milner, A.M. York, 1781. p. 221.

On the other hand, Cleanthes and Philo understood one another very well. Each was worlds away from vulgar religionism, since each was represented as having attained the highest pitch of trained intelligence. And when Demea slipped away in dudgeon, the two friends came pretty near to one another's sentiments, although Philo remained the more loquacious.

Hume's early readers were convinced that Hume and Philo were as good as one (cf. Milner, *op. cit.*, p. 199 and Hayter's *Remarks on Mr. Hume's Dialogues*, Cambridge, 1780). If so we should perhaps infer (as they did not) that, whatever hares a zetetic sceptic might amuse himself in starting, a mitigated sceptic would find himself approaching closely to experimental theism and its Intelligent Designer. (For Philo in the end (*l.c.*, 467) gave a qualified assent to something like Cleanthes's position.)

This is a possible view, and it is certainly not contradicted by the final paragraph of the *Dialogues*, where Pamphilus (not Philo) said, by way of general commentary, that the opinions of Cleanthes seemed to him to be nearer the truth than those of Philo (i.e. before Philo's ostensible partial surrender). But this statement might have been made for *no* relevant reason. For Hume was writing a new version of the *De Natura Deorum*; and Cicero's dialogue had concluded with the statement: 'Velleius judged that the arguments of Cotta were truest; but those of Balbus seemed to me to have the greater probability.' On the other hand, Cotta *was* the Academic; and since Cicero's ostensible summing up was plainly ironical, there is a high probability that Hume's was ironical too.

There was little characterization in the *Dialogues*, but what little there was tended to show that the author felt himself to be very near to Philo. Philo was said to have proceeded 'in a vehement manner, somewhat between jest and earnest' (G. II. 398), and 'in his rambling way' (*l.c.*, 415) to have spoken 'with an air of alacrity and triumph' (*l.c.*, 412). This was just the sort of language an author might be expected to use when he paused to smile at himself as he wrote.

On the other hand, this, and all the rest of the evidence, was equally consistent with the simplest construction that could be put upon Hume's correspondence with Elliot, viz. that Philo was only a *part* of Hume—the part that Elliot could never go along with—but that Hume, with another part of him, was rather like the rest of the (enlightened) world. If so, although Elliot disowned Cleanthes, we should infer that Clean-

thes, in Hume's opinion, put the Argument from Design in the strongest form that was possible consistently with a sound comprehension of the causal principle and the experimental method; and so that Hume hoped that, if Elliot would not help him directly, he would at least be sympathetic.

If I had to decide between these alternatives, I should try to reconcile them by suggesting that Philo was much the largest part of Hume [1]; but I am convinced that it would be a mistake to try to reach a decision on the point. The writer of a dialogue has the privilege of mixing and confounding his persons, and, unless he wants to, need not commit himself in any way whatsoever. The game of 'hunt the slipper', therefore, is apt to be inconsequential; and if any one wants a decision in this affair let him take what comfort he can from the covering letter that Pamphilus sent to Hermippus. It was there stated that the dialogue form was admirably adapted to the subject of natural religion since (*a*) the existence of God was so obvious as to invite literary embellishments of the theme without irrelevance, and (*b*) the nature of God was so obscure that very different opinions might be introduced and allowed to develop in a thoroughly natural way (G. II. 378).

The dialogues began with an examination of the nature and province of scepticism, always with the object of considering primarily what 'ran wide of common life' and appeared to be beyond the reach of our faculties. Philo, under the transparent pretence of agreement with Demea, said that the *only* science that could claim certainty, i.e. the science of quantity (G. II. 381), as well as such an apparently obvious fact as 'the coherence of the parts of a stone', contained repugnances and contradiction. 'The origin of worlds', therefore, must be much more obscure. Cleanthes retorted that while Pyrrhonian philosophers might (like the Stoic sages in their exaltation) achieve a condition of universal doubt for short, intense periods, they, like all other philosophers, 'became plebeians' for the greater part of their lives, and believed, quite unsceptically, that they would be hurt if they fell out of a window. Here Philo asserted the doctrine of the *Treatise*. 'A kind of instinct or necessity' accounted for ordinary sensitive beliefs. Philosophy allured certain minds; but the generalizations of a sane philosophy were only 'a more regular and methodical operation of the same kind' as in common life. Such general-

[1] Mr. Greig (p. 237) thinks that Hume 'allowed Philo to run away with him'.

izations applied very well to 'trade, or morals, or politics, or criticism' but became impotent when they became too self-critical or tried 'to look beyond human affairs and the properties of the surrounding bodies'.

This gave Cleanthes his opportunity; and he took it. Copernicus, Galileo, and others *did* base their beliefs upon very abstruse principles, and philosophical sceptics did not allow their 'general undistinguished scruples' to qualify their acceptance of Newton. Therefore these Pyrrhonists were not serious, although they need not be what the *Port Royal Logic* called them (*l.c.*, 387), a 'sect of liars'. For a long time theologians had decried natural reason in the interests of faith; and M. Huet [1] (*l.c.*, 388) had been as good a Pyrrhonist as any. But fashions had changed with Locke and his 'reasonableness' of Christianity; and why should not the sceptics agree with Locke (avoiding Bayle and other libertines) and, like the better sort of deist, regard religion itself as a branch of philosophy and of reason? And Cleanthes brushed aside a characteristic attempt of Philo's to impugn the good faith of the priests (G. II. 389).

So the stage was set for examining the fundamental question of the *Dialogues*, viz. whether our natural faculties, employed about the data of experience, were or were not capable of establishing the truth of theism. Cleanthes, cutting short a very 'artful' manœuvre of Philo's (*l.c.*, 392), asserted that *only* the argument *a posteriori* could prove 'the existence of a deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence' (*ibid.*). Philo replied that the experimental evidence was not 'even the most certain and irrefragable of that inferior kind' (*ibid.*). The substance of Cleanthes's argument, he said, was that 'there is an original principle of order in mind, not in matter' (*l.c.*, 395). But just reasoners would not go so fast, or traffic so recklessly in conjectures and weak analogies. 'Can a conclusion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? . . . What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe?' (*l.c.*, 396). Cleanthes had assumed that the world was 'a great machine' (*l.c.*, 392). But how could he seriously employ weak analogies

[1] Pierre Daniel Huet, Bishop of Avranches. Author of *Censura philosophiae cartesianae* (1689); *De imbecillitate mentis humanae* (1738); *Traité philosophique de la foiblesse de l'esprit humain.* Londres, 1741.

derived from his knowledge of machines to ' so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe ' ? (*l.c.*, 397). Astronomers had *several* worlds to reason about (after Galileo, that great genius, had shown in his ' Dialogues ' that there was no fundamental distinction (*l.c.*, 399 *sq.*) between ' elementary and celestial substances '). But neither astronomers nor any one else had experience of ' the first arrangement of the elements '. ' When two *species* of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can *infer*, by custom, the existence of one wherever I *see* the existence of the other. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain ' (*l.c.*, 398). Like Simonides, when Hiero asked him *What God was* (a story found in Cicero, *D.N.D.*, I. xxii), it was necessary to take ' a day to think of it, and then two days more ', and so continually to postpone an answer.

Cleanthes refused to be silenced. There might, he said, be unparalleled events which, all the same, were proofs of design. Suppose an articulate voice were heard in the clouds ? Suppose —and here the reader is again reminded of the Ciceronian argument (*D.N.D.*, II. xxxvii) that it was vastly improbable that ' if a great quantity of the one and twenty letters . . . were thrown upon the ground, they would fall into such order as legibly to form the *Annals* of Ennius '—suppose that nature was, so to say, a great self-propagating library, could we not infer that such singularities, however vast, were designed ? And was not nature a production even better designed than such a ' vegetating ' library could be ? (*l.c.*, 402). And was the fact not plain to common sense, beyond the reach of scepticism ?

Here Philo was ' a little embarrassed and confounded ' (*l.c.*, 404) and was grateful to Demea for interposing the objection that God's ways were not our ways, and that no anthropomorphite, like Cleanthes, had the least occasion to infer that we knew enough about God's intelligence to attribute to him an interest in cosmic engineering. The reply of Cleanthes was that *any* mind must resemble the human if it were a mind at all (*l.c.*, 407), and that the religionist's assertion of the mystical simplicity and unintelligibility of God's mind was a genuine, if unintended, atheism. But Philo, pretending to agree with Demea, set about to develop the most pertinacious and probably the strongest part of his sceptical theme.

Abstract reason, he said, proclaimed that a mental world

required a cause as much as a universe of objects (*l.c.*, 407). Experience, judging as well as she could from the samples exposed to her notice, simply discovered the fact of order both in objects and in minds. In both cases she found exceptions: 'of the first in madness, of the second in corruption' (*l.c.*, 409); in both cases she was ignorant of the cause of order and, if she were wise, declined to follow the bad example of the Peripatetics who assumed a *faculty* or *occult quality* and called it a cause. The *fact* of order, in minds and in objects, therefore, was all that we had to argue from. So why not stop there? 'The first step which we make leads us on for ever. It were, therefore, wise in us to limit all our inquiries to the present world, without looking farther' (*ibid.*).

The experimental argument for theism, Philo went on to say (for he was now in full career), depended entirely upon analogy. The liker the effect, the liker the cause (*l.c.*, 411). Therefore (*a*) a *finite* God would be sufficient for the *known* effects, (*b*) a *perfect* God was a gratuitous supposition. A 'botching and bungling' God, with eternity to work in, might have 'struck out' the present system (*l.c.*, 413). [Tully's Epicurean (*D.N.D.*, I. xx) had taught us 'that the world was made by nature, and that there was no occasion for a work-room to frame it in'.] Several deities might have taken a hand at the job of creation. Or why not become 'a perfect anthropomorphite' and say with Epicurus (cf. *D.N.D.*, I. xxiv) that analogy indicated that reason, even in God, must be in a human figure? The principle of analogy showed 'that where several known circumstances are *observed* to be similar, the unknown will also be *found* similar'[1] (*l.c.*, 415 *sq.*). Did not vulgar experience therefore suggest the ancient hypothesis that the world was like some vast animal?

Like a vegetable, rather, replied Cleanthes. The world had no nervous system. Besides, it was in its infancy, and not, like human history, a cyclical affair of revolutions and of alternations (*l.c.*, 418 *sq.*).

'Why not?' said Philo. Why should there not have been revolutions in nature? Cleanthes required a principle of order —for chance had no place anywhere (*l.c.*, 420)—but his principles left him free to choose between any number of possible hypotheses. Incidentally he had to prove, if he could, that the universe was liker a work of art than a great animal or a spreading vegetable (*ibid.*). 'The world plainly resembles

[1] Italics mine.

more an animal or a vegetable than it does a watch or a knitting-loom.' But 'reason, instinct, generation, vegetation' were, all of them, but names for unknown causes, and it was 'a palpable and egregious partiality' (*l.c.*, 423) to prefer a *mental* cause to the other *equally*, because *totally*, unknown possibilities.

According to Cleanthes, we had to stop somewhere in our explanations. Why not then (to repeat the point) stop at the facts that we know? As soon as we 'gave a loose' to wild conjectures, each supported by 'a faint shadow of experience' and 'some small appearance of analogy' we were pursuing chimeras. There was nothing to constrain a single determinate inference. Indeed, it would be legitimate to revive, with improvements, the ancient hypothesis of Epicurus.[1] (Here as elsewhere Hume's argument showed very obvious traces of the influence of Bayle's Arts. *Epicure* and *Averroes*, Rem. Q.) Let us suppose, as Epicurus did not, that the universe was finite. It would then follow that, given an infinite time, matter would fall into its present economy, even if it had started from chaos, and that 'order, when once established, supports itself, for many ages, if not to eternity' (*l.c.*, 427). 'A real and perpetual revolution or motion of parts, affords a plausible, if not a true solution, of the difficulty' (*l.c.*, 428). To give thought the precedence was to *reverse* the natural order. In the natural order, thought was a copy (or ectype) of nature, not its archetype or pattern, except where mind and body had an equal reciprocal influence (*l.c.*, 429 *sq.*).

Thus Philo, well schooled in the reasonings of antiquity, gave a loose to his 'fertile' (*l.c.*, 425) imagination; and the most important part of the *Dialogues* was completed when Cleanthes and Philo combined to refute the learned abstractions of Dr. Clarke, with Demea for his mouthpiece (*l.c.*, 430 *sqq.*), and concluded (*l.c.*, 434) that the argument *a priori* had 'seldom been found very convincing' even to people 'of good sense and the best inclined to religion', and that 'men ever did, and ever will derive their religion from other sources than from this species of reasoning' (*ibid.*).

In this refutation of Demea-Clarke, Philo, in order to show that 'the whole economy of the universe' might be 'conducted by necessity, though no human algebra can furnish the key', illustrated the possibility of seeming chance, but real algebraic necessity, by the truth that in any multiple of 9, the sum of the digits is always either 9 or a multiple of 9 (*l.c.*, 433 *sq.*),

[1] Cf. Lucretius, I, 1021 *sqq.*

and gave as his reference the (*Nouvelles de la*) *République des Lettres, Août* 1685. It is perhaps significant that another article in this very number (referring to the controversy between Arnauld and Malebranche) received attention in Bayle's Art. *Epicure*, Rem. H. And we may pause at this point to consider some other scraps of evidence concerning the sources which influenced Hume's *Dialogues*.

Certain memoranda in Hume's handwriting are preserved among the Hume MSS. in Edinburgh, and Hill Burton published a selection from them (B. I. 134 *sq.*), although he printed but seven out of forty jottings (mostly excerpts) about philosophy. The date of these memoranda is of course uncertain, but they seem to have been contemporaneous (judging from the handwriting, paper, etc.) with other jottings concerning economics (B. I. 126 *sqq.*) and, on that hypothesis, belonged to the period of the early draft of the *Dialogues*.

Of the forty memoranda, sixteen, with certainty, and probably [1] eight others, were taken from Bayle, four at least (probably six) came from King's *Origin of Evil* (one of the jottings and perhaps some others contained a comparison between Bayle and King), two at least were from Fénelon, and one referred to Cudworth. Again, dividing according to subjects, fifteen referred to the problem of evil and to optimism (six being concerned with 'freedom' in relation to evil), four with the various species of atheism, three with the classification of ancient philosophies, two with the First Cause, two with the *Argument a priori*, and four with points dealt with, more specially, in the *Natural History of Religion* (viz. ancient polytheism, and its priority to monotheism, 'universal consent' with relation to barbarous peoples, and the 'secret instinct' of priests for ritual).

Among the jottings specially appropriate to the *Dialogues*, the following may be noted: 'The Center of Unity of all Men with Relation to Religion is: That there is a First Cause. As you augment the Proposition you find Non-conformists, Atheists, Epicureans, Idolaters, those who maintain the Extension, Composition, Necessity of the First Cause etc.' (Baile). 'Three Kinds of Atheists according to some. 1. Who deny the Existence of a God. Such as Diagoras (and ?) Theodorus. 2. Who deny a Providence. Such as the Epicureans and the Ionic Sect. 3. Who deny the Free Will of the Deity. Such as

[1] i.e. consecutive excerpts not marked '*Id*'. In the sequel I shall put a query (?) after the probable author's name.

Aristotle, the Stoics &c ' (Baile ?). ' Strato's Atheism the most dangerous of the ancient—holding the Origin of the World from Nature, or a Matter endued with Activity. Baile thinks there are none but the Cartesians can refute this Atheism.' ' A Stratonician could retort the Arguments of all the Sects of Philosophy. Of the Stoics, who maintained their God to be fiery and compound; and of the Platonicians, who asserted the Ideas to be distinct from the Deity. The same Question —Why the Parts or Ideas of God had that particular Arrangement ?—is as difficult as why the World had ' (Baile ?). ' Matter indifferent to all Kinds of Motion and Direction. The Soul a carte blanche indifferent to all Perception. What necessity then for harmful Motions or disagreeable Perceptions. Many Plans upon which the Universe might be formed. Strange that none should be better than the present ' (Baile). ' Whether a Cause is necessary ? Whether necessary to an eternal Being ? Whether necessary in every new Moment of a successive Being ? Whether necessary in Motion ? ' (Baile ?). ' Three proofs of the Existence of a God; 1st Some thing necessarily existent, and what is so is infinitely perfect. 2nd The Idea of Infinite must come from an infinite Being. 3rd The Idea of infinite Perfection implies that of actual existence ' (Fénelon ?).

Broadly speaking, Hume's discussion in the *Dialogues* followed the order indicated by Cicero's Balbus (*D.N.D.*, II. i), ' firstly that there are gods, secondly of what character and nature they are, thirdly that the universe is governed by them, and lastly that they supervise human affairs '—although Hume, of course, did not, like Balbus, try to prove these things. He had therefore to deal with the Epicurean denial of a Providence, as distinguished from the existence of a Deity (which the Epicureans admitted), or in other words with the theological ' problem of evil '; and obviously he could not have avoided the subject in an age in which this historical problem had been so prominent in the works of Bayle (e.g. Art. *Epicure*, especially Rem. S.), in Archbishop King and in the authors of the *Theodicées* (G. II. 436 n.). The comparative brevity of Hume's discussion of the question in the *Dialogues*, however, may indicate that he thought the point too plain to need much argument. (' Away with Him if He shows no benevolence ' Cicero's Cotta had said (*D.N.D.*, I. xliii) of the Epicurean God, although both Cotta and Balbus devoted a great part of their attention to this aspect of the question.)

Demea and Philo began (G. II. 434 *sqq.*) with a competition in the darkening of the picture of human misery. They cited the poets ' from Homer down to Dr. Young ' ; they repudiated Leibniz and Dr. King ' and some few others ' who had anticipated that preposterous optimism. Philo, in particular, pointed out that while social organization lightened certain human burdens, it carried greater evils, such as war and oppression, in its train, and also delivered himself of a few melancholy aphorisms rather like those in which Hume in the essay called ' The Sceptic ' (G. III. 225 *sqq.*) had opposed ' the artificial arguments of a Seneca or an Epictetus '. Philo, in short, was very well equipped with missiles for attacking experimental theism from this new quarter, and he soon introduced the venerable elench of Epicurus, ' Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able ? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing ? Then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing ? whence then is evil ? ' (G. II. 440).

Therefore, Philo went on to say (after Cleanthes had heroically affirmed that there was more happiness than misery in the world, and that God's beneficence, consequently, was established) it was the theist who had to ' tug the labouring oar ' against the tide of common sense in this affair. The sceptic had the tide with him. For even if happiness exceeded misery, the theist had to show cause why an *almighty* Deity should have allowed any misery *at all*, and had to ' prove the pure unmixed and uncontrollable attributes from the present mixed and confused phenomena, and from these alone. A hopeful undertaking ! ' (*l.c.*, 443).

But what, Cleanthes interposed, if we abandoned the term ' infinite ' together with all else that was mere panegyric, and asserted the existence of ' benevolence regulated by wisdom and limited by necessity ' ? (*l.c.*, 444). I allow, Philo replied, that if we had antecedent assurance of God's existence we might be able to *save* the theistic doctrine ; but we could never *establish* it on the mixed foundations of experience (*l.c.*, 448). How account for the four great classes of *natural* evil ? (*l.c.*, 451). (*a*) Why should not pleasure be the *sole* stimulus to animal activity, instead of being a less effective stimulus than pain ? (*b*) Why should not a particular Providence rectify the inconveniences of general laws (if necessary secretly so that we should still believe in the uniformity of nature) ? (*c*) Why should Deity have been so frugal in His gifts ? He gave to each species forces just sufficient for its preservation—for no species

had yet been extinguished in the universe (*l.c.*, 448)—but why might He not have been a little more liberal? 'Almost all the moral, as well as natural evils of human life arise from idleness' (*l.c.*, 449). Why, then, should not God have made us all industrious? (*d*) And why, O why, did He show so much 'inaccurate workmanship'? (*l.c.*, 450)—with tempests and hurricanes, excess or defect, everywhere. Such 'natural' evil, it would seem, might well be capable of remedy without overtaxing the powers of a strong benevolent deity; but the plain conclusion was, not Manichæanism even, but 'that the original source of all things is entirely indifferent to all these principles' (*l.c.*, 452). And as to vice or *moral* evil, how account for the difficulty that there existed any vice at all . . . 'Hold! hold!' cried Demea. . . .

So Demea went away and the two old friends, the enlightened theist (or deist) and the undogmatic sceptic, had a ruminative conversation. Philo, at long last, professed to state his 'unfeigned sentiments' (*l.c.*, 460). Common sense was on the side of Cleanthes; therefore no sensible person could ever mistake Philo's intentions; for Philo also had his measure of common sense. The evidence of design and of final causes being clear 'the existence of a Deity is plainly ascertained by reason' (*l.c.*, 457); and a certain analogy between God's intelligence and ours could scarcely be denied. Therefore, theists and atheists disputed about a matter of degree. The theist admitted 'a great and immeasurable, because incomprehensible difference between the human and the divine mind' (*l.c.*, 458). The atheist—(who was only nominally so [1] (*ibid.*)—admitted the probability that the first principle of the universe bore 'some remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of nature, and among the rest to the economy of human mind and thought' (*l.c.*, 459). The evidence for God's benevolence (as *we* understood the term) was indeed much weaker; but the proper inference was 'that the moral qualities of man are more defective in their kind than his natural abilities' (*ibid.*).

For the rest, the two friends largely agreed and subtly differed. The sympathies of both were with a 'true' religion of the philosophical kind; but Philo would like to see this religion confined to the few who could understand it, while

[1] In a well-known anecdote (Greig, p. 299) Hume told d'Holbach that he had yet to meet an atheist and was informed that he was sitting with fifteen of them at d'Holbach's table. Holbach's *Système de la nature* was called 'A philippic against God' (*The Double Heart*, p. 29).

Cleanthes opined that 'religion, however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all' (*l.c.*, 460), that it was salutary to society (*ibid.*) and 'the only great comfort in life' (*l.c.*, 464). Philo, on the other hand, dreaded superstition and all its influence. He believed that vulgar religion was, in Cleanthes's words, 'a cover to faction and ambition' (*l.c.*, 460), that it was saturated with hypocrisy (*l.c.*, 461); not very 'favourable to morality' (*l.c.*, 463), and an edged tool for magistrates to handle (*ibid.*). The 'engaging and alluring' side of religion, it was true, was 'more than appearance' (*l.c.*, 464)—to the genuine philosopher. But threats of hell, enthusiasm, and the belief that Deity had 'a restless appetite for applause' were not alluring at all. In short, 'a plain philosophical assent' (*l.c.*, 467) to a remote analogy between the cause, or causes, of order in the universe, on the one hand, and human intelligence, on the other, could 'afford no inference that affects human life, or be the source of any action or forbearance'.

As in the *Natural History of Religion* this conclusion was pure 'naturalism' (or Epicureanism) in terms of Warburton's definition; and in the penultimate paragraph of the *Dialogues* Philo made the ironical statement that 'to be a philosophical Sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian'.[1]

[1] Perhaps in parody of Shaftesbury's 'to be a settled Christian, it is necessary to be first of all a good Theist' (II, 209).

N.B. On p. 303 I neglected to mention that Hume seems to have studied Fénelon's *Traité de l'existence de Dieu.*

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This index omits references to matters sufficiently indicated in the Table of Contents, and also to Hume himself. Several other omissions are intentional.

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