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# **Hume's Scepticism and the Science of Human Nature**

**Paul J. Stanistreet**

**PhD**

**Department of Philosophy**

**University of Glasgow**



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## Abstract

The difficulty of reconciling Hume's use and endorsement of sceptical arguments and conclusions with his constructive project of founding 'a science of man' is perhaps the central interpretive puzzle of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Hume has been interpreted as an entirely unmitigated sceptic about induction, causation, personal identity and the external world. His sceptical arguments emerge as part of a naturalistic programme to explain fundamental human beliefs, but seem to call into serious question the viability of this programme. This work is an attempt to understand the relationship between Hume's sceptical arguments and his Newtonian ambition of founding a science of human nature. It defends two main theses: that Hume's sceptical arguments appear as steps in a more general and systematic argument the conclusion of which involves a causal explanation of scepticism itself; and that the scepticism of Book One of the *Treatise* is to be seen not as unmitigatedly destructive but as a part of the necessary preparation for the more robustly Newtonian investigations of Books Two and Three. Hume's sceptical arguments support the general conception he has of philosophy, and of its role and value, which emerges in the conclusion to the first book. I show that Hume's exposition of this conception is the conclusion of a complex and systematic dialectic. The work is divided into four chapters. In Chapter One, I examine Hume's commitment to the experimental method of reasoning and formulate a number of general theoretical principles which, I argue, guide the Newtonian investigations of the *Treatise*. I also assess Hume's understanding of what constitutes a good or adequate explanation in science. Chapter Two considers Part III of Book One. Here I emphasise the reflexiveness of Hume's extended account of the causal relation, acknowledging the constructive programme which leads Hume to formulate a set of normative rules for telling what is the cause of what. The remaining two chapters deal with Hume's main sceptical arguments concerning the attribution of identity over time to bodies and persons. In Chapter Three, I critically consider Hume's account of our belief in and idea of continued and distinct existence. The fourth chapter examines the supposition of the identity of persons and Hume's bundle theory of the self. I draw and develop a number of parallels between these accounts and Hume's account of the idea of necessary connection. In the conclusion, I consider the relationship between Hume's use of sceptical arguments and the more constructive self-application of causal reasoning in Part III and give an account of Hume's notion of true philosophy.

## **Table of Contents**

Preface, p.1

### **Chapter One**

Hume's Science and the Study of Human Nature, p.4

1.1 Hume's Methodological Outlook, p.6

1.2 Ideas and Association, p.28

Notes, p.53

### **Chapter Two**

Causality, Reason and Causal Inference, p.62

2.1 The Argument Concerning Induction, p.64

2.2 Hume and the New Hume, p.95

Notes, p.129

### **Chapter Three**

Hume's Scepticism with Regard to the Senses, p.141

3.1 The Argument in Detail, p.145

3.2 Common Sense and True Philosophy, p.173

Notes, p.209

### **Chapter Four**

Hume on Personal Identity, p.218

4.1 Of Personal Identity, p.221

4.2 Hume's 'Recantation' and His Critics, p.231

Notes, p.252

**Conclusion, p.256**

Notes, p.266

**Bibliography, p.267**

The Philosopher is someone who has to cure many diseases of the understanding in himself, before he can arrive at the notions of common sense.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**

# Preface

Hume's fortunes as a philosopher have fluctuated enormously since the publication of *A Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739. Hume has been seen as a sceptical philosopher concerned with the *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of ideas; as a positivist intent on giving a reductive analysis of the propositions with which we express our common sense view of the world; and, more recently, as a realist or sceptical realist whose commitment to the common sense view of the world is accurately reflected in the many passages in which he writes of lasting objects and of causal connections between distinct events. None of these views is without merit and each has some basis in the text. But the difficulty commentators have had in reconciling these interpretations with the whole text of the *Treatise* and with Hume's other works suggests quite strongly that none of them succeeds in telling the whole story about Hume's philosophy. In my view, all of them, in one way or another, seriously distort what Hume has to say.

This work is an attempt to redress the balance in Hume's favour by showing that there is a greater unity and cohesiveness to his philosophical thinking than is usually thought and by taking seriously the number of general theoretical intentions with which Hume sets out on his enquiries. My text is Book One of the *Treatise*. I argue for two main theses: firstly, that Hume's sceptical arguments in that book are not isolated and disruptive episodes in the thought of an inconsistent and unsystematic philosopher, but indispensable steps in a more general argument which reaches its conclusion in the final section of Book One; and, secondly, that Hume's scepticism in the first book of the *Treatise* should be seen not as a destructive force, but as an important part of the preparatory investigation upon which Hume intends to found a 'compleat system of the sciences'(T.xvi). Where other commentators have found in Book One of Hume's *Treatise* a series of brilliant, but discontinuous, and holistically unsatisfactory, philosophical arguments, I see Hume's important arguments as part of a general account of human belief and commitment which leads him to form a conception of philosophy which both serves his scientific ambitions and acknowledges his sceptical concerns.

The question of how to reconcile Hume's use and endorsement of sceptical arguments with his '*Attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*' is perhaps the central interpretive puzzle of Hume's philosophy. Hume has been seen as a wholly unmitigated sceptic with regard to certain areas of commitment. The challenge for any interpreter is to show why Hume's arguments do not lead him to reject entirely the problematic ways in which we speak or think about these areas. Philosophers have been divided on the question of whether or not Hume's Newtonian ambitions can withstand the force of his own sceptical arguments and conclusions. The general consensus has been that they cannot. There has been a tendency among some recent critics either to ignore or to downplay the

sceptical dimension to Hume's thought. I believe this move in thinking about Hume needs to be resisted. The *Treatise* abounds with sceptical arguments and it is important that we take them as seriously as Hume did. I attempt to show the importance of these arguments not only to Hume's philosophical perspective but to his general theoretical objective of basing the system of the sciences on a foundation 'almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security'(T.xvi).

Hume saw his work as gathering force and persuasiveness as it progressed. The important general issues of his philosophy in Book One of the *Treatise* arise from his treatment of particular local problems and are brought to a head only in his conclusion to that book. I follow Hume's lead by first taking the local issues of causation, induction, external existence, and personal identity, and working my way through them towards the more general issues concerning scepticism and Hume's constructive scientific programme. Only by following this strategy, I believe, do we get a sound understanding of why the general problems of Hume's philosophy emerge as they do. I divide the work into four main chapters, the first of which addresses Hume's general methodological concerns and commitments, while the following three deal respectively with what I believe are the main areas of Hume's sceptical interest: our beliefs about causation, the external world, and the identity of persons.

In Chapter One, I closely examine the depth and character of Hume's commitment to the experimental method of reasoning which he was intent on introducing to the moral sciences. I bring out what I think are the general theoretical principles which Hume will make use of throughout the *Treatise* and assess his understanding of what makes for a good or adequate explanation in science. In Chapter Two, I consider Part III of Book One, and, in particular, the extended causal account of the natural relation of cause and effect, which includes Hume's famous argument concerning induction and which reaches a climax with his two definitions of causation. The treatment I offer of these themes emphasises the reflexiveness of Hume's account, giving weight to the nonsceptical constructive concerns which lead him to formulate his set of normative rules by which to judge of causes and effects. The final chapters deal with Hume's main sceptical arguments concerning the attribution of identity over time to bodies and minds. Hume's account of our belief in the continued and distinct existence of body is critically assessed in Chapter Three, while the fourth and final chapter deals with Hume's bundle theory of personal identity and the supposition of the identity of persons. I draw some important parallels between these accounts and Hume's account of the idea of necessary connection. These are developed in the conclusion in which I attempt to clarify the nature of the relationship between these sceptical arguments and the more obviously constructive intentions behind Hume's reflexive applications of causal reasoning in Part III.

My debt to those scholars who have worked, and continue to work, in this area is, of course, enormous. But I would single out two as being especially important. These are Barry Stroud,

whose book *Hume* remains the most lucid and enquiring introduction to the *Treatise*, and John Passmore, whose classic work, *Hume's Intentions*, has been a continuous source of opposition and inspiration. Among more recent commentaries, I have found Annette Baier's *A Progress of Sentiments* and Don Garrett's *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* to be the most penetrating. Their work, like the work of Stroud and Passmore, brings to the subject not only an acute critical appreciation, but an imaginativeness and enthusiasm which, for this reader, have proved infectious. I would also like to acknowledge the critical help and support offered by my supervisors on the project, Professor Alexander Broadie and Dr Philip Percival, of the University of Glasgow. Both have played an important part in shaping the work. My engagement with Hume began as an undergraduate and it would be ungracious not to acknowledge the supportive environment offered by the philosophy department of the University of Wales, at Cardiff, and, in particular, by my MPhil supervisor Barry Wilkins who introduced me to the study of the history of philosophy and who has continued to offer his friendship and advice. I remain in his debt.

## Abbreviations

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| T./Treatise | References to <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> are given by page number to the L.A. Selby-Bigge edition, revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).                |
| E./Enquiry  | References to <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> are given by page number to the L.A. Selby-Bigge Edition, revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). |

# Chapter One

## Hume's Science and the Study of Human Nature

Hume describes his *Treatise of Human Nature* as '*an Attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*'. In his introduction to the work, he gives a ringing, largely unqualified, endorsement of the scientific method, insisting, in terms fairly typical of the mid-18th Century, upon the value of observation and experience. It has been a standard move among commentators to identify what Hume understood by the 'experimental method' with his understanding of Newton's method. There remains good reason, despite some recent hints at revisionism(1), to think that Newton provided Hume with the paradigm for explanatory adequacy. Hume, however, has little to say, directly, at least, about what makes one explanation better or more complete than another, or what the limits are within which such theorising ought to take place. He tells us far less than we would wish about the nature of the general 'laws and forces'(E.14) he takes science to be investigating or about how those laws and forces relate to the phenomena which they are intended to explain. Hume does, however, have a number of general methodological principles and constraints in mind, which, as I mean to show, implicitly guide and drive his own attempts at scientific theorising. There may well be good reason to revise our picture of Hume's Newtonianism, but the true picture, as I see it, places Newton still more pivotally at the heart of Hume's philosophy, not least in guiding Hume's understanding of what a good or adequate explanation is in science. The question of the depth, niceness and originality of Hume's understanding of Newton, will be a significant and recurrent theme in the discussion to follow. There are, of course, a number of other important influences on Hume's thought, not least among them, Malebranche and Locke, and these too cannot be ignored. Once we have clarified the nature of Hume's conception of science and the practice of scientists like Newton, much else to have puzzled commentators on Hume's philosophy will be brought into sharp relief. We can begin to pick apart and reconstruct the use Hume makes of his general theoretical principles, and gather, more exactly, what his intentions are. What I hope to bring out is not only the care with which Hume attended to and appreciated Newton's writings, but the respects in which Hume, perhaps rightly, reckoned himself a more thoroughgoing and reliable Newtonian than Newton himself.

It seemed evident to Hume that 'all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another.'(T.xv) Mathematics, natural philosophy and natural religion are all 'in some measure dependent on the science of MAN; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties'(T.xv). The study of human nature

represents the indispensable groundwork for the study of all these sciences, including those 'whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate'(T.xv), what we might call the moral sciences. As the science of man is the 'only solid foundation for the other sciences', so 'the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation'(T.xvi). What Hume proposes is 'a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security'(T.xvi). While Hume evidently intends his remarks to go some way towards clarifying his purpose, if not his strategy, many more questions would appear to be raised here than are answered. Some care is needed in appreciating just how Hume understood his proposed reconstruction of the sciences.

Experience and observation do not provide us with foundations in the sense in which Descartes looked to offer indubitable metaphysical foundations for a science consisting wholly of 'certain and evident cognition'(2). A search for foundations such as these, is, for Hume, as misguided as it is hopeless. The sceptical doubt 'both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chace it away'(T.218). Hume's more modest hope is 'to establish a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hop'd for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination'(T.272). For Hume, there neither is, nor can be, any metaphysical guarantee that our thinking about reality is in harmony with how things really are. The question of whether or how our thinking corresponds, in whatever sense, to some ultimate reality or existence, is dismissed as 'chimerical' and 'presumptuous'. It is as little a part of Hume's case to suggest that sense experience provides us with an unproblematic basis for knowledge. Experience does not provide us with a foundation in this sense. The more we probe the received foundations of knowledge, however we think of them, the more they give and crumble beneath us. The sceptical doubt increases 'the farther we carry our reflections'(T218). Philosophy, as it is practised by Hume in Book One, and as he ultimately defends it, has a role, but, as we will see in due course, its role is severely circumscribed.

The 'sole end of logic', Hume writes, 'is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas'(T.xv). What Hume proposes, and what occupies him in Book One of the *Treatise*, is an examination of the foundations to which science might lay claim, with the ultimate aim of acquainting ourselves more thoroughly with 'the extent and force of human understanding'(T.xv). The outcome of this course of critical and reflective thinking is a sort of 'mitigated' scepticism, an uneasy marriage of reason and imagination, which Hume, nevertheless, hopes will provide the reader with the assurance he needs to follow him in the enquiries to come. Hume's work in Book One needs to be understood as an extended puzzling-out of the problems lying in the way of the more full-bloodedly Newtonian investigations of Books Two and Three. Bringing the 'logic' of Book One

to a close, Hume writes that it is 'now time to return to a more close examination of our subject, and to proceed in the accurate anatomy of human nature, having fully explain'd the nature of our judgment and understanding'(T.263). Hume's examination of the nature and extent of human understanding, his logic, has merely brought him to the point of launching out 'into those immense depths of philosophy, which lie before me'(T.263).

The distinction Hume makes between the roles served by Book One, on the one hand, and the succeeding two books, on the other, is important, and should be taken seriously, as, indeed, Hume intended it to be. That said, it would be a mistake, I think, to take too strictly what is, in some ways, a fairly rough-and-ready distinction. The sceptical doubts Hume raises in Book One are never entirely disposed of, and recur at points in Books Two and Three, almost as reminders of the need for philosophical caution. It will suffice, for the moment, to bear in mind that Hume has a number of definite critical aims before him in the first book, as well as a definite set of theoretical intentions, which he takes to be preparatory for the more constructive Newtonian investigations of the following books. One of the things to emerge from this is the distinction Hume draws between his own way of philosophy and the 'several systems of philosophy, both of the intellectual and natural world'(T.263) which he considers only to dismiss. Hume's conception of the goal and nature of philosophy is what he hopes, ultimately, will allow us to move beyond the sceptical doubts he raises in Part IV of Book One, restoring, to some extent, the assurance he appeared to have stripped away from our fundamental beliefs and practices. What will be explored in this, and in the following chapters, is just how Hume thought of philosophy, its value and purpose, as well as the relation between this conception, as Hume develops it, and the sceptical doubts he raises. Only with this background in mind, can we begin to make sense of what have often seemed the unsystematic, even self-contradictory, claims of Book One. It is essential to begin with an examination of Hume's methodological strategy, the constraints he takes himself to be working within, and the kind of account of explanatory adequacy he has in mind as the test of the success and intelligibility of his own theorising.

## 1.1 Hume's Methodological Outlook

Implicit in the description of his work Hume gives at the outset of the *Treatise* is a contrast between 'natural philosophy', what we would now think of as the natural sciences, and 'moral' philosophy, which is to say, in Hume's terms, those subjects whose connection with human nature is closest and most intimate. The moral sciences are concerned essentially with human life and thought, conduct and manners, comprehending 'almost every thing, which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind'(T.xvi). The set of moral sciences consists of '*Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics*'(T.xvi). There is no question of importance, Hume assures us, 'whose decision is not compriz'd' in this new science of man(T.xvi). The science of man is identified with the whole

set of moral sciences. There is, however, some little ambiguity in Hume's use of the expression 'the science of man' which it is as well to dispose of now. Hume gives the expression two different, but easily distinguishable, senses. He sometimes writes of the science of man as though it comprised not the whole set of moral sciences but only one member of that set, one member upon which all the others are dependent. All the sciences, whether moral or natural, according to Hume, are not only comprehended in the science of man, but have 'a dependence on the knowledge of man'(T.xv). It is, Hume says, 'impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences were we thoroughly acquainted with the extent and force of human understanding, and cou'd explain the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings'(T.xv). This, as we saw, is 'the sole end of logic': to explain the principles and operations of the understanding, and to determine the nature of the ideas upon which it works. In *An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume makes explicit the relationship he believes holds between his logic and the other parts of his putative science. This *Treatise*, he writes, 'seems intended for a system of the sciences. The author has finished what regards logic, and has laid the foundation of the other parts in his account of the passions'(T.646). Since our 'impressions of reflexion', the 'passions, desires, and emotions, which principally deserve our attention', derive from our ideas, it is necessary, Hume thinks, 'to explain the nature and principles of the human mind' and 'give a particular account of ideas, before we proceed to impressions'(T.8). Hume saw the logic of Book One as the necessary preparation for the 'accurate anatomy of human nature'(T.263), of human conduct and the passions, which follows. When Hume writes of the science of man in this sense he identifies it directly with his logic, rather than with the set of moral sciences, which comprises logic, the passions, morals and politics.

The only solid foundation which we can give to this new science is to base it upon experience and observation. Hume proposed to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral philosophy. He sets out to explain the principles and operations of the understanding, the origin and nature of our ideas, on the same basis as he later intends to explain sympathy and benevolence, pride and envy, by basing his experiments on 'a cautious observation of human life'(T.xix). Hume supposes that the 'scientific method', which had yielded such impressive and unexpected results in the area of natural philosophy, might lead to similarly striking discoveries in the moral sciences, if pursued with the same care and caution. The relationship between moral science and the experimental method of the natural sciences is a complex one, with special implications. The examination of human understanding might, in turn, lead to a reform or refinement of the scientific method, making this science 'much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension'(T.xix). Reflection on the rules of the understanding which Hume believes the scientific method presupposes can lead to their correction and improvement. Hume saw himself as giving a new turn to these investigations. While he was clear that the principles and habits of mind upon which scientific practices rest could not survive rational scrutiny, it was in no way to his purpose to deny our right to pursue

them. As he himself makes clear, the logic of Book One must be read as preparatory to investigations of just this sort.

There was, however, a special difficulty facing practitioners of this new science. Moral philosophy, Hume says, has 'this peculiar disadvantage, which is not found in natural, that in collecting its experiments, it cannot make them purposely, with premeditation, and after such a manner as to satisfy itself concerning every particular difficulty which may arise.'(T.xviii-xix) To know the effects of one body upon another in a given circumstance, one has only to 'put them in that situation, and observe what results from it. But should I endeavour to clear up after the same manner any doubt in moral philosophy, by placing myself in the same case with that which I consider, 'tis evident this reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phenomenon.'(T.xix) Hume's science of man is not to involve direct experiments of the sort characteristic of the experimental natural sciences. Moral scientists must look to the uninfluenced behaviour of others, caught up in the ordinary course of their lives, for their data. We must, Hume tells us, 'glean up our experiments' from a broad reflection on human life, taking them 'as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures'(T.xix).

The ultimate nature of mind being as little known to us as that of body, 'it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations'(T.xvii). The moral scientist labours under no special difficulty in being ignorant of the 'true springs and causes of phenomena'(3). The search for simple and general principles must proceed on the basis of experience and not pretended conjecture as to 'the ultimate original qualities of human nature'(T.xvii). The experimental science of man must, following the example of the natural sciences, endeavour to render its principles as universal as possible by tracing its experiments 'to the utmost, and explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes'(T.xvii). Hume saw that the natural sciences, and Newton, in particular, had gained what success they had met with by seeking to determine 'the laws and forces' by which, for example, 'the revolutions of the planets are governed and directed'(E.14). Forces had been used 'with regard to other parts of nature' to explain phenomena as diverse as simple chemical reactions and the motion of the tides. There is no reason, Hume supposes, 'to despair of equal success in our enquiries concerning the mental powers and economy, if prosecuted with equal capacity and caution'(E.14). Newton describes his own experimental programme in the preface to the *Principia* as 'from the phenomena of motions to investigate the forces of nature, and then from these forces to demonstrate the other phenomena'(4). Hume seeks, in a similar vein, to explain the 'operations of our reasoning faculty'(T.xix) in terms of the fewest number of psychological general causes(E.30), controlled by laws from which, once discovered, other phenomena can be 'demonstrated'.

Hume makes explicit the parallel he intends between his principle of association among ideas, and Newton's explanation of the motion of bodies in terms of the principle of mutual gravitation. Here, Hume writes, 'is a kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms'(T.12-13). Hume observes his earlier counsel by directing his attention purely to the conspicuous effects of this principle. As to the causes, Hume tells us, 'they are mostly unknown, and must be resolved into *original* qualities, which I pretend not to explain'(T.13). Newton, in similar terms, concedes that 'the cause of gravity is what I do not pretend to know'(5). Nothing, Hume writes, 'is more requisite for a true philosopher, than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes, and having establish'd any doctrine upon a sufficient number of experiments, rest contented with that, when he sees a farther examination would lead him into obscure and uncertain speculations'(T.13). A famous passage from Hume's *History of England* makes clear the debt he considered philosophy owed to Newton in this regard. 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 referred her ultimate secrets to that obscurity, in which they ever and ever will remain'(6). 'Sight or feeling', Hume writes in the first *Enquiry*, 'conveys an idea of the actual motion of the bodies' but the 'force or power, which would carry on a moving body forever in a continued change of place, and which bodies never lose but by communicating it to others, of this we cannot form the most distant conception'(E.33).

Hume, particularly in the *Enquiry*, but to a degree also in the *Treatise*, talks uninhibitedly of nature being endowed with 'powers' or 'causes', concealed from or 'wholly unknown to us'(E.44). Commentators have found claims of this kind difficult to reconcile with Hume's apparent suggestions in the *Treatise* that talk of this sort could not possibly make sense. Critics have often understood Hume as offering an account of causation or causal connections in nature which reduces them to mere constant conjunctions of like events. On this reading, all that is meant by our talk of causation is regularity of succession. There is some textual support for the view that Hume subscribed to a regularity theory of causation. In all single instances, Hume writes in the *Enquiry*, 'of the operations of bodies or minds there is nothing that produces any impression, nor consequently can suggest any idea, of power or necessary connexion'(E.78). The 'synonyms' of power, cause, necessity or connection(T.157), Hume says, are 'absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings or common life'(E.74), except, it would seem, in so far as they are taken to refer to '*an object, followed by another...where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second*'(E.76). The problem facing the regularity view of Hume on causation is that Hume seems to deny that this is all we mean or can mean by causal connection. The text strongly suggests that Hume considered necessary connection to be an essential part of causation. There is, Hume tells us, 'a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into

consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above mentioned'(T.77). The relation of necessity or necessitation is what differentiates causal and non-causal sequences of events. Hume does not appear to deny that there exist relations of this sort. Instead, he tells us that it is impossible 'to give any just definition of cause, except what is drawn from something extraneous and foreign to it'(E.76). Hume does not argue that the mind possesses no idea of necessity. It turns out that the mind has an idea of necessary connection but not as any 'quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other'(E.63). Hume rules out the possibility of *a priori* causal inferences. The idea of necessity the mind possesses arises from a 'determination of the mind'. The mind mistakes this idea for an idea of natural necessity which it does not possess. Hume argues strongly against the possibility of a science based on such perceptions. Causal relations, on the view of inductive inference defended in the *Treatise*, can only be established between events found in our experience to be constantly conjoined. All belief about matter of fact and 'real existence', furthermore, 'is derived merely from some object, present to the memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between them and some other object'(E.46). Passages such as these might lead us to expect that Hume took science and scientific belief to consist purely in the description of observable causal relations among events. Hume, however, makes clear the difference he perceives between the achievements of those astronomers who 'had long contented themselves, with proving, from the phaenomena, the true motions, order and magnitude of the heavenly bodies' and those of Newton who had 'from the happiest reasoning...also determined the laws and forces, by which the revolutions of the planets are governed and directed'(E.14). It seems clear from this that the Newtonian method Hume endorses goes beyond the straightforward description of observable regularities. We cannot, however, ignore the question of how squarely such an interpretation sits with Hume's account of causation and his theory of meaning.

Hume's views on causation are complex and difficult to unpick. A proper treatment of them will have to wait until the next chapter. I do not believe that Hume did think of causation as mere observable regularity. Hume is much less interested in the question of what, if anything, the causal relation is than in the question of what the circumstances are in which an observer pronounces related events 'to be *connected*'(E.75). The matter of the existence of causal connections in nature is, appropriately enough, left undecided by Hume's analysis. Much, though, critically, not all, of the philosophical baggage which accompanies the received view of Hume on causation will need, in due course, to be discarded. What I want to suggest in this chapter is that there is some consistent sense to be made of Hume's general remarks about causation and causal explanation and his considered characterisation of his preferred mode of scientific explanation in terms of Newtonian laws and forces. Hume warns in a footnote in the *Enquiry* that in speaking of our 'ignorance of natural powers' he uses the term 'power' in 'a loose and popular sense'(E.33). The ordinary run of folk believe 'they perceive the very force or energy of the cause, by which it is connected with its effect'(E.69). Hume goes on, in the

following few pages, to offer an account of what he terms the 'more accurate explication' of the term, as, say, a Newtonian physicist might use it. This would seem to be Hume's considered word on the nature of theoretical expressions like 'force' and 'power'. We will see shortly how Hume begins to fill out the picture I have sketched here. In the sections that follow, I show that while Hume thinks that scientific theories must be founded in experience, he is in no ways committed to thinking of them as mere 'natural histories' of phenomena. The main problem for such a view seems to be that if we take Hume to subscribe to the view of causation and causal explanation which I have characterised as the received one, then it appears we must also concede that Hume is committed to the exclusion of forces and like entities from scientific explanation. Hume, on the other hand, seems not only to make such forces - what he calls 'general causes' - an essential part of scientific explanation, but to self-consciously endorse the practice as a feature of the Newtonian outlook. I have already suggested that Hume had a more plausible and complex view of the explanatory adequacy of theories, and the constraints within which they are obliged to work, than is usually thought. Hume's critical objection to Newton lies in his perceived contravention of his own self-prescribed constraints. While Hume and Newton may very well have a common method in view, and I would suggest that, to a degree, they do, it will quickly become evident that they have rather different goals and different prospective limits in mind for the scientific project. It is to these issues that I now turn.

Hume tells us in the *Enquiry* that the goal of his science of man is 'to discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations'(E.6). Individual events can be 'explained' with reference to general laws and causes from which the phenomena, in some sense, derive. The task of the moral scientist is to explain 'all effects from the simplest and fewest causes'(T.xvii). We must consider the way in which Hume thought of such causes and what kind of role he gives them in his understanding of the explanatory adequacy of scientific theories. The nub of the question concerns the problem of how conclusions making reference to such causes can be the result of causal explanation as Hume outlines it in his account of probable inference. The view I have begun to sketch needs to be distinguished from the received one. Many commentators have been prepared to follow Popper's line in taking Hume to have thought of the outcome of scientific theorising as a mere 'digestion of perceptions'(7). Passmore says with confidence that empirical science, to Hume, 'is the discovery that things in fact behave in certain ways'(8), altogether the view with which Hume himself seems to contrast the happier reasonings of Newton. But Passmore is not the only philosopher to have found what Hume says in one place to be at odds with what Hume does at another. According to Ayer, Hume subscribed to a reading of Newton as a practitioner of 'straightforward induction'(9), abstaining 'from any generalisation that was not directly founded upon observed instances'(10). Hume is himself, on this view, committed to excluding from scientific explanation any relation or theoretical

entity not known by direct observation. Scientific theories, on this view, are simply generalisations from observation.

The idea is that Hume thought of scientific theories as the 'straightforward' outcome of 'general induction from phenomena'(11). Theories have the status of generalisations which 'universally agree' with our experiments. Hume's science is in effect reducible to his account of causal inference. Causal relations, on this view, can be established only between observable contingent regularities. There is no question of an empirical generalisation being deduced or 'demonstrated' from the phenomena. Two objects, 'tho' perfectly resembling each other, and even appearing in the same place at different times, may be numerically different: And as the power, by which one object produces another, is never discoverable merely from their idea, 'tis evident *cause* and *effect* are relations, of which we receive information from experience, and not from any abstract reasoning or reflexion.'(T.69) Causal inference alone takes us beyond the present circle of our perceptions. Conclusions beyond the impressions of our senses, says Hume, 'can be founded only on the connexion of *cause* and *effect*; nor can we otherwise have any security, that the object is not chang'd upon us, however much the new object may resemble that which was formerly present to the senses'(T.74). All arguments from experience, we are told, are of the form of causal inferences. Were we to proceed 'not upon some fact, present to the memory or senses, our reasonings would be merely hypothetical; and however the particular links be connected with each other, the whole chain of inferences would have nothing to support it, nor could we ever, by its means, arrive at the knowledge of any real existence.'(E.46) The rejection of hypothesis is taken to go hand-in hand with the identification of Hume's account of causal inference with his theory of science. Causal inferences are limited to sets of like events found conjoined in experience. Writing in the *Abstract*, Hume promises 'to draw no conclusions but where he is authorized by experience' and to talk 'with contempt of hypotheses'(T.646). The passages quoted lend some textual support to the view that Hume must have understood theories as grounded in experience in the same way that causal inferences are. But Hume's rejection of hypotheses at this point should give us pause. Far from seriously wishing to expel all hypotheses from science, Hume goes on, throughout his work, to make fairly free use of them, sometimes adding his own explicit endorsement of the practice. Hume's own understanding of scientific practice would suggest that he thought of theories as being somewhat differently, or at least, less straightforwardly, grounded in experiment and observation than are causal inferences. The crux of the matter, as I see it, is that the general causes of which Hume's own theories are composed have much more of the character of hypotheses about them than could be supported on the basis of straightforward induction.

The aim of Hume's science, as Passmore and others have understood it, is the discovery by inductive analysis of observable causes or causal relations between observable events. Hume's method is straightforwardly modelled on the analysis Newton proposes in the *Opticks*

as consisting in 'making experiments and observations, and in drawing general conclusions from them by induction, and admitting of no objections against the conclusions, but such as are taken from experiments or other certain truths. For hypotheses are not to be regarded in experimental philosophy.'(12) Hume can be seen in the *Treatise* 'tracing up' his 'experiments' to explain the phenomena 'from the simplest and fewest causes'(T.xvii). What are the sorts of phenomena Hume is interested in explaining? I have already characterised Hume's main concern in his discussion of causation and causal inference as being with the circumstances in which an observer pronounces like events to be causally connected. The explanation Hume offers has two main components. In the first place, he offers an account of instances of the regular succession of events in the world; in the second, he describes the change that takes place in the mind of the observer when apprehending an instance of this sort. When many 'uniform instances' occur, and event A is found always to be followed by event B, we then '*feel* a new sentiment or impression, to wit, a customary connexion in the thought or imagination between one object and its usual attendant; and this sentiment is the original of that idea which we seek for'(E.78), which is to say, the idea of necessary connection. We feel a 'determination of the mind' to pass in expectation from one event to its 'usual attendant', which we express in pronouncing the two events to be causally connected. Hume provides us with a psychological explanation of causal inference grounded not in reason, but in what he calls 'custom' or 'habit'. Reason, in the *Treatise*, is considered as another 'kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect'(T.180). After a repetition of similar instances, 'the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist'(E.75). Hume's conclusion is that inductive inference is an effect of 'habit'. Whenever the repetition of any act or operation produces 'a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *custom*.'(E.43) In doing so, 'we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity. We only point out a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects'(E.43). The regularities found in the transitions made from one idea to another are the result of custom or habit. Custom 'determines' us, after the constant conjunction of two objects, to expect 'the one on the appearance of the other'. We can give no reason why these principles are as they are, no 'cause of this cause'(E.43), for 'we can give no reason for our most general and refined principles, beside our experience of their reality'(T.xviii). Nothing, Hume tells us near the outset of the *Treatise*, is more requisite for the true philosopher than to 'restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes' where 'farther examination would lead him into obscure and uncertain speculations'(T.13).

How then are we to think of the general causes of phenomena, causes like habit and custom, which Hume thinks of as our 'most general and refined principles'? Hume would want to avoid the suggestion that he seeks to 'explain' the transitions of the imagination from one idea to another in terms of a propensity of the mind to such transitions. Recourse to a propensity of

this sort would mark a readmittance of 'occult' qualities or forces, offering, in Passmore's words, 'a mere name for our ignorance'(13). If this were all Hume were doing then habit would no more explain the transition than the nourishment given by bread is 'explained' by its nutritive quality or 'faculty'(14). Hume is aware of the fact. His remarks amount to a self-prescription which, as we will shortly see, he is careful to follow. It is by means of 'occult' qualities and forces, Hume writes, in a caustic note to his discussion '*Of the ancient philosophy*' in the *Treatise*, that 'philosophers set themselves at ease, and arrive at last, by an illusion, at the same indifference, which the people attain by their stupidity, and true philosophers by their moderate scepticism. They need only say, that any phaenomenon, which puzzles them, arises from a faculty or an occult quality, and there is an end of all dispute and enquiry upon the matter'(T.224). Should we think of Hume's general causes as the outcome, well-founded or not, of straightforward induction? If we accept the thesis that Hume's science is entirely reducible to his account of causal inference then, clearly, we should. But if all Hume has it in mind to do is to give a name to the conjunction of inference and regular succession then recourse to propensities like habit would seem not only to add nothing to the explanation but to violate Hume's own self-conscious strictures against occult qualities.

The account Hume gives of causal inference grounds causal relations in observed constant conjunctions. The limits of causal inference are set by the limits of what can be observed. Can the conclusion that inductive inference is an effect of habit or custom be itself the outcome of an inference of this sort? It seems clear to me that it could not be. Habit, in the sense in which Hume understands it, is not observable. Since we never, strictly speaking, observe habit or custom, how, in this case, do we acquire the relevant habit of inference? What is required is a conjunction between the effect, the phenomenon of causal inference, and its cause, Hume's 'principle' of human nature, habit. Hume makes it clear that it is not the observable repetition or regular succession that is the cause of the inference. As the new idea 'arises from a number of similar instances, and not from any single instance, it must arise from that circumstance, in which the number of instances differ from every individual instance. But this customary connexion or transition of the imagination is the only circumstance in which they differ. In every other particular they are alike.'(E.78) The principle is what causes the observer to form an expectation of an event on the appearance of its usual attendant. All inferences from experience 'are effects of custom, not of reasoning'(E.43), products, in other words, of the imagination. The problem is that the general cause or principle, habit or custom, is not observable and so could never form an observable constant conjunction with its effect, the phenomenon of causal inference. Hume should be read as offering a causal account of causal inference, in as much as his investigation is tilted at the 'discovery' of general causes, but the conclusion of that account could not itself be the outcome of an inductive inference.

Hume sees the aim of science as the explanation of all effects from the simplest and fewest causes. What has been shown so far is that Hume's thesis that causal inference is an effect of

habit is not to be thought of as the result of causal inference. How else then are we to think of Hume's appeal to habit? With Hume's counsel of caution as to the invocation of occult qualities in mind, we need to consider what Hume understood habit to be and how his recourse to it is intended to explain the phenomena in question. If Hume's theory of causal inference cannot itself be reduced to straightforward induction, we must ask how else we are to think of it, and, indeed, of the other conclusions which compose Hume's theory of human nature? Hume thought scientific theories had to be grounded in experience, but not, I would suggest, as he thought causal inferences must be. How are we to think of this grounding? Hume provides us with a valuable clue to his thinking in a passage from the *Enquiry*. It is certain, Hume writes, that 'we here advance a very intelligible proposition at least, if not a true one, when we assert that, after the constant conjunction of two objects - heat and flame, for instance, weight and solidity - we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other. This hypothesis seems even the only one which explains the difficulty, why we draw from a thousand instances, an inference which we are not able to draw from one instance, that is, in no respect, different from them.'(E.43) Hume explicitly describes his own theory of causal inference as hypothetical. If we take what Hume says here seriously, we should expect the theory he offers to be rather more than straightforwardly descriptive. Hume says as much. His conclusion, as he presents it, is 'if not a true one' at least 'a very intelligible' one. The suggestion is worth taking seriously. I made the point earlier that Hume's theories had rather more of the character of hypothesis about them than could be supported by straightforward induction. We have begun to see that Hume did not think of his theories in this way. I want now to fill out that earlier suggestion. The discussion broaches another important difficulty which I will mention here. Hume regards his hypothesis as explanatory. It compares favourably with the only rival hypothesis Hume considers because of its greater explanatory completeness(15). The kind of explanation Hume has in mind must go beyond the bare description of observed regularities. His explanation of phenomena in terms of general causes would appear to transcend the phenomena themselves. Hume seems to have seen that a theory must somehow do this if it is to avoid merely redescribing the phenomena in question. The problem is that, on the face of it, talk of general causes such as habit, and other theoretical entities which play a part in Hume's theorising, would seem to violate the strictures of Hume's own theory of meaning. I have already noted that Hume makes fairly free play with the language of secret or concealed causes. What is required is some account of the meaning of these terms which reconciles the critical constraints Hume places on theorising with his relaxed use of the language of powers and forces. These issues will be addressed in due course. We need first to understand Hume's thought on hypotheses.

Despite Hume's promise in the *Abstract* to 'talk with contempt of hypotheses', he not only makes ready use of them, but, on occasion, makes his endorsement of the practice explicit. To illustrate his 'hypothesis' as to the causes of pride and humnility in Book Two, Hume invites us 'to compare it to that, by which I have already explain'd the belief attending the judgments,

which we form of causation'(T.289). A little later in the same book, he writes that these 'phaenomena, when duly weigh'd, will be found convincing proofs of this hypothesis'(T.345). All belief arises from the association of ideas, Hume says, 'according to my hypothesis'(T.112). On other occasions, as we have seen, Hume is more prepared to endorse Newton's apparently sweeping rejection of hypotheses in science. Hypotheses, Newton says, 'are not to be regarded in experimental philosophy'(16). The practice of induction, he tells us, 'may not be evaded by hypotheses'(17). Newton's apparent verdict on hypotheses has been received as the keynote of his empiricism. Hume has very often been read as expelling or seeking to expel, in terms strikingly similar to Newton's, all hypothetical argument from philosophy. It is a fundamental part of Hume's methodological outlook, as he presents it in the *Treatise*, to reject 'any hypothesis, that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature'(T.xvii). This would suggest that Hume's rejection of hypotheses is perhaps not as sweeping as Newton's appears to be. It at least marks a significant qualification of that position. A conclusion like this sits uneasily with my earlier contention, and Hume's own suggestion, that he and Newton had, for the most part, a common method in view. Fortunately, neither Hume nor Newton has as flawed or inconsistent a view as the highly selective comparison of passages would suggest. Newton's remarks on method prove as unreliable a guide to his actual practice as, very often, do Hume's. The overwhelming concern of both, I think, is not, as they would on occasions have us believe, with the expulsion of hypotheses from science, but with the proper regulation of their use.

An early letter written by Newton explicitly acknowledges the role he took hypotheses to play in his method and gives a robust defence of his position. The 'best and safest method of philosophizing', Newton writes, 'seems to be, first to inquire diligently into the properties of things, and establishing those properties by experiments and then to proceed more slowly to hypotheses for the examination of them.' Hypotheses, he goes on, 'should be subservient only in explaining the properties of things, but not assumed in determining them'(18). Hypotheses, Newton tells us, may be 'assumed' only in so far 'as they may furnish experiments'(19). Newton's hypothesis about ether in the *Opticks* is an example of a hypothesis with little other than assumption to support it(20). The idea seems to be that while hypotheses can be allowed exceptionally to prompt or 'furnish' experimentation, they must not be used to avoid it or to disavow its findings. Newton allows a limited role even for more or less speculative sorts of conjecture such as that concerning ether. It may not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that Newton's methodological strictures about hypotheses are intended more for the education of his readers and scientific rivals than for the guidance of his own scientific practice. His promise not to feign hypotheses occurs not as a preliminary to his investigations but as an afterthought, in the second edition of the *Principia*(21). He is, in any case, very far from endorsing Thomas Reid's verdict that Newton had shown 'that hypotheses ought to have no place in the philosophy of nature'(22) or indeed in 'genuine philosophy' of any kind. Reid took the apparently sweeping verdict of the *Principia* as a literal rejection of hypotheses of all

forms. According to Reid, a cause must be shown to exist before it can play a part in scientific theory. If the cause assigned to the phenomena cannot be shown to our satisfaction to exist, the theory of which it forms a part must be discarded. Reid's view would appear to leave Newton in the embarrassing position of forming 'hints' or hypotheses about light and ether which, from his own strictures, he must have known should never have been formulated. In Reid's view, the only assertions admissible in science are those for which experimental confirmation is already available. I think it is clear, however, that Newton had another programme in mind, one which, implicitly at least, endorsed the use of conjecture in explanation of natural phenomena.

There is reason to suppose that Newton's sensitivity to the use of hypotheses was a late development in his thinking, one with terminological rather than practical implications for his work(23). In a paper sent to John Locke three years after the publication of the *Principia*, Newton describes his laws of motion as '[H]ypotheses'(24). In later editions of the *Principia*, the nine propositions termed hypotheses at the beginning of the third book of the 1687 edition are called either 'Phaenomena' or '*Regulae Philosophandi*'. Three entries described as hypotheses remain still in the second and third editions, despite the presence of Newton's most explicit strictures on the matter. The explanation for the obvious obscurity of Newton's verdict lies, I think, in his concern to clear himself of association with what he thought of as the inadmissible use of hypotheses, rather than with any use at all. Newton's anxiety over such an association leads him, unhappily, to issue a verdict which, as it stands, makes a nonsense of his own methodology. The problem for interpreters is to sort out the inadmissible from the admissible. The important point for Newton, as he presents it in the above passages, is not so much that hypotheses must always be preceded by observation and experiment, although they must be if they are to be more than mere 'hints', as he describes them, but that their use must not be allowed to pre-empt or obscure the collection of observational data. When Newton tells us that hypotheses are 'not to be regarded in experimental philosophy' he has in mind hypotheses which are, in his words, 'assumed' in determining the 'properties of things'. The properties must first be established by experiments, before we proceed to hypotheses in explanation of them. Newton's distaste for hypotheses could be more happily expressed as a distrust of purely speculative explanatory theories which neglect or ignore experimental evidence. Newton's concern, I think, is to put a distance between his own scientific work and the practice of those speculators who take their bare conjectures as the basis for their experiments. 'As in Mathematics,' Newton writes in the *Opticks*, 'so in Natural Philosophy, the Investigation of difficult Things by the Method of Analysis, ought ever to precede the Method of Composition. This Analysis consists in making Experiments and Observations, and in drawing general Conclusions from them by Induction, and admitting of no Objections against the Conclusions, but such as are taken from Experiments, or other certain Truths. For Hypotheses are not to be regarded in experimental Philosophy.'(25) Not 'to regard hypotheses' means not to admit it as an objection to a conclusion formed on the basis of induction that it is

in conflict with any other proposition not 'taken from Experiments'. It is no point against a conclusion derived from Newton's method of analysis and composition that an alternative conclusion can be conceived of by the imagination. Newton is concerned that this point should not be lost on his rationalist opponents. By way of analysis, he writes, 'we may proceed from Compounds to Ingredients, and from Motions to the Forces producing them; and in general, from Effects to their Causes, and from particular Causes to more general ones, till the Argument end in the most general. This is the Method of Analysis: And the Synthesis consists in assuming the Causes discover'd, and establish'd as Principles, and by them explaining the Phaenomena proceeding from them, and proving the Explanations'(26). In his fourth Rule of Reasoning in the *Principia* Newton warns:

*In experimental philosophy we are to look upon propositions inferred by general induction from phenomena as accurately or very nearly true, notwithstanding any contrary hypotheses that may be imagined, till such time as other phenomena occur, by which they may either be made more accurate, or liable to exceptions. This rule we must follow, that the argument of induction may not be evaded by hypotheses. (27)*

The conceivability of any alternative hypothesis should not prevent a proposition grounded systematically in the way Newton describes being regarded as '*very nearly true*'. Note that Newton allows that scientific propositions might be '*made more accurate*' as '*other phenomena occur*'. Our attachment to a given hypothesis should not prevent us from admitting any exception which occurs 'from Experiments'. Our assertions remain, in an important sense, revisable. Hypotheses of the inadmissible sort are those which seek, as Newton says, to 'evade' the 'argument of induction'. The main business of natural philosophy, as Newton describes it in the *Opticks*, is 'to argue from Phaenomena without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very first Cause, which certainly is not mechanical'(28). Newton, as this passage suggests, is not entirely free of the rationalist baggage he is attempting to discard. He does, however, make quite clear elsewhere in the *Opticks* that argument from experiments and observations can 'be no demonstration of general conclusions; yet it is the best way of arguing which the nature of things admits of'(29). There remains, for Newton, some little attraction to rationalism, not least in the ways in which he thinks of the aim and scope of science, for which Hume is concerned to take him to task. It is, nevertheless, his rationalist opponents that Newton has in mind in his apparently general denunciation of hypotheses. It is this that must be borne in mind in sorting out the important procedural questions posed by Newton's methodological remarks. The 'feigned' hypotheses of the speculators are those of Descartes and the Cartesians. Newton wants to distinguish his own method of analysis and synthesis from fanciful hypothetical schemes of which Descartes' theory of vortices is usually thought a leading example(30). What Newton recommends is a reversal of the order of investigation which treats the settlement of metaphysical questions

such as that of the existence of God as preparatory to the beginning of natural science proper. Newton's objection is not that we are wrong to ask such questions. Where we go wrong is, more basically, in failing to 'deduce' causes from effects, in illicitly introducing a speculative, empirically vacuous assumption at, or in place of, the stage of analysis.

Newton's concern is that the method of analysis ought always to precede the method of composition. The right point at which to introduce a hypothesis is once the business of analysis is complete, at least in so far as circumstances allow. Phenomena must be accounted for '*notwithstanding any contrary hypothesis*'. Observation and experiment must always precede hypothesis and generalisation. This is the case with any admissible, explanatory hypothesis. The point was not lost on other scientists and philosophers of Newton's time. Robert Hooke, a contemporary and sometime antagonist of Newton's, and a member of the Royal Society, spoke of the Society's considered avoidance of '*Dogmatizing, and the espousal of any Hypothesis not sufficiently grounded and confirm'd by Experiments*'(31). John Locke makes the same point in a little more detail in his *Essay*. Hypotheses, he tells us, if 'well made', may often 'direct us to new discoveries'. We should not, however, '*take one up too hastily, (which the Mind, that would always penetrate into the Causes of Things, and have Principles to rest on, is very apt to do,) till we have very well examined Particulars, and made several Experiments, in that thing which we would explain by our Hypothesis, and see whether it will agree to them all; whether our Principles will carry us quite through, and not be as inconsistent with one Phenomenon of Nature, as they seem to accommodate, and explain another.*'(32) Locke, like Newton, disparages the speculative use of hypotheses as 'foundations of reasoning, or verities to be contended for'(33), while endorsing their use in explanation of data already collected by experiment and observation. Unless hypotheses are preceded by careful observation they will remain 'suppositions taken up gratis'(34). Locke's objection to Descartes' 'hypothesis' that '*the soul always thinks*'(35) is that it merely begs a question of fact. Whether that 'Substance perpetually thinks, or no, we can be no farther assured, than Experience informs us...The Question being about a matter of fact, 'tis begging it, to bring, as proof for it, an Hypothesis, which is the very thing in dispute: by which one may prove any thing'(36). He who 'would not deceive himself, ought to build his Hypothesis on matter of fact, and make it out by sensible experience, and not presume on matter of fact, because of his Hypothesis, that is, because he supposes it to be so'(37). A sound methodology will reject the 'high priori method' of Descartes in favour of the 'plain historical method' of Robert Boyle and Sir Isaac Newton.

Similar sentiments to those Locke presents are, indeed, to be found in the work of his friend and intellectual mentor, Boyle. Some recent scholarship has given us reason to suppose Boyle's influence to have extended in a significant way to Hume(38). There can be little doubt that Hume was well-acquainted with Boyle's work. The corpuscular hypothesis invoked by Boyle, as well as by Hooke and Newton, is one of the few Locke is prepared to entertain.

Locke writes favourably of the hypothesis as 'that which is thought to go farthest in an intelligible Explication of the Qualities of Bodies'(39). While we can by no means come to discover the 'Texture and Motion' of the hidden parts of bodies(40), the hypothesis of the existence of insensible particles or corpuscles in motion gives the most comprehensive explanation of the qualities and actions of bodies available, comprising, most importantly, the most puzzling and apparently anomalous cases, for example, the fact of the same water feeling hot to one hand and cold to another(41).

The function of hypothesis, according to Boyle, is 'to render an intelligible account of the effects, or phenomena proposed'(42). The terms in which the corpuscularian theory is presented by Boyle make clear its conjectural character. The account is not offered as a true one but merely as the most 'intelligible' one which systematizes the greatest range of phenomena. The hypothesis has to do with the concealed or unobservable causes of phenomena. There are some hints in Locke and Boyle as to what might guide us in conjecturing intelligibly as to the existence of unobservables. A 'wary Reasoning from Analogy', Locke tells us, is 'the best conduct of rational Experiments, and the rise of Hypothesis', where 'we can only guess, and probably conjecture'(43) as to the causes of phenomena. Analogy with something already familiar from experience is the 'only help we have' in forming judgments and conjectures as to unknown and unobservable causes. The 'insensible' mechanism identified by a hypothesis should be suggested by analogy with some familiar part of our experience. The 'minutest fragments', Boyle explains, are, by analogy with the largest masses, 'endowed each with its peculiar bulk and shape'(44). The unobservable mechanism responsible for the qualities and action of bodies is identified with the sensible 'primary' qualities of body. It is only, Locke writes, by 'observing that the bare rubbing of two Bodies violently upon one another, produces heat, and very often fire it self, we have reason to think, that what we call Heat and Fire, consists in a violent agitation of the imperceptible minute parts of the burning matter'(45). As we will see, Hume too goes some way in endorsing the use of analogical reasoning, but has much more definite ideas about where the limits of such reasoning are to be drawn.

I have already suggested that Hume thought of scientific theories as something more than mere natural histories of phenomena or statements of constant conjunctions. Hume's conclusion that habit is the cause of causal inference cannot be supported on the basis of straightforward induction. He characterises his own conclusion as hypothetical: a 'very intelligible' if not a true proposition. The explanation of phenomena in terms of general causes, powers and principles seems, of necessity, to go beyond the phenomena themselves. The Hume of the *Enquiry* tells us that the aim of his science is 'to discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations'(E.6). Hume's methodological position in the *Enquiry* is substantially the same as that presented by him in the *Treatise*(46). Any 'hypothesis', Hume writes in the *Treatise*, that

'pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature, ought at first to be rejected as presumptuous and chimerical'(T.xvii). In the *Enquiry*, Hume writes that the 'ultimate springs and principles' of natural phenomena are 'totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry'. The principles of elasticity, gravity, 'cohesion of parts' and the 'communication of motion by impulse' are 'probably the ultimate causes and principles which we shall ever discover in nature'(E.30). The chief difficulty in reconciling the methodologies of the two works lies in making consistent sense of Hume's account of causation in the *Treatise* and his continued use, most striking in the *Enquiry*, of the language of unobserved principles, powers and Newtonian forces. What I have begun to suggest is that Hume thought of his hypothesis that habit is the cause of causal inference as an empirically-grounded conjecture to do with the existence of a 'secret' or 'conceal'd' principle. Hume characterises his philosophical thought as being about the 'discovery' of these principles or general causes. Hume's own theories are couched in terms of such unobservable entities. Before fleshing out these suggestions I want to consider, more generally, how Hume thought of hypotheses, and where, and under what circumstances, he thought their use admissible and explanatory.

There remains, in particular, the problem of interpreting Hume's apparently outright and oft-noted rejection of hypotheses in science. Hume has been read as accepting a view of hypotheses that is close to the one Reid attributed to Newton. Such a view would embarrass Hume as much as it would have embarrassed Newton, had he seriously entertained it. Nevertheless, the apparent discrepancy on Hume's part can be accounted for in the same way as we accounted for it in Newton. Hume, like Newton, is prepared to allow in hypotheses, but only under the appropriate conditions. In his more cautious moments, he is much more careful to distinguish those hypotheses with which he is happy to work from those 'that pretend to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature'(T.xvii). He smartly reproves those philosophers who have fallen into the error 'of imposing their conjectures and hypotheses on the world for the most certain principles'(T.xviii). Hume nonetheless saw that his science of human nature required a much less arid methodological ground from which to flourish than that envisaged by Reid. The contrast is a particularly vivid one. Where Reid saw Newton's achievement in terms of the strictures with which he appeared to have strictly bound the scientific enterprise, Hume found in Newton's methodological outlook a fertile place in which theory and conjecture could find root and flourish, though within limits which the scientist must be careful to guard. Had Hume observed Reid's strictures he could never have formulated his hypothesis that habit is the cause of causal inference. Hume would have been led to reject the whole substance of his science of man as well as the better part of empirical science as he understood it. Writing in his *History*, Hume warmly commends Boyle's work on hydrostatics, which, he says, contains 'a greater mixture of reasoning and invention with experiment, than any other of his works; but his reasoning is still remote from the boldness and temerity which has led astray so many philosophers'(47). The endorsement of Boyle's invention is striking here, as is the contrast Hume draws. The contrast he has in mind lies, I

think, between the careful use of hypotheses in explanation of data collected by uncontaminated experiment and observation, exemplified in the work of Boyle and Newton, among others, and the 'most extravagant' conjectures or 'inventions' of the rationalists, mere 'reasonings upon a supposition', lacking 'the authority of the memory or the senses'(T.83), yet taken for 'the most certain principles'. Hume is happy to refer to parts of his own theory as 'hypotheses'. The exact 'conformity of experience to our reasoning', he says, is 'a convincing proof of the solidity of that hypothesis, upon which we reason'(T.338). Hume agrees with Newton that only those hypotheses which seek to evade or take the place of the authority of experience should be outlawed from science. The formulation of hypotheses must be preceded by careful experiment and observation of the phenomenon. It cannot be used as a substitute for them.

Hume thinks of scientific theories as composed of hypotheses. He carefully distinguishes the science of Newton, as he understands it, from the mere description of phenomena with which previous philosophers had contented themselves. Newton's outstanding achievement lay in his explanation of the motions of bodies in terms of 'laws and forces'. In order to be explanatory a theory must transcend the phenomena to be explained. It cannot merely redescribe them. Hume both recognised the breadth and originality of Newton's achievement and sought, to the best of his abilities, within the field of the moral sciences, to emulate it. Had Hume thought to do no more than offer an accurate description of phenomena then recourse to principles like habit would appear only to mark a readmittance of occult qualities or forces, merely lending a name to our ignorance. Explanations in terms of occult qualities, powers or propensities say nothing yet give the appearance of settling 'all dispute and enquiry upon the matter'(T.224). I have suggested that Hume has a different programme in mind for his science of man. There remains, however, plenty of work to be done on the question of what makes for a good or adequate explanation. We need now to turn to the question of how Hume thought explanation couched in terms of unobservable 'general causes' explained the phenomena. Hume, I believe, had a number of general principles in mind.

Of Newton's four rules for the conduct of reasoning in philosophy, Hume singles out the principle of parsimony as Newton's 'chief rule of philosophising'(E.204). It is, Hume says, 'entirely agreeable to the rules of philosophy, and even of common reason; where any principle has been found to have a great force and energy in one instance, to ascribe to it a like energy in all similar instances'(E.204). Newton's third rule states that the qualities of bodies 'which are found to belong to all bodies within the reach of our experiments, are to be esteemed the universal qualities of all bodies whatsoever'(48). Writing in the *Treatise*, Hume observes that 'in the course of nature' we find 'that tho' the effects be many, the principles, from which they arise, are commonly but few and simple, and that 'tis the sign of an unskilful naturalist to have recourse to a different quality, in order to explain every different operation'(T.282). To invent, Hume goes on, 'without scruple a new principle to every new

phaenomenon, instead of adapting it to the old; to overload our hypotheses with a variety of this kind; are certain proofs, that none of these principles is the just one, and that we only desire, by a number of falsehoods, to cover our ignorance of the truth.' The variety of our principles and their inability to account for much in the way of phenomena is an indication that the principles in question are not 'just'. An acceptable theory will be one which explains 'every different operation' in terms of the fewest and simplest causes or principles. It is, Hume tells us, 'an inviolable maxim in philosophy, that where any particular cause is sufficient for an effect, we ought to rest satisfied with it, and ought not to multiply causes without necessity'(T.578). The best explanation will be the one which sufficiently accounts for the operations of phenomena in terms of the fewest sorts of cause or principle. The test of a theory's adequacy, Hume suggests in his discussion of habit, is its comprehensiveness, its capacity to account for all the phenomena of a given sort, and in particular, the more puzzling or apparently anomalous cases. The hypothesis that it is reason that is responsible for the phenomenon of causal inference is rejected on just these grounds. The task for the experimental science of man, as Hume announces it in his introduction to the *Treatise*, is to render its principles 'as universal as possible' by tracing its experiments 'to the utmost, and explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes'(T.xvii).

Hume's expressed intention in the *Treatise* is to explain the operations of the understanding in terms of the 'simplest and fewest' psychological causes; causes which, like the forces of Newton, were 'governed and directed' by laws from which other phenomena could be 'demonstrated'. His principle of the association of ideas can be used to 'demonstrate' or explain other phenomena, such as the belief in the continued and independent existence of body, which in turn stand in support of the original theory. Hume thinks that the derivation of phenomena from laws like the one from which the phenomena of belief in body can be demonstrated explains because it systematises phenomena which would otherwise appear various and disconnected. To suggest that phenomena are subject to a force is to say that they can be demonstrated from such laws. A theory is more or less explanatory according to the degree to which it succeeds in systematising a set of phenomena in terms of the fewest general laws. An acceptable explanation will be one which puts phenomena in wider, more general law-governed patterns, with as little multiplication of general causes or principles like habit as is necessary. The phenomena in question are explained by being subsumed under psychological laws. The 'utmost effort of human reason is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasonings from analogy, experience, and observation'(E.30). We may, Hume continues, 'esteem ourselves sufficiently happy, if, by accurate enquiry and reasoning, we can trace up the particular phenomena to, or near to, these general principles', placing them, in other words, in increasingly general law-governed patterns.

Unobservable entities like habit are, for Hume, an essential ingredient of explanations of this sort. Hume tells us that he hopes to discover 'at least in some degree' the 'secret springs and principles' of human nature. Scientific theories are sets of hypotheses concerning hidden or concealed causes like habit by which 'the human mind is actuated in its operations'(E.6). Hume insists on a distinction between the mere description of phenomena and their explanation in terms of forces, principles and laws. Explanatory hypotheses, while closely, and crucially, related to the inductive generalisations they are intended to explain, go beyond them. What guides us in drawing up hypotheses to do with unobservable principles or causes, and, in particular, assigning terms to our causes, Hume thinks, is analogy. I suggested earlier that Hume went some way with Boyle and Locke in endorsing the use of analogical reasoning. Theoretical terms, like habit, while referring to no observable object, must, nevertheless, be identified by analogy with some cause with which we are already familiar. This, Hume makes clear, is very much the case with his principle of 'habit': 'For wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of custom.'(E.43). Theoretical entities, like habit, though unobservable, are identified, by analogy, with known features of impressions. The propensity to repeat an action or behaviour is commonly termed an effect of habit or custom. Hume makes clear what is not intended by the use of the term: 'By employing that word, we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity. We only point out a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects.'(E.43) The analogous nature of his principle to a cause with which we are already well-enough familiar is what guides and, to Hume's mind, justifies, his choice of terms. It is certain, Hume goes on, that 'we here advance a very intelligible proposition at least, if not a true one'(E.43).

Hume endorses the use of analogical reasoning in science. His remarks on the subject or on its special logic are sparse and unsystematic. All our reasonings concerning matters of fact, Hume tells us, 'are founded on a species of Analogy, which leads us to expect from any cause the same events, which we have observed to result from similar causes'(E.104). He does, however, want to make sure that the practice is not abused. His prime example of abuse is drawn from Newton. Hume sees Newton's argument from design as an example of a hypothetical argument from experience not sufficiently supported by analogy. Hume's *Dialogues* present a reading of Newton's argument drawn directly from Colin Maclaurin's *An Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries*(49). The argument Hume has Cleanthes present pivots on the analogy drawn between the natural world and the works of human designer-builders. The world, in particular, resembles 'one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines'(50). Its parts are every one 'adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men, who have ever contemplated them'(51). In the case of machines we know that this precise 'adapting of means to ends' is the result of 'human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence'(52). Since the effects in these

two cases are in all important respects similar we may infer 'by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble' and that the intelligent designer of nature 'is somewhat similar to the mind of man'(53). Hume has Philo respond with a restatement of his own position. The exact similarity of cases, Philo says, 'gives us a perfect assurance of a similar event; and a stronger evidence is never desired nor sought after. But whenever you depart, in the least, from the similarity of the cases, you diminish proportionably the evidence; and may at last bring it to a very weak *analogy*, which is confessedly liable to error and uncertainty.'(54) Hume writes in similar terms in the *Enquiry*, that where 'the causes are entirely similar, the analogy is perfect, and the inference, drawn from it, is regarded as certain and conclusive'. But where 'the objects have not so exact a similarity, the analogy is less perfect, and the inference is less conclusive; though still it has some force, in proportion to the degree of similarity and resemblance.'(E.104) It is this latter principle that Hume invokes to refute Newton's position. If we see a house, 'we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder, because this is precisely that species of effect, which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause'(55). The departure from the 'similarity of the cases' makes the reasoning liable to 'error and uncertainty'. The object in this case is so singular, and without parallel in our experience, that to show that the universe had been the product of a mind-like intelligence would require experience of the origin of other worlds, other universes. We have, in this case, no experience at all from which an analogous cause could be inferred. From so inadequate a base, analogy could lead us to any number of equally plausible, but no more convincing, alternatives. We are left only with the devalued currency of conjecture. Experience alone, Philo concludes, 'can point out...the true cause of any phenomenon.'(56)

Despite what we have found to be their broad and far-reaching agreement on the correct method to be pursued in the sciences, Hume and Newton disagree, implicitly, on the question of the aims and scope of the scientific problem. While Newton, as Passmore has put it, 'regretfully' puts aside hypotheses to do with the 'inner nature' of objects as 'not yet "deducible from the phenomena"; Hume rejects them outright'(57). Newton is able to envisage science advancing from the phenomena to more and more general causes until it comes, at last, to the 'first cause'. For Newton, science still holds out the possibility for the sort of necessity the rationalists saw as a part of explanation. In his view, the scientific method presupposes a simple and well-ordered natural scheme resting on a rational, intelligible design. He never doubts that science will, in time, be capable of uncovering the ultimate causes of phenomena, their 'inner' natures. Hume believes it a profound mistake to think of science as targeted on any such thing. The rationalist ideal of explanation is a chimera. The notion of truth has little part to play in scientific explanation. No philosopher, Hume writes, 'who is rational and

modest, has ever pretended to assign the ultimate cause of any natural operation, or to show distinctly the action of that power, which produces any single effect in the universe.'(E.30) Success in the natural sciences lay in the reduction of our principles or general causes to 'a greater simplicity'. But as to the causes of these general causes, we need not trouble ourselves, nor should we think of science as targeted on their discovery. The 'ultimate springs and principles' remain 'totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry'(E.30). It is not much to Hume's point to deny that there are such 'ultimate' causes and principles. He does not do so. He wants merely to say that they can play no part in scientific explanation, nor, for that matter, need they. Hume adopts a Newtonian model of explanatory adequacy, within which 'laws and forces' are the ultimate explainers of phenomena. Forces like gravity and elasticity are 'probably the ultimate causes which we will ever discover in nature'.(E.30) 'The most perfect philosophy of the natural kind only staves off our ignorance a little longer'(E.31).

Hume's hypotheses are not concerned with 'the true springs and causes' of phenomena. He rejects outright, at the outset of the *Treatise*, any hypothesis 'that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature'(T.xxi). The 'powers and forces' by which the course of nature is 'governed' are 'wholly unknown to us'(E.54). Hume insists upon the impossibility of our ever apprehending the sort of ultimate connection between cause and effect which natural philosophers as astute as Boyle and Newton still, at times, wrote of science as being targeted on. Locke declared that natural philosophy might still be 'capable of being made a science'(58) akin to mathematics were the search for 'first causes' or 'real essences' pushed far enough. For Hume, such speculations have no place in experimental philosophy. We have, and can have, no appreciation of what it would be like to apprehend a fact that carried implications for other facts of a sort. This was the lesson he believed he had drawn from Newton. Scientific hypotheses can say nothing about the essential, original nature of matter. Hume, nevertheless, continues to speak of hidden and secret causal powers. The aim of his science is 'to discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations'(E.6). Forces or general causes are an essential part of what Hume thinks of as scientific explanation. The problem for interpreters of Hume is to reconcile this language of causal endowment, which is an undeniable part of Hume's work, with his theory of ideas, and, in particular, its application to the question of the origin of our idea of causation in the *Treatise*. All our ideas, Hume tells us in the *Abstract*, 'are derived from our impressions, or strong perceptions...we can never think of anything we have not seen without us or felt in our own minds'(T.647-8). We have no impression and so can have no idea of the 'conceal'd' powers and forces of which Hume writes. He would appear to be committed to the thesis that talk of this sort cannot possibly make sense and so, one would suppose, to its inevitable expulsion from scientific discourse. Hume, however, not only makes fairly free play with such talk but is happy to describe these causes as 'secret' and 'wholly unknown to us'. Far from intending the expulsion of such terms from experimental philosophy, Hume, as we will now see, was at pains to find a place for them.

The key to understanding Hume on this point lies, I believe, in an important footnote in the *Enquiry*. Hume warns us that in speaking of our 'ignorance of natural powers' the term 'power' is to be understood in 'a loose and popular sense'(E.33). The 'generality of mankind' suppose themselves acquainted with 'the very force or energy of the cause'(E.69), some 'quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other'(E.62). We have, of course, no conception of such a quality, nor any idea of what it would be like to do so. Hume uses the term in this 'loose and popular' way when he wishes to stress our ignorance of 'natural powers'. The idea we have of causal powers as hidden or concealed is 'very uncertain and confused'(E.77). He promises a more 'accurate explication'(E.33) of the nature of terms like force and power which should prove more satisfactory to the philosophically-minded. Hume refers us to Section VII where he intends 'to fix, if possible, the precise meaning of these terms, and thereby remove some part of that obscurity, which is so much complained of in this species of philosophy'(E.62). His concern in these passages of the *Enquiry* is to offer some account of what Newton and other experimental scientists meant by causal power. While Hume continues to restate the thesis of the *Treatise* that we have no adequate idea of active power in objects, the *Enquiry* is notable for Hume's insistence upon and defence of the language of Newtonian 'laws and forces'. The suggestion is that experimental philosophers should follow the example of Newton in using these terms only to 'mark' the observable effects of a cause and not signify the causal power itself(59). We need not 'examine at length the *vis inertia* which is so much talked of in the new philosophy, and which is ascribed to matter. We find by experience, that a body at rest or in motion continues for ever in its present state, till put from it by some new cause; and that a body impelled takes as much motion from the impelling body as it acquires itself. These are facts. When we call this a *vis inertia*, we only mark these facts, without pretending to have any idea of the inert power; in the same manner as, when we talk of gravity, we mean certain effects without comprehending that active power.'(E.73) Hume seems here to accept that there are real and 'active' powers or forces such as gravity, which science can, he supposes, 'in some degree' uncover. This is, indeed, what science is really targeted on. But he is just as clear that science cannot tell us what these causes are, cannot, in other words, give us the 'cause of these general causes', but can only inform us of what they do. It is, Hume writes, 'allowed by all philosophers, that the effect is the measure of the power'(E.77). In Hume's more 'accurate explication' of these terms, 'causal powers' and 'forces' are understood, indirectly, in terms of their effects, and not in terms of what they are. Of this we have but the most distant, 'obscure and uncertain'(E.62) idea. We can define causal powers, strictly speaking, only in terms of their observable effects, of which our ideas are clear and determinate. Gravity and its counterparts are 'probably the ultimate causes and principles which we shall ever discover in nature'(E.30).

Newton was greatly troubled at the accusation of Leibniz and others that he had failed to say what gravity was(60). The 'force' of mutual gravitation appeared to Leibniz to mark a readmittance of occult qualities, 'propensities' the effects of which were known but whose cause and real nature remained mysterious. The cause of gravity, Newton admitted, 'is what I do not pretend to know'(61). Newton evidently shared some of Leibniz's concern. He was aware of the awkwardness of failing to say what the cause of gravity was while denying that gravity was an occult property of the sort he explicitly rejects. He makes his position clear in the *Principia* when he writes that he does not affirm gravity to be anything 'essential to bodies'(62). Gravity can be understood only indirectly, in terms of its effects. Nothing is intended as to its 'minute parts' or essential nature. The phenomena cannot be dismissed on the grounds that they fail to provide real explanation as the rationalists thought of it. Hume takes up Newton's hint but he desires greater methodological clarity. Newton appeared to leave open the rationalist ideal of explanation as a realistic goal for science. Hume's point is that these 'true springs and causes' are permanently and unreachably 'shut up from human curiosity'. It is a mistake to think of science as converging on such 'ultimate causes'. They are not only 'unknown' but 'entirely incomprehensible'(E.77). We have no conception at all of the sort of connection the rationalists saw science as targeted on(63). What Newton had achieved, while not the end or final condition of science, was, Hume appreciated, the only sort of thing that could be achieved by science. Nothing, Hume says, is 'more requisite for a true philosopher, than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes'(T.13).

## 1.2 Ideas and Association

Hume attempts to explain a number of mental phenomena as the effects of the principles of the association of ideas and impressions. He saw a clear parallel between what he called the 'principles of union or cohesion among our simple ideas'(T.12) and the principle of mutual gravitation in terms of which Newton had explained the motions of the planets. Here is a 'kind of ATTRACTION', Hume promises, 'which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms.'(T.12-13) The analogy, however, has no real work to do in Hume's system. Hume has no mathematical formulae comparable to the mathematical laws from which Newton 'demonstrated' the behaviour of bodies, and little is to be gained from pressing the point much further than Hume himself does. We stand to gain a good deal more from taking seriously the general parallel Hume has in mind between the nature of the scientific project and that of his own enterprise. A more exact and, I think, quite deliberate analogy is being drawn between the aims and constraints of natural and 'moral' enquiry. I characterised Hume's chief concern in Book One of the *Treatise* as being with the discovery of the principles and operations of the understanding, and with the origin and nature of its ideas. The principles of the association of ideas and impressions are the principles with which Hume wants to explain our fundamental beliefs. Mental phenomena, these beliefs among them, are to be thought of as natural events,

governed by laws and principles, which the empirical scientist might hope, 'to some degree', to discover. In doing so, he pretends not to explain the '*original* qualities of human nature'(T.13). As Hume makes clear, we succeed only in deluding ourselves when we think of science as targeted on the discovery of such qualities. Science can inform us only of what these principles do, not of what they are, and in the case of the principle of the association of ideas, the effects 'are every where conspicuous'(T.13). As with the natural sciences, the only 'solid foundation' for Hume's new science is provided by experiment and observation. By cautiously and judiciously collecting and comparing his experiments, the scientist of human nature can reasonably hope to found a science not only the equal in certainty and scope of the natural sciences but, for the reasons I explored earlier(64), 'much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension'(T.xix).

The operations of the imagination in separating and uniting its simple ideas are guided, Hume says, by 'some universal principles, which render it, in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places'(T.10). The 'natural relations' of resemblance, spatial and temporal contiguity, and cause and effect, guide and constrain the freest flights of the imagination, conveying the mind from 'one idea to another'(T.11), as a picture 'naturally leads our thoughts to the original'(E.24). The simplicity of Hume's account of these relations satisfies one of his demands for theoretical adequacy. The effects of this 'secret tie or union'(T.662), we are told, 'are none more remarkable, than those complex ideas, which are the common subjects of our thoughts and reasoning, and generally arise from some principle of union among our simple ideas.'(T.13) Association ties together our simple ideas to form complex ones. Although 'nothing is more free' than the imagination, its ideas are not 'entirely loose and unconnected'(T.10). Some 'associating quality' ensures that events in the mind fall out regularly along well-worn associative tracks. This 'bond of union' is best regarded, Hume thinks, as a 'gentle force'(T.10) which causes one idea or impression 'naturally' to 'attract' or 'introduce' its 'correlative'(T.269).

The 'uniting' principles of the imagination are not to be thought of as 'inseparable connexions'. The laws of association can at best be said to 'commonly prevail' when one idea is connected with another in the imagination. There is no necessity about the relation. Hume, as one would expect, shuns all 'obscure and uncertain' speculation as to the 'ultimate causes' of his principle of association. Enquiry will be best employed, he tells us, 'in examining the effects' rather than the causes of the principle(T.13). Hume considered himself the first philosopher to have 'attempted to enumerate or class all the principles of association'(E.24), the 'natural relations' responsible for the association of ideas. If anything can entitle the author of the *Treatise* to the 'glorious name' of '*inventor*', Hume writes in the *Abstract*, 'tis the use he makes of the principle of the association of ideas, which enters into most of his philosophy'(T.661-2). His theory of association is fundamental to the science of man. It is these principles of the association of ideas which, Hume believes, explain the origin of the passions, as he describes

them in Book Two. Hume, however, is inclined to put the case much more strongly than that. The principles of association are, Hume says, 'the only ties of our thoughts' and really are 'to us the cement of the universe'(T.662).

Hume offers an associationalist account of belief. Beliefs arise as a result of the interaction of the principles of association with certain features of our experience. Hume defines belief as 'A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION.'(T.96) The 'additional force and vivacity' of a belief comes from the 'PRESENT IMPRESSION' to which it is related. Hume explains the transition from 'original impression' to 'the idea of the connected cause or effect'(T.84) in terms of an association of ideas. Vivacity is transferred from an impression to the idea of its regular associate sufficient to make that idea a belief. Hume makes belief 'more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cognitive part of our natures'(T.183). All probable reasoning 'is nothing but a species of sensation'(T.103). Belief is more a matter of 'feeling, or sentiment'(T.624) than of reason, and feeling, Hume explains, is conveyed from impression to idea by the mechanism of association. All our beliefs are the result of the operation of certain psychological principles. Hume nevertheless wants to distinguish those beliefs which he considers good or more reasonable from those he considers mere prejudices or superstitions(65). Beliefs are proportioned by Hume according to rules which appear to give warrant to ascriptions of degrees of probability. Nothing is more dangerous to reason, Hume tells us, 'than the flights of the imagination, and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers'(T.267). We are to distinguish between those 'irregular' principles of the imagination which 'are observ'd to take place only in weak minds' and those which are 'permanent, irresistible, and universal'(T.225), such as the general rules 'by which we ought to regulate our judgment concerning causes and effects'(T.149). Hume, nevertheless, expects us to draw from his work the moral that many of our most fundamental beliefs, as well as much of our philosophy, rest on the 'irregular' operations of the imagination. The problem for Hume, and for his interpreters, is to see how, if at all, he can find the scope within his system to make the sorts of adjudications among beliefs he insists upon. I will attempt a solution to this problem in the closing sections of the chapter. We need, first of all, to sketch an outline of the framework within which Hume puts the aforementioned questions and with which he hopes to resolve them: his theory of ideas.

The basic components of the mind are, for Hume, as for his immediate predecessors, perceptions, or impressions and ideas. All the 'perceptions' of the human mind, Hume says, 'resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS.'(T.1) Ideas are the fainter, less forceful 'images' of the impressions of the senses 'in thinking and reasoning'(T.1). The perceptions which enter the mind 'with most force and violence, we may name impressions; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul.'(T.1) These are among the fundamental elements of Hume's account of mind. Hume's difficulty, and in some ways, his

chief purpose, in Book One of the *Treatise*, is to explain how, from so unpromising a base, we come to think of ourselves and our world as we do. Complex ideas, according to Hume, are not confined to actually-experienced complex impressions. Simple ideas can be combined in novel and original ways. The principles of association guide the mind in forming, on the basis of a strictly limited number of ideas, a system of beliefs which, in significant ways, goes beyond them. The mind contributes actively to the ways in which the world appears to us. The natural operations of the imagination give rise to 'fictions' to which no feature of reality corresponds. Fictions, such as the belief in the continued existence of the objects of sense, 'bestow on the objects a greater regularity than what is observ'd in our mere perceptions'(T.197). Hume's concern is to explain how the mind makes do with what it gets, and what it does with those ideas it has.

In Part I of Book One, Hume makes a number of distinctions among what he calls 'the elements of this philosophy'(T.13) which will prove to be of the greatest importance to the exposition to follow. Having introduced his most basic distinction among perceptions, Hume further distinguishes between simple and complex impressions and ideas. Complex ideas can be analysed into simple ones which can be traced back to the simple impressions to which they correspond. There is a one-to-one correspondence between the basic elements of thought and the basic elements of experience. Simple perceptions 'are such as admit of no distinction nor separation'(T.2). Complex impressions and ideas 'are contrary to these, and may be distinguished into parts'(T.2). Hume has surprisingly little to say about the nature of the simples into which complex perceptions can be analysed, but he does give us a valuable clue as to the sort of analysis he has in mind. Although we find a particular colour, taste and smell to be 'united together' in the complex idea of an apple, 'tis easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other.'(T.2) The idea is a complex one because its elements can each be separated one from the others. It is not clear from this whether or not Hume considers these qualities to be the ultimate simples into which the complex idea of the apple can be divided, or if the division is to proceed wholly along perceptual lines until we arrive at qualities which are genuinely simple. It matters more to Hume, at this point, to make clear that distinguishable perceptions are always separable(66). We can, however, learn something more of how Hume construes the separability of ideas and the sort of analysis he has in mind for them, by considering his treatment of ideas of colour, or, more exactly, of shades of colour. Ideas of colour, perhaps surprisingly, provide Hume with his paradigm of perceptual simplicity. It is important to appreciate why Hume thinks of ideas of colour in this way.

The missing shade of blue is typical of the sort of quality Hume thinks of as simple. Hume describes one 'contradictory phaenomenon' to the thesis that all our simple ideas are preceded into the mind by simple impressions(T.5-6). Supposing a person to have become acquainted 'with colours of all kinds, excepting one particular shade of blue', Hume suggests

that it would be possible for that person 'to raise up to himself the idea of that particular shade, tho' it had never been conveyed to him by his senses'(T.6). Commentators have been understandably unsettled by the curious way in which Hume's handles this apparent counter-example(67). His admission would appear to seriously undermine what Hume, after all, regards as a 'general maxim'(T.6), and, indeed, the supreme principle of his theory of ideas. An empirical generalisation is apt to be refuted by even a single exceptional instance. For all that, the instance is clearly not as 'particular and singular' as Hume believes. Could we not, analogously, 'raise up' instances of a missing tone or taste, or missing shades of every other colour? Hume is happy to dismiss the example on the grounds of its apparent singularity. It has struck critics that Hume might easily have dispensed with it in another way: by dismissing it as a genuine counter-example to his thesis(68). Hume might well have treated ideas of shades of colour as complex rather than simple ideas. The suggestion is that apparently simple perceptions, like colours, should be seen as complex perceptions involving relations to other perceptions of the sort. On the basis of a complexity of this sort, Hume could allow that ideas of colour can sometimes be derived from other related ideas without any extra input from the senses. He could still, quite plausibly, deny that we can form an idea of a shade of a colour with which we are entirely unfamiliar.

Hume continues to regard ideas of particular colours as simple, even after he has shown that we can raise up ideas of shades of colour on the basis of our experience of other shades and colours(69). The imagination, Hume admits, '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.'(T.198) It seems to me that Hume must have had it in mind to set certain limits to the extent to which the imagination might continue on without fresh impulse. These, I believe, have to do with Hume's insistence upon the separability of different or distinguishable ideas. Hume thought that every simple idea had to have a direct and distinguishable precedent among impressions. A complex idea is one which can be analysed into simple properties each of which can be traced independently back to simple impressions. The difficulty with treating ideas of shades of colour as complex lies in distinguishing adequately among its supposed parts. Let us take as obvious candidates for separation, the tone and brightness of a colour. Because neither one can exist without some measure of the other it is not possible adequately to distinguish nor, then, to separate one from the other. Brightness and tone cannot function as simple ideas. The shade of colour to which they belong cannot be analysed further and so, for Hume, meets the criterion for simplicity. Ideas, Hume tells us bluntly in Book Three of the *Treatise*, 'never admit of a total union, but are endowed with a kind of impenetrability by which they exclude each other'(T.366). Hume insists upon the perfect separability of all our simple ideas. All ideas that are separable are different(T.24). Hume nevertheless continues to talk of perceptions of 'colour, taste, heat, cold' and so on, as though they comprised qualitatively identical parts. Resemblances among them immediately 'strike the eye, or rather the mind'(T.70). The instance of the missing shade of

blue would seem to be as clear an example as one could wish for of the sort of perception which comes related to other perceptions within the same sense modality. Hume, unfortunately, gives little explicit attention to the detail of the distinction between simple and complex perceptions. The precise drawing of the distinction seems to have mattered little to him. What is, nevertheless, and for good theoretical reasons, of the first importance to Hume is to argue that all our simple ideas are essentially separable from one another.

Another important distinction, though one which does most of what work it has to do in the later books of the *Treatise*, is drawn by Hume within the class of impressions. Impressions, he tells us, 'may be divided into two kinds, those of SENSATION and those of REFLEXION'(T.7). The first sort arises 'in the soul' from 'unknown causes', striking upon the senses and causing us to 'perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other'. The second 'is derived in a great measure from our ideas'. When the idea of pleasure or pain 'returns upon the soul', it 'produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it'(T.7-8). All impressions are either impressions of the senses or impressions of reflection. Impressions of sensation are, however, in an important sense, more basic than their counterparts. Impressions of reflection occur only because we have already experienced impressions of sensation. All the materials of the mind derive, ultimately, from impressions of sensation.

A number of ambiguities attend Hume's drawing of these important distinctions. Hume is somewhat careless in the detail of his theory of ideas. He expects that 'it will not be very necessary to employ many words' in explaining his first distinction between impressions and ideas, since everyone 'will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking'(T.1-2). The difference between impressions and ideas is 'easily distinguished'(T.2) since this is just the difference between thinking about and perceiving something which we all acknowledge in our own experience. Hume appeals to experience to support his suggestion that there is a one-to-one correspondence among impressions and ideas. The distinction between complex and simple perceptions allows Hume to continue to insist upon this neat correlation while acknowledging that many of our complex ideas have no direct correspondent. We can easily see Hume's reasons for drawing his distinction in the way he does. If all the components of the mind are perceptions, or impressions and ideas, and all our ideas, whether simple or complex, are ultimately derived from the simple impressions to which they correspond, then everything that can be an object of thought can be seen to have its origin in feeling or the impressions of the senses. Hume sees his theory of ideas as counting decisively against the doctrine of innate ideas, the thesis that there exist in the mind ideas derived from neither sensation nor reflection. The question 'concerning the precedency of our impressions or ideas', Hume tells us, 'is the same with what has made so much noise in other terms, when it has been disputed whether there be any *innate ideas*, or whether all ideas be derived from sensation and reflection.'(T.7)

The 'first proposition' of the science of man, as Hume describes it in the *Abstract*, 'is that all our ideas, or weak perceptions, are derived from our impressions, or strong perceptions; and that we can never think of anything we have not seen without us or felt in our own minds.'(T.647-8) All our ideas or 'more feeble impressions', Hume tells us in the *Enquiry*, 'are copies of our impressions or more lively ones'(E.19). Feeling or sensation is the ultimate source of all the materials of thought. Hume characterises the difference between thinking and feeling as a difference in the force and liveliness with which the perceptions 'enter' the mind. When we examine the contents of the mind we find they can be roughly distinguished into two sets on the basis of their force and liveliness. Hume, however, seems unhappy in drawing the distinction solely in these terms. It is not impossible, he admits, that our ideas might, on occasion, approach impressions in their forcefulness and liveliness. Hume appears to be aware of the unreliability and hence the inadequacy of the grounds he initially offers for the distinction. He suggests a second way in which the distinction might be drawn. By the name 'impressions', Hume says, he understands 'all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul'(T.1). We can divide perceptions up on the basis of the order in which they occur. All the perceptions of the mind, Hume says 'are double'(T.3). To every simple idea there corresponds a more lively simple impression which resembles it. The idea of red 'which we form in the dark', Hume says, 'and that impression, which strikes our eyes in sun-shine, differ only in degree, not in nature'(T.3). We may satisfy ourselves on the point, Hume tells us, by running over as many cases as we may. What we find is not only a straightforward correlation between all our simple ideas and all our simple impressions, but a priority among them, such that the impression always occurs prior to the idea to which it corresponds. While force and liveliness provide us with a useful, though not always reliable, means with which to draw the distinction, it is primarily on the basis of temporal priority that perceptions are to be distinguished as either impressions or ideas. The difficulty for Hume is that in arguing for the causal priority of impressions over ideas he must assume that it is possible to distinguish impressions and ideas in terms other than those of priority. It must be possible, in the first instance, to distinguish impressions and ideas adequately on the basis of their forcefulness and liveliness, and solely upon that basis.

Impressions are causally prior to ideas. Hume has yet, at this stage of the *Treatise*, to discuss causation. His theory is, however, very much in evidence in these early passages. Having discovered the relation of resemblance to obtain, in general, between these 'two species of perception', Hume turns to the question of 'how they stand with regard to their existence, and which of the impressions and ideas are causes and which effects'(T.4). We can ascertain which of two constantly conjoined events is the cause and which the effect by considering the order in which they occur. Whichever of the two sorts of thing occurs first in the conjunction is to be considered the cause, whichever occurs second, the effect. The constant conjunction of resembling perceptions, writes Hume, 'can never arise from chance; but clearly proves a

dependence of the impressions on the ideas, or of the ideas on the impressions.' To know on which side the dependence lies we need only consider 'the order of their *first appearance*'. We find that simple impressions always precede their correspondent ideas into the mind and never appear in the 'contrary order.'(T.4-5) The constant conjunction of perceptions is 'a convincing proof, that the one are the causes of the other; and this priority of the impressions is an equal proof, that our impressions are the causes of our ideas, not our ideas of our impressions.'(T.5)

Simple ideas are the effects of the simple impressions to which they correspond. The general distinctions Hume offers can be read, quite plausibly, as steps in an inductive argument for the general proposition: *'That all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.'*(T.4) The copy principle is perhaps the most important in Hume's system and is the one which has, for Hume, the greatest utility. It is certainly the most interesting and most often discussed general claim of his theory of ideas. Hume presents his principle not, as some have suggested, as an *a priori* or 'logical' claim about the preconditions for understanding(70), but as the conclusion of an evidentially well-grounded inductive argument(71). He uses it, with most effect, to explode the pretensions and suppositions of philosophers who take themselves to have an idea or ideas which they could not possibly have. It is, Hume says, 'impossible to reason justly, without understanding perfectly the idea concerning which we reason; and 'tis impossible perfectly to understand any idea, without tracing it up to its origin, and examining that primary impression, from which it arises.'(T.74-5) The first components of thought, according to Hume, are simple ideas. Simple ideas are caused by simple impressions. If we suspect a piece of reasoning of being unjust in the sense Hume has in mind we need only trace up the origin of the problematic idea to its correspondent impression. Where no impression can be produced we are led to conclude that the reasoning in question is unjust. There neither is, nor, very often, could there be, an impression of the sort required for the existence of the supposed idea. This procedural principle plays a crucial, largely negative, role in the general strategy Hume develops in order to deal with problems like causation and personal identity. It allows Hume to dispose unfussily of a number of troublesome philosophical questions and positions. The copy principle, which both underlies and justifies Hume's strategy in these cases, has seemed to many to stand on rather unconvincing foundations(72). It rests, as we have already begun to see, on two main premises. It is to the question of the sorts of ground Hume is able to offer for these premises and for his general conclusion that I wish now to turn.

Hume argues that to every simple idea there corresponds a simple impression which it resembles and that there is an apparently invariable temporal priority among pairs of 'resembling perceptions'. He thinks that from these two facts he can infer a third proposition: that all our simple ideas *'in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions'*(T.4). The inference appears to be a good one within Hume's system. But what kinds of evidence, if

any, does Hume adduce for his two premises? Hume makes clear that his argument is supported by two main sorts of evidence. To convince ourselves of the claim that there exists an exact one-to-one correspondence among our simple ideas and impressions we need only undertake a fresh review of the contents of our minds. To know 'on which side the dependence lies' we need to consider 'the order of their *first appearance*'(T.5). We find 'by constant experience' that the impression is always prior to the idea to which it corresponds. This is the lesson Hume draws from an examination of his own experience. Impressions are always followed into the mind by their correspondent ideas, but ideas never precede their correspondent impressions into the mind.

Hume looks to a second source of evidence to support his general claim that impressions are causally prior to ideas. The priority thesis is confirmed, Hume thinks, by the 'plain and convincing phaenomenon' that where the senses are in some way dysfunctional so that no impressions are to be had, no ideas are to be had either(T.5). The same general point can be seen to hold even for cases where one's senses function normally. If one has never experienced the taste of pineapple, one will have neither the impression, nor the idea of the taste of pineapple(T.5). Hume thinks that our inability to have an idea or mental image of a taste or visual sensation without having first had the taste or sensation in question supports his thesis that ideas are derived from impressions.

A number of commentators have raised questions about the sort of support Hume can give for his argument(73). There are good *prima facie* reasons for questioning its adequacy. These have to do with the nature of the support Hume offers for his principle and the sort of job it is to do in his system. Hume provides some inductive evidence for the copy theory but it is, by its nature, inconclusive. Anthony Flew objects that while Hume's psychological thesis might well be true, Hume cannot be in a position to know that it is so. His suggestion is that Hume must be in a position to be certain of the truth of the general proposition that all impressions are causally prior to ideas if the use to which he puts the copy theory in the remainder of the *Treatise* is to be warranted. This is not a point about the strength of the inductive evidence Hume adduces. Flew admits that Hume's theory has some inductive support. What Hume needs, according to Flew, is a different sort of support altogether, an *a priori* principle depending not upon the truth of 'certain contingent facts' about people, but 'on the meanings of the terms employed to state it.'(74) What Hume is looking for, Flew believes, is an argument showing that no idea whatever could possibly arise in the mind without the prior occurrence of its correspondent impression. No inductive argument could convince us of this.

Hume's argument falls significantly short of supplying the sort of support for his principle which Flew thinks it requires. Hume openly acknowledges the inconclusiveness of his argument. He unabashedly introduces counter-examples to his thesis. Hume's willingness to admit as an exception the instance of the missing shade of blue shows, at the very least, that he does not

rule out the possibility of an idea arising in the mind without a precedent impression. If what Flew says is correct, Hume is on very slippery ground indeed. But to conclude the matter here, as Flew does, would be to do Hume a significant injustice. Before damning Hume, we should attempt to see the question from his own perspective. Hume makes no claim for the necessity of his thesis. He nowhere suggests that his principle embodies a necessary proposition. There are no appreciable signs of his being unhappy with the sort of evidence available to him. It is obvious from what Hume has to say about the possibility of *a priori* knowledge of causal relations (T.86) that he does not, nor, in good faith, could he, think of his claim as an *a priori* or necessary one. He does not present it as a necessary truth about the human mind but, as we have seen, as a well-grounded causal inference supported by what he obviously thinks are some unexceptionable facts about human life. The copy principle is confirmed both by direct self-observation and by what we know from common experience about human beings. It is, Hume thinks, a bald and uncontroversial fact that we know of no reports, whether first or second-hand, of the blind experiencing ideas or images not related to the previous input of the senses. The conviction borne of self-observation is strengthened by the absence of either first or second-hand reports to the contrary. This represents, for Hume, some good inductive evidence in support of the copy principle. It is strengthened by the success Hume thinks he gains later in the book in accounting for the origin of a number of our basic concepts and beliefs. But none of this is conclusive evidence for the principle. Hume's argument fails to establish that all simple ideas whatever are causally dependent on simple impressions. In Hume's favour, though, it must be said that he shows every sign of being aware of the fact. He presents what evidence he can in support of what he thinks is a contingent feature of human experience. He makes, to my knowledge, no stronger claim. The fact that we have always found it to be the case that impressions precede their correspondent ideas into the mind means that we might 'reasonably hope', in applying the lesson of past experience, to remove all dispute concerning the 'nature and reality' of a contested idea (E.22).

Hume goes on to employ his principle in challenging the legitimacy or 'reality' of certain problematic or disputed ideas. It has seemed to commentators that Hume's procedure here is, if not wholly unacceptable, at least deeply puzzling. How can what Hume has either said or shown warrant the use to which he puts the copy theory in the remainder of the *Treatise*? Hume must surely rest his key methodological strategy on something more than a reasonable hope. Hume's position may not be as difficult to defend as, at first glance, it seems. Recent work by Don Garrett suggests a possible defence (75). Garrett observes that when Hume uses the copy principle to argue against the existence of an idea, he does not appeal merely to the absence of the impression, but to the fact that no perception could possibly meet the demands placed implicitly upon it. The point is worth entertaining. It is not merely that we have no apprehension of, for example, necessary connection, but that we have no conception of what it would be to apprehend a fact with the implications it would need to have. In this, as in other cases, Garrett suggests, an exception to the copy principle would mean the admittance of a

mean the admittance of a perception which could not, even in principle, resemble an impression. Hume is careful never to argue merely from the absence of the original impression. While the copy principle is a crucial part of Hume's procedure, his reliance upon it is not complete. In arguing against the existence of an idea, Hume makes clear not only that the impression is absent, but that no perception whatever could possibly meet the demands being made on its behalf. The desire for an idea of a certain sort often reflects, for Hume, a desire for a certain sort of apprehension which no perception could possibly satisfy(76).

There is no doubt that the copy theory represents an important, not to say, indispensable, part of Hume's general strategy. He presents the principle that every simple idea is copied from an antecedent impression as the conclusion of a strong inductive inference. I have tried to explain why, despite the inconclusiveness of his arguments, Hume presents his theory with as much confidence as he does. Hume neither asks, nor does he suggest that he envisages a need, for a stronger form of support. The use to which he puts the copy principle gives us no reason to suppose that he thought of it as embodying an *a priori* or necessary proposition. This much, I think, can be said in Hume's defence. What I want to consider now is whether, and upon what basis, Hume's 'experiments' lend the sort of inductive support to his theory it needs. To do this we need to bring some of the deeper structure of Hume's theory of ideas into view. We need, in particular, to understand the sorts of commitment entailed by the doctrine. The nature of those commitments quickly becomes clear once we begin to probe the theoretical basis upon which Hume's experiments support the proposition that every idea is preceded into the mind by a correspondent impression. It is important to note the extent of Hume's entanglement. What I want to suggest is that Hume's discomfort with his finished position stems from a number of commitments which are an indispensable part of the doctrine of ideas and from his inability or reluctance to conceive of an alternative. The sort of theoretical constraints Hume is working under are clear from the kinds of assumptions he must make before taking his experiments as supportive of his general position. As we will see, they support the theory only on the basis of these assumptions being either true or in some way justified(77).

Hume tells us that we cannot form an idea or mental 'image' of the taste of a pineapple without having first had experience of the taste of pineapple(78). This evidence is intended to support the premise that all simple ideas are preceded into the mind by simple impressions. It may seem at first glance that it does so and in a very obvious way. But this is not all that is going on. The evidence supports the premise only on the basis of the assumptions, first of all, that to taste a pineapple is to have a perception before the mind, and, second of all, that those perceptions which are before the mind when we are having sense perceptions such as tasting are impressions. It is important to note the extent of Hume's reliance on these assumptions. On the face of it, the most the phenomena Hume presents might be said to confirm is the lesser thesis that simple ideas, of the taste of pineapple or the colour red, are preceded into the mind by tasting pineapple or seeing red. If we cannot safely assume that in tasting

pineapple, for example, I am having a perception, and that that perception is an impression, Hume's thesis as to the temporal priority of impressions has not been supported.

Let us take the second of the two assumptions first. Hume wants to say that the perceptions which are before the mind when I see red, or taste orange, are impressions. Hume must assume, for the purposes of his argument, that it is possible to distinguish impressions and ideas on some basis other than the order in which they occur. Hume, as I remarked earlier, needs to make out his distinction adequately on the basis of the liveliness and forcefulness of our perceptions(T.1). I can conclude, on this basis, that the lively and forceful perception I have of the taste of orange is an impression, and its fainter, less forceful appearance in thought, an idea. Assuming that this first ground for the distinction is adequate, Hume can take the phenomena he describes as evidence for the general proposition that simple impressions precede simple ideas into the mind.

Hume is confident that the distinction he is drawing is one to which we will all readily assent. The 'common degrees' of our 'resembling perceptions' are, Hume thinks, 'easily distinguished'. This is just the distinction between feeling and thinking about something which we all acknowledge as a feature of our experience. We need only remind ourselves of it. Hume is happy to draw the distinction in a rough and perfunctory sort of way. The distinction is too obvious and too familiar to require much explanation. This may be true. But it is not, in itself, very much to the point. The obviousness of the distinction may explain its ready acceptance but it does not tell us how, and precisely upon what basis, it is to be drawn. This is surely what Hume needs to do. However, almost as soon as he has expounded it, Hume raises a significant doubt about its reliability as a means of distinguishing impressions and ideas. Hume concedes that 'it is not impossible but in particular instances' the force and liveliness of our resembling perceptions may 'very nearly approach each other. Thus in sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul, our ideas may approach to our impressions'(T.2). Our impressions are likewise at times 'so faint and low' that 'we cannot distinguish them from our ideas'(T.2). Hume adds, rather unconvincingly, it seems to me, that impressions and ideas are nevertheless, in general, 'very different'. Hume's discomfort with the distinction as it stands is evident. Force and liveliness, Hume admits, do not provide wholly adequate or conclusive grounds for the distinction. The forcefulness and liveliness of our ideas in dreams or during delirium can often be indistinguishable from that of our impressions. This has unfortunate consequences for Hume. If all that distinguishes an impression from an idea is the forcefulness or liveliness with which it strikes the mind, it seems that Hume is pushed to conclude that at least some of the perceptions which are before the mind when it is thinking are impressions. In the same way, if all an idea is is a faint or less forceful perception, Hume must admit that at least some of the perceptions which are before the mind in seeing, tasting, smelling, and so on, are ideas.

Hume's discomfort is understandable. The problem he has lies in making a distinction among *kinds* of perception, purely on the basis of the *degree* of force and liveliness with which the perceptions strike the mind. Hume admits that this criterion for the distinction is inadequate. It does not give us a reliable means with which to determine whether a given perception is either an impression or an idea. This is what Hume is looking for. It might seem, at first sight, that Hume has a better candidate to hand in the criterion of temporal priority. Hume does, indeed, make the distinction in these terms. This is another way in which it can be drawn. But it does not give Hume what he needs. Hume wants to explain how it is our impressions differ from our ideas. He cannot characterise the difference in terms of the temporal priority among resembling perceptions. If the distinction were made in this way, then whichever perception, of a corresponding pair, was to enter the mind first, could properly be called an impression, irrespective of its degree of force and liveliness. No experiments would be needed to establish the point. Hume would have wasted a good deal of time in attempting to do so.

What Hume needs to tell us is how feeling or perceiving something differs from thinking or reasoning about it. He must do this before his experiments can support the proposition that impressions are temporally prior to ideas. Hume must therefore show that it is possible to distinguish between impressions and ideas on grounds other than priority. This is what he consistently attempts to do. Impressions and ideas, he tells us, 'differ only in their strength and vivacity'(T.19). The component parts of impressions and ideas 'are precisely alike. The manner and order of their appearance may be the same. The different degrees of their force and vivacity are, therefore, the only particulars, that distinguish them.'(T.319) We must be able to sort a perception into one or other class simply from an inspection of 'the perceptions themselves'(T.2n). This is the line Hume consistently held to, despite his own questions as to its likely adequacy. It is important to see that Hume's options are severely compromised. Once he has characterised the difference between thinking and feeling as a difference in kinds of perception he has more or less restricted himself to the sort of answer which he in fact gives, and which, by his own admittance, is less than adequate(79).

Impressions, for Hume, are those perceptions which are before the mind when one is feeling or perceiving something. This is a crucial point for Hume because it is the link between feeling and having impressions which allows him to direct his chief methodological principle against the doctrine of innate ideas. It is probable, Hume writes in the *Enquiry*, that 'no more was meant by those, who denied innate ideas, than that all ideas were copies of our impressions'(E.17n). It would have been obvious to Hume that if impressions are characterised purely in terms of their precedence over their correspondent ideas, the doctrine of innate ideas survives unscathed. Hume will have shown only that a perception of a certain sort is the effect of another, of a different sort, which may or may not be innate. The copy theory is decisive in settling the question of innate ideas because, for Hume, it shows that all our ideas derive, in one way or another, from sensation. Hume presents the claim as a

conclusion drawn from observation and experiment. Hume thinks he can show that all the materials of thought have their origin in experience. It is only because of the connection between feeling or perceiving something and having impressions that Hume can confidently use the copy principle in justification of his general strategy in challenging the legitimacy of certain of our supposed ideas. The principle that every simple idea is the effect of a simple impression has no real theoretical force at all if ideas are taken to differ from their 'precedent perceptions'(E.17n) only in the order in which they occur.

We can now see how little room Hume has left to manoeuvre in. Hume might have avoided some of his difficulties by finding some other means of making the distinction between impressions and ideas. The criterion of precedence appeared to be the best candidate(80). But this can be of no use to Hume. Neither can he distinguish impressions and ideas in terms of their causes. The 'ultimate cause' of the impressions of the senses is, Hume admits, 'perfectly inexplicable by human reason'(T.84). It will never be possible to decide 'whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind'. Hume can only hope to make the distinction by pointing up differences in 'the perceptions themselves'. Hume commits himself to such a view, as well as to all the difficulties which attend it, when he characterises the difference between impressions and ideas as a difference between kinds of perception. Hume, therefore, has good theoretical reasons for attempting to distinguish thinking and feeling in terms of the force and liveliness of our perceptions. To hear, smell, taste, see, as much as to think or to reason, is, for Hume, to have a perception before the mind. The same can be said of any mental phenomenon. This is the central assumption of Hume's theory of ideas. Unfortunately, Hume offers little or no argument for it. We find none, at least, where we might most expect or hope to find it: in Hume's exposition of the 'elements of this philosophy'(T.13). When Hume does argue in support of the assumption, his arguments are perfunctory and unconvincing(T.210-1/226-7). It would be both unrealistic and unfair to think of these as the foundations upon which Hume bases his philosophical edifice. Hume, at least, does not seek to present them in this way(81). A more likely explanation is simply that Hume thought the assumption too obvious a truth to require much argument. This, indeed, is the line Hume appears to take. It is, he says, 'universally allow'd by philosophers, and is besides pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions or impressions and ideas, and that external objects become known to us only by those perceptions they occasion'(T.67). This assumption has not stood up well. Its results are notoriously sceptical. The doctrine of ideas makes it difficult to see how we can know anything about the external world or about the degree to which our perceptions adequately represent it. What, precisely, the sceptical results of this theory are, and what we are to make of them, will be the topic of a later chapter. It is important, for now, to note that Hume is arguing from within a philosophical tradition, with a not unreasonable expectation that the assumptions he makes will be shared by his readers. I have attempted to point up the sort of work these assumptions are doing within Hume's philosophy. The demands they make upon Hume, and the difficulties

they present him with, will, I trust, become clear as I proceed to consider his application of the copy principle and his theory of ideas.

Hume presents the correspondence and resemblance between impressions and ideas as basic features of human experience which can be discovered by direct observation. The 'component parts' of corresponding pairs of impressions and ideas are, Hume tells us, 'precisely alike'(T.319). It may also happen that the 'manner and order' of their appearance are the same. This is the case with memories. The order and composition of our present ideas correspond to the order and composition of their original impressions. When there is no correspondence between the order of the idea and our original impressions, we say the idea is a product of the faculty of the imagination. This is how Hume presents the distinction between remembering something and imagining it. Ideas of memory preserve the order and structure of their original impressions. Ideas of the imagination vary the form and content of their impressions. Hume identifies another difference between these two sorts of ideas. We find by experience, Hume says,

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. The faculty by which we repeat our impressions in the first manner, is called the MEMORY, and the other the IMAGINATION.'(T.8-9)

Ideas of memory are said by Hume to be 'much more lively and strong' than those of the imagination. When we recall a past event 'the idea of it flows in upon the mind in a forcible manner; whereas in the imagination the perception is faint and languid, and cannot without difficulty be preserv'd by the mind steady and uniform for any considerable time.'(T.9) Ideas of memory are 'intermediate' between impressions and ideas. This is how Hume thinks of the difference between ideas. Ideas differ from impressions, and from one another, in terms of their different degrees of force and vivacity(T.96). Perceptions can be assessed and classified along the lines of the degree of vivacity or force and liveliness with which they enter the mind. Our stronger or more lively perceptions pass on a share of their vivacity to their fainter or less forceful copies. Association regulates the transfer of vivacity from one idea to another. Hume's discussion of the basic entities and faculties of mind reflects his concern with simplicity as a test of the adequacy of a theory. He uses the transfer of force and vivacity to explain causal inference and other phenomena involving belief. Belief, for Hume, is to be thought of as differing from mere conception in terms of its greater force and vivacity. Belief, he tells us, 'super-adds nothing to the idea, but only changes our manner of conceiving it, and renders it more strong and lively'(T.101). Beliefs are formed as a result of the operations of the

imagination. The force and vivacity by which they are distinguished from other ideas is communicated to them by a present impression. The relation between impression and idea conveys the vivacity 'by an easy transition' from impression to idea. Without the present impression 'the attention is not fix'd, nor the spirits excited'(T.290).

Hume's characterisation of belief as the product of the idea-forming faculty of the imagination may strike some readers as odd, given the frequent contrast he draws between imagination and reason, but Hume's meaning is both deliberate and precise. He explains somewhat later in the *Treatise* that he has in mind two distinguishable but related senses of the term. 'When I oppose the imagination to the memory', Hume writes, '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.'(T.117n) When he uses the term in the first sense, Hume has in mind the faculty which is responsible for the production of all our non-memory ideas, including beliefs, as well as for reasoning or argumentation. When he writes of the imagination in the second sense, he means to contrast some of the ways in which the imagination forms its ideas with those it forms by demonstrative or probable reasoning. Hume does not think of the two senses as referring to two separate faculties. He rejects the Cartesian distinction between pure intellect, on the one hand, and sense and imagination, on the other. The faculty of reason, or of reasoning, or making inferences and demonstrations, is not, for Hume, to be thought of as a faculty separate from the imagination, but as one aspect of the way in which the imagination forms ideas(82). It is in the second sense that Hume speaks when he contrasts the operations of the imagination with those of the understanding, for, as Hume makes clear, the understanding is 'founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas'(T.265). The understanding, indeed, is nothing other than 'the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination'(T.267).

Beliefs differ from most of the ideas of the imagination. We may, Hume tells us, 'mingle, and unite, and separate, and confound, and vary our ideas in a hundred different ways'(T.96). The imagination is at liberty to separate and unite whatever ideas it likes 'in what form it pleases'(T.10). Belief merely changes our manner of conceiving these ideas. The mind can be guided by the regularities it finds in its experience in forming beliefs, and to this degree be constrained by them, but the imagination can also form original complex ideas to which no correspondent exists among our simple impressions. Its ideas are not, however, 'entirely loose and unconnected'(T.10). It is impossible, Hume says, that the same simple ideas should 'fall regularly into complex ones (as they commonly do) without some bond of union among them'(T.10). There must be some principle or principles governing the order of ideas in the imagination, some 'associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another'(T.10). Hume presents the near correspondence of different natural languages as evidence for the operation of some 'uniting principle' among our simple ideas. In combining and separating the simple copies of the impressions of sensation and reflection, Hume finds, whether in belief, or

in the freer flights of the imagination, the mind is guided by what Hume calls laws of association. There are, Hume thinks, three natural relations or principles of association: resemblance, spatial and temporal contiguity, and cause and effect. The imagination is led to recombine or re-associate those simple ideas whose correspondent simple impressions it has perceived to be either spatially or temporally contiguous, related as cause and effect, or by their resemblance to one another. No relation 'produces a stronger connexion in the fancy' than cause and effect(T.11). It is only causation, Hume writes, 'which produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas follow'd or preceded by any other existence or action'(T.73-4). A relation, it is explained, 'is that quality, by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination'(T.13). The natural relations of the imagination are responsible for the striking regularities we find to obtain among the sorts of transitions we make from idea to idea, and from idea to belief. The laws of association are the fundamental laws governing the behaviour of Hume's basic entities. Hume's suggestion is that most, if not all, of what goes on in the imagination can be accounted for in terms of the association of ideas. The effects of the three relations of association are, Hume tells us, not only remarkable, but 'everywhere conspicuous'(T.13).

Hume was not the first philosopher to invoke the notion of association among ideas, although he considered himself to be the first to have attempted to enumerate all the general principles according to which it operated. He uses the term much as it had been used by Locke, though with somewhat different effect. Some of our ideas, Locke writes in a section added to the fourth edition of the *Essay*, 'have a natural correspondence and connexion one with another...Besides this there is another Connexion of *Ideas* wholly owing to Chance or Custom; *Ideas* that in themselves are not at all kin, come to be so united in some Mens Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang always inseparable shew themselves together.'(83) Locke does not give any examples of these 'natural' correspondences. He is more concerned with the 'unnatural connexions' owing to 'chance or custom' which seem to carry with them 'as natural an evidence as self-evident truths themselves'. Custom, he tells us, 'settles habits of Thinking in the Understanding, as well as of Determining the Will, and of Motions in the Body'(84). Locke, however, sees the phenomena of association not as an indispensable feature of the way in which human beings think about and experience the world, but as a 'disease of the mind' to be cured rather than explained(85). Another formative influence on Hume's thinking about association is likely to have been Malebranche. The parallels here are, if anything, even more striking. Like Hume, Malebranche stresses both the importance of imagination and its tendency to operate out of habit. Like Locke, he speaks of 'natural connections' among ideas, contrasting them with the necessary connections discovered by the intellect(86). Whenever any two ideas or perceptions are found to be regularly conjoined in our experience, the imagination is led to habitually associate the one with the other, mistaking,

very often, the natural connection of the mind, for a necessary connection between objects or events. The 'natural connections' of the imagination, while the 'principal cause' of human error(87), nevertheless, are 'necessary to the preservation of life'(88). For Hume, too, the relations of idea-association are a natural source of error. Nothing, Hume says, 'is more apt to make us mistake one idea for another, than any relation betwixt them, which associates them together in the imagination, and makes it pass with facility from one to the other.'(T.202) The easy slide of the imagination from one idea to its regular associate explains, for Hume, our tendency to mistake constant conjunction for necessary connection. The mind takes the idea it has, an idea arising merely from a 'determination of the mind', an association of constantly conjoined ideas, for an idea of necessary connection between natural objects(89). The principles of mental association guide us in forming complex perceptions which take us far, and in significant ways, beyond the impressions to which they can be traced. To us, however, these relations are not only the main source of the complexity of our ideas, but of the coherence and orderliness of our experience. The relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation are 'the only bonds that unite our thoughts together, and beget that regular train of reflection or discourse, which, in a greater or less degree, takes place among all mankind'(E.50).

'So far as regards the mind', Hume writes in the *Abstract*, 'these are the only links that bind the parts of the universe together, or connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves. For as it is by means of thought only that any thing operates upon our passions, and as these are the only ties of our thoughts, they really are *to us* the cement of the universe, and all the operations of the mind must, in a great measure, depend upon them.'(T.662) The principles of association 'cement' together the simple elements of experience, organising and systematising the constant flux of events in the mind. Whereas previous philosophers, such as Locke and Malebranche, had recognised the importance of association or the 'natural relations' of the imagination, Hume was the first of the moderns to attempt to show how, and on the basis of what 'universal principles', these relations operate. He offers an elaborate working out and classification of the ways in which the natural relations cause ideas to come into our minds. Association represented for Hume the solution to the problem of how, from so limited a stock of original impressions, we come to form the complex ideas and beliefs about ourselves and the world that we do. He made rather stronger claims for its importance than either Locke or Malebranche. For Hume, the connection of ideas 'owing to Chance or Custom' is not, as Locke thought, the 'curable' exception, but the rule. Hume shows how the principles of association construct our complex passions. In Book Two of the *Treatise*, Hume invokes the relation of resemblance to explain why grief and disappointment 'give rise to anger, anger to envy, envy to malice, and malice to grief again, till the whole circle be completed.'(T.283) Hume seems to have thought that most of the complicated and various phenomena of human mental life, belief among them, could be accounted for in terms of psychological association. Even in our 'wildest and most wandering reveries, nay in our very dreams', Hume writes in the

*Enquiry*, 'we shall find, if we reflect, that the imagination ran not altogether at adventures, but that there was still a connexion upheld among the different ideas, which succeeded each other.(E.23) The more instances we examine, Hume thinks, 'the more assurance shall we acquire, that the enumeration, which we form from the whole, is complete and entire.'(E.24)

Hume's account of belief and the causes of belief is given against the same general background against which he made sense of the difference between ideas of memory and ideas of imagination(90). Hume introduces his discussion of the causes of belief by remarking *'that when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity'*(T.98). Belief is a special case of the sort of association by which liveliness is transferred from an impression to an idea. Hume makes clear that his main concern in the sections dealing with belief is with the sort of belief which attends causal association or probable reasoning. We cannot be induced to believe in any matter of fact, Hume thinks, without being first acquainted with either its cause or its effect. Hume characterises belief of this sort in terms of the force and vivacity of an idea. But it is important to note that this is a characteristic also of ideas of memory and other sorts of judgment. Degrees of belief or assent can be characterised in terms of degrees of force and vivacity. Ideas of memory, as we saw, enjoy the greatest degree of vivacity, being, in this sense, 'intermediate' between an impression and an idea. Judgments of an 'unphilosophical probability' are communicated only a small share of force and liveliness. In all these cases, Hume says, 'the evidence diminishes by the diminution of the force and intensesness of the idea. This therefore is the nature of the judgment and probability'(T.154). Causal judgments based on an experienced conjunction of pairs of events are attended by a degree of probability and so, of 'force and intensesness', somewhere between the ideas of memory and of weak probability. This is the strongest kind of causal belief. It is with our belief or assent to judgments of this sort that Hume's theory of belief is concerned.

Hume appears to have thought of belief of this sort almost exclusively as belief about unobserved matters of fact. The transition the mind makes from observed impression to unobserved idea in belief is explained by Hume as an effect of the association of ideas. The greater force and liveliness of a present impression conveys to the idea of its absent associate an additional force and vivacity sufficient to make it a belief. Belief is therefore defined by Hume as 'A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION'(T.96). This provides Hume with his paradigm case of belief. Hume makes a number of general remarks about 'the nature of belief, or the qualities of those ideas we assent to'(T.94). Belief, Hume says, 'does nothing but vary the manner, in which we conceive any object'(T.96). When we affirm the existence of God, for example, we might think that we join an idea of existence to the idea of God's other qualities, but, in fact, 'we simply form the idea of such a being, as he is represented to us' and 'make no addition to or alteration on our

first idea'(T.94). When I think of God and when I believe in God's existence 'my idea of him neither encreases nor diminishes'. This must be so, according to Hume, for were it not, I could not distinguish between believing in and merely thinking about the same thing. Any alteration to the 'parts or composition' of an idea changes it into an idea of something else. The same idea, Hume concludes, can only be varied 'by a variation of its degrees of force and vivacity'(T.97), and not by any change in its content.

Hume distinguishes between belief and conception in the same way he distinguished between impressions and ideas, and the ideas of memory and the imagination. Nothing enters into this operation of the mind 'but a present impression, a lively idea, and a relation or association of the fancy betwixt the impression and idea'(T.101). Hume finds belief to involve an inference of sorts. The present impression does not have this 'extraordinary' effect by its own 'proper power and efficacy'. We must 'in every case have observ'd the same impression in past instances, and have found it to be constantly conjoin'd with some other impression'(T.102). The basis for 'BELIEF of the existence of any object', Hume tells us, is provided by a sort of association which communicates sufficient force and vivacity to make an idea a causal belief. The high degree of force and vivacity associated with this sort of belief is seen only where 'the conjunction is found by experience to be perfectly constant, and when the object, which is present to us, exactly resembles those, of which we have had experience'(T.154). In these circumstances, belief 'arises immediately, without any new operation of the reason or imagination'(T.102). When we are accustomed to finding two impressions regularly conjoined, the appearance of one of the impressions, leads the mind to form 'a more vivid and intense conception' of its regular associate. This is how belief in any unobserved matter of fact is to be thought of. When I am convinced of any argument or opinion, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence.'(T.103)

Hume concludes that it is not the argument-forming faculty of reason that is the source of probable reasoning but custom or habit. All probable reasoning, Hume writes, is 'nothing but a species of sensation'(T.103). In the case of propositions 'that are prov'd by intuition or demonstration', Hume says, 'the person, who assents, not only conceives the ideas according to the proposition, but is necessarily determin'd to conceive them in that particular manner, either immediately or by the interposition of other ideas'(T.95). In the case of probable reasoning or causal inference there is no intermediate idea or operation. Hume dismisses what he thinks are the only candidates for such an idea. The inference is immediate. A belief 'which attends the present impression, and is produc'd by a number of past impressions and conjunctions' arises, Hume writes, 'immediately, without any new operation of the reason or imagination. Of this I can be certain, because I never am conscious of any such operation, and find nothing in the subject, on which it can be founded. Now as we call every thing CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition, without any new reasoning or conclusion,

we may establish it as a certain truth, that all the belief, which follows upon any present impression, is deriv'd solely from that origin.'(T.102) All arguments from experience take the form of causal inferences and causal inference, Hume explains, is based not on reason, but on custom or habit. Belief, Hume tells us, 'is more properly an act of the sensitive than of the cognitive part of our natures'(T.183). It seems that nature 'by an absolute and uncontroullable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel'(T.183).

Hume, nevertheless, wants to fix some general rules 'by which we ought to regulate our judgment concerning causes and effects'(T.149). Hume, like Newton, takes the object of science to be very largely to do with the discovery of causal connections in nature. He attempts to follow Newton in setting down a number of rules to determine when an object or event might properly be thought the cause or effect of another. Hume sets down eight rules which he says are 'form'd on the nature of our understanding, and on our experience of its operations in the judgments we form concerning objects'(T.149). These rules go significantly beyond the rules of reasoning established by Newton. Hume uses them to distinguish 'philosophical' from 'unphilosophical probability'. They state the conditions under which ascriptions of probability are warranted, and tell us how the 'wise man proportions his belief to the evidence'(E.110). Hume thinks that it is natural for human beings to form habits of expectation on the basis of past conjunctions of events. He offers a set of rules for making this sort of inference based on well-established, well-observed associative habits of mind: A cause must be contiguous with and prior to an effect with which it has been observed to be constantly conjoined; it must be both necessary and sufficient to produce its supposed effect; if several different objects produce the same effect, the cause must be some quality which we discover to be common among them; if an effect arises from one but not another 'resembling' cause of a given effect, there must be some determinate point of difference in the causes; if an effect is found to increase or diminish with its cause, then some presence or absence of a part of the cause must be always attended by a correspondent presence or absence of a part of the effect; if an object exists for any amount of time without the object which is its supposed cause, that object is not its cause(T.173-175).

Hume's formulation of these rules would suggest, at the very least, that he does not believe that in probable reasoning we take no more into account than constant conjunctions of events. Our causal beliefs can be subject to significant correction. The mind, Hume says, 'having form'd another observation concerning the connexion of causes and effects, gives new force to its reasoning from that observation; and by means of it can build an argument on one single experiment, when duly prepar'd and examin'd'(T.131). The picture Hume gives us is much more subtle and more carefully nuanced than is usually thought(91). The same general rules which lead us to conclude from  $p$  and  $q$  that  $r$ , will also lead us, upon further enquiry, to conclude that from  $p$  and  $q$  follows  $r$  only on the basis of  $y$ . Hume continues to account for the natural and subtle ways in which we judge of causes and effects after he has presented the

argument in which he is usually thought to have denied all warrant to inference of this sort(T.88-91). The formation of these general rules proceeds, Hume thinks, from 'those very principles, on which all judgments concerning causes and effects depend'(T.147). This is all the 'LOGIC' which, Hume says, he sees fit to employ in his reasoning: 'Our scholastic headpieces and logicians shew no such superiority above the mere vulgar in their reason and ability, as to give us any inclination to imitate them in delivering a long system of rules and precepts to direct our judgment in philosophy.'(T.175) The rules, being 'supply'd by the natural principles of our understanding', are 'very easy in their invention, but extremely difficult in their application'. It is only in so far as causation 'is a *natural* relation', Hume tells us, that we are 'able to reason upon it, or draw any inference from it'(T.94). Our reasonings about causation, as a *natural* relation, are based on the same natural associative relations as are all reasonings concerning matters of fact. Hume is giving a causal explanation of the 'accustom'd unions' formed by habit in the imagination. The eight rules of reasoning are just the natural habits of causal reasoning 'methodized and corrected'(E.162).

A reflection upon general rules 'keeps us from augmenting our belief upon every encrease of the force and vivacity of our ideas'(T.632). From these general rules 'we learn to distinguish the accidental circumstances from the efficacious causes'(T.149), and so, to correct the imagination, and attribute to a belief a 'full conviction', though its 'want of resemblance, or contiguity, may render its force inferior to that of other opinions'(T.632). Resemblance and contiguity, nevertheless, have some effect on the imagination, and that effect too is to be attributed to general rules or principles of the imagination. The opposition of these two principles 'produces a contrariety in our thoughts, and causes us to ascribe the one inference to our judgment, and the other to the imagination. The general rule is attributed to our judgment; as being more extensive and constant. The exception to the imagination; as being more capricious and uncertain'(T.149). The distinction is, however, purely nominal, since both sorts of belief are products of the general rules of the imagination. The understanding just is 'the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination'(T.267). Our general rules then are 'in a manner set in opposition to each other'. When an object appears that resembles any cause 'in very considerable circumstances' the principles of the imagination naturally carry it to form 'a lively conception of the usual effect'. Hume describes this as 'the first influence of general rules'. However, when we review this act of mind 'and compare it with the more general and authentic operations of the understanding' we find it to be 'irregular' and 'destructive of all the most establish'd principles of reasonings; this is the cause of our rejecting it' and is, Hume says, the 'second influence of general rules'(T.149-50). The same general rules of the mind produce both the 'judgments' and the 'exceptions' of the imagination. Both sorts of belief are the products of the imagination. What is it about the 'second influence' of general rules which makes it preferable to the first? One answer which appears to be open to Hume is to argue that these more 'extensive and constant' general rules are necessary for the preservation of order and regularity in our thinking. Hume distinguishes 'in the imagination

betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistable, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular'(T.225). The former are, Hume says, 'the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin.'(T.225). The latter are 'irregular' and 'capricious'. The first influence of general rules is the result of principles 'of an irregular nature'(T.150), found, Hume thinks, 'only to take place in weak minds'(T.225). The second sort of influence of general rules is what makes our thinking regular and systematic. This appears to be Hume's considered view. However, if we press him on our preference for regularity, and ask why we should prefer a regular set of beliefs to an irregular one, it seems that Hume can only answer, as he does, that the vulgar are guided by the latter and the wise by the former.

General methodological principles 'such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and effects to causes' are drawn then from our observation of the rational practices of the wise. The wise man, Hume says, 'considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability'(E.110). The vulgar, on the other hand, take things 'according to their first appearance' and 'are commonly guided' by the first sort of influence of general rules. Hume's position seems very vulnerable. Who, we may well ask, are we to consider 'the wise', and who the 'vulgar'? If Hume's answer is that the wise are those who follow these general methodological rules his position begins to look appallingly circular. Hume recommends these general rules to us on the basis of the 'disposition and character of the person' who subscribes to them. We must already be in a position to know who the wise are. What is at issue, according to John Passmore, is whether there is such a thing as 'superior wisdom'(92). Hume's account would seem to have ruled this out. Philosophical probability, as much as unphilosophical probability, depends upon what Passmore calls 'a trick of the mind'. In neither case is there 'objective implication'. We are led to the conclusion we form by 'a merely psychological operation'(93). In the end, Passmore writes 'psychology triumphs. Empirical reasoning fades away; it is found to be nothing more than the habitual procedure of those persons we choose to dignify as 'the wise' or 'the philosophical'. The logical problem - how can empirical reasoning be justified? - vanishes as unanswerable.'(94)

In Passmore's view, Hume's position fluctuates hopelessly between giving an account of belief which places all our beliefs about matters of fact on the same footing, and saying that some of those beliefs are more rational or better-justified than others. His attempt to justify his general rules fails, according to Passmore, because of the obvious circularity of Hume's efforts to dignify the beliefs and practices of the wise. Other critics have insisted on reading Hume's rules for judging of causes and effects in a mildly ironic or sceptical light, given 'the new and signal contradiction' Hume claims to have discovered 'in our reason'(T.150). The 'triumph of

the imagination'(95) seems concomitant with the defeat of normative reasoning of any sort. A view like this one has serious implications for philosophy and Hume is unlikely to have overlooked the irony of enumerating the normative rules upon which the practice is to proceed. However, the sceptical view is clearly not one to which Hume considers himself committed. Hume continues to reason about causal association and to freely make use of his rules of reasoning. The matter for Hume is neither as stark nor as hopeless as Passmore suggests. Let us look again at the detail of his charge. Hume's theory only succumbs to circularity if the only test Hume can look to in justifying those procedures is the observance of the rules which constitute them. I think it is obvious that Hume does not do this. I do not think that he needs to. There are other tests to which a given method can be subjected apart from its adherence to its own rules(96). General rules are formed on the basis of reflection not only upon actual methods but upon their consequences. The truth conditions of my belief that the sun will rise tomorrow are external to the belief and to the method by which it is arrived at. Hume's rules for judging of causes and effects are themselves supported by inductive reasoning concerning the past predictive success of its rules. The wise man, Hume says, 'considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments' and to that side he inclines. The success of the method depends therefore on something other than the observance of the set of procedural rules to which it is subject. Hume thinks that any human being who reflects upon these cognitive mechanisms will come quite naturally to endorse those practices which are inductively successful. Reflection leads us to approve of those associative habits which are successful and to reject those that are not.

In all reasonings from experience 'there is a step taken by the mind which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding'(E.41). We can have no fully rational justification for trusting the tendencies of the imagination. Hume, nevertheless, seeks to regulate the judgment, in accordance with rules set down for the avoidance of the errors to which the unregulated imagination is prone. If the mind is not engaged by reason in its judgments 'it must be induced by some other principle of equal weight and authority'(E.41). This is the interesting and important question to which Hume is addressing himself. Hume is concerned with what sort of warrant or authority we can give our causal reasonings once the intellect has been ruled out as a possible source. It is because causation is a natural relation that we can continue to reason causally about it. The essence of causal reasoning lies in a 'propensity' fixed by custom 'to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant'(T.165). While certain of our vulgar propensities may be corrected by reflection, and the observance of general rules, it was obvious to Hume that 'custom takes the start, and gives the bias to the imagination'(T.148). Hume rejects the idea that the intellect operates as an independent idea-forming faculty. Reason 'when it acts alone...entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition in philosophy or common life'(T.267-8). It would have been obvious to Hume that the kind of demand Passmore is making is one which could never be met. The methodologist must either formulate his rules in a purely arbitrary way, stipulating

principles *a priori*, without reference to human need or nature, or attempt to form them on the basis of a 'cautious observation' of the actual practices of natural scientists, and of their successes and failures. This is indeed what Hume attempts to do. He believes that we will look in vain to find some authority for these laws which is not, in some sense, of our own making. Our habits of inference and the basic operations of the understanding have their basis in our own natures. General rules are obtained from a reflection upon these procedures, and upon their success or failure. Hume is not troubled by the absence of any rationally demonstrable standards of judgment. He does not think that by grounding the authority for causal reasoning in our natures and experience he has undermined it. The methodologist can still discriminate between methods which yield correct predictions and methods which do not. His own procedure rests on making explicit those rules which are followed in successful practice. Hume's rules for judging of causes and effects are those rules which are both produced and supported by inductive reasoning. This, Hume thinks, is the only feasible approach which a methodologist can take. Without 'consulting experience' all we may say is that 'any thing may produce any thing'(T.173). Methodological rules are formed 'on the nature of our understanding, and on our experience of its operations in the judgments we form concerning objects'(T.149). By bringing these rules into relief, Hume hopes not only to make causal thinking more regular and systematic, but to show why causal reasoning takes the form it does and has the special role it has in our cognitive lives.

# Notes

## Chapter One

### Hume's Science and The Study of Human Nature

1. I have in mind Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982); and John P. Wright, *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983). Michael Barfoot's article 'Hume and the Culture of Science in the Early Eighteenth Century' in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) shows that Hume's experience of the culture of science was fuller and more complex than is usually acknowledged.
2. Rene Descartes, 'Rules for the Direction of our Native Intelligence' in *Selected Philosophical Writings*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.1.

### 1.1 Hume's Methodological Outlook

3. David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion in The Philosophical Works*, Ed. T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, Vol.IV (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1964), p.316.
4. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and his System of the World*, 2 vols., translated by Andrew Motte and revised by Florian Cajori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), p.xvii.
5. Isaac Newton, Letter to Bentley, January 1692, quoted by Cajori, *op.cit.*, p.633.
6. David Hume, *History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Abdication of James II, 1688*, Chapter 7, Vol.6 (Boston: Phillips Sampson, 1854), p.374.
7. Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p.342.
8. John Passmore, *Hume's Intentions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p.150.
9. A.J. Ayer, *Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.24.
10. *Ibid.*, p.25.
11. Isaac Newton, *op.cit.*, p.400.
12. Isaac Newton, *Opticks or A Treatise of The Reflections, Refractions, Inflections and Colours of Light* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931), p.402.
13. John Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.76.
14. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), Part IV, p.73. Hume has Philo remark: 'It was usual with the *Peripatetics*, you know, *Cleanthes*, when the cause of any phenomenon was demanded, to have recourse to their *faculties* or *occult qualities*, and to say, for instance, that bread nourished by its nutritive faculty, and

senna purged by its purgative: But it has been discovered, that this subterfuge was nothing but the disguise of ignorance; and that these philosophers, though less ingenuous, really said the same thing with the sceptics or the vulgar, who fairly confessed, that they knew not the cause of these phenomena.'

15. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p.43: 'This hypothesis seems even the only one which explains the difficulty, why we draw from a thousand instances, an inference which we are not able to draw from one instance, that is, in no respect, different from them. Reason is incapable of any such variation. The conclusions which it draws from considering one circle are the same which it would form upon surveying all the circles in the universe.'

16. Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, p.404.

17. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, Vol.2, p.400.

18. Isaac Newton, *Papers and Letters on Natural Philosophy*, Ed. I. Bernard Cohen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p.106.

19. *Ibid.*, p.106.

20. Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, p.350.

21. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, Vol. 2, p.484.

22. Thomas Reid, *Essays on The Active Powers of Man* (1788) in *The Works of Thomas Reid*, vol.2, Ed. W. Hamilton (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1863), p.526.

23. See James Noxon, *Hume's Philosophical Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp.39-40.

24. Referred to in I. Bernard Cohen, *Franklin and Newton: An Enquiry into Speculative Newtonian Experimental Science and Franklin's Work in Electricity as an Example Thereof* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp.583-4.

25. Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, p.402.

26. *Ibid.*, p.402.

27. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, Vol.2, p.400.

28. Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, p.369.

29. *Ibid.*, p.404.

30. See, for example, James Noxon, *op.cit.*, p.58.

31. Robert Hooke, *Micrographia, or Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses, with Observations and Illustrations Thereupon* (Printed by Jo. Martyn and Jo. Allestry, 1665).

32. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), IV.XII.13.

33. John Locke, *The Correspondence of John Locke*, Ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976-89), Vol.IV, p.8.

34. *Ibid.*, p.8.

35. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.I.9.

36. *Ibid.*, II.I.10.

37. *Ibid.*, II.I.10.

38. See Michael Barfoot, *op.cit.*

39. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III.VI.16.

40. *Ibid.*, IV.III.16.

41. *Ibid.*, II.VIII.21.

42. Robert Boyle, *Works*, Vol.IV, Ed. Birch (London, 1792), p.234, cited by L. Laudan in 'The Nature and Sources of Locke's Views on Hypothesis' in *Locke on Human Understanding*, Ed. Ian Tipton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.160.

43. John Locke, *op.cit.*, IV.XVI.12.

44. Robert Boyle, 'The Origin of Forms and Qualities According to the Corpuscular Philosophy' (publ.1666) in *Selected Philosophical Papers of Robert Boyle*, Ed. M.A. Stewart (Manchester University Press, 1979), p.18.

45. John Locke, *op.cit.*, IV.XVI.12.

46. Daniel E. Flage, *David Hume's Theory of Mind* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), suggests a different view of the relationship between the two works. According to Flage, while 'the *Treatise* provides a theory of the nature of the mind, the *Enquiry* provides merely a lawful description of the operations of the mind' (pp.166-7). As I try to make clear, I think this view is mistaken. The same caution about the 'ultimate cause of any natural operation'(E.30), manifest in the *Enquiry*, underlies Hume's rejection of any hypothesis concerning the 'ultimate original qualities' of phenomena (T.xvii) in the *Treatise*. Flage cites a passage in the *Enquiry* as indicative of Hume's new position and of the rejection of the methodological outlook of the *Treatise*. Hume is said to contrast his own 'experimental method' with the 'other scientific method, where a general abstract principle is first established, and is afterwards branched out into a variety of inferences and conclusions'(E.174). The intended contrast here, however, is not with the method Hume himself endorsed in the *Treatise*, only later to reject, but with the 'high priori', empirically groundless, speculations of the rationalists which Hume attacked in the *Treatise* and continued to oppose in the *Enquiry*. Hume nowhere suggests so radical a change in his methodological outlook, and what changes we do find in the *Enquiry* are more of the nature of modifications than of a significant overhaul.

47. David Hume, *The History of Great Britain, Vol.II, Containing the Commonwealth and the Reigns of Charles II and James II* (London, 1757), p.451.

48. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, p.399.

49. The point is well made out by Robert Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton and the Design Argument* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p.42.

50. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, p.53.

51. *Ibid.*, p.53.

52. *Ibid.*, p.53.

53. *Ibid.*, p.53.

54. *Ibid.*, p.54.

55. *Ibid.*, pp.54-5.

56. *Ibid.*, p.56.

57. John Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.51.

58. John Locke, *op.cit.*, IV.XII.10.

59. For a fuller and highly perceptive treatment of Hume on this point see Martin Bell, 'Hume and Causal Power: The Influences of Malebranche and Newton' in *The British Journal of The History of Philosophy*, Vol.5, No.1, 1997.

60. A fuller discussion of Leibniz's criticism and Newton's response to it is presented by Noxon, *op.cit.*, pp.43-46.

61. Isaac Newton, Letter to Bentley, *op.cit.*, p.633.

62. Isaac Newton, *op.cit.*, p.400.

63. John Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.50, observes that to assign an 'ultimate cause', for Hume, would be 'to discover a "connexion" as distinct from a "conjunction" i.e. to show that the natural operation *must* be what it is.' This theme and its implications for Hume's project will be further explored in the next chapter.

## 1.2 Ideas and Association

64. In 1.1 I put special stress on the reflexivity of Hume's analysis of scientific method and of causal reasoning, in particular. By exposing human habits of inference to causal scrutiny Hume hopes to be left with a set of rules which the natural scientist could consistently endorse. This is an important positive part of Hume's philosophical agenda. It is, Hume says in the introduction to the *Treatise*, 'impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences were we thoroughly acquainted with the extent and force of human understanding'(T.xv). In Book One, Hume offers a causal account of the origin and nature of many of our ideas and of important mental operations like causal inference. His account of the special relationship between 'moral' science and experimental method is complex and tendentious. He thinks that by turning causal reasoning on itself we might hope, in many cases, to reform or correct its use. Reflection on the rules of causal reasoning will lead, Hume hopes, to a set of norms for judging of causes and effects the observance of which would produce a refinement in scientific method. The upshot of Hume's reflexive analysis of causal inference will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. A good discussion can be found in Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.93-100. In this chapter, I am concerned to plot the general drift in Hume's argument towards some notion of normativity in causal reasoning, and the several factors which would seem to militate against the move.

65. Hume's attempts to do so have proved a particular bugbear with commentators. Passmore, *op.cit.*, remarks that Hume appears to have left himself no grounds at all upon which to make the proposed distinction. His attempts to make out a case for the distinction leads him into hopeless circularity. The question of the justification of causal reasoning 'vanishes as unanswerable'. The only questions which remain are: 'Under what circumstances are we

confident? What are the psychological peculiarities of the man who thinks scientifically - i.e. in the manner we choose to call scientific although such thinking has no formal peculiarities - as distinct from him we call superstitious?', pp.60-1. Noxon, *op.cit.*, pp.85-90, puts an alternative view to Passmore's, exonerating Hume from the charge of circularity. I offer my own analysis of this debate in the closing pages of the chapter.

66.The point is given special stress by Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.58-75. According to Garrett, the separability principle has as crucial a role to play in Hume's philosophy as his copy principle. Hume, however, presents the former principle far less explicitly, and with rather less pomp, than he does the latter. I have tried to make explicit the work the principle is doing where it occurs in Hume's account. The stress is perhaps greatest in my treatment of Hume's discussion of personal identity.

67.Barry Stroud's attempt to deal with it on Hume's behalf seems unsatisfactory. Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p.34, suggests that all Hume is saying is that it is 'not impossible for someone to get a simple idea in that way'. Hume, however, seems to want to say rather more than this. Hume tells us that the exception is 'a proof that the simple ideas are not always derived from the correspondent impressions'(T.6). Stroud goes on to suggest that Hume might easily have accommodated the exception within his existing system by taking into account a psychological principle he makes use of later in the *Treatise*. Hume might refer forward to a principle of the imagination which he later suggests could allow the mind to continue in motion 'even when its object fails it'(T.198) to produce the idea of the missing shade of blue. Hume, however, not only declines the use of the principle, but makes clear that the ideas it produces are 'fictions', like the idea of continued existence(T.198). Hume's idea, however, appears to be a 'genuine' idea of the missing shade of colour. Similar considerations would seem to count against D.M. Johnson's account, 'Hume's Missing Shade of Blue, Interpreted as Involving Habitual Spectra' in *David Hume: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1995), Vol.I, pp.207-217. Johnson suggests that Hume modelled his solution to the problem of the missing shade on the pattern he used in explaining the origin of our idea of necessary connection (p.211). Writing along similar lines to Stroud, Daniel E. Flage, 'Hume's Relative Ideas', *Hume Studies*, April 1981, p.68, argues that the idea can be accommodated within Hume's system, by taking into account Hume's theories of abstraction and the association of ideas. David Pears, *Hume's System: An Examination of the First Book of His Treatise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.25, tries to explain why Hume is committed to regarding ideas of shades of colour as simple, rather than complex, and so, Pears thinks, to the rejection of accounts like Stroud's. Hume, according to Pears, thinks that any complex perception must be exhaustively separable into simpler units which are each capable of standing by themselves. What makes the missing shade of blue a genuine counter-example for Hume is its resistance to this sort of analysis. I offer a similar account of Hume's construal of complexity in the following few sections.

68. It is not clear whether Stroud thinks that the idea produced by his psychological principle would be simple or complex. Hume gives no helpful account of how the principle produces ideas like the idea of the continued existence of bodies. Other commentators have challenged Hume's story on the grounds that what Hume evidently takes to be a simple idea is not in fact simple and so is susceptible of treatments such as Stroud's. Views along these lines have been presented by Bernard Rollin, 'Hume's Blue Patch and the Mind's Creativity', in *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1971, Vol.32, pp.119-128; and John Losee, 'Hume's Demarcation Project' in *Hume's Studies*, 1992, pp.51-62. Don Garrett, *op.cit.*, p.73, argues that this approach is misguided. In my discussion, I try to show why Hume would have been unmoved by such accounts.

69. Hume's inclusion of his discussion of the missing shade in the *Enquiry* may reflect his thinking that his system has resources with which to cope with it. The suggestion is made by Rollin, *op.cit.*, p.120. Hume, however, continues to write of the missing shade as though it were a genuine exception.

70. See, for example, Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.227, and Anthony Flew, *David Hume: Philosopher of Moral Science* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp.20-23.

71. This is a view defended by Barry Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.20-24.

72. Flew, *op.cit.*, pp.20-23, for example, takes Hume not only to be in need of a stronger sort of support than induction can supply, but to use the copy principle as though it were the embodiment of a necessary proposition. Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.24-33, while taking Hume's argument on its own terms, raises significant doubts about the capacity of the evidence Hume adduces to give the inductive support his conclusion needs. See also David Pears, *op.cit.*, pp.18-30.

73. Apart from Flew, *op.cit.*, see also Bennett, *op.cit.*, pp.225-234; and Kenneth Merrill, 'Hume, Whitehead and Philosophical Method' in *David Hume: Many-Sided Genius*, Ed. Kenneth Merrill and Robert W. Shahan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), p.137.

74. Anthony Flew, *ibid.*, pp.21-2.

75. Don Garrett, *op.cit.*, p.49.

76. I present a fuller treatment of these themes in the next chapter. Hume recognises that the demand for the sort of apprehension of connection between events that would cast a writ over other events of the sort is one that cannot be met. For a significant development of this theme see Simon Blackburn, 'Hume and Thick Connections' in *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.94-110.

77. I am indebted to Stroud on this point. Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.24-33, shows the sort of hold the theory of ideas has on Hume's thought, and the kinds of commitment it entails. What follows is an amplification of some of the themes of Stroud's exemplary treatment.

78. Hume here, as elsewhere, draws his example, and, it would seem, his confidence, directly from Locke's *Essay*, III.VI.11: 'He that thinks otherwise, let him see if any Words can give him the Taste of a Pine-Apple, and make him have the true idea of the Relish of that celebrated

delicious Fruit.' Hume's use of the examples of gold and its solubility in aqua regia in his discussion of ideas of substances (T.16) will also be familiar to readers of Locke. See, for example, *op.cit.*, II.XXIII.10.

79.A number of commentators have offered a somewhat different construal of Hume on perceptions to the one presented here. Donald W. Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.10, suggests a 'radically different and distinctively Humean usage' of the term, challenging what he calls the 'standard' view which holds that Hume took ideas to be logically private images, p.64-5. Ideas, for Hume, are 'internal to the public world of common life'(p.65). William Davie, 'Perceptions and Persons', in *Hume Studies*, 1984, p.130, argues similarly that perceptions are 'the things that we know, both private and public'. I argue against this sort of revisionism in Chapter Three.

80.The suggestion is made by Daniel E. Flage, *David Hume's Theory of Mind* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), pp.21-2.

81.I consider just what Hume's arguments do show in Chapter Three.

82.Hume tells us that reason 'may be consider'd as a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect'(T.180). When he uses 'reason' in this restrictive sense Hume has in mind the reason of the deductive 'sciences'. Reason in this sense is concerned with the discernment, by intuition or demonstration, of the relations between ideas, and the production of knowledge proper. It is important to note, however, that Hume uses reason in other, broader, senses. In its broadest sense, reason includes any sort of inference, including causal or inductive inference. Hume's consistent use of reason in this latter sense (see, for example, T.177-178; 180-187), and the alleged restriction of sense in his discussion of causal inference, has provided a number of commentators with the basis for a non-sceptical interpretation of Hume's account of induction. These include Tom Beauchamp and Alexander Rosenberg, *Hume and the Problem of Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp.33-79; N. Scott Arnold, 'Hume's Skepticism about Inductive Inferences', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol.12, January 1983, pp.31-55; and Annette Baier, *op.cit.*, pp.54-77. I return to the issues raised in these studies in Chapter two.

83.John Locke, *op.cit.*, II.XXXIII.5.

84.*Ibid.*, II.XXXIII.6.

85.John Locke, *The Conduct of the Understanding*, in *The Works of John Locke* (London, 1823), sec. 41.

86.Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. T.M. Lennon and P.J. Olscamp (Columbus, Ohio, 1980), 1.1.3.

87.*Ibid.*, 1.5.2.

88.*Ibid.*, 1.1.3.

89.For a fuller treatment of the influence of Malebranche on Hume, both on association and causation, see Charles J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp.254-290. T.M.Lennon, *op.cit.*, goes so far as to endorse the

description of Hume's theory of causation as 'occasionalism minus God'(p.xxii). In Chapter Two I offer reasons for questioning the justness of Lennon's claim.

90. Hume's satisfaction with the theory of belief presented in the *Treatise* was short-lived. By the time he came to write the *Abstract*, Hume entertained serious doubts about the adequacy of his characterisation of belief in terms of force and vivacity. His worries are reflected in the changes he was led to make to the account of belief presented in the first *Enquiry*. In the appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume offers what amounts to a recantation of a critical feature of the theory presented in that book. He admits to an error in having characterised the difference between two ideas of the same object as a difference in degrees of force and vivacity: 'I believe there are other difference among ideas, which cannot properly be comprehended under these terms. Had I said, that two ideas of the same object can only be different by their different feeling, I shou'd have been nearer the truth.'(T.636) Hume's dissatisfaction seems, in large part, to stem from the much-observed inability of his theory to characterise belief in terms which would sufficiently distinguish it from other mental phenomena, such as the ideas of poetry or madness. It is common, Hume says, 'both to poetry and madness, that the vivacity they bestow on the ideas is not deriv'd from the particular situations or connexions of the objects of these ideas, but from the present temper and disposition of the person'(T.630). Hume continues to think that an opinion or belief differs from a mere conception 'not in the nature, or the order of its parts, but in the manner of its being conceiv'd'(T.628) An idea 'assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea'(T.629). It is this different feeling which, Hume says, '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 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'(T.629). Hume seems to be moving away from a characterisation of the feeling of belief in terms of force and vivacity, and towards a more explicitly functional account, to be given in terms of the 'superior influence' of a belief on 'the passions and imagination'. Ideas which are beliefs are to be distinguished solely by their effects. Hume appears to have given up on his attempt in the *Treatise* to offer a unified view of belief, memory, the imagination and the senses. I have characterised the simplicity of that account as an important part of Hume's explanatory programme. Hume's acknowledgement of the inadequacy of the basic dimensions along which he makes his critical distinctions marks, I think, a significant change in his ambitions and in his confidence in his own project. I do not seek to make much of the point here. For the purposes of this work, we must treat Hume's account of belief as it appears in the body of the *Treatise*. It is this remarkable account alone that I attempt to characterise.

91. Commentators have tended either to ignore or under-value the rules 'by which to judge of causes and effects' that Hume presents in Section XV of Part III. Jonathan Bennett, *op.cit.*, p.302, claims that Hume has ignored the sort of causal judgments 'which look interrogatively rather than confidently towards the future'. Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford:

Clarendon Press, 1984), p.211, asserts that 'we are more subtle than Hume suggests: we take more into account than regular succession of similar events'. There are good prima facie reasons for questioning the accuracy of these and like views of Hume on causal judgment.

92. John Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.60.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*

95. Robert J. Fogelin, *Hume's Scepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p.53.

96. The point is made by James Noxon, *op.cit.*, pp.86-88.

## Chapter Two

### Causality, Reason and Causal Inference

No part of *A Treatise of Human Nature* has excited as much critical attention, or inspired as much disagreement, as Part III of Book One, in which Hume presents his account of nondemonstrative or probable reasoning. It is among the least well understood sections of the *Treatise*. Much of the misunderstanding stems from the reading of Hume's two main arguments, his argument concerning induction and his so-called 'regularity' definition of causation(1). A good deal of the debate surrounding these arguments bears little relation to what Hume is attempting to do in Part III. Hume treats of a number of interrelated notions, including inductive inference, causation, reason and probability, and presents a number of connected, mutually-supportive arguments, before bringing his story to its climax with his two 'definitions' of causation. His arguments concerning induction and causation arise as part, and as a result, of his sustained treatment of what is, for him, the most important operation of the mind: causal inference. Despite this, commentators have usually preferred to consider Hume's argument concerning induction and his self-styled definitions of causation as independent and free-standing pieces of argumentation(2). The standard appreciation of these arguments is typified in Fogelin's description of them as Hume's 'sceptical attack on induction and his attempted regularity definition of causation'(3). These arguments are of obvious importance to Hume. They retain their pivotal position in the *Enquiry* and in the *Abstract*. They are also of significant interest to present-day philosophers and to historians of philosophy. A large and impressive secondary literature has been built up around them. Much of this literature has read Hume either as a contemporary or as a positivist, concerned to deny all rational warrant to our inductive practices and to reduce causation to mere regularity of succession among events(4). I believe this interpretation of Hume to be wrong. A number of commentators have clearly shown that this approach, if not flatly at odds with much of what Hume has to say, is, at best, a poor and partial representation of it(5). But it is far from clear what we are to replace the 'standard' view with. So far, no really satisfactory picture has emerged. The nonsceptical or sceptical realist view of Hume is inadequate and itself needs replacing(6). The standard sceptical view is wrong-headed and one-dimensional, though it too has its proponents. What I propose in this chapter is an appreciation of Hume's two main arguments which keeps them firmly within the sights of their author and his general intentions, and which, I believe, takes us some little way towards relieving the interpretive impasse that besets Hume scholarship in this area(7).

The traditional sceptical interpretation of these arguments is not without textual support, but it faces a number of difficulties. The arguments emerge as part of an extended discussion

which not only endorses and presupposes causal reasoning, but appears as a prelude to, and not as a part of, Hume's discussion of sceptical systems. Causal inference is construed as a species of the association of ideas and impressions. As such, it concerns most human beliefs concerning matters of fact. All our beliefs about the unobserved are the result of a customary transition from observed to unobserved matters of fact, founded on the relation of cause and effect. This finding is of the first importance to Hume and to the account which follows. He does not regard it as undermining his own causal analysis of causation and causal inference. The examination of the causal relation presented by Hume in Book One, Part III of the *Treatise* makes ready and persistent use of obviously causal notions. Much else in the *Treatise* can be read in the same way. There is also textual evidence against the view that Hume adopted a regularity theory of causation. Hume distinguishes between the mere redescription of regularities among events and their explanation in terms of 'laws and forces'(E.14). There are 'hidden and 'conceal'd' forces in nature which the natural scientist might hope 'in some degree' to discover. Hume sees his science of man as targeted on explaining the operations of the understanding in terms of the 'simplest and fewest' causes. These points alone are enough to place the standard 'Humean' view under considerable suspicion. But there are other problems facing these readings. There is an obvious interpretive difficulty with treating as independent two arguments which are not only parts of the same complex dialectic, but are mutually-supportive and inter-dependent. The argument concerning induction paves the way for the analysis of causation which follows it. Hume's explanation of the idea of necessary connection treats it as a product of causal inference. Necessary connection is what distinguishes causal from non-causal sequences of events. One event is inferred from another on the basis of the presumption of a necessary connection between them. To ignore the obvious relations of these arguments to each other and to the general drift of the discussion in Part III is already to risk the 'displacement' of Hume's arguments into other less-friendly contexts(8).

These initial points aside, there are no convincing *prima facie* reasons for taking Hume's intentions in Part III to be radically sceptical ones. Hume makes inductive inferences both during and after the argument in which he is usually thought to have denied all warrant to them. He offers eight rules which state the conditions under which ascriptions of probability are warranted. He makes explicit the intended contrast between 'philosophical' and 'unphilosophical' probability. The *Treatise* is itself styled '*An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of reasoning into Moral Subjects*'(T.xi). It would be odd indeed if Hume was to deny warrant to the sort of reasoning which he is intent on introducing to moral subjects and which he proceeds to make use of throughout the *Treatise*. If we add to this the conspicuous absence of the sort of confession of sceptical hopelessness which afflicts Hume in all the darker moments of his philosophy, we can easily see the weight of the burden of proof which lies with the defender of the standard sceptical view.

The crucial section of Part III in which Hume presents his 'sceptical attack on induction' in fact contains not a single direct reference to scepticism of any sort(T.88-91). The highly sceptical thesis that inductive argument is unjustified or epistemically worthless is never presented. We have to wait until Part IV for Hume's extended treatment of scepticism and sceptical subjects. A number of recent commentators have taken the view that Hume is not a sceptic about induction at all but has, instead, only a limited, and rather less ambitious, objective in mind for his famous discussion(9). This nonsceptical view has some plausibility. It rests, it seems to me, in all of its various forms, on a textually-supported distinction between deductive or *a priori* 'reason' and 'reason' in a broader sense, inclusive of probable reasoning or causal inference. In the pages dealing with induction, Hume is held to have restricted the use of reason to a *priori* or demonstrative reasoning(10). The idea is that while Hume does not think that inductive reasoning can provide the sort of certainty or necessity characteristic of demonstrative reasoning, he leaves the question of the broader reasonableness of induction more or less untouched. I argue for the rejection of this view. I also argue that Hume is in no way committed to the radically sceptical thesis that inductive arguments are epistemically worthless. On this view, Hume is guilty of gratuitously adopting an unargued-for assumption concerning the conditions under which inductive arguments could be warranted. He is meant to have argued for the worthlessness of inductive argument on the basis of the presumption that only deductively valid arguments are good or justified. I think it is clear that Hume did not do this. The conclusion of Hume's argument concerning induction can be read as answering a straightforward question as to what 'determines' to make inductive inferences without committing him to a position on the question of its justification. It is still open to Hume to argue for the justification of induction and this, I find, is precisely what he does.

## 2.1 The Argument Concerning Induction

The main topic of Part III of the first book of the *Treatise* concerns the nature of our reasonings concerning matters of fact. Hume begins Part III by distinguishing our 'knowledge' of those relations 'such as depend entirely on the ideas' from our merely 'probable' reasonings concerning relations 'such as may be chang'd without any change in the ideas'(T.69). Hume is prepared, even at this early stage of his discussion, to sort knowledge and probability into separate epistemological categories. The first sort of relations, that is, the relations of resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity, fall under the province of intuition, or, in the case of quantitative relations, demonstration, and are the only 'objects of knowledge and certainty'(T.70). The demonstrative sciences of algebra and arithmetic are the only ones in which we can 'carry on a chain of reasoning to any degree of intricacy, and yet preserve a perfect exactness and certainty'(T.71). Our judgments concerning matters of fact involve the tracing of the relations of identity, contiguity in time and place, and cause and effect(T.73), relations which do not depend entirely upon 'the ideas', and which yield conclusions which are merely probable and do not amount to knowledge. Hume

makes clear that of these three relations, the only one 'that can be trac'd beyond our senses' to inform us of absent or unobserved 'existences and objects' is causation(T.74). He tells us in the *Enquiry* that all transitions from observed to unobserved matters of fact are 'reasonings' which are 'founded' on the relation of cause and effect(E.26). The majority of our factual beliefs are of this sort. Hume announces that his broad purpose in the corresponding passages of the *Enquiry* is 'to enquire what is the nature of that evidence which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory'(E.26). This, I think, is also Hume's main concern in Part III of Book One of the *Treatise*. Hume's investigation of causal reasoning and his argument concerning induction emerge within the context of his concern with the nature of probable reasoning. The treatment of the *Enquiry* finds the question to arise very naturally from the distinction Hume first makes between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact'(E.25-6). In the *Treatise*, Hume comes to the question in a rather more roundabout manner. Having dispatched the question of knowledge in the opening section, Hume devotes the remaining sections to a consideration of probability and probable reasoning.

Hume later explains that he is using 'probability' in an unusually broad sense in order to include all nondemonstrative arguments in his treatment. These include not only those arguments from causes and effects which are still 'attended with uncertainty'(T.124), but those that amount to 'proofs'. Probability turns out to be inclusive of all our reasonings concerning matters of fact. The general contrast Hume draws is between causal inference and demonstration or deductive reasoning. Hume is concerned with the character of all nondemonstrative inferences. Judgments of this sort, while on occasions enjoying a status approaching or equal to certainty, nevertheless do not produce knowledge. This is the province of the demonstrative sciences. Hume describes 'knowledge' as '*that evidence, which arises from the comparison of ideas*'(T.124). Only intuition or demonstrative reason produces knowledge. Reason in this sense is construed as 'a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect'(T.180). The scope of demonstrative reason is very limited. It is concerned only with the discernment, by intuition or demonstration, of connections between ideas. It is in deference to the contrast with reasoning of this sort that Hume is obliged to comprehend all our arguments from causes and effects under the same general heading of 'probability'(11). To 'mark the several degrees of evidence' which attend judgments of this sort Hume distinguishes probability from 'proof'(T.124). When he writes of probability in its narrowest sense he has in mind judgments the evidence for which is still attended by uncertainty. Hume treats of this sort of probability in Sections XI and XII of Part III. In its broadest sense, 'probability' also includes judgments of probability which are 'entirely free from doubt and uncertainty' and should be regarded as proofs. It is with cases such as these that Hume is most concerned. Causal inferences based on a constant conjunction of events and a present impression of one of those events are attended by the greatest degree of certainty. Inferences of this sort produce the strongest kind of causal belief. The communication of force and vivacity by the causal

association of present impression and associate-idea ensures that the liveliness of the idea-belief increases and diminishes according to the strength of the evidence. In judgments of probability in the narrower sense some of that communicated vivacity is lost through what Hume calls 'contrary experiments'(T.135). These effects produce only an 'imperfect belief': a belief whose vivacity is somewhere intermediate between that of 'perfect' beliefs and pure conjectures. Hume appreciates that many of our causal beliefs are like this. When he uses reason in its broadest sense he intends it to include both demonstrative arguments and proofs and probabilities. Animals can, in this sense, be said to reason from present impressions and to found their 'judgment' on past instances(T.178). Reasoning, in this sense, comprehends any sort of inference or customary transition from one belief to another(12). Causation turns out to be the only relation upon which we reason which does not depend solely on the ideas.

Cause and effect is the relation upon which we reason in all our judgments concerning unobserved events and 'existences'. Nondemonstrative inference is always based on this relation. When both objects are present to the senses 'along with the relation we call this perception rather than reasoning'(T.73). Only causation can take the mind beyond what is immediately present to the senses to 'discover the real existence or the relations of objects'(T.73). In Section II of Part III, Hume announces his intention to consider the source of the idea of causation. It is, Hume says, 'impossible to reason justly, without understanding perfectly the idea concerning which we reason'(T.74). To understand the idea in question we must 'see from what origin it is derived', and this, for Hume, means the examination of the impressions from which the idea arises. He makes clear in Section II that more than temporal priority and spatio-temporal contiguity is involved in recognising these relations(13). There is 'a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mention'd'(T.77). We do not always regard two objects related by contiguity and priority as cause and effect. Hume recognises the problem of distinguishing accidental from non-accidental regularities. An important part of Hume's discussion of induction concerns the recognition of non-accidental sequences. There must be some other feature essential to the causal relation in virtue of which we distinguish causal from non-causal sequences of events(14). Yet when Hume comes to discover the nature of this necessary connection by an examination of the 'known qualities' of objects, he finds no relations but those of contiguity and succession(T.77). Not finding the idea of necessary connection 'in the objects', we are compelled to 'beat about all the neighbouring fields, without any certain view or design', in the hope that an examination of 'some other' questions 'will perhaps afford a hint, that may serve to clear up the present difficulty.'(T.78).

It is the causal relation which Hume wants to 'explain fully' before passing from 'the subject of the understanding' onto other subjects(T.74). To 'reason justly' we must understand the idea concerning which we reason. Hume's natural move is to look for the origin of our idea of the relation among his original impressions. He begins with a single case of the relation but is

immediately faced with a difficulty: he can find impressions accounting for only two of the three features he thinks essential to the relation. Hume begins, in his roundabout way, to 'beat about' in the adjoining fields in the hope of supplying the deficit in his explanation. It soon becomes clear that Hume's main interest in the idea of necessary connection lies in the basis and warrant it might be thought to supply to inferences from cause to effect and from effect to cause. It is within the context of his examination of the operation of the human mind Hume terms 'causal inference' that the argument concerning induction arises. But Hume comes to the question indirectly. He first sets out to consider two neighbouring questions of some significance: 'For what reason we pronounce it *necessary*, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, shou'd also have a cause?' and 'Why we conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects; and what is the nature of that inference we draw from the one to the other, and of the *belief* we repose in it?'(T.78). These questions are, in one way or another, pursued by Hume throughout the next fourteen sections of the *Treatise*. They mark an important shift in emphasis away from the search for an original impression of necessary connection in experience and towards an examination of the nature of the inferences we make from cause and effect and, crucially, of what determines us to make them. This is the beginning of the remarkable and important account of causal inference in which Hume attempts to show how the idea of necessity arises from the inferences we make rather than the other way around. This is a crucial change of tack on Hume's part. It marks his abandonment of the search for any necessity in the objects which could provide a basis for the justification of inference from perceived to unperceived. Hume rejects it along with the possibility of grounding *a priori* inferences about unobserved matters of fact in relations between ideas. Our experience gives us no basis for this sort of inference. Causes do not imply their effects. There is no object, Hume remarks later in Part III, 'which implies the existence of any other if we consider these objects in themselves, and never look beyond the ideas we form of them. Such an inference wou'd amount to knowledge, and wou'd imply the absolute contradiction and impossibility of conceiving any thing different'(T.86-7). Because all distinct ideas are separable 'there can be no impossibility of that kind'. We will revisit this argument of Hume's shortly. Suffice to say, for the moment, that it is with these sorts of issues, and with this sort of general strategy, in mind that Hume turns to the first of his two questions.

In Section III Hume argues that we can never demonstrate the necessity of a cause without 'shewing at the same time the impossibility there is, that any thing can ever begin to exist without some productive principle'. This latter proposition, he says, is 'utterly incapable of a demonstrative proof'(T.79). Since all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and the ideas of cause and effect are 'evidently distinct', the separation 'of the idea of a cause from that of a beginning of existence, is plainly possible for the imagination(T.79-80). The possibility cannot be refuted 'by any reasoning from mere ideas'(T.80). It cannot therefore be demonstrated that it is 'absolutely' impossible for something to begin to exist without a cause.

Hume's important general conclusion is that it is not 'from knowledge or any scientific reasoning' that 'we derive the opinion of the necessity of a cause'(T.82). When Hume talks of 'scientific reasoning' he has in mind demonstration which, together with intuition, provides 'the foundation of science'(T.73). The opinion can arise only from 'observation and experience'. Questions could certainly be raised about the adequacy of Hume's rather perfunctory treatment of this argument(15). But Hume is more concerned to underline the latest shift in emphasis which he now feels he is entitled to make. We must therefore ask *'how experience gives rise to such a principle?'* or, since, Hume tells us, the same answer will serve in both cases, *'Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?'*

Hume's aim in Section III seems to have been the apparently modest one of discrediting one possible answer to the question of what determines us to believe that every event must have a cause. When he comes to offer his own positive answer to the question he makes it abundantly clear where his real interests lie and what his agenda will be for much of the remainder of Part III. Hume is less concerned with the question of how experience gives rise to the opinion of the necessity of causes, than with the pressing problem of why we conclude that a particular cause must *necessarily* have a particular effect. He does not attempt a direct answer to the question of how experience produces the belief in the causal maxim. It is the inference from cause to effect and the nature of its evidence that interests him. The explanation Hume offers of our beliefs about particular causes and effects can, in turn, be pressed in reply to the first question. Once we understand how it is experience gives rise to the conviction that one event *must* produce another, we will also have understood how experience can produce our belief in the necessity of causes. Hume anticipates at least one important part of the treatment of inductive argument he presents in Section VI(16). Our belief in the necessity of causes is derived not from deductive reasoning, from either intuition or demonstration, but must instead 'arise from observation and experience'(T.82). The first stage of Hume's strategy is the same: he offers a negative argument designed to discredit one possible answer to the question he is asking. In both cases it is to reason in its narrowest sense that Hume looks for an alternative to his own view, and in both cases reason is found wanting. By the time he turns from Section III to Section IV of Part III, Hume has already, in Fogelin's words, 'abandoned the idea of grounding our causal inference in the idea of a necessary connection' in favour of 'giving an account of our idea of necessary connection through the use of transparently causal notions'(17).

Hume begins Section IV of Book One, Part III of the *Treatise* by reminding us that although the mind 'in its reasonings from causes or effects carries its view beyond those objects, which it sees or remembers, it must never lose sight of them entirely, nor reason merely upon its own ideas, without some mixture of impressions, or at least of ideas of the memory, which are equivalent to impressions.'(T.82) Hume has already announced his intention of giving a full

explanation of the one relation which takes us beyond our senses(T.74). One part of this explanation consists in accounting for those features of our experience which give rise to causal inference. Hume's attempt to discover 'some relation among objects'(T.75) from which the idea of necessity could be derived has foundered prematurely and Hume will put aside the problem of accounting for our idea of necessary connection until Section XIV. Necessity was given special attention because it was thought to provide a possible basis, a 'just foundation'(T.90), for inferences from cause to effect and from effect to cause. But the question of the derivation of the idea of causation is only one part of the 'full explanation' of the causal relation Hume presents in Part III. Hume appreciates that an explanation like the one he is giving must also account for how, and upon what basis, the causal relation takes us beyond the impressions of the senses(18). Hume now turns to the important task of explaining how, by what, and under what conditions, the mind is 'determined' to pass from the idea or impression of one object to 'the idea or belief of another'(T.92).

Hume's purpose in Section IV is to sort out the component parts of our reasonings concerning cause and effect. He turns first to the conditions under which we make such inferences. Inferences from causes to effects involve both an idea which is not present as an impression and an 'immediate perception of our memory or senses' from which vivacity is communicated to the inferred belief. All our 'reasonings' concerning matters of fact involve a sort of inference to the unobserved. When both objects are present to the senses together with the relation, the operation of mind which relates them is more properly called 'perception' rather than reasoning(T.73). Causal inference is to be thought of as a species of the association of ideas and impressions. Vivacity is transferred from present impression to associate-idea in a degree sufficient to make that idea a belief. Beliefs resulting from causal inference enjoy both a greater probability and a greater degree of vivacity than purely conjectural or 'hypothetical' reasoning about causes. Any 'chain of argument or connexion of causes and effects' must first be founded either on the authority of the memory or senses or upon the testimony or impressions of others, themselves 'founded on those characters or letters, which are seen or remember'd'(T.83). Without this foundation there would be 'no belief nor evidence'. All the inferences in which Hume is interested start with an impression or idea of memory, which is 'equivalent to impressions', and proceed to a belief or enlivened idea of something not present to the senses or memory. Inferences based on the relation of cause and effect are described by Hume variously as 'probable' or 'moral' reasonings, or as 'reasonings concerning matters of fact'. Some caution is required in construing these sorts of arguments as narrowly inductive. Hume does not construe inductive arguments primarily as inferences from particular cases to general or universal conclusions. His concern, particularly in the *Treatise*, is with predictive-inductive inferences, which is to say, in other words, with inferences from particular cases to singular conclusions, for example, from 'All past instances of As have been Bs' to 'This A is a B'(19). He takes this as his paradigm case for all inferences of this sort. On the few occasions when Hume uses the term 'induction', he uses it not in the modern sense but in the broadest

sense to include any sort of inference or nondemonstrative argument to a factual conclusion. As his various examples suggest, when he speaks of causal inference he usually has in mind inferences to singular conclusions. In the interests of brevity, as well as of consistency, I will follow the convention of using the terms 'induction' and 'inductive' as general terms inclusive both of this sort of inference and inference from particular cases to general conclusions. Hume's chief concern in Section VI is with predictive-inductive inferences or inferences to singular conclusions but it is obvious that he intended the conclusions he drew about inferences of this sort to be drawn also for inferences to general or universal conclusions.

Hume is interested in the foundation of the transition the mind makes from observed to unobserved matters of fact(20). In Section V he considers what he calls 'the first act of the judgment' which, he thinks, provides the basis for causal reasoning(T.86). All our arguments concerning causes and effects consist not only in a present impression of the senses or memory but in 'an idea of that existence, which produces the object of the impression, or is produc'd by it.'(T.84) There are then three things that want explaining: the original impression; the transition to the idea of connected cause or effect; and the nature and qualities of that idea. He turns first to the original impression and to the nature of the assent upon which inductive arguments are founded. The belief or assent which, Hume says, always attends the memory and senses 'is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; and this alone distinguishes them from the imagination'(T.86). Hume is preparing the ground for the account of causal inferences in terms of custom and transferred vivacity that follows. This vivacity or 'force and liveliness' of our 'original' perceptions constitutes the first act of judgment and 'lays the foundation of that reasoning, which we build upon it, when we trace the relation of cause and effect'(T.86). It is the vivacity of the perceptions presented by the faculties of memory and sense which gives them their role in the production of belief. Belief 'or assent', in this case, is nothing but 'the vivacity of those perceptions they present'. Vivacity is transmitted from the original impression to the idea or belief which is the conclusion of a causal inference. Hume also highlights another factor in increasing the vivacity of perceptions and, so, of inducing belief. An idea of the imagination may acquire, by repetition alone, 'such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory' and have 'the same influence on the mind as nature, and infixing the idea with equal force and vigour'(T.86). The frequent repetition of lies can lead the liar 'to come at last to believe and remember them, as realities'(T.86).

The stage is now set for Hume to turn from the first component of his explanation to the all-important question of the nature of the transition the mind makes from original impression or idea to the idea of a connected cause or effect. This is the topic of the famous Section VI '*Of the inference from the impression to the idea*'(T.86). Nothing testifies more to the importance of this section to Hume's account than the care with which he has prepared the ground for it. The conclusion of Section V was that it was the force and liveliness of the original perception which accounted for its role in belief and as the 'foundation' of all our reasoning from cause

and effect. This is an important conclusion within Hume's causal story and within his theory of belief. He next asks what it is that causes the transition of the mind from the impression to the idea of its connected cause or effect. He writes later in Part III that his intention has been to explain those arguments 'which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty'(T.124). The question arises very naturally within the sort of account Hume has been giving. His first move is to deny that we make the inference on the basis of an inspection of the original perception or object alone. This would mean that we had derived the inference 'merely from a survey of these particular objects, and from such a penetration into their essences as may discover the dependency of the one upon the other'(T.86). Hume argues against the possibility of such a demonstration in much the same way as he did in arguing against the demonstrative certainty of the opinion that every event must have a cause. Hume's argumentative strategy is the same. An apprehension of this sort would imply the impossibility 'of conceiving any thing different'(T.87). However, as all distinct ideas are clearly separable, 'tis evident there can be no impossibility of that kind.' It is perfectly possible for us to conceive of an event having some cause or effect other than the one it has. When we pass from a present impression to the idea of any object, 'we might possibly have separated the idea from the impression, and have substituted any other idea in its room.'(T.87) Hume's point is not merely that one is conceivable without the other, but that nothing in the one implies or gives us grounds to believe in the existence of the other if we consider 'the objects in themselves'(21). The point is made clearer in the *Abstract*, where Hume writes that it 'is not anything that reason sees in the cause, which makes us *infer* the effect'. Such an inference would amount to a demonstration, but, since the mind 'can always *conceive* any effect to follow from any cause', it is easily seen that no such demonstration is possible(T.650). Hume appears to have thought that the apprehension of a causal connection between events would put one in a position to make *a priori* certain claims about the way in which those events will turn out in the future(22). But, since all distinct ideas are in principle separable, there can be no apprehension with implications of this kind. It follows from the success of Hume's previous argument that it is not possible to deduce from the survey of one object or event the existence of another or to discover, *a priori*, any 'natural' connection between a cause and its effect. Once again the crucial move comes next. It can only be 'by EXPERIENCE' that 'we can infer the existence of one object from that of another'(T.87). The conclusion of this part of Hume's story is that all probable arguments must be founded on experience.

If we are not determined by deductive or demonstrative reason in the inference then we can only have been determined by experience. This was the moral swiftly drawn by Hume in Section III where it was experience that was found to determine our belief in the necessity of causes. It is only on the basis of experience that we can infer the existence of an object from that of another. When it comes to accounting for the nature of that experience Hume already has the resources to hand. The power of habit and repetition in augmenting the vivacity of our

perceptions was remarked in Section V. Hume returns to the point now. We remember that we have had frequent experience of the existence of one sort of object and that that experience has always been attended by that of another class of object the members of which have always 'existed in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them'(T.87). When we remember the 'species of object we call *flame*' we naturally call to mind the 'species of sensation we call *heat*' which has always attended the first object: 'Without any further ceremony, we call the one *cause* and the other *effect*, and infer the existence of the one from that of the other.'(T.87) We can now add to the relations of contiguity and succession discovered between cause and effect in Section II a third: 'This relation is their **CONSTANT CONJUNCTION**. Contiguity and succession are not sufficient to make us pronounce any two objects to be cause and effect, unless we perceive, that these two relations are preserv'd in several instances.'(T.87) Hume presents the claim that we make causal inferences under these circumstances as a straightforward generalisation about human experience. He has now discovered, from 'several instances' of cause and effect, what he had failed to discern in his examination of the single case: the source and nature of that necessity 'which makes so essential a part' of our idea of the causal relation. Hume is confident that this new relation will enable us to see how the idea of necessary connection is generated. We may now, he says, 'see the advantage of quitting the direct survey of this relation' since there are hopes that 'by this means we may at last arrive at our propos'd end'(T.87).

Hume is, nevertheless, quick to temper his optimism with due caution. The 'new-discover'd' relation of constant conjunction seems, he says, 'to advance us but very little in our way'. It seems evident 'at least at first sight' that the 'mere repetition' of instances can 'only multiply, but not enlarge the objects of our mind' and so can never produce 'any new original idea, such as that of a necessary connexion'(T.88). Hume reminds us of the search for the idea of necessary connection which he began in Section II. He thinks that he now has the resources with which to show how our idea of necessity is generated. The earlier change of tack away from the search for an impression of necessary connection in the objects is to be fully vindicated. The problem Hume has lies in showing how 'mere' repetition can produce in us an idea of anything other than repetition. He nevertheless retains a hope that the explanation to follow might show how the idea of necessary connection is generated and that the experience of constant conjunction will somehow play a part. Hume puts aside his worries about necessity almost immediately, suggesting, with rather more guile than uncertainty, that it might 'appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion'(T.88). He immediately turns back to the question which he has been promising to answer since Section IV: of 'the nature of that inference, and of the transition from the impression to the idea'(T.88). Hume is mostly interested in the mechanism by which causal inferences occur in the circumstances he has described. The question of the origin of the idea of necessary connection is at once set aside in favour of the question of what it is that determines us to make causal inferences.

Hume has already established to his satisfaction that the transition is founded on experience and, in particular, on the remembrance of constant conjunction. His next question is: 'Whether experience produces the idea by means of the understanding or by the imagination; whether we are determin'd by reason to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perceptions'(T.88-89). The idea in this case is not, of course, the idea of necessary connection, but the lively idea or belief which is the outcome of a causal inference. When Hume contrasts the imagination with reason or the understanding, he usually has in mind all the operations of the imagination, excluding argumentation and the forming and judging of inferences. Reason and the imagination are considered as the two possible determinants of causal inference. Hume has already shown how strictly limited the mind is in the different sorts of ways in which it can form new ideas. For reasons to which I have already adverted, I will leave aside for the moment the question of which of the two senses of 'reason' Hume is employing here in favour of a statement of Hume's argument.

If reason determined us, Hume says, it would proceed upon the principle *'that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same'*(T.89). The determination of inductive inference by reason requires that the proposition be founded on argument and this argument must, according to Hume, be of one of two sorts - it must be derived either from knowledge or from probability. It is easily seen that there can be no demonstrative or knowledge-yielding arguments to prove the principle of the uniformity of nature since we can 'at least conceive a change in the course of nature; which sufficiently proves, that such a change is not absolutely impossible. To form a clear idea of any thing is an undeniable argument for its possibility, and is alone a refutation of any pretended demonstration against it'(T.89). Hume refers us to the argument he has already made use of to show that 'all reasonings concerning cause and effect, are founded on experience'(T.650). He next looks to probable argument as a source of the principle. Probability 'as it discovers not the relations of ideas, consider'd as such, but only those of objects, must in some respects be founded on the impressions of our memory and senses, and in some respects on our ideas.'(T.89) The 'connexion' or relation of cause and effect is the only one on which we can form a just inference from one object to another and, so, is the only one which can take us beyond the 'immediate' impressions of the senses and memory(T.89). Our idea of cause and effect can be derived only from experience 'which informs us, that such particular objects, in all past instances, have been constantly conjoin'd with each other'(T.90). As soon as one object is supposed present in its impression, we 'presume on the existence of one similar to its usual attendant'(T.90). Probability is, therefore, 'founded on the presumption of a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those, of which we have had none; and therefore 'tis impossible the presumption can arise from probability.'(T.90)

All probability is founded on the presumption or supposition that 'the future will be conformable to the past'(E.35). Hume immediately draws the moral that 'the same principle cannot be both the cause and effect of another', or, in other words, that a principle cannot be established on the basis of an argument whose acceptability depends upon its presumption(T.90). The uniformity principle(23) cannot, therefore, arise from probability. Should we attempt to evade Hume's conclusion by suggesting that after the experience of constant conjunction we have found an object to be endowed with a 'power of production' which necessarily implies its effect, and which provides a 'just foundation' for causal inference, the question still arises of why, on the basis of our experience of past regularities, we form any conclusion beyond them(T.90-1). Not only does 'reason' fail us 'in the discovery of the ultimate connexion of causes and effects, but even after experience has inform'd us of their constant conjunction, 'tis impossible for us to satisfy ourselves by our reason, why we shou'd extend that experience beyond those particular instances, which have fallen under our observation. We suppose, but are never able to prove, that there must be a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those which lie beyond the reach of our discovery.'(T.91-2) Any attempt at the 'proof' of this last supposition by probable arguments, Hume writes in the *Enquiry*, 'must be evidently going in a circle, and taking that for granted, which is the very point in question'(E.35-6). Since reason cannot show us 'the connexion of one object with another', even after the observation of a constant conjunction in all past instances, Hume turns to the other source of ideas and belief he recognises: the imagination. When the mind 'passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination.'(T.92) The inference depends solely on the relations of association which cause the mind to pass 'from one object to another, even tho' there be no reason to determine us in that transition'(T.92).

Hume presents versions of this argument in the *Abstract* and in Section IV of the *Enquiry*. The fuller and, in many ways, clearer, version of the *Enquiry*, nevertheless preserves much the same structure and draws much the same conclusion. A good deal, however, is left out, and it is only in the *Treatise* that Hume presents the argument within the context of his complex account of the causal relation. Commentators need to be alive to the dangers of transplanting the argument of the *Treatise* into the context of the *Enquiry*. I have tried to show how much of our understanding of the argument depends upon an appreciation of the nourishment and support it receives from other parts of Hume's extended treatment of probability and probable reasoning. Hume rightly thought his argument concerning induction among the outstanding achievements of his philosophy. It has proved to be of enduring philosophical interest. Nevertheless, beyond the acknowledgment of its importance(24), there is surprisingly little agreement as to how it is to be understood. I have already adverted to a number of the interpretive positions entertained by commentators. In the next few sections I proceed to a

critical examination of several of the most important and influential readings. I want, first of all, to consider what I have characterised as the standard or Humean view.

On the standard view, Hume's argument presents a radically sceptical thesis about induction. Hume is supposed to have argued for the unwarrantedness or epistemic worthlessness of inductive argument. In doing so, we are informed, he became the first philosopher to pose the problem of the justifiability of inductive inference. Beliefs arrived at by means of inductive arguments are unreasonable or rationally unjustified. Stroud appears to defend one version of this view. He describes Hume's rejection of reason or the understanding as the source of causal inference as 'his most famous sceptical result'. Hume is said to have condemned as 'unjustifiable a whole mode of inference or pattern of reasoning'(25). I have already argued that there are good *prima facie* reasons for questioning this view(26). Before amplifying these arguments, I want to consider a highly influential, and, some have thought, quite decisive, argument for the Humean view of Hume's argument concerning induction. D.C. Stove's argument is typical in a number of respects of the sceptical sort of reading(27). He accuses Hume of gratuitously adopting premises from which he derives a wholly unwarranted conclusion about the reasonableness of most of our beliefs about matters of fact. Roughly speaking, Stove takes Hume's view of induction to be that the premises of an inductive argument never increase the probability of its conclusion being true. While the case Stove presents is far from exceptional, having a number of important precedents, the rigour with which he prosecutes it is, and so, in the interests of even-handedness, it is to Stove that we ought first to turn.

Stove interprets Hume as arguing for the conclusion that all inductive arguments are unreasonable on the basis of a tacit premise stating that only deductively valid arguments make their conclusions more probable. Hume's 'inductive scepticism' reduces to the former claim, considered by Stove to be a judgment of the 'irrelevance' of premises concerning observed objects to the probability of conclusions concerning unobserved objects(28). Stove's argument is complex and detailed, but its main elements can be neatly summarised. His treatment focuses on the nature of the presumption or presupposition upon which, Hume says, all probability is founded. Sometimes, Stove says, 'when we say of an argument from  $p$  to  $q$ , that it presupposes  $r$ , our meaning is as follows: that, as it stands, the argument from  $p$  to  $q$  is not valid, and that, in order to turn it into a valid argument, it would be necessary to add to its premisses the proposition  $r$ .' This is the sense in which Stove believes 'presuppose' occurs at the point in Hume's argument when he suggests that all probable arguments presuppose, or are 'founded on the supposition', that unobserved instances resemble observed ones. Stove's suggestion is that the uniformity principle is presupposed in the sense that it is what is necessary to make an inference deductively valid. Stove asks us to consider a 'predictive-inductive inference', typical of the sort Hume is interested in, from 'This is a flame, and all of the many flames observed in the past have been hot' to 'This is hot'(29). The argument, Stove

writes 'is invalid as it stands. Nor could it be turned into a valid argument without the addition of some further premiss which will have the effect of saying that (at least in respect of heat) flames yet unobserved resemble observed flames.' The addition of the uniformity principle is needed if this argument is to be 'turned into a valid one'(30). What Hume wants to show, according to Stove, is that the premises of inductive arguments do not make their conclusions more probable. But all he has shown, at least on the basis of those premises which he makes explicit, is that inductive arguments never produce conclusions which are deductively valid: what Stove calls 'inductive fallibilism'. Hume draws his unwarranted sceptical conclusion on the basis of a suppressed premise that only deductively valid arguments lend support to their conclusions. All we need do to avoid being committed to inductive skepticism is to suppose that there are inductive arguments which are merely probable.

When Hume tells us that all probable arguments 'proceed upon' the presumption of a resemblance between those objects of which we have had experience and those of which we have not, what he means to say, according to Stove, is that inductive arguments are invalid as they stand, 'and it would be necessary, in order to turn them into valid arguments, to add to their premisses the Resemblance Thesis'(31). Hume is a 'deductivist' in as much as he tacitly assumes the thesis that only deductively valid arguments are reasonable. Stove looks to what is, I think, the critical section of Hume's argument. Hume argues that if reason determined us to make the transition in question it would proceed upon the principle or supposition that nature is uniform(T.89). Stove's idea is that Hume thinks of the uniformity principle as a 'middle term' without which the inference would be deductively invalid and, so, on the basis of the tacit premise, unwarranted(32). Hume infers inductive scepticism from inductive fallibilism on the basis of his tacitly assuming the 'thesis of deductivism'. Hume's inductive scepticism, the thesis that inductive arguments are all unreasonable or rationally unjustified, follows from this assumption and a second premise stating that inductive inferences are invalid. This last premise is what Hume is meant to have established in arguing that the uniformity principle can arise from neither probable nor demonstrative reasoning, as he puts it. No argument of any kind can establish that nature is uniform. Stove's conclusion is that Hume infers from his premises the highly sceptical thesis that no proposition about the observed is a reason to believe any contingent fact about the unobserved. Hume's procedure in moving from inductive fallibilism, the position which Stove in good faith takes Hume to have established, to inductive scepticism, depends entirely upon his tacit commitment to the thesis that the only good argument is a good (or valid) deductive one.

Stove's interpretation has been influential. There are, nevertheless, good textual grounds for resisting his conclusion, a number of them, I think, quite decisive. Stove goes on to argue that Hume's crucial deductivist premise is false, and that his conclusion is, therefore, unwarranted. I do not take issue with this argument of Stove's. I am more interested in the allegation that Hume is committed to deductivism and, on those grounds, to the highly sceptical conclusion

he is meant to have drawn on its basis. I will turn shortly to the allegation that Hume held a thesis like the one Stove identifies as 'inductive scepticism'. If it can be shown that Hume did not hold the critical premise then Stove's case will have been effectively shortcircuited. What is the textual and historical evidence for thinking that Hume was committed to deductivism? Stove rests his claim very largely on the sense he thinks is to be assigned to 'presuppose' in his 'translation' of the crucial passages of Section VI(T.89-90). It may seem too obvious a point to require much argument. It certainly has seemed obvious that all inferences of this sort are invalid as they stand and that something like the uniformity principle would be what was needed to make them valid. A number of recent critics, Stroud and Peter Millican among them, have argued that Stove, Mackie and others, have taken too restrictive a view of the senses in which the uniformity principle could be 'presupposed' in argument(33). Stove's view is that when Hume states that probable arguments presuppose or 'proceed upon'(T.89) the supposition of the uniformity principle he must mean that the addition of the premise is what is required to make an invalid argument deductively valid. Stove is on fairly solid ground when it comes to recasting the principle as a 'medium' or 'middle term' in an inference. In the *Enquiry*, Hume writes that there is required 'a medium, which may enable the mind to draw such an inference, if indeed it be drawn by reasoning and argument'(E.34). Where Stove goes wrong, according to Millican, is in supposing that in talking about 'a medium' Hume must have in mind the middle term of an 'exclusively deductive' form of inference. There are good reasons for thinking Hume would have blanched at such a view. Hume acknowledges Locke as the source of the distinction between knowledge and probability he draws in the *Treatise* and reiterates in the *Enquiry*(E.56). What we find in Locke is not only a toleration of 'mediums' or 'middle terms' in probable reasoning, but an explicit statement of their role. Probability, according to Locke, 'is nothing but the appearance of such an Agreement, or Disagreement, by the intervention of Proofs, whose connexion is not constant or immutable, or at least is not perceived to be so, but is, or appears for the most part to be so, and is enough to induce the Mind to judge the proposition to be true, or false, rather than the contrary.'(34) Probability differs from knowledge not in terms of the 'intervention', or not, of 'proofs', but in terms of the nature and strength of the connexion between the proofs(35). A demonstration shows the agreement or disagreement of ideas by the intervention of proofs which have 'a constant, immutable, and visible connexion with one another'(36). Proofs are merely those 'intervening Ideas, which serve to shew the Agreement of any two others'(37). Locke also writes of these proofs as 'mediums', observing that in demonstration there must be a remembrance of 'the Intuition of the Agreement of the *Medium*, or intermediate *Idea*, with that we compared it with before'(38). In the following section, he writes that there are other ideas 'whose Agreement, or Disagreement, can no otherwise be judged of, but by the intervention of others, which have not a certain Agreement with the Extremes, but a usual or likely one: And in these it is, that the judgment is properly exercised, which is the acquiescing of the Mind, that any *Ideas* do agree, by comparing them with such probable *Mediums*.'(39) Locke goes on, in terms revisited by Hume in Section XI of Part III, to distinguish this sort of probability which, he says, 'Assent as

necessarily follows' as 'Knowledge does Demonstration'. Far from taking mediums or middle terms to be restricted to use in demonstrative arguments, Locke makes explicit the role he takes them to play in probable argument. Hume's preference for the 'logic' of Locke, taken with his endorsement of the distinction Locke draws between probability and knowledge, must give us some textual and historical grounds for resisting Stove's view(40). But it is not decisive. Millican has shown only that Stove's assumption that Hume must have thought of mediums or intermediate ideas as middle terms, whose connections with premise and conclusion are deductively certain, is 'historically unwarranted'. If we are to show decisively that the crucial deductivist premise is one that Hume did not and could not have held we must look in more detail at the text.

A second textual objection to Stove concerns his charge that Hume recognised only one form of inference. Hume is supposed to have held that only deductively valid arguments lend support to their conclusions. There are no arguments which make their conclusions merely more probable. According to Stove, then, there is, for Hume, only one kind of inference: inferences which necessitate the truth of their conclusions, given the truth of their premises, which are, in other words, deductively valid. The supposition that there are probable arguments, and that among them are some inductive ones, is, Stove believes, all that is necessary to deflect Hume's sceptical attack on induction. Despite the confidence with which Stove presents his claim, he can point to very little direct textual support for the view that Hume recognised only demonstrative forms of inference(41). There is, however, a good deal of evidence for the view that Hume recognised both demonstrative and probable-inductive inferences. There is no doubt that Hume considered there to be more than one sort of argument. Stove could hardly deny that Hume identifies both probable and demonstrative forms of reasoning. His response is to suggest that Hume's concern in making the distinction is not with the 'degree of conclusiveness' of the arguments, but with 'the epistemological character of the premises'(42). The kind of interest which Hume displays in his explicit discussions of probability in Sections XI to XIII of Part III is dismissed by Stove as 'an empirical, psychological interest, rather than a logico-philosophical and evaluative one'(43). The distinction is 'a material and descriptive one' concerned with distinguishing those arguments the premises of which are necessarily true from those the premises of which are contingent. Hume's considered position remains, according to Stove, that there are no probable inductive arguments, or, in other words, no inductive arguments which lend something less than full support to their conclusions.

I think Stove's reading can be resisted on strong textual grounds. There is an obvious tension between Stove's position and the one Hume defends in Part III and elsewhere in the *Treatise*. Much of the evidence for holding that Hume distinguishes two sorts of inference seems, in the light of Stove's reading, equivocal. There, remains, nevertheless, evidence enough to show that Hume did not always talk of 'probability' and 'probable' argument in the sense suggested

by Stove. In the first place, Hume's later argument concerning '*scepticism with regard to reason*' appears to be based on the supposition that a set of premises can lend a conclusion a degree of support or probability varying between 0 and 1 (T.180-3). Hume shows how extended chains of reasoning produce less and less assurance in a conclusion in proportion to the number of successive 'new examinations' that attend it, until, at last, there remains 'nothing of the original probability' (T.182). Let us suppose that we have formed an original judgment to which we assign the probability 1 and that we have considered in that case the probability of error involved in our calculation, 'we are oblig'd by our reason to add a new doubt deriv'd from the possibility of error in the estimation of the truth and fidelity of our faculties' (T.182). But this new estimation is itself founded on probability and so weakens further the evidence, which is itself weakened by another doubt of the same kind, and so on *in infinitum*. No matter what the strength of our original conviction 'it must infallibly perish by passing thro' so many new examinations, of which each diminishes somewhat of the force and vigour' (T.182-3). A similar presupposition would seem to be made in Hume's discussion of 'probability' and 'probable argument' in Sections XI to XIII of the *Treatise* and in Section VI of the *Enquiry*. Stove dismisses the sections dealing with probability as 'an inessential part of Hume's philosophy of induction' (44). They nevertheless suggest quite strongly that Hume considered the premises of some arguments to lend a degree of support to their conclusions. The sections should be read as attempts to explain how probable arguments can supply differing degrees of warrant for their conclusions.

Stove may still argue that Hume's intention in these passages is psychological rather than evaluative. Fortunately, we can point to other passages which, to my mind, settle the matter. Hume writes that the 'wise man proportions his belief to the evidence' (E.110), where the evidence is still 'attended with uncertainty' and the resultant belief 'imperfect' (T.135). He 'weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability' (E.111). There can be little doubt that Hume intended to endorse the judgments of the 'wise man' (45). In Section XV of Part III Hume presents his list of 'rules by which to judge of causes and effects', with which we are to distinguish philosophical from unphilosophical probability. Hume makes it perfectly clear that arguments can lend different degrees of support to their conclusions. He is concerned with the causes of all our habits of inference, perfect and imperfect, and seeks to explain them on the basis of the same principles (T.124). It would require a significant distortion of the text to read Hume as being concerned merely with the psychological explanation of why philosophers judge of these arguments in the way they do.

A final passage from the *Treatise* should suffice to settle the question. Hume writes that while a demonstration is 'either irresistible, or has no manner of force', in probabilities 'difficulties can take place, and one argument counter-balance another, and diminish its authority' (T.31).

Hume is quite obviously making the point that, in contrast with demonstrative arguments, probable inferences can and do vary in force. Not all reasons for belief are deductively sufficient. There can remain little doubt that Stove is simply wrong to say that Hume identified the lack of full support for a conclusion with its epistemic worthlessness. Hume, at least, is in no doubt that probable arguments can vary in force and warrant according to the strength of their premises, and that, if we are wise, we will proportion our belief to the evidence they present.

The weight of textual evidence against Stove's position is considerable. This becomes clearer when we review the stages of the argument concerning induction as Hume summarises them in the *Abstract*. Hume first argues that it is not anything 'that reason sees in the cause, which makes us *infer* the effect', on the grounds that 'the mind can always *conceive* any effect to follow from any cause' and that 'whatever we *conceive* is possible'(T.650). Whenever a demonstration takes place, the contrary is impossible, and implies a contradiction, and so, Hume concludes, all our reasonings concerning causes and effects must be founded on experience. What is striking about this argument is the fact that Hume might easily have used it, at this early stage, to conclude, on the basis of the deductivist assumption, that all inductive arguments are unreasonable: the sceptical thesis Stove presents as the over-all conclusion of Hume's argument(46). It is perfectly conceivable, and, therefore, possible, for the conclusion of any inductive inference to be false, while its premises are true. Hume could easily, and straightforwardly, have concluded, on the basis of the conceivability of an inference from observed to unobserved having true premises but a false conclusion, that the inference is not one that reason, in the demonstrative sense, determines us to make. Wherever a demonstration takes place 'the contrary is impossible'(T.650). Hume, however, goes on to consider the potential sources of rational support for the supposition upon which, he says, all reasonings from experience are founded(T.651). Hume, of course, considers two possible sources of rational support for the principle that nature is uniform, including probable argument. This is, again, difficult to square with the allegation of deductivism. Hume's procedure would be odd in a philosopher committed to the view that the only good sort of argument is a deductively valid one. If Stove is right in attributing the deductivist thesis to Hume, he ought never even to have considered the possibility of there being a probable inductive support for the principle. Not only does Hume go on to restate the distinction between his two basic sorts of argument, but he is quite clearly prepared to countenance the possibility that the principle be supported by probable reasoning. Thus, Hume is able to conclude, as he does in the *Abstract*, that there can be no proofs 'by any *probable* arguments, that the future must be conformable to the past'(T.651).

So far, we have seen that Stove's position cannot be supported on either textual or historical-textual grounds. The interpretation cannot, however, be dismissed for these reasons alone. Stove's stronger claim is that Hume's argument only makes sense on the basis of his

subscribing to the thesis of deductivism. Stove's view is that when Hume states that probable arguments proceed upon the supposition that the course of nature continues uniformly he must mean that the addition of this principle is what is needed to turn a bad or invalid inference into a good or deductively valid one. The idea is, in Stove's own words, that the uniformity principle is what is necessary to 'turn it into a valid argument'(47). Once again, there are good grounds for resisting Stove's interpretive point. In the first place, it is obviously not the case that the uniformity principle is necessary to turn the invalid argument into a valid one. As Stroud points out, there are indefinitely many ways of adding premises to make 'a previously invalid argument deductively valid', of which the simplest would be to add the conclusion to the premises(48). Stroud's complaint is that, on this understanding of 'presuppose', Hume's requirement is a purely logical one which could be satisfied trivially without reference to the basis upon which one could know or have reason to believe the conclusion(49). It is not clear that Stroud is right to separate the question of logical validity from the 'epistemic' notion of certainty in this way(50). The conclusion of a deductively valid argument can be regarded as certain relative to the truth of its premises. Nevertheless, once we acknowledge Hume to be making what is at least in part, an epistemic, rather than a purely logical point, the question of which assumptions about inference are being made by Hume seems more open(51). Stove's view of the sense in which an inference can be founded on a 'supposition' can perhaps account for the epistemic character of Hume's concerns but it is still to be seen whether this is the best, or only, alternative. The baldness of Hume's claim that all reasonings from experience are based upon the supposition of uniformity has led many commentators to side with Stove. The statement of the principle in the *Treatise* is strong enough to give some support to the view that Hume is interested in what could turn a good inductive argument into a good deductive one. Hume writes that if reason determined us to make the inference, it would proceed upon the principle that instances of which we have had no experience *must* resemble those of which we have had experience(T.89). But, taken literally, such a principle would transform not only good inductive inferences into deductively valid ones, but bad inductive inferences too. This seems an implausible reading of the sort of presupposition Hume has in mind for probable argument. I have already shown that the textual and historical support for the deductivist view is slight. But this by itself, in the absence of any plausible, better-supported alternative, is not enough to wholly discredit Stove's account. Can we account for the epistemic character of the supposition without characterising its role in purely logical terms? Why, in other words, should Hume think that probable arguments presuppose the uniformity principle unless he is working within a deductivist understanding of inference? Fogelin is right to say that the text is somewhat underdetermined on this matter(52). Stroud, however, offers his own alternative interpretation which is worth our while considering, if only to show quite clearly the nature and extent of the options available to Hume.

Stroud begins by explaining Hume's sense of 'presuppose' as follows: 'To say that an inference is "founded" on a particular supposition is to say at least that no one will be justified in inferring the conclusion from the premisses unless he is also justified in believing the supposition on which the inference is "founded"'(53). This initial formulation is broad enough to accommodate a number of different views about the character of the inference, and the nature of the justification, involved. Why, Stroud goes on to ask, does Hume think that inferences are founded on the uniformity principle in that sense? One possibility, we have seen, is that Hume thinks inferences from the observed to the unobserved are invalid without it. Stroud has left this, among other options, open. If this is what Hume believes, then he must also believe that we have no reason to believe anything unless we also have a reason to believe something that logically implies it. If this is all Hume means then, as Stroud points out, he can only be said to have shown that '*if* no one is ever justified in believing a proposition unless he is justified in believing something that logically implies it, *then* no one is ever justified in believing anything about the unobserved.'(54) This conclusion falls significantly short of establishing the sceptical conclusion that all inductive inferences are unreasonable or rationally unjustified. Stroud's argument only really works on the basis of Hume having subscribed to a conclusion like the one Stove attributed to him. There are other reasons for rejecting the deductivist interpretation. We saw that Hume does not believe an inference must be deductively valid in order to be good or, to some degree, warranted. He recognises that there are inferences the premises of which lend less than full support to their conclusions. On these grounds alone, some alternative reading, which makes sense within the structure of Hume's argument, and does not attribute to Hume an unwarranted and textually-unfounded assumption, is desirable. Stroud, I think, has it in mind to provide just such an alternative. Hume, according to Stroud, exploits another aspect of the 'traditional conception of reason' which allows him to form a really sceptical conclusion without making the unwarranted assumption that all reasons must be deductively sufficient(55). Let us suppose, with Stroud, that someone who has observed a constant conjunction of events and is presently observing one of the events forms a belief that its usual conjunct will now occur: 'The man might believe it for some very bad reason, completely unconnected with his past and present experience of As and Bs. Or he might have made a lucky guess. So something else must be true of him as well. It would seem that, if he is to be reasonable in believing that a B will occur, he must somehow take his past and present experience with respect to As and Bs as a good reason to believe that a B will occur.'(56) But even if the man does believe that what he has experienced gives him good grounds for believing that a B will occur, and even if this last belief is true, it still does not follow that the man's belief is reasonable or rationally justified.(57) It seems to Stroud that if the belief that a B will occur is to be reasonable, and if the man's belief that what he has experienced provides good grounds to believe that a B will occur is to be part of his reason for believing it, then his believing that what he has experienced provides good grounds for the belief that a B will occur must itself be reasonable or rationally justified(58). If he cannot show that it is, then he cannot, on this understanding of 'reasonable', be said to have made a

reasonable or justified inference from observed to unobserved at all. This 'self-conscious' and 'potentially regressive' aspect of the notion of reason may well, Stroud thinks, be 'what Hume is focussing on in the traditional conception'(59).

By focusing on this aspect of reasonableness, Hume could support his claim that reasonable belief about the unobserved requires something more than past observation of constant conjunctions of events and a present impression of one of those events, without committing himself to the sort of thesis about deductivism which we found to sit so awkwardly with the text. A 'fully rational agent', on this view, is 'not one who proceeds rationally only at the last step'(60). Hume is able to ask whether one can have a belief that is reasonable in this sense, and form a sceptical conclusion about it, without assuming that all good reasons are deductively sufficient ones. Stroud's view fits in well with the over-all structure of the argument. Hume can make the charge that probable argument 'presupposes' the thing that is at issue without committing himself to the view that this thing is what is necessary to make the argument deductively valid. Probable arguments presuppose the thing at issue in the sense that the beliefs that support the original belief are subject to the same sorts of doubts as that original belief. I find Stroud's response, both on structural and textual grounds, extremely powerful. The main interpretive difficulty facing it seems to be the construction he places on the uniformity principle(61). Stroud characterises it as the proposition that the past experience of a conjunction of As and Bs, along with an observed A, is good reason to believe that B will occur(62). In other words, in order to be justified in believing, on the basis of the two premises, that B will occur, one must be justified in believing that the past instances, of which one has had experience, provide good grounds for the belief about future or unobserved instances. This would not, of course, give us a deductively valid inference to the conclusion that B will occur. It is still possible that B will not occur and this ties in very well with Hume's belief, implicit in his discussion of his 'rules by which to judge of causes and effects', that inductive inferences are fallible, even on the basis of the 'supposition'(63). What is needed for a reasonable belief about B is a reasonable belief that what has been observed is a good reason for believing that B will occur. Stroud's difficulty is that this is not equivalent to what Hume says is required for a reasonable belief in these circumstances. Hume says that what is required is a principle which says that 'those instances of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience'(T.89). The strength of Hume's claim here seems to give some credence to the deductivist view. The principle is less definitely formulated in the *Enquiry*. Hume seems to have thought that the same presupposition could be expressed as well by saying 'that the future will be conformable to the past'(E.35) or that the past be a 'rule for the future'(E.38). This seems closer to Stroud's suggestion that Hume is claiming that one must reasonably believe that what one has observed is good grounds for one's beliefs about the unobserved. Indeed, this could be read as a fairly loose paraphrase of what Hume has in mind when he writes that instances of which we have experience *must* resemble those of which we have no experience: 'To say that the murderer *must* have only

four toes on the left foot is to indicate that what you already know is good or conclusive reason to believe that about the murderer, and not just that he does have only four toes on the left foot'(64). No one who has observed a constant conjunction of events A and B, and is presently observing A, will reasonably believe that B unless he also believes reasonably that what he has experienced is 'a good or conclusive' reason for believing B. The sceptical upshot of this is that, on the conception of reason or reasonableness Hume's treatment of presupposition suggests, we can have no good reason for believing that what we have experienced is good grounds for belief about what we have not. Stroud's suggestion makes good sense not only of the different ways in which Hume puts his claim, but of the role it plays in the structure of Hume's argument. The reasonableness of inductive inferences will, on this understanding, have been undermined if it can be shown that what is needed for a reasonable belief that B will occur is, in addition to an observed constant conjunction of As and Bs and a presently observed A, a reasonable belief that what has been observed is a good reason to believe that B will occur, and that no one could ever come to reasonably believe that(65).

These are strong, and, I think, decisive, textual and philosophical grounds for resisting Stove's interpretation of Hume's argument. My strategy in challenging Stove's reading of Hume's conclusion was to undermine, textually and historically, his attribution to Hume of the crucial but unwarranted assumption that only deductively valid arguments lend support to their conclusions. I found that this aspect of Stove's interpretation should be rejected, together, I suggested, with the thesis that Hume held a radically sceptical view of induction. There, nevertheless, remains the possibility that Stove's highly sceptical reading of Hume's conclusion could be defended on independent textual grounds. If it can be shown that Hume held induction to be unreasonable or epistemically unwarranted, then this is surely evidence for the view that Hume held some other tacit assumption about what is or is not reasonable, that would have allowed him to draw a conclusion which, on the basis of his explicit premises, he was not entitled to draw. This view has been resisted, and, to my mind, effectively refuted, by a number of recent commentators(66). These writers have, by and large, taken the view that Hume intended his argument concerning induction not as a sceptical attack on induction, but as an attack on a restrictedly deductivist conception of the reasonableness of induction. Hume's argument is to be read as deflationary rather than destructive of the claims of induction. While these authors have been prepared to allow that Hume's argument is, indeed, intended to show that inductive arguments are deductively invalid, one of the two premises from which Stove thinks Hume derived his radically sceptical conclusion about induction, they have resisted attributing to Hume the deductivist assumption, the second of Stove's 'sceptical' premises. Hume is supposed to have argued for something like inductive fallibilism. So, far from being a deductivist, or subscribing to a thesis like the one Stove describes, Hume is concerned with the refutation of deductivism. This position is exemplified by, among others, Beauchamp and Rosenberg. They write that, although Stove's interpretation of Hume is directly opposed to their own, they are broadly in agreement with him in holding that Hume has

established a case for what both they and Stove term 'inductive fallibilism', and that this position 'is not, as some have alleged, trivial'(67). Stove's claim, they continue, conforms to their thesis that "'Hume's scepticism concerning rationalism" is a measured and proper antidote to the excess of that philosophical view'. The 'larger purpose' of Hume's argument is to attack the 'rationalistic' conception of reason. The 'whole point' of Hume's discussion of whether the uniformity principle can be established by argument, according to Scott Arnold, 'is to see whether invalid predictive-inductive inferences can be "cured" of their invalidity by being transformed into acceptable deductively valid counterpart inferences'(68). Hume's 'sceptical fire' was directed 'at those who would claim more for causal (inductive) reasoning than it could deliver'(69). 'Inductive fallibilism', according to both Scott Arnold and Beauchamp and Rosenberg, alone describes the sceptical position attributable to Hume. The problem of induction 'is simply not to be found in Hume's philosophy'(70).

A number of textual considerations tell against the standard or Humean interpretation of the argument concerning induction as committing Hume to the radically sceptical thesis that inductive arguments are epistemically worthless. The *Treatise* is subtitled '*An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*'(T.xi). The experimental method is largely inductive. Hume could not, therefore, call into question the epistemic worth of inductive inference without calling into question his own procedure in the *Treatise*. Causal reasoning is presupposed in much of the argument of the *Treatise*, before, during, and after the argument in which he has usually been thought to have denied all warrant to them. Hume turns immediately from his discussion of induction to a consideration of the nature and causes of belief(T.94-106). He continues to make inductive inferences throughout the remainder of the *Treatise*, even formulating a set of rules by which, he believes, we ought to regulate our judgment concerning causes and effects. Hume makes free use of all of these rules. From his first tracing of the causal dependency of ideas upon impressions, much of the argument of the *Treatise* can only be read as a causal investigation of the operations of the understanding. The justification of many of the claims of the *Treatise* would seem to depend upon at least some inductive inferences being themselves justified. At times, Hume is prepared to make this commitment explicit. One who concludes somebody to be near him 'when he hears an articulate voice in the dark, reasons justly and naturally; tho' that conclusion be derived from nothing but custom'(T.225). When we infer a cause 'immediately' from its effect 'this inference is not only a true species of reasoning, but the strongest of all the others'(T.97n). Sections XI to XIII of Part III of the *Treatise* suggest strongly that Hume not only considered there to be arguments which gave less than full support to their conclusions, but was prepared quite openly to endorse those in which belief is proportioned to the evidence. In the *Enquiry*, Hume writes that the evidence resulting from testimony 'admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less usual'(E.113). The uncritical reliance on testimony is attacked, among other forms of 'prejudice' and 'superstition', as 'unphilosophical', and contrasted with the more 'philosophical' reasonings concerning causes and effects he

identified with his eight rules. These rules are intended to tell us when and under what circumstances inductive inferences are well-grounded. It seems obvious that, at the very least, Hume did not consider his argument concerning induction to seriously undermine his own causal analysis, or the project of introducing the experimental method into the moral sciences.

It could be argued that this is all these passages do establish. It may still be possible to reconcile the standard sceptical interpretation of Hume's argument with Hume's use and explicit endorsement of inductive inference on the grounds that inductive inference, however unreasonable, is nevertheless, for Hume, psychologically inevitable(71). We are under a psychological compulsion to continue making inductive inferences, even after we have found them to be epistemically worthless. But this move, while not entirely without precedent in Hume's philosophical writing, seems rather at odds with what Hume has to say in Section VI and with the way in which he says it. We might, at the very least, expect Hume to acknowledge, in Section VI or in one of the remaining sections of Part III, that this is what he is doing. But he makes no such admission. Hume does not include his argument among the sections dealing with 'sceptical systems' and subjects in Part IV(T.180-263). He refrains from describing his argument as 'sceptical' and shows no sign of being aware of the damage his sceptical assault on induction is supposed to have wrought. Hume's intentions in Part III do not seem to be sceptical at all. Hume's own psychological account of causal inference is based on inductive argument. All our reasonings concerning cause and effect are founded on the same natural relation of association which is under examination. Far from issuing in a general pessimism about the reasonableness or justifiability of induction, the upshot of these investigations is the formulation of a set of normative rules by which to judge of causes and effects. Hume's scepticism is little in evidence in Part III, and when Hume does eventually raise the question, it is not to endorse the conclusions of 'that fantastic sect'(T.183), but to defend a 'true' or 'mitigated' form of scepticism the result of which is not the radical rejection of our 'rational' practices, but a due 'diffidence' both in our doubts and in our convictions(T.273).

The nonsceptical views to which I have already adverted are all, it seems to me, based, in one way or another, on a distinction Hume is supposed to have drawn between deductive or *a priori* reasoning and 'reasoning' in a broader sense, inclusive of all sorts of probable argument, to which Hume also subscribed. In the section dealing with induction, Hume is said to have used 'reason' in what Beauchamp and Rosenberg call 'his stipulatively restricted sense'(72). Hume shows 'first that demonstrative reasoning does not yield factual results and, second, that induction is not marked by the logical necessity attending demonstrative reasoning'(73). Hume's argument can finally be characterised as 'a frontal assault on rationalist assumptions that at least some inductive arguments are demonstrative'(74). He wants only to show that inductive reasoning can provide neither 'self-evident certainty', nor 'the logical necessity that uniquely characterizes demonstrative reasoning'(75). Hume has no intentions of drawing a sceptical conclusion about induction at all. The sort of 'reason' in which Hume is interested in

his discussion of induction, Baier writes, is 'restricted to the faculty of intellectual intuition and demonstration, that which can discern "intelligible" connections'(76). Hume adopts this 'rationalist' sense of 'reason' purely in order to dismiss it. There is some textual support for the view that, occasionally in his writing, Hume insisted upon a distinction between species of reasoning. Hume describes formal reason, or the reasoning of the demonstrative 'sciences', as 'a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect'(T.180). This is the faculty of mind which produces 'knowledge', of which Hume treated in Section I of Part III. When Hume talks of 'reason' in this sense he has in mind the faculty responsible for the discernment, by intuition or demonstration, of relations of ideas. It is also clear that Hume uses 'reasoning' in a much broader way to include any sort of transition or inference to a vivacious or enlivened idea. It is in this sense that Hume is able to write of the 'reasoning faculty of brutes' and animals, as well as of human creatures(T.176). The actions of a dog in avoiding fire or shunning strangers 'proceed from a reasoning, that is not in itself different, nor founded on different principles, from that which appears in human nature'(T.177). From the tone of his voice, 'the dog infers his master's anger, and foresees his own punishment'(T.178). These 'reasonings' derive not from 'reason', in the first of Hume's two senses, but from custom. Hume's negative conclusions concerning induction are directed not at the institution itself, but at 'reason' in the first of these two senses. Despite his use of 'reasoning' in this broader, highly inclusive, sense in a number of places in Part III, Hume is supposed to have restricted his use, in the crucial passages of Section VI, and in his discussions of probable 'argument' and other forms of 'ratiocination', to the former sense. I do not take issue with the claim that Hume made a distinction along these lines, and in something like these terms. But I do not think that Hume's use of 'reason' in Section VI of Part III is either as restrictive as these commentators have suggested, or as loose and inclusive as the proposed alternative sense of 'reasoning' might suggest.

What is at issue is the question of the sense in which Hume thought of inductive arguments as being not 'determined by reason'. On the view being considered, what Hume has in mind when he writes that probable arguments are not 'determined by reason' is that inductive inferences are not deductively valid: 'inductive fallibilism'. Beauchamp and Rosenberg say explicitly that Hume, in their opinion, restricts reason to '*a priori* reason' or 'the discernment of ideas and their relations (i.e., to deductive reasoning and intuitive derivation of nonsynthetic *a priori* propositions)' in those contexts 'where he directly discusses the nature of induction'(77). What is the evidence for believing Hume used 'reason' in this way in the crucial passages of Section VI? The first difficulty for the view is that, as Baier acknowledges(78), when Hume is not discussing induction directly, he either uses 'reason' in a broader sense to include both demonstrative and probable argument, or makes it quite explicit that he is doing otherwise. When he introduces his argument concerning scepticism with regard to reason, for example, Hume makes clear that it is with reason as it regards the 'demonstrative sciences' that he is concerned(T.180). Hume follows the same sort of procedure when uses the term 'probability'

in a narrower-than-usual sense in Section XI of Part III(T.124). Hume warns his readers that he will be using the term in a special sense, noting that 'in the precedent part of this discourse' he has followed the 'method of expression' of those philosophers who distinguish knowledge and probability. The influence of Locke on this aspect of Hume's thought is, as I have already noted, made manifest in the *Enquiry*(E.24). His remarks there are to be read as a reiteration of his acknowledgment, in the *Treatise*, of 'Those philosophers, who have divided human reason into *knowledge and probability*'(T.124). Locke is the acknowledged source of Hume's initial distinction between demonstration and probability, and of his use of the term 'reason' to include arguments and inferences of both kinds. Reason, according to Locke, operates with both knowledge and probability or 'opinion'. It is responsible for probable and demonstrative inference. It consists, Locke says, 'in nothing but the Perception of the connexion there is between the *Ideas*, in each step of the deduction, whereby the Mind comes to see, either the certain Agreement or Disagreement of any two *Ideas*, as in Demonstration, in which it arrives at Knowledge; or in their probable connexion, on which it gives or with-holds its Assent, as in Opinion.'(79). Locke uses the term 'for a Faculty in Man, That Faculty whereby Man is supposed to be distinguished from Beasts, and wherein it is evident he much surpasses them'(80). He treats reason as the faculty which discovers certainty or probability by deduction or inference from the ideas acquired from sensation and reflection. Hume, I think, has in mind the same use of 'reason' as denoting the faculty of mind inclusive of, and responsible for, all argument and inference, whether probable or demonstrative. For the moment, I observe only that this is the usage of the term 'reason' which Hume appears to be endorsing. He identifies this usage with the common 'method of expression' which he has followed 'in the precedent part' of the *Treatise*, which includes, of course, the argument concerning induction. The restricted sense of the term Hume is supposed to have followed in Section VI would mark a significant departure from this usage. Yet Hume neither stipulates, nor gives us any clue, that this is what he understands by the term in this context, or that he has in mind any sort of deviation from the common usage.

A second difficulty for this nonsceptical view concerns the structure of Hume's argument concerning induction. Hume's argument, as he presents it both in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*, suggests very strongly not only that Hume recognised two sorts of inference, but that he considered both as possible sources of support for the principle that nature is uniform. Summarising his argument in the *Abstract*, Hume claims not only that it is not possible to '*demonstrate*, that the course of nature must continue uniformly the same', but that there are no 'proofs' by 'any *probable* arguments, that there is this conformity betwixt the future and the past, and therefore can never prove it'(A.652). Whether we take Hume's 'deductivism' in these passages to be feigned or real, it seems extremely difficult to square it with Hume's resort to a possible probable support for the uniformity principle. The argument, as Hume presents it in the *Abstract*, clearly features two main stages. In the first, Hume argues that it is not 'any thing that reason sees in the cause, which makes us *infer* the effect' on the grounds that 'the mind

can always conceive any effect to follow from any cause'(T.650). As I have already noted, Hume could quite straightforwardly have concluded, on the basis of the conceivability of an inductive inference having true premises and a false conclusion, that this sort of inference is not one that reason, in the demonstrative sense, determines us to make. Whenever a demonstration takes place, the contrary is impossible, and implies a contradiction(T.650). If all Hume has in mind in saying that probable arguments are not 'determin'd by reason' is that they are not deductively valid then he could have drawn this conclusion much earlier, on the basis of the first stage of his argument, without arguing, as he does in the second stage of his argument, that the uniformity principle cannot be supported by an argument using either inductive or demonstrative sorts of inference. Hume's strategy in the second stage is to consider whether the uniformity principle can be founded on either one of two sorts of argument. Hume considers all the arguments upon which, he supposes, the proposition may be founded. These, he tells us, must be of two kinds, since they 'must be deriv'd either from knowledge or probability'(T.89). His procedure consists in showing that the principle can be justified by neither one. But even if Hume had been successful in showing that the uniformity principle could be given a probable support of some kind, this would in no way show that 'at least some inductive arguments are demonstrative' - the possibility Hume is supposed to be arguing against. All 'certainty', Hume tells us, 'arises from the comparison of ideas, and from the discovery of such relations as are unalterable, so long as the ideas continue the same'(T.79). Probable arguments produce a lesser 'degree of evidence' than demonstrative ones(T.124) and so can provide neither the 'self-evident certainty' nor the 'logical necessity' that Beauchamp and Rosenberg say 'uniquely characterizes demonstrative reasoning'(81). Hume, it would appear, has no reason even to raise the possibility of finding a probable argument to support the uniformity principle, if his aim is to show that inductive inferences cannot be turned into deductively valid ones. The question is strictly irrelevant to the position he is supposed to be attacking. The problem for the nonsceptical view is that it is unable to account adequately either for Hume's insistence on considering both demonstrative and probable argument as the source of the principle, or for the presence of an argument to the conclusion that the uniformity principle cannot, in Hume's own words, 'arise from probability'(T.90).

The third and, perhaps, chief difficulty for the anti-rationalist view concerns the terms in which Hume presents the conclusion of his argument. Hume writes, in summary of his findings, that 'even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience'(T.139). He gives a similar account of his conclusion in the *Abstract*. 'We can give no reason for extending to the future our experience in the past, but are entirely determined by custom, when we conceive an effect to follow from its usual cause'(T.654). Hume's conclusion appears to be that we can have no reason whatever for believing that events of which we have had experience will resemble those of which we have had none. This is a much stronger

conclusion than the one attributed to him by Beauchamp and Rosenberg. Hume is supposed to have concluded only that 'there can be no *demonstrative* arguments to prove, *that those instances, of which we have had no experience, resemble those, of which we have had experience*'(82). This modest conclusion, which Hume draws part-way through the second stage of his argument, and then only in reiterating his 'foregoing method of reasoning' in stage one, could hardly be said to warrant Hume's own assessment of the force and originality of the conclusions of the two stages of his argument: 'I say, let men be once fully convinc'd of these two principles, and this will throw them so loose from all common systems, that they will make no difficulty of receiving any, which may appear the most extraordinary'(T.139). The strength of this claim would scarcely be credible in a philosopher who had done no more than argue for a form of inductive fallibilism(83). Hume obviously takes himself to have argued for a conclusion radical enough to have thrown men 'loose from all common systems'. It is not, in my view, deductivism, or rationalism, that bears the brunt of Hume's scorn, but the pervasive view of reason, exemplified by Locke, as a faculty of intellectual 'light' or insight, a guide for conduct and a source of 'certain definite principles of action'(84), whereby man 'much surpasses' animals(85).

Hume expresses his conclusion in a number of different ways. In the *Treatise* he writes that when the mind 'passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination'(T.92). In paraphrasing the conclusion of the argument of the *Enquiry*, Hume writes: 'that, even after we have experience of the operations of cause and effect, our conclusions from that experience are not founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding.'(E.32). A few pages later he makes a somewhat different point when he writes that 'it is not reasoning which engages us to suppose the past resembling the future, and to expect similar effects from causes which are, to appearance, similar'(E.39). It is not 'by any process of argument or ratiocination', in other words, that we come to believe that instances of which we have had experience will resemble those of which we have had none. All our inferences from experience, therefore, involve a step 'taken by the mind which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding'(E.41). Hume forms the same general conclusion, on the same argumentative basis, in the *Abstract*. Even after the experience of 'many repeated effects' of a sort, Hume writes, 'there is no argument, which determines me to suppose, that the effect will be conformable to past experience. The powers, by which bodies operate, are entirely unknown. We perceive only their sensible qualities: and what *reason* have we to think that the same powers will always be conjoined with the same sensible qualities?. 'Tis not, therefore, reason, which is the guide of life, but custom.'(T.652) The main features of this line of thought can be sketched roughly as follows: Having established that the determination of inductive inference by reason would proceed upon the principle that nature is uniform, Hume asks whether there are any arguments upon which the proposition might be founded. Hume considers all the

arguments that might be supposed to 'found' the principle, which he sorts into two classes. Finding that neither sort of argument can be used to support the principle, Hume concludes, quite generally, that inductive inferences are not 'determin'd by reason', or, as he puts it in the *Enquiry*, by 'any process of argument or ratiocination'(86). Hume is able to conclude that in all probable argument there is a step taken which is not supported by any 'argument or process of the understanding'(E.41).

Hume is interested in the question of whether or not we adopt induction on the basis of any process of argument 'or ratiocination'. In giving the answer he gives, Hume arrives at the position usually thought of as Hume's 'scepticism about induction'. Hume does not, however, consider the upshot of his argument to be sceptical. It seems obvious that Hume did not consider his argument concerning induction to undermine either his own causal examination of probable argument and the causal relation, or his endorsement of scientific induction. The reason for this is that Hume has no intention of calling into question the epistemic warrant of induction, at least, not in Section VI of Part III. Hume's argument is, in my view, by no means the 'sceptical attack on induction' it has been portrayed as being. Hume's ambitions for the argument are clearly stated and carefully prosecuted. He argues not that our reliance on induction is unreasonable, in the sense of being unjustified or without epistemic value, but that it is not 'reasoning' or the inference-forming faculty of reason which 'engages us' to suppose the past to resemble the future, and, so, to expect 'similar effects' from similar causes(E.33). His concern is with what causes or 'determines us' to make inductive inferences, rather than with the further evaluative question, which, to my thinking, goes unasked until late in Part IV of Book One of the *Treatise*. Hume asks, in a quite general way, whether it is reason that determines us, noting that, if it does, it will proceed by argument, and that that argument must 'proceed upon' the supposition of a proposition itself founded on argument. Hume uses 'reason', both in Section VI, and throughout the *Treatise*, to denote the faculty of mind responsible for the making of inferences and the forming of arguments, whether demonstrative or probable. He follows the common 'method of expression' of Locke in taking reason to be the faculty which produces both sorts of argument. His dispute with Locke concerns the notion that reason is a faculty of intellectual 'perception', a kind of 'natural *Revelation*', whereby 'Man' is distinguished from 'Beasts'. Locke thinks of all probable argument as proceeding on the basis of a perception of the connection between the 'proofs' or mediate ideas in 'every step of a Discourse, to which it will think Assent due'(87). Reason, according to Locke, perceives the '*certain or probable Agreement, or Disagreement of any two other Ideas*'(88). Probability is the appearance of an agreement or disagreement 'by the intervention of Proofs'(89). It is to Locke's notion of reason as an autonomous intellectual faculty, capable of 'perceiving' the 'connexions' between the proofs of a probable argument, in the same way as it 'perceives' the relations of 'necessary' connection in each step of any demonstrative argument, that Hume takes exception. Hume shows that in any probable argument or 'process of the understanding' there is a step taken by the mind which 'is not

supported by any argument'. The step is supplied not by reason but by instinct. Any argument for the reliability of induction would proceed upon the supposition of the uniformity principle and for this principle there can be no satisfactory argument. Hume considers that any such argument would have to be of either one of two kinds: probable or demonstrative. There can be no demonstrative argument because it is always conceivable, and, for Hume, therefore, possible, that an inductive argument have true premises but a false conclusion. There can be no probable argument for the proposition because probable arguments are founded on the same principle, and the same principle cannot be 'both the cause and effect of another'. Because an argument must of one of these two kinds, Hume is able to conclude that no argument can 'found' the uniformity principle and, so, that it is not by argument that we are 'determin'd' to take up induction.

Any probable argument involves a step which, irrespective of the question of its reasonableness or justifiability, proceeds not from argument or reason, but from custom and instinct. We are 'determined by CUSTOM alone to suppose the future conformable to the past'(T.652). This is a conclusion of critical importance within Hume's philosophy. Reason was, to Locke, the dominant guide for conduct and belief, a reliable and autonomous touchstone for knowledge and 'opinion', and a guide to action. It is, I believe, Hume's objection to this view of reason, that, for him, justifies his appraisal of his own conclusion as one likely to throw man 'loose from all common systems'(T.139). Reason, Hume says emphatically is not 'the guide of life'. Reason is neither autonomous, nor dominant, in the way Locke supposed(T.186). Custom alone 'determines the mind, in all instances, to suppose the future conformable to the past. However easy this step may seem, reason would never, to all eternity, be able to make it.'(T.652) Hume's central point is not any sceptical thesis about induction, but the claim that it is by the imagination, and not by any means of the understanding, that we are determined to make the transition from cause to effect or effect to cause. Hume writes, later in the *Treatise*, that his intention in displaying the arguments of those 'fantastic' sceptics who attempt to undermine demonstrative reasoning by showing how successive assessments of the probability of error diminish their probability 'to nothing', had been merely to show '*that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom*'(T.183). Reason, in Hume's inferential-faculty sense, does not engage us to make inductive inferences. Hume nevertheless continues to refer to inductive inferences as 'reasonings'. He uses the term broadly in referring to any 'inference' or customary transition from idea or impression to belief. But the term carries no normative weight. 'Reasoning' can be sensitive and instinctual. Hume's position is that while inductive inferences belong to a certain class of reasonings, they are not, as a class, determined or produced by the faculty of reason, or by any higher process of reasoning. This is not, however, to say that they are unjustified or epistemically worthless. This is not entailed by Hume's argument and Hume, as was noted, gives no indication that he thinks it is.

The upshot of Hume's argument concerning induction is not scepticism. Hume's concern in Section VI is not with the reasonableness or justifiability of inductive inference, nor is his interest in the question, in any explicit way, normative. Hume is giving a straightforward answer to the straightforward question of what it is that determines us to take up induction. It is quite clear that Hume does not assimilate the reasonableness or justifiability of inductive argument to its being a product of reason or reasoning. He nowhere suggests that inductive inferences are reasonable only if they are determined by reason. This, I think, explains how Hume is able to argue forcefully that we have 'no reason' for making inductive inferences, while relying extensively and unequivocally on their conclusions. The well-groundedness of most of the claims of the *Treatise* depends upon at least some inductive arguments being justified. Hume's causal investigation leads him to formulate as rules many of the principles of reasoning which he makes use of in the preceding sections and in those that come after it(90). He treats probable arguments as varying in force and warrant. Hume has placed a constraint on what it is for an inference to be reasoning, not on what it is for an inference to be justified. Determination by reason or reasoning would require that we argue with reasons 'at every step'. The question of the reasonableness of inductive argument has not been raised, still less, settled. Hume has argued to the conclusion that we do not adopt inductive reasoning on the basis of any theoretical argumentation or process of the understanding. If reason determined us it would proceed upon the principle that nature is uniform, and this principle can be produced neither by demonstration, nor by any probable argument. Hume's concern is with what causes us to adopt inductive inference. He treats the argument-forming faculty of reason as one possible determinant of causal inference among others. This is not to say that the practice of induction is unreasonable or that we do not have good inductive evidence for believing the procedures of experimental science to be better or more reliable than those of rationalist speculation or guesswork. Hume agrees that we do. But we cannot show the reliability of induction by reasoning about it unless we already accept that induction is reliable. We can give no supporting argument for our reliance on induction which does not itself rely upon it. Hume's discussion may well invite the theoretical question of the justification of induction, but it does not settle it.

Hume has argued that our adoption of induction is not the result of reasoning or ratiocination, on the grounds that any probable argument involves a step 'not supported by any argument or process of the understanding', but by a strong natural instinct. Hume's conclusion concerns the causes of inductive inference rather than the question of its justification. Should we then conclude, with Beauchamp, Mappes and Rosenberg, that the problem of induction is not to be found in Hume's philosophy? Hume presents his conclusion as an important thesis about what 'determines' us to make causal inferences. The argument, as presented in both the *Enquiry* and the *Treatise*, stresses the conclusion that it is not reason that determines us to make inductive inferences. Hume argues that it is 'custom or a certain instinct of our nature'(E.159) that causes us to make inferences from unobserved to observed causes or effects. It is clear

that the problem Hume is addressing in Section VI is not the problem of the justification of induction. It does not follow from the fact of our inductive inferences being determined by custom that they are unjustified. Subsequent attempts to produce a justification for our reliance on induction that does not presuppose that reliance are, nevertheless, clear responses to Hume's argument, or, at any rate, to aspects of it. Philosophers have attempted to show that it is possible to establish the reliability of induction by argument without begging what is in question, without, in other words, presupposing the reliability of probable argument. Hume's argument quite obviously militates against this possibility. But this upshot of Hume's argument is not, in itself, sceptical. Hume is very far, about as far as can be, from suggesting that the reasonableness of induction depends upon its justification by argument.

This is not to say that Hume is unaware of the normative question. This would be unlikely in a philosopher as astute as Hume, and rather unfortunate in a philosopher many of whose important conclusions depend upon inductive inferences being justified at least some of the time. Hume does raise the question, but not in Part III, and not as a direct result of the argument of Section VI. Hume alludes to the problem first, and fleetingly, in Section IV of Part IV, returning to it, once more, in Section VII, the conclusion of the first book of the *Treatise*. Hume expresses some of the sceptical sentiments which philosophers like Stove have been prepared to attribute to him in Section VI of Part III. Hume writes that the '*intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another.'(T.268-9) Hume's conclusion follows the restatement of an argument(T.266) from Section IV of Part IV in which Hume complains that there is 'a direct and total opposition betwixt...those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body'(T.231). When we reason from cause and effect, we are led to conclude, on the basis of arguments showing the mind-dependency of both secondary and primary qualities, that 'neither colour, sound, taste, nor smell have a continu'd and independent existence', and so that 'there remains nothing in the universe, which has such existence'(T.231). There is thus a 'direct and total opposition' between 'reason' and the senses. Although these two operations are 'equally natural and necessary in the human mind....in some circumstances they are directly contrary'(T.266). Hume clearly believes this contrariness or 'opposition' calls into question the epistemic value of causal inference since it leads him to conclude that he can no longer look upon any opinion as 'more probable' than another. Scepticism breaks in upon Hume not as a consequence of his argument concerning induction, but as a result of the direct opposition he believes he has discovered among those principles of the imagination which he has described as 'permanent, irresistible, and universal', and distinguished from those which are 'changeable, weak, and irregular'(T.225). The 'principles of custom and reasoning' which are received by philosophy are those which are 'the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin'(T.225). It is on

these grounds that Hume defends the reasonableness of induction. Inductive method is a part of that framework of beliefs and practices governed by principles which are either unavoidable or necessary to the conduct of life. Hume's real scepticism about inductive argument emerges only when this sense of reasonableness, and this tidy framework, seems threatened. Hume's response is to attempt to discriminate between the operations of the imagination responsible for 'illusion' and 'contradiction' and those which are steadier and more regular. We cannot do this by adhering merely to the understanding or 'more establish'd properties of the imagination' since we have found, in Section I of Part IV, that 'the understanding, when it acts alone, entirely subverts itself'(T.267). But if we establish it as a rule that 'no refin'd or elaborate reasoning is ever to be receiv'd' we cut ourselves off from 'all science and philosophy'. We have no choice left 'but betwixt a false reason and none at all'(T.267). Nature, fortunately, suffices to 'cure me of this of this philosophical melancholy and delirium'. But Hume is not prepared to rest at this. He is still willing to give philosophy 'the preference to superstition of every kind of denomination'(T.271). A just philosophy, in contrast to superstition, can provide us with only 'mild' and 'moderate' sentiments. A 'true' philosopher or sceptic will 'be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical convictions'(T.273). Philosophy, if just, can instil in the philosopher only a due modesty and 'deference to the public'(T.274). Hume's claims need to be understood with some care. The philosopher, in recognising that he can save himself from 'total scepticism' only by means of a 'singular and seemingly trivial property of the fancy'(T.268), takes on some of the 'gross earthy mixture' of common life(T.272). The upshot of this is a diffidence and caution, as much about what one doubts, as about what one believes. The aim of philosophy has become a kind of reflexive self-consciousness. Greater self-consciousness means that we are more confident in endorsing those rules which, like the rules of inductive argument, can survive their own scrutiny. The 'true' sceptic is engaged in a search for rules of reasoning which can bear up under their own survey(91). Hume recognises that any defence of reasoning must, ultimately, involve reasoning. It is a token of a rule's adequacy that it can endure its own reflexive examination. Habits of mind become endorsable rules only when they have been found to survive the test of evaluation from their own point of view. By weighing up our doubts as carefully as our convictions, we might still hope to 'establish a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hop'd for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination'(T.272).

## **2.2 Hume and the New Hume**

John Mackie describes Hume's theory of causation as '[T]he most significant and influential single contribution' to the subject(92), yet there is surprisingly little general agreement among philosophers as to how the theory is to be understood. Most commentators agree that Hume is saying, or attempting to say, something of importance about causation, but they differ wildly in their appreciation of his aims, procedure and conclusion, and of the merits of his argument.

Part of the blame for this must undoubtedly lie with Hume himself. Important parts of Hume's procedure, and his presentation of his conclusions, can seem willfully obscure, and even perverse. His statements of intent seem clear enough, but the surface lucidity of these passages quickly gets lost among the labyrinthine intricacies of Hume's argument. Hume presents his account as the centre-piece of his investigations in Book One of the *Treatise*. He poses a number of different questions about the important relation of cause and effect, pursuing them, in one way or another, throughout the sixteen sections of Part III. Hume's theory begins with a search for the impression from which the idea of necessary connection was supposed to be derived, and ends with his two 'definitions' of a cause as '[A]n object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in like relations of precedency to those objects, that resemble the latter' and as 'an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other'(T.170). Hume offers similar, though not identical, 'definitions' in the *Enquiry*. In each case they are presented as the outcome of an argument concerning the idea of necessary connection. His intention, he says, is to 'collect all of the different parts of this reasoning, and by joining them together form an exact definition of the relation of cause and effect, which makes the subject of the present enquiry'(T.169). Few commentators have thought that what Hume gives us amounts to an 'exact definition' of cause. The main elements of the definitions can be roughly summarised in the following way: The first 'philosophical' definition identifies causation with regularity of succession, what Hume terms 'constant conjunction'; the second 'natural' definition identifies causation with the inferability of one 'object' or event from another, appealing to the psychological association of ideas from which, as Hume will argue, the idea of necessity arises. I will return shortly to the controversial and, in many ways, central, question of the nature, origin and importance of this idea. I turn first to a number of familiar difficulties for Hume's account.

The chief difficulties arising from Hume's statements of his double-definition of cause are too well-known to require much introduction. Some of the leading objections to Hume's account will be dealt with directly in this chapter. For the moment, I remark merely, together with a number of other commentators, that the definitions are neither strictly equivalent, nor coextensive(93). The point does not require much argument. The two definitions are obviously not synonymous or intensionally equivalent. It might be replied that although the definitions are not logically equivalent to each other, it is nevertheless a fact that where one applies, the other does also, that they are, in other words, coextensive. But it seems clear that this is not the case. There are circumstances in which either one of the two could apply where the other does not. Not every instance of regular succession produces an association in the mind. The constant conjunction of two objects or events could satisfy the first definition without ever having been observed to do so, without, that is to say, satisfying the second definition. Conversely, the second definition might equally well be satisfied without the first. We

sometimes declare two objects to be causally related after only a few 'experiments', or, in some cases, on the basis of 'one experiment' of a kind(T.105). In cases like these, a psychological association results from a survey of objects, but the objects do not instantiate the kind of regularity that would satisfy the first definition. The chief interpretive difficulty for scholars of Hume's writings on causation is that of accounting for the presence of two 'definitions' of the same crucial concept which are neither intensionally nor extensionally equivalent. Hume appears either to contradict himself or to offer different, nonequivalent definitions of two different relations. The latter option can be swiftly dismissed on textual grounds. Hume is adamant that the two definitions provide 'different views of the same object'(T.169-70). It is quite clear from the text that Hume offers two obviously nonequivalent definitions relating to the same concept or object, both of which, he claims, are, in some sense, correct. As I will go on to argue, there are good textual grounds for thinking Hume endorsed both definitions. Nevertheless, the appearance of conflict in Hume's system has led a number of commentators to treat Hume's account either as comprising two distinguishable theories, or as endorsing as correct only one of the two definitions. I consider these views in the sections to follow. There are good textual grounds for resisting both of them. It might seem from this that we are missing something important in Hume's account, and that this something has to do with how Humean definitions of relations work or are meant to work. There is something in this suggestion. It too will be developed in what remains of this chapter.

Equally important, though, to a just reading of the text, and to an appreciation of what Hume is attempting to do, is an understanding of the argument which leads up to the two definitions. It seems to me that both traditional and revisionist interpretations omit to consider in sufficient detail the extended argument of which the two definitions are the undoubted climax. Hume's attempts to 'define' causation need to be taken for what they are: as steps in a more general, highly reflexive and subtle piece of argumentation. We need, in other words, to consider closely the nature of Hume's theory, the part played by the two definitions within it, and, in particular, the sense in which they are the summation of the foregoing parts of Hume's reasoning. To do so we need to fix our attention on the crucial parts of Hume's account which provide him with the raw materials for the two definitions. I argue for the rejection of any account which seeks either to split Hume's theory into two more or less self-subsistent parts, or to ignore one half of what Hume has to say about causation. Both these views, unsurprisingly, end up attributing to Hume a position he does not hold. In this section, I reflect upon some of the main difficulties urged against Hume's explanation of the causal relation, arguing, against a number of them, that Hume's theory has been significantly and consistently miscast, and offering, in turn, what I think is a more plausible and less problematic alternative view. I will begin, however, by sketching a number of other attempts to shed light on the structure of Hume's argument and the nature of the two definitions.

Commentators have responded in a number of different ways to the difficulty, or, perhaps, the challenge, of making sense of these two definitions within a unified theory. Some have preferred to treat Hume's theory of causation as confined only to the first of his two definitions. Hume's chief purpose in making out the first philosophical definition is supposed to have been to show up the error of including any relation of necessity in an analysis of the causal relation. A move like this one is usually associated with the Humean or positivist reading of Hume's theory of causation. On this interpretation, Hume's theory of causation is, on the whole, motivated by scepticism. Strawson refers to this as the 'standard account' of Hume's views on the subject(94). Hume is said to be presenting a metaphysical thesis about what causation 'in the objects' is, and concluding that it is nothing but the regular succession of phenomena. Ayer sums up what he thinks is Hume's thesis with the phrase 'in nature one thing just happens after another'(95), and this, according to Ayer, and others, is all Hume believes there to be to causation(96). Hume has offered a reductive analysis of the meaning of causation, designed to show that propositions about causes can be analysed, without loss of content, into ones about regularity of succession. The first definition alone really defines the causal relation. The second can be read as a psychological reflection on causation so-defined. I argue later that Hume's projectivism about causation does not commit him to this sceptical thesis. The standard interpretation significantly distorts Hume's intentions, as well as his conclusions. It does not sit well with Hume's earlier observation that apart from contiguity and succession '[T]here is a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration'(T.77), nor with his later remark that '[A]ccording to my definitions, necessity makes an essential part of causation'(T.407). It would be surprising to find Hume defending a regularity theory of causation having already argued against it. As we will see, there are other, equally strong, textual reasons for rejecting the Humean view.

The obvious difficulty in squaring a reductive interpretation with Hume's frequent talk of 'conceal'd' and 'secret' causal powers in nature, and his explicit endorsement of causal explanation in terms of 'laws and forces'(E.14), has led some commentators to question what was, until fairly recently, the orthodox reading of Hume on causation. Among them are those philosophers who argue that Hume is a realist or a 'sceptical-realist' about causes or causal connections(97). These commentators, in my view, rightly, allow that, for Hume, we do have an idea of necessary connection and that that idea has an important, not to say, pivotal, role to play within his causal theory. The view that Hume sought only, or, primarily, to explain how we fall into the error of including necessary connection in our definition of cause can be rejected on good textual grounds. The evidence for thinking that this is, at best, a very partial, and unnecessarily negative, rendering of what Hume has to say, is especially strong. It seems much more plausible to acknowledge, in line with the text, that Hume not only believes that we have an idea of necessary connection, but that he dedicates a good deal of his time to accounting for it. Proponents of the sceptical-realist view, nevertheless, face a serious difficulty in reconciling a straightforward realist reading of Hume's remarks about causal

powers and forces with a theory of meaning which seems to deny that talk of this sort can make sense. While such objections are not fatal to the realist view, they are compelling grounds for caution. Considerations such as these take us to the heart of the matter. In what follows, I argue for the rejection of both the 'standard' and the 'sceptical-realist' views, and for their replacement with something truer to Hume's intentions, and to the overall structure of his argument in Book One, Part III of the *Treatise*. The crucial interpretive difficulty, as I see it, lies in making some consistent sense of Hume's account of the origin of our idea of necessity and his endorsement of a view of Newtonian science as advancing, in some sense, beyond the mere redescription of phenomena. Whether or not Hume can, in good faith, avoid being committed to the view that in talking of causes or causal connections we are somehow making a mistake remains then, for the moment, an open question.

It will be useful to begin by seeking some perspective on Hume's general strategy and the procedure he follows in deriving the two definitions of cause and in framing his explanation of the origin of our idea of necessity. In Section II of Part III, Hume sets out to 'explain fully' the relation of cause and effect, and, that we might 'reason justly', to trace to its source the idea of causation 'concerning which we reason'(T.74). Hume's concern is with the relation by which the mind is engaged when it makes causal inferences. Hume is in no doubt as to the importance of this relation. It is the only one of the three natural relations depending 'not upon the mere ideas' which involves a form of 'reasoning' as distinct from mere 'perception'(T.73). All our reasonings concerning matters of fact, including our reasonings on and about causation, turn out to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. Its effects are very special. Cause and effect is the only relation which can be 'traced beyond our senses' to inform us of 'existences and objects' which we do not see or feel(T.74). Of the three 'natural' forms of association, only causation produces belief. Hume's interest is, for reasons obvious from the sort of project he is engaged in, directed towards an analysis of this important relation. Hume's analysis is, importantly and transparently, from the beginning of Part III, an analysis of the relation itself, as well as of the idea 'concerning which we reason'. It is a serious mistake to think of Hume as being wholly, or primarily, concerned with the analysis of linguistic meaning. The picture, for Hume, is much broader, and much less negative.

I have argued that Hume's argument concerning induction does not commit him to a radically sceptical view of causal inference. The argument, I suggested, should be read as part of an extended defence of the role the imagination plays in our cognitive lives. Hume's argument arises as one phase, albeit an important one, of the analysis of the causal relation he began in Section II. We have already seen the value of taking Hume's discussion of causation as one move in a more far-reaching and ambitious enterprise. Hume provides a useful summary of the conclusions of this phase of his discussion of causation in Section XII. Hume writes: *'That there is nothing in any object, consider'd in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it; and, That even after the observation of the frequent or constant*

*conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience.*'(T.139) This restatement makes clear, once again, the two-stage nature of Hume's argument. Hume concludes, first of all, on the familiar grounds that any effect can be conceived to follow any cause, that it is nothing that reason 'sees' in the cause that makes us infer the effect, and, second of all, that the mind, in making causal inferences, is not determined by the argument-forming faculty of reason. The mind is determined in the transition by certain principles of the imagination or the association of ideas. The conclusion, as I understand it, is a straightforward answer to an important question arising within cognitive psychology. The rejection of reason as the source of the belief that nature will continue uniformly the same is part of Hume's causal account of what faculty of mind produces what mental phenomena. One important corollary of this part of our discussion can be brought out now. Hume can be cleared of the serious charge of having confused the genetic question of the causal explanation of belief with the normative question of its justification(98). Hume, at least for the purposes of Section VI, is much more interested in 'reason' as one possible and plausible answer to the genetic question of what it is that causes us to make inductive inferences. I argued strongly for the view that Hume's primary concern is with the question of whether it is reason or the associative principles of the imagination that causes or determines us to adopt induction. Both of these alternatives are live answers to the same question. In answering the question of what causes us to make causal inferences, Hume is careful not to prejudge the question of the authority or legitimacy of beliefs deriving from either source. Once 'reason' has been rejected, on the grounds that argument cannot produce the principle upon which the inferential faculty of reason would proceed if it determined us, Hume can turn to the other belief-source of which, he says, he has already taken note, the 'natural' principles of the imagination(T.92). It is, he says, the 'principles of union among ideas' which 'make us pass from one object to another, even tho' there is no reason to determine us to that transition'(T.92). Hume is now free to examine the nature of the association and of the belief to which the transition is made. This is the subject of Hume's enquiries in Sections VII, VIII and IX of Book One, Part III.

Hume has quite a lot to say about how and under what conditions the associative principles of the imagination do determine us to make inductive inferences. We need to note not only the manner in which Hume characterises this form of association, but the language he uses to do it. Of particular importance to us is the manner in which Hume distinguishes causation from other sorts of 'natural' association. Hume sketches the sort of distinction he has in mind in Section IX. As already noted, causal inference, for Hume, is a species of the association of ideas in which, uniquely, vivacity is transmitted from an impression to an associate-idea sufficient to make that idea a belief. Belief, for Hume, differs from mere or simple conception in being 'a more vivid and intense conception of an idea, proceeding from its relation to a present impression'(T.103). When any impression becomes present to the mind *'it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a*

*share of its force and vivacity*'(T.98). Association by cause and effect is distinguished by Hume from association by either resemblance or contiguity in terms of the strength of the determination of the mind to pass from one object to another and of the force and vivacity of the related idea. The 'influence' of contiguity and resemblance is 'very feeble and uncertain'(T.109) in comparison with the influence, or, as Hume has it, the 'determination', of cause and effect. Hume explains the power of the original impression to produce a belief in the existence of its associate not 'by its own proper power' but in terms of a background of experienced constant conjunctions. We must 'in every case' have found 'the same impression' to be 'constantly conjoin'd with some other impression'(T.102). It is the repetition of resembling past instances that augments the vivacity of the idea and makes it a belief. It is only because of this effect that association by cause and effect can produce belief. Once the mind has been exposed to a constant conjunction of events, it moves naturally and easily from the idea or impression of one to the idea of the other. The belief which attends 'the present impression, and is produc'd by a number of past impressions and conjunctions', Hume says, arises 'immediately, without any new operation of the reason or imagination'(T.102). The thought passes from impression to idea without 'choice or hesitation'(T.110). When the mind is faced with a perfect correlation of past conjunctions, it is, in effect, determined by custom to infer the existence of one from the appearance of the other(T.156).

The determination of the mind which takes place in causal inference, and which we feel as an impression of reflection, arises from our experience of repetition. The discussion of causal inference and belief in Section VI of Part III concentrated on cases of belief in which the correlation is perfect and the argument is, as Hume says, 'entirely free from doubt and uncertainty'(T.124). In Sections XI to XIII, he shows how the 'same principles', or the same general hypothesis about the causes of belief, can be used to explain the origin of another 'species of reasoning'(T.124) and belief, the evidence for which is 'still attended with uncertainty'. Hume intends these sections to stand in confirmation of the theory outlined in Section VI, and in the following few sections. The sections '*Of the probability of chances*' and '*Of the probability of causes*' show how, when our experience of correlations is 'mixed' or 'imperfect', an 'imperfect belief' is produced(T.135). In these cases, the vivacity transferred from impression to idea-belief is of a lesser degree to that communicated in the case of a perfect correlation, and the attendant conclusion, on the same basis, less probable. Since Hume has explained belief as a matter of custom, founded on the perceived resemblance of pairs of objects, 'tis not strange the want of resemblance shou'd overthrow what custom has establish'd, and diminish the force of the idea, as much as that latter principle encreases it'(T.114). A 'contrariety of experiments' produces not a change in the content of a belief, but a change in its force and vivacity. Probabilities start out as proofs, but weaken in their force and fixity as contrary experiments are found. Where the habit of expectation formed on the basis of past conjunctions is perfect, our ideas, Hume explains, not only have a greater share of force and vivacity, but are of a more settled order(T.108). Our beliefs about such existences

as 'lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory' can only be derived from custom and experienced constant conjunction and so must take on and reflect the orderliness and constancy of the experience upon which they are based. When a 'contrariety of experiments' breaks in upon this constancy, our former confidence is destroyed, and only an, at best, 'imperfect' belief is possible. It is this constancy in our experience that accounts for the 'fixt and unalterable' nature of the ideas we get by causal inference, each of which, Hume says, takes its place in the imagination 'as something solid and real, certain and invariable'(T.110). The same constancy explains the feeling of determination which attends causal association where a correlation has been found to be perfect. In these cases, the causal factors of custom and the association of cause and effect fix or determine rather than merely influence the belief in question. Anything other than constant conjunction in our experience can merely influence the mind in its transitions, producing an impression of reflection of a certain looseness(T.408) in the association. As we will see, Hume picks up the language of psychological determination and reflection again in the crucial Section XIV, '*Of the idea of necessary connexion*'. Hume will use the feeling of determination or constraint we experience in the customary transition from cause to effect in explaining our mistaken view of necessity as a feature of the 'known qualities' of objects.

Hume continues to develop and examine the associationalist causal thesis he argued for in Section VI, in Sections VII and VIII, and in the sections dealing with probability. Hume's account of the causal relation is unflinchingly causal. Causal inference is itself a causal process which can be investigated as we investigate other causal phenomena. It is important to note that this is the way in which Hume thought of his account. As early as Section III, we find Hume presenting an account of the relation, and of the idea of necessary connection which enters into it, which is, in Fogelin's words, 'transparently causal'(99). Hume's analysis of the relation has been explicitly causal, and explicitly couched in causal terms, since Section III of Part III. Hume's theory of causation is itself causal. When Hume sets out to hunt down our idea of the causal relation, and, of necessary connection, in particular, he turns immediately to the impressions which are the causes of the simple ideas in question. Hume's conclusions in Part III are the result of a sequence of reflexive causal inferences. As I will argue shortly, and in much greater depth, Hume is presenting a causal explanation of how and under what conditions we come to think of two objects or events as causally connected. He goes on to offer a causal account of the idea of necessity, and a definition of causation as a natural relation in which the causal term 'determines' occurs(100). Hume's procedure here seems worryingly circular, and, indeed, would be, if Hume was offering a definition of cause in anything like a contemporary sense of the term(101). The psychological relation of ideas to which Hume appeals in the second definition of a cause is itself a causal relation. It is not, however, clear that Hume has that much to worry about, even on the basis of this statement of the case. Hume has a number of options open to him in avoiding the charge of circularity. He can either argue that what occurs in the definition is not the term but the impression of

determination(102), or he can identify cases of determination by appealing to the feature of constant conjunction adverted to in the first definition(103). This second alternative would be in line with the self-referential nature of Hume's account. What is clear is that Hume does not regard the presence of the term as a defect of his definition, but, in Baier's words, 'as a part of the self-referential subtlety of the whole account'(104). A good deal depends upon the conditions under which Hume thinks a definition of a relation has been successful. Hume would be in more of a difficulty if he thought of definition in what Kemp Smith calls 'the strict logical sense'(105), the sense in which the definition states the precise and complete meaning of the term. Doubts Hume has as to the adequacy of the definitions, and their appeal to 'objects foreign to the cause', might suggest that he does not think of them in this way. Hume's definitions are stated, it seems to me, in terms of what has to be the case in order for a causal relation to be successfully identified. This is not quite what we would now expect of a definition. The issues here are complex. Before we can tackle them head-on, we need a greater grasp of how Hume thought of them, and how they come to arise in his argument. We need, in particular, to look to the text for more evidence of how Hume thought of definitions and of the conditions under which he thought a definition adequate or successful.

Hume tells us early on in the *Treatise* that our ideas of relations are among the more remarkable effects of the association of ideas(T.13). Our ideas of the relations which guide our associations of ideas are themselves the products of association. It is because the causal relation is a natural relation that we can reason upon it and draw inferences from it(T.94). One object is 'naturally' related to another if the idea or impression of the one leads the mind naturally, or as a matter of course, to form an idea of the other. It is cause as a natural relation that leads us to draw inferences about matters of fact and, so, guides us in forming our idea of cause as a 'philosophical' relation, a relation 'implying contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction'(T.94). Our idea of the causal relation is itself the result of reflexive causal inferences founded on the natural relation of cause and effect. The distinction between natural and philosophical relations is of the utmost importance to Hume. All relations, according to Hume, are philosophical relations. To say of two objects that they are related by a philosophical relation, is to say that any relation at all holds between them. Among these relations which, Hume appears to think, number seven in all, there are some relations by which one idea 'naturally introduces' another in the imagination(T.13). Of the three natural relations or principles of association, resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect, we find by experience, 'that belief arises only from causation, and that we can draw no inference from one object to another, except they be connected by this relation'(T.107). Hume undertakes an analysis of this relation in order to show how we are able to form inferences and derive new beliefs about matters of fact which take us beyond what we either see or feel. It is with the source of the idea of this relation that Hume is concerned from near the outset of Part III, and which Hume has already gone a significant way to discovering by the time he comes to discuss induction in Section VI.

Hume tells us that the idea of the causal relation 'must be deriv'd from some *relation* among objects'(T.75). Hume's interest is in the relations which obtain between those objects or events which we consider to be causally connected. He finds the causal relation to involve the relations of contiguity and temporal priority, together with another, rather more mysterious, relation. Of these three relations, which Hume believes to be 'essential' to our idea of causation, it is the element of necessity or necessary connection in which he is principally interested. Hume gives this relation special attention, beginning in Section III in which he discusses our belief in the necessity of causes. The idea of necessary connection is of special importance to Hume, as it was to a number of other philosophers, notably, Nicolas Malebranche. It was this connection that was thought to license our projection of past regularities into the future. The foundation necessary connection was thought to provide for inferences from cause to effect gives Hume's pursuit of the notion its rationale. Hume eventually argues that we can have no perception of necessary connection in nature on the grounds that such a perception would 'amount to a demonstration, and would imply the absolute impossibility for the one object not to follow, or to be conceived not to follow upon the other'(T.161-2). This is the thesis which is usually thought to constitute the core of Hume's theory of causation. But Hume was not the first philosopher to argue against the possibility that necessary connections could be given in experience. Malebranche, for example, finding the notion of a necessary connection between mind and body 'unintelligible', argued that we could get no idea of power from our notions of body and mind, and turned, instead, to the causal activity of God for the source of the idea(106). He argued that the mind perceives a necessary connection 'only between the will of an infinitely perfect being and its effects. Therefore, it is only God who is the true cause and who truly has the power to move bodies'(107). Malebranche believed that since all causal connections are necessary, and no other cause is *necessarily* followed by its effect, the only cause is the will of God. The deity is supposed, in Hume's words, to be 'the prime mover of the universe' who 'by a continu'd exertion of omnipotence, supports its existence, and successively bestows on it all those motions, and configurations, and qualities, with which it is endow'd'(T.159). What we think of as causation in nature, according to Malebranche, just is the regular succession of sorts of objects or events(108). Natural causes 'are only *occasional* causes that act through the force and efficacy of the will of God'(109). There is no doubt that Hume's account of causation owes a number of significant debts to Malebranche(110). Above all, Malebranche took the important step of denying intelligibility to a number of presumed causal connections. Nevertheless, Hume appears to want to resist the regularity thesis about causation to which he believes Malebranche and the Cartesians committed(E.14). The conclusion that all there is to causation just is regularity of succession is, Hume thinks, unavoidable on the basis of the rejection of innate ideas and Malebranche's assumption that ideas reveal how reality is. The 'supposition of a deity', Hume writes, 'can serve us in no stead, in accounting for that idea of agency, which we search for in vain in all the objects, which are presented to our senses, or

which are internally conscious of in our own minds'(T.160). If we do have an idea of power, it must be derived from the known qualities of objects, but, since there is 'nothing in known qualities, which can produce' such an idea, we must conclude, on the basis of an assumption like the one Hume attributes to Malebranche, that there are no real causal connections in nature. Hume, I suggest, remains critical of Malebranche and of the crucial assumption he believes him to be making. The interesting question for interpreters is whether Hume makes this assumption, or one like it, which would commit him to a regularity thesis about causation, the thesis which has been so often attributed to him. I will argue that he does not. I have already suggested a number of textual reasons for rejecting the regularity-theorist reading of Hume on causation. Some of these will be developed more fully. The chief difficulty facing my own reading lies, as we will see, in reconciling Hume's account of our idea of necessary connection with his talk of hidden and concealed natural causes, and with his professed endorsement of Newtonian science.

Finding no impression among the '*known qualities* of objects' which could account for the idea of necessary connection, Hume turns to an examination of other questions which, he hopes, might 'afford a hint' concerning the nature of the idea(T.78). As early as Part III, Section III, Hume is prepared to reject the notion that any idea or relation of ideas could rationally ground our causal inferences. Having dispensed with the possibility of finding in the objects any impression which could account for the idea of necessary connection, Hume is free to turn to the questions of why we conclude that particular causes must *necessarily* have particular effects, and of what is the nature of the *inference* we make from one to the other. These are questions which Hume, in one way or another, continues to pursue throughout the rest of Part III. His task remains that of explaining the nature and origin of our idea of necessary connection. Having argued against the possibility of finding any necessary connection in nature which could serve as the basis for such an idea, Hume is forced to advance on his quarry by a rather less direct route. Hume's concern in Section VI, and in the sections which immediately follow it, is with the nature, causes and effects of inductive reasoning. These sections constitute Hume's complete explanation of how and under what circumstances we come to form beliefs and draw inferences about unobserved matters of fact. As we have already noted, the important change in the direction of Hume's argument came much earlier. As early as Section III, Hume abandoned the search for an impression or idea of necessity in the objects which could serve as the basis for the projection of past regularities into the future, turning instead to the question of how the idea of necessary connection can arise from causal inference(T.78). Hume has already armed himself with most of the materials he will need to show how our idea of necessity arises, and how we come to take it for something that it is not, by the time he introduces his discussion of inductive argument. The suggestion at the outset of Section VI is that the 'new relation' of constant conjunction will somehow supply the deficit in our idea of cause. Hume's considered view is that our complex idea of the causal relation comprises ideas of the relations of contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction, as well, it

seems, as the further element of necessary connection. Hume promises that "it will appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion"(T.88). He is, however, faced with the problem of explaining how 'from the mere repetition of any past impression' any 'new original idea, such as that of a necessary connexion' can arise(T.88). This is the problem with which Hume introduced his discussion of inductive inference, only to leave off giving a direct answer until Section XIV. Hume's worry took the form of explaining how repetition could produce the 'original' idea of necessary connection. In Section VI, Hume attempted to explain the nature and importance of the form of inference from which, as he will go on to argue, that idea arises. It turns out that by following Hume's rather indirect route we can come to see how the idea can be derived from constant conjunction, or, more accurately, from the determination of the mind by which we are constrained to form the idea of a certain object upon the appearance of its usual attendant(T.156). To see how we get this extra element we need to turn to Hume's argument concerning necessary connection and to the lengthy Section XIV of which Hume's two definitions of causation are the eventual summation.

Hume finds that the transition we make from observed to unobserved matters of fact occurs only after we have observed a constant conjunction of two sorts of thing, and received an impression of one of the conjuncts. When the cause is present, Hume writes in the *Abstract*, 'the mind, from habit, immediately passes to the conception and belief of the usual effect'(T.656). Beliefs about unobserved matters of fact arise from custom, as a result of experienced repetition. Custom presupposes the perceived resemblance between sequences of events. When we observe either one of a pair of objects found to be constantly conjoined in our experience, there is little we can do to prevent the idea of its 'usual attendant' occurring, and no process of reasoning can either lead us to or prevent us from forming that idea in these circumstances. Custom alone 'determines' us to make the past the 'standard of our future judgements'. All our 'reasonings in the conduct of life' are of this nature(T.650). There are three circumstances that Hume finds requisite to every cause. In considering the motion communicated from one billiard ball to another, as 'perfect an instance' of the relation of cause and effect 'as any which we know'(T.649), Hume writes, we 'find nothing but contiguity, priority in the cause, and constant conjunction'(T.656). It is, however, 'commonly suppos'd', that beside these circumstances, there is a necessary connection between the cause and effect and that the cause possesses 'a *power, or force, or energy*(111). It is this supposition - the notion that a certain cause not only will, but must, have a certain effect - that Hume is interested in explaining(112). The question of the idea which is to be annexed to these terms is the chief difficulty in Hume's account. Finding himself, once more, obstructed in his pursuit of the idea of cause by the absence of any perceived connection between cause and effect, Hume can only repeat the question which he last posed directly in Section VI: '*viz. What is our idea of necessity, when we say that two objects are necessarily connected together*'(T.155). Hume promised that it would turn out that necessary connection would depend on the

inference, rather than the inference's depending on the necessary connection(T.88). He is now in a position to tell us how, on the basis of observed repetition, we get the idea of necessity we have, and how we project that idea back onto the regularities which caused it.

Hume's first step is to remind us of the principle formulated earlier, and noted at length in Chapter One, that every idea is copied from some preceding impression of sensation or reflection. As we have no idea that is not derived from an impression, we must look for the impression from which the idea of necessity is derived. Hume observes that in all single instances in which two objects are supposed to be placed in the relation of cause and effect, there is no third relation beside contiguity and succession from which the idea of necessary connection might be derived. Hume refers us back to his earlier argument to show that demonstrative reasoning can never make us conclude that a cause is always necessary to every new existence(T.78-82). A perception of necessary connection in nature would 'amount to a demonstration' and, so, would imply the impossibility of one object not following upon the other(T.161-2). But, as Hume has already argued, any cause and effect pair being distinguishable, and, hence, separable, it is always conceivable, and, therefore, possible, for any cause to have any effect whatever. All our reasonings *a priori* 'will never be able to show us any foundation for this preference'(E.30). Hume turns instead to classes of instances, adding the constant conjunction of objects within a class, to the relations of contiguity and succession already adverted to(113). At first sight, Hume says, 'this seems to serve but little to my purpose. The reflection on several instances only repeats the same objects; and therefore can never give rise to a new idea. But upon farther enquiry I find, that the repetition is not in every particular the same, but produces a new impression, and by that means the idea, which I at present examine.'(T.155)

Only after the repeated observation of conjunctions of pairs of events do we form an impression of necessary connection. In cases where the same object is always conjoined with the same event, the mind is, upon the appearance of the object, '*determin'd* by custom to consider its usual attendant, and to consider it in a stronger light upon account of its relation to the first object'(T.156). In cases like this, one receives a new impression or sentiment, a feeling of 'determination', which, Hume says, 'affords me the idea of necessity'(T.156). The impression of necessity arises from that circumstance in which classes of cases differ from singular cases. After frequent repetition of resembling instances, the mind is determined to move from one idea or impression to the idea of its usual conjunct, and it is from our impression of this feeling of determination that the idea of necessary connection arises. The impression from which the idea of necessity is derived is an impression of reflection. Since 'reason' or, as Hume puts it in the *Enquiry*, '*reasoning a priori*'(E.27), can never give rise to it, the idea of necessity must be derived from experience, and, as there is no impression convey'd by our senses which can produce the idea, it must be derived from 'some internal impression'. There is no 'internal impression' or impression of reflection 'which has any

relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity.'(T.165) We must either concede that we have no idea whatever of 'force and energy' or necessity, and that these words are therefore without signification, or concur in Hume's view that 'they can mean nothing but that determination of the thought, acquir'd by habit, to pass from the cause to its usual effect'(T.657).

Hume's conclusion, and its relation to the remainder of the argument and to the two definitions, need to be considered with some care. Hume has argued that while we have an impression and idea of causal necessity as an internal impression or feeling of determination to pass from one idea to another, we have no impression or idea of necessity or necessary connection as an extra relation found in or between pairs of objects related by contiguity, priority and constant conjunction. The idea of necessity we have is not produced by any new instance of relation found to obtain between the related objects. The 'several instances of resembling conjunctions' which lead us to the idea of necessary connection 'are in themselves totally distinct from each other, and have no union but in the mind, which observes them, and collects their ideas'(T.165). The 'repetition of similar instances' does, nevertheless, give rise to a new impression. Hume describes the idea of necessity as 'the effect of this observation' of instances of resembling conjunction, and as 'nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another'(T.165). To a degree, it is quite clear what Hume has in mind in this and in similar passages in the *Enquiry*(E.75). But there is some considerable equivocation in what Hume wants to say here and in how he says it. He appears to tell us that the experience of constant conjunction gives rise to the idea of necessity by producing a new internal impression of the determination of the mind to pass from one object to the thought of another in cases where a perfect correlation of events has been observed. Since, as Hume has already suggested, mere repetition can produce nothing new in the objects themselves, it must be from some new impression *in the mind*(T.165) that the idea arises. This new impression, it seems, is, simply, the determination of the mind to pass from one object to the idea of its usual attendant. Hume is not entirely consistent in what he says here, nor does he appear entirely comfortable with it. We can easily see why if we consider, more closely, the implications of what Hume seems to be saying.

Hume writes of the determination of the mind to pass from an idea or impression of some object or event to a belief or idea of some other object with which it has been regularly conjoined. This describes a typical Humean cause-and-effect pair. In this case the relation is between one complex mental event, the observation of constant conjunction and a present perception of one of the conjuncts, and another, the belief that its usual attendant will occur. The remarkable feature of the above passage is that Hume appears, at first sight, at least, to identify what he terms 'the determination of the mind' directly with the impression of necessity or necessary connection from which the idea arises. The 'determination of the mind to pass

from one object to its usual attendant' must, Hume says, 'be the same with power and efficacy'(T.165) Necessity, he adds, 'is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another'(T.165). He writes, in the *Enquiry*, that 'the customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant' is the 'sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion'(E.75). This is not only puzzling, but is, as Stroud points out, taken literally, quite incoherent. Stroud observes that Hume appears to be arguing 'that, since the idea of necessary connection comes into the mind only as a result of one mental occurrence's causing another, and since according to the theory of ideas the cause or source of every idea is an impression, therefore the one event's causing another *is* the impression from which the idea of necessary connection is derived'(114). The suggestion requires that all that is understood by 'determination of the mind' is one event in the mind causing another, in the way I have described above. This is even more explicit in the passage from the *Enquiry*. Hume seems to say that since one mental event causing another is the cause of the idea of necessity, it must be an impression of cause or determination from which the idea of causal necessity arises. If this is all Hume has in mind, then his position is incoherent because, as he has amply shown, it can make no sense to talk of one event's causing another being an impression. It is difficult to see how the internal impression can be the determination of the mind. A transition from 'one object to its usual attendant' is not an additional impression. When Hume writes of a customary transition from one to another he has in mind only the regular and orderly conjunction of events in the mind. We can speak of the occurrence of pair of events, and of the order in which they occur, and 'trace up' the impressions to which these ideas correspond, but we can have no impression, and hence, no idea, of one *causing* the other.

To be fair to Hume, he makes other, more plausible, or, at least, more consistent, attempts to characterise the impression in question, though these too have their difficulties. Hume seems, at times, to want to suggest that the idea of necessity is derived from a feeling of determination, an impression of the connection between a cause-and-effect pair. The suggestion is that rather than identify the inference or determination of the mind with an impression, Hume thinks we have an awareness or impression of the causal or necessary connection between mental events from which the idea of necessity can be derived(115). A number of passages support this reading. Hume sometimes says that we 'immediately feel a determination of the mind'(T.165). In the *Enquiry*, Hume writes that 'we *feel* in the mind' the 'connexion' by which 'the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist'(E.75). There is a strong suggestion in this last passage that what we have is an impression of necessary connection between two events in the mind. This, again, is rather perplexing. Hume provides us with textual grounds for ascribing more than one position to him, but, this alternative, like the last, has little to recommend itself, either to us or to Hume. The reasons for this should already be obvious.

Taken literally, Hume would appear to allow that there is at least one example of a causal connection between events of which we can have an impression. As I have already noted, this is not an alternative that Hume would have been willing to tolerate. Hume expressly denies that there are any necessary connections, whether between physical or mental objects or events, that we can apprehend. His reasons for saying so have to do with the impossible consequences of any such apprehension(116). He clearly argues for the thesis that there is no independent impression of power accompanying the motions of the body or the acts of the mind. His most explicit statement of this position occurs in the *Enquiry*, shortly before his restatement of the two definitions of cause presented in the *Treatise*. It might be thought, Hume writes, that we 'are every moment conscious of internal power' when we 'feel...by the simple command of our will, we can move the organs of our body, or direct the faculties of our mind' and that from this apprehension we 'acquire the idea of power or energy'(E.64). However, when we proceed to examine this 'pretension' we find that this 'influence' is a 'fact, which, like all other natural events, can be known only by experience, and can never be foreseen from any apparent energy or power in the cause, which connects it with the effect, and renders one the infallible consequence of the other'(E.64-5). To apprehend a necessary connection between mental events would be to apprehend a 'fact' which would, so to speak, cast a writ over all future events of the sort, and, for Hume, of course, no apprehension can have this consequence. We may conclude from the whole, Hume writes, 'that our idea of power is not copied from any sentiment or consciousness of power within ourselves, when we give rise to animal motion', nor are we 'conscious of a power or energy in our own minds, when, by an act or command of our will, we raise up a new idea, fix the mind to the contemplation of it, turn it on all sides, and at last dismiss it for some other idea'(E.67). It is our failure to find any relation of necessary connection between causally related objects that gives rise to Hume's problem in the first place.

It is clear that Hume could not mean to say that our idea of necessity is derived from an impression of the necessary connection between two mental events. I do not think that either one of the two alternatives sketched above captures Hume's meaning. We can bring out quite clearly why Hume, on occasions, writes as though they do. Hume could mean, quite simply, and rather more plausibly, that the mind, in making its customary transition from cause to effect, or effect to cause, has, in addition to the enlivened idea of one of two conjoined events, a certain feeling of constraint or determination in the transition. It is this feeling of expectation or inevitability that we then project onto pairs of conjoined events in describing one as the cause of the other. This avoids saying that one event's causing another is the impression in question, and need not commit Hume to saying, as, at times, he appears to, that the impression from which the idea of necessity arises is itself an impression of necessary connection. It seems quite clear that Hume would not want to say either of these two things. This impression or feeling of determination enters the picture only after we have had experience of the constant conjunction of pairs of resembling perceptions and have an

impression of one of them. This is how Hume explains the move we make from the perceived repetition of 'similar instances' to the new impression of necessity. We do not get the impression every time we observe a conjunction of objects. This part of what Hume has to say is quite clear. The idea of necessity is derived from an impression we have only because we are caused to infer an effect from a cause on the basis of experienced constant conjunction. This is one important thread in the story which leads up to the two definitions of a cause. Hume states his position relatively clearly. He has more difficulty in saying what exactly it is, if anything, the mind contributes to this relation.

The gist of what Hume wants to say is fairly clear. As we have seen, Hume makes reference to the determination of the mind, and to what determines it, throughout the latter sections of Part III of Book One, and in Section VI, in particular. His use of the term is always roughly the same. Hume tells us that in cases where we have observed a constant conjunction of events and have an impression of one of the events 'the thought is always determin'd to pass' to the idea of its conjunct 'without any choice or hesitation'(T.110). We have an impression or feeling accompanying the transition which can be described as a feeling of determination or constraint. The 'objects' which the relation of cause and effect presents seem 'fixt and unalterable'(T.110). The association 'feels' constrained in cases where there has been a perfect correlation among past events. We have a feeling of the inevitability of the transition which we project onto the world in the form of an expectation that, given a constant conjunction of As and Bs, and a present impression of an A, a B must occur. The problem for Hume lies in characterising this feeling of inevitability as an impression without saying that at least one relation of necessity has been found to obtain independently between objects in the mind. Hume wants to avoid suggesting that we are aware of one object causing another or that we have an impression of necessary connection between those objects. He means to say that the source of our idea of necessity just is this feeling of constraint or inevitability, this impression of reflection, that arises after the observation of the constant conjunction of events. The complexities set in when Hume attempts, as, on the basis of his theory of ideas, he must, to account for this feeling of inevitability in terms of an impression of reflection. He wants to be able to say that in inference we feel we are determined to form the belief we do, that we have an impression that this transition is inevitable, but he needs to say this in terms of an impression of inevitability. It is not surprising that he is led, on occasions, to characterise this impression as being something like a direct experience of necessary connection, although, as we have seen, this is the answer he wants, at all cost, to avoid giving. He finds himself pressed to say that, although we have no impression of necessity, we have an impression of inevitability or determination which is something like it. He tells us far too little about how he thinks this case differs from those other cases which he has dismissed. What Hume needs is some way of expressing the thought that we experience the transition from cause to effect as inevitable without saying that we have a direct impression of inevitability. Hume, however, remains clear on one important point. We get the idea of necessity only because our minds

react in certain ways to certain features of our experience, features which include contiguity, succession and constant conjunction, but not necessary connection. Hume's main interest lies in the epistemological question of how the mind is led, upon the 'appearance' of one object or event, 'to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist'(E.75), and to project this expectation and this belief onto the world. His concern with the question of why we ascribe necessity to things in the world which exhibit none of the relevant features tends, for the most part, to express itself through the search for the idea of the relation which we so ascribe. Nevertheless, the explanation of how we come to believe that a certain event must occur on the basis of the occurrence of another is the epistemological core of Hume's account. His theory of ideas betrays him into attempting to give an explanation of the content of this 'internal impression' of inevitability which the constraints he has imposed on himself would seem not to allow for.

The central thought here is clear enough. In describing a relationship between two events as causal we project a response we have to other features of our experience onto a particular conjunction of events. These features include contiguity, priority, and constant conjunction, but not necessary connection. The repeated experience of the regular succession of 'similar' sorts of events produces an association of ideas, which results in the 'determination' of the mind to pass from the idea or impression of an event of one sort to the enlivened idea of its associate. We do, however, 'commonly suppose' there to be a fourth feature or 'quality', which we tend to ascribe to objects so related - what Hume describes synonymously as power, efficacy or necessary connexion. He defines power as 'that very circumstance in the cause, by which it is enabled to produce the effect'(E.67-8); and efficacy as 'that very quality, which makes [causes] be follow'd by their effects'(T.156). According to Hume, we have no idea of necessity as such. We get the idea of power or efficacy from 'what we feel internally' when the mind is led 'upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant'(E.75). The mind mistakes the idea of necessity which it does possess for an idea of necessary connection as 'that quality' in or between 'the objects' which makes causes 'be follow'd by their effects'. Exposed to the constant conjunction of resembling pairs of objects the mind cannot help but form an idea of one upon the appearance of the other. It is this reaction to certain regular features of our experience that the mind projects back onto the world when it describes one event as the cause of another.

The idea of necessity which we ascribe to the objects and events around us derives from the impression the mind gets when it is caused, by a 'perfect' habit of association, to infer the existence of one object from the impression of another of which it is conscious. Hume accounts for this association, and for its peculiar 'fixity' and 'settled order', in terms of the regular succession of 'similar instances'. He attempts to show that we would never get the idea of necessity were it not for certain events in the mind which occur as a result of our observation of the constant conjunction of similar events. The idea we get when our minds are

caused to infer an effect from a cause, or a cause from an effect, is projected beyond its source in the mind onto events in the world to give us some of our mistaken ideas about necessity. Hume concludes that '[U]pon the whole, necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it possible for us ever to form the most distant idea of it, consider'd as a quality in bodies. Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effect and from effects to causes, according to their experienc'd union'(T.165-6). The tendency to ascribe this relation to the objects is explained by the 'great propensity' the mind has 'to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin them with any internal impressions, which they occasion'(T.167). This same propensity 'is the reason, why we suppose necessity and power to lie in the objects we consider, not in the mind, that considers them'(T.167). In showing up the falsity of this supposition, Hume claims to have uncovered the 'most violent' paradox, that the 'efficacy or energy of causes is neither plac'd in the causes themselves, nor in the deity, nor in the concurrence of these two principles; but belongs entirely to the soul, which considers the union of two or more objects in all past instances'(T.166).

Hume is, at last, in a position to 'collect all the different parts of this reasoning, and by joining them together form an exact definition of the relation of cause and effect'(T.169). He now presents his two definitions which, he says, present 'a different view of the same object'(T.170). We may define a cause, according to Hume, either as philosophical or a natural relation. He proceeds to give the following definitions of a cause as '[A]n object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter'; and as 'an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form a more lively idea of the other'(T.170). It is not immediately obvious how these definitions relate to the argument concerning necessary connection of which they are the outcome. Hume presented that argument as a search for the idea of necessary connection which, he says, makes so essential a part of our idea of cause. The implication of Hume's earlier remarks seemed to be that necessity must play some part in any adequate definition of causation(T.77). This is the view taken by Kemp Smith(117). Yet it must be admitted that the first definition contains no reference whatever to necessity, while the second may be said to do so, but only obliquely. I have already discussed some of the difficulties arising from Hume's double-definition of cause(118). I want to consider some of the interpretations which have been pressed upon Hume as a result of these difficulties, before attempting to resolve them.

Hume's two definitions of cause are, as we saw, neither intensionally nor extensionally equivalent. The upshot of this is that if we take Hume's definitions to express, or be intended to express, the full meaning of the term, then only one, or neither, but not both, of the definitions can be strictly correct. A number of commentators have latched onto Hume's

distinction between philosophical and natural definition, in order to identify Hume's theory of causation exclusively with the first of Hume's two definitions(119). According to Robinson, only the first of Hume's two definitions is to be regarded as the correct one(120). Only the first philosophical definition should be read as Hume's 'definition of the cause-effect relation' embodying, as, according to Robinson, it does, Hume's analysis of the causal relation 'as nothing more than an instance of general uniformity of concomitance between two classes of particular occurrences, and as quite independent of any association of ideas which may or may not exist in human minds'(121). The second 'definition' is not strictly a definition at all, but 'simply a restatement of the proposition that the (already defined) cause-effect relation is a *natural* relation, in a somewhat elliptical formulation'(122). Hume's chief interest, in the argument concerning necessary connection, has been to show how we are mistaken in supposing the causal relation to involve necessary connection, and to explain the origin of this 'philosophical error'. This is roughly the standard or Humean view of Hume on causation. Hume is supposed to have offered a metaphysical thesis about causation as something existing in the objects, arguing that causation just is the regular succession of phenomena. The causal relation is, according to Robinson, just a philosophical relation, and to define it as a philosophical relation is, simply, to define it. Hume's theory of causation can be aptly characterised as a sort of reductive analysis of the concept of cause, according to which, propositions about causes can be analysed into ones about regularity of succession, without any loss of content. All we can either understand or mean by causation just is the regular succession of events.

There are convincing textual grounds for resisting the view that Hume identified causation exclusively with the philosophical definition of a cause. In the first place, Hume continues to insist, both before and after his statement of the two definitions, that necessity or necessary connection 'makes an essential part of causation'(T.407). Hume is supposed to have used the second definition merely to restate that the already-defined causal relation is a natural relation, but this is scarcely credible on the evidence of the text(123). Hume describes the two definitions as each presenting a 'different view of the same object'(T.170). In concluding Section XIV, Hume reiterates his contention that both these statements be considered as definitions of the same relation(T.172). He gives us no reason whatever to suppose that the second definition is, in actual fact, only a psychological comment on causation as defined in the first, and to characterise his intentions in this way is to seriously misrepresent them. There are good textual grounds for thinking that Hume could not have thought his first definition alone sufficient to define causation in the sense of giving the full and exact meaning of the term. In Section II, Hume identifies necessary connection as one of three relations essential to the relation of cause and effect, describing it as being 'of much greater importance, than either of the other two'(T.77). In the *Enquiry*, he writes that it is not possible 'to *define* a cause, without comprehending, as a part of the definition, a *necessary connexion* with its effect'(E.95). Hume has argued that the impression from which the idea of necessity is derived

is the impression of reflection or feeling of determination the mind gets as a result of experienced repetition, yet neither the idea, nor the impression from which it arises, is mentioned in the first definition. We have decisive grounds for rejecting the view that Hume thought that the first definition alone could adequately or correctly define causation(124).

Hume argues that we can never perceive a necessary connection between two objects or events in any single instance of conjunction. But he does not conclude from this that we have no idea of necessity. Necessity, he says, is something 'that exists in the mind, not in objects'(T.165). This does not, and cannot, mean that, for Hume, we do actually perceive the necessity of the connection between events in the mind. Hume wants to avoid saying this. If it were true, we could get the idea of necessity directly from an independent internal impression of necessary connection, without the need of the experience of constant conjunction. Hume wants to say that we only get the idea of necessity because of certain happenings in the mind which are the result of certain features of our experience. We mistakenly take an idea which is the indirect result of the regularities displayed in nature for an idea of the cause of those regularities. The suggestion on the table is that this projectivism of Hume's somehow commits him to the sceptical view that all there is to causation is regularity of succession. Hume is supposed to have argued, on the basis of an assumption John Wright identifies with Malebranche's account of necessary connection(125), that because we have no idea of necessary connection in the objects there are no such connections in nature. Malebranche is supposed to have taken the line that our ideas adequately represent reality, and, argued, on that basis, and on the basis of his criterion for the apprehension of a 'true cause', for the rejection of any causal connection in nature apart from that between God's will and its effects. Wright argues that this first assumption is not one that Hume makes. There are good grounds for taking Wright's suggestion seriously. Hume makes quite clear in the *Enquiry* the distinction he has in mind between the mere redescription of phenomena and their explanation in terms of unobserved causal 'powers', 'laws and forces'(E.14). There is no doubt that Hume intends to endorse the latter. Another remarkable feature of the *Enquiry* is the number of references Hume makes to 'hidden', 'secret' and 'conceal'd' causal powers in nature(126). This could hardly be said to fit with the view that, for Hume, causation in nature just is the regular succession of events. It suggests quite strongly that Hume does not have it in mind to deny that causes in nature exist.

This is the line taken by Wright. Wright argues strongly for what he calls the 'sceptical-realist' view of Hume on causation, the view that, for Hume, there is something more to causation in nature than mere regularity of succession. Hume 'advocates and operates in terms of a belief in real physical causation and a representative theory of perception' and takes these to be the 'important ontological beliefs underlying science'(127). Wright takes the view that Hume adopted Malebranche's understanding that knowledge of necessary connection is essential to an awareness of causal power, together with his conclusion that all we ever perceive in nature

are constant conjunctions of events, only to resist the view that this is all there is to causation in the objects(128). We have already noted evidence in support of the view that Hume is not a regularity theorist about causation. We need to consider what weight we are to attach to such evidence. Wright's reading rests largely on his understanding of Hume's attack on what he understands to be the view of Malebranche. Hume's discussion '*Of the idea of necessary connexion*' is, according to Wright, directed 'against contemporary theories which sought "to rob nature, and all created beings, of every power"(E.71)'(129). Malebranche gives a number of arguments to show that apparent causal relations between natural phenomena are not 'true causes', but only occasions on which the 'one single cause that is truly a cause' has acted in effecting change(130). All so-called causal relations, or 'secondary causes', in nature, and all the volitions of the mind, are what Malebranche calls 'occasional causes'(131). The only true or primary cause is God. This, in very broad strokes, is the argument Hume criticises in the *Treatise*(T.159-161). Hume is supposed by Wright to have attacked not only Malebranche's doctrine that causal power, being absent from matter, 'must lie in the DEITY'(T.159), but the assumption Wright alleges Malebranche made that all ideas, whether of matter or of the supreme being, are adequate to the reality they represent. Something like this thesis may be what Malebranche has in mind when he writes that a true cause 'is one such that the mind perceives a necessary connection between it and its effect'(132). It is on the basis of this assumption that Malebranche is supposed to have drawn the conclusion that there is no 'power or efficacy in any object...neither in body or spirit, neither in superior nor inferior natures'(T.160). This is the conclusion Hume is understood to be rejecting. According to Wright, although Hume endorses Malebranche's understanding of true causation as involving necessary connection, he resists the suggestion Wright ascribes to Malebranche that our ignorance of such causes implies their non-existence. Hume argues that 'the principle of innate ideas being allowed to be false', the supposition of a deity 'can serve us in no stead, in accounting for that idea of agency, which we search for in vain in all the objects, which are presented to our senses, or which we are internally conscious of in our own minds'(T.160). The same course of reasoning which led 'these philosophers'(133) to conclude that matter is not 'endow'd with any efficacious principle, because 'tis impossible to discover in it such a principle', ought also to have led them to 'exclude it from the supreme being', and, so, to conclude that 'they have no adequate idea of efficacy in any object'(T.160). The upshot of this, and the alleged assumption that our ideas acquaint us with the essence God, as well as with the essence of matter, would be the denial of causal power or efficacy to either secondary or primary causes. Hume, according to Wright, wants to challenge this assumption in order to resist the sceptical conclusion that all there is to causation is constant conjunction. While Hume is in agreement with Malebranche in repudiating the suggestion that we have any direct perception of necessary connection between natural or mental events, or, on that basis, any idea of the power by which a cause produces its effects, he resolutely rejects the sceptical conclusion to which he is supposed to have thought Malebranche committed.

Wright reads Hume as adopting Malebranche's suggestion that knowledge of necessary connection is the criterion for awareness of causal power, and endorsing his finding that we find nothing in any single instance of relation by cause and effect which amounts to a perception of necessary connection. Hume argues that the occasionalist theory of causation is committed, on the basis of its assumptions, to a regularity thesis about causation, and then, according to Wright, for the rejection of this conclusion on the basis of a rejection of one of those assumptions. Hume regarded such reasoning as leading to the 'entirely Pyrrhonian' conclusion 'that there are no real forces in nature'(134). Nevertheless, according to Wright, Hume accepted 'the basic Cartesian requirement of a "true" cause, namely, that there must be a necessary connection between cause and effect'(135). This is a surprising conclusion and one, I suggest, which should be resisted. While Wright modifies this conclusion by suggesting that, for Hume, the mind can have a general idea of power only by having an idea of a specific power, I do not think he captures the nub of Hume's argument against occasionalism, or picks up on Hume's attempts to cast doubt on the idea of necessary connection Malebranche uses. According to Wright, when Hume talks of hidden and concealed powers and forces in nature, he means much the same as did Malebranche when he characterised true causation in terms of a relation of ideas. But it seems clear from the way in which Hume presents his critique of occasionalism that it is this idea that he has in mind to place under suspicion. Hume writes that there is no question which has caused more dispute among philosophers than 'this concerning the efficacy of causes', adding that, before entering into these disputes, 'it would not have been improper to have examin'd what idea we have of that efficacy, which is the subject of the controversy'(T.156). Hume's intention, as I read him, is to show that we have no understanding of what it is for one object or event to be causally dependent upon another. This is about as far from the thesis Wright ascribes to him as can be. Wright nevertheless makes several acceptable points. Hume does not accept the assumption that ideas need adequately represent reality, and, it is certainly true that he follows Malebranche in arguing against the possibility of there being any direct perception of necessary connection between causally related events. But Hume nevertheless rejects outright the notion that we have any idea of necessary connection as a relation between ideas. The impression or feeling of determination from which the idea of necessity we have is derived is not an impression of one event's causing another or of the connection between them. Our idea of necessity is simply an idea of that feeling of inevitability or expectation which the mind happens to project onto particular conjunctions of events. Hume's deeper point, in my view, is that we have no idea of necessary connection or causal power along the lines envisaged by Malebranche and the Cartesians. Wright does not pick up on this important thread at all, and he is led, in my opinion, to seriously misrepresent what Hume has to say. Once we have a clearer notion of the subject matter and logic of Hume's argument, it becomes obvious that Hume is not arguing for anything like the sceptical-realist thesis Wright attributes to him.

Wright's reading of Hume on causation has been questioned, and, I think, quite decisively refuted, in a recent article by Martin Bell(136). Bell argues that in order to arrive at his interpretation of Hume on causation, Wright has had to read Hume's critique of occasionalism in a way that requires Hume to have misunderstood Malebranche on an important doctrinal point. *Bell's point is that, having made the mistake in his own reading of Malebranche, Wright is quick to ascribe the same erroneous view to Hume(137).* Hume's criticism of Malebranche's occasionalism is supposed to have taken the form of arguing that, from the absence of any idea of power or necessary connection through our ideas of matter or of the supreme being, and on the basis of the assumption that we are 'perfectly acquainted'(T.159) with the essence of matter and the essence of God through our ideas, Malebranche is committed to the view that there is no power or necessity either in matter or in the supreme being(138). Wright's view is that since Hume accepted the first premise, and rejected the conclusion, he must also have rejected the second premise Wright ascribes to Malebranche. The problem for Wright's view, as Bell points out, is that this is not a premise Malebranche held. Although Malebranche did hold the view that we know bodies through our ideas, and Hume does resist this view, 'he did not hold that we know God through our ideas of him, and he would have denied the premise that Wright thinks Hume attributed to him'(139). Malebranche's own position is fairly clear from the text. He writes that although we know God 'through himself' and 'by a direct and immediate perception', our knowledge of Him 'in this life is very imperfect'. Our knowledge of 'corporeal things', on the other hand, 'is through their ideas, i.e., in God, since only God contains the intelligible world, where ideas of all things are located'(140). Malebranche, in other words, would not be committed to the view that because we have no idea of necessary connection through our idea of God, there are no true causes in reality. Fortunately, we have to hand a more plausible reading of Hume's argument which avoids committing us to the view that he misread Malebranche on a key piece of doctrine(141). What Hume meant, according to Bell, when he complained that 'the same course of reasoning' would lead the occasionalist to the conclusion that there is no causal power at all, once the doctrine of innate ideas was rejected, was 'the use of the doctrine that if the mind cannot perceive necessary connections when it consults its ideas of putative causes and effects, then these are not true, real causes'(142). If the doctrine of innate ideas is false, then the occasionalists would be forced to deny that God is a true cause, on the basis that it is not possible to discover in Him any 'efficacious principle'(T.160). The conclusion follows, for occasionalists, 'precisely because they hold that to discover true causation is to consult one's ideas and perceive that relation of ideas which *they* mean by "necessary connection"'(143).

Bell's view fits neatly with the one I sketched above. Hume's concern in the passages dealing with occasionalism and Malebranche's doctrine of cause is not to do with the avoidance of the regularity outcome that threatens the 'Cartesian' theory of causation, but with the account Malebranche gives of the ideas the mind possesses. On Bell's reading, Hume's target is not the occasionalist denial of the 'efficacious principle' to matter, and the failure of that theory to

avoid extending that thesis to all phenomena, but the criterion Malebranche adopted for the existence of causal power. Malebranche argued that the perception of necessary connection was the criterion for the existence of causal power. Hume objects that, with the doctrine of innate ideas discounted, and given the failure of experience to discover any necessary connections between events, Malebranche and other occasionalists would be committed to the view that there are no true causes, either in matter or in the deity. To avoid so 'absurd and impious' an opinion, the occasionalist need only conclude 'from the very first, that they have no adequate idea of power or efficacy in any object; since neither in body nor spirit, neither in superior nor inferior natures, are they able to discover one single instance of it'(T.160). Far from endorsing 'the Cartesian criterion of power', as Wright suggests he does, Hume is suggesting that we have no 'adequate idea' of such a power 'in any object'. This is the conclusion of Hume's argument, and here, I would suggest, is where Hume's real interest lies in these important passages.

It should be obvious that none of the passages Wright cites support his thesis in the way he believes them to. According to Wright, Hume accepts Malebranche's criterion for the existence of causal power, but attempts to avoid the sceptical conclusion he thinks him committed to, by arguing that the ideas the mind has do not adequately represent reality. Wright believes that by rejecting the Cartesian assumption that our ideas reveal 'the essence or true nature' of reality, Hume is able 'to reject the Cartesian argument which leads to the conclusion that there is no power or force in material events'(144). When Hume writes that 'necessity makes an essential part of causation'(T.407) what he is supposed to have in mind is something of which we have no clear idea at all. By employing the Cartesian criterion of necessary connection, Hume reaches the same conclusion as Malebranche: that we have no idea of causation in 'corporeal things'. But he is supposed to have resisted the ontological conclusion of his predecessors by denying that the absence of any necessary connection between our ideas need apply to the objects to which they correspond. I have argued that Hume's intentions are, in fact, very different. Far from arguing for the existence of real causes in the sense in which Malebranche understood them, Hume's concern is to deny that we have any idea of power so understood. Hume denies that we have any perception of necessary connection between material events. He reaches the same conclusion about our perception of power or true causation in physical objects as the Cartesians. But the point of Hume's argument is not the epistemological one Wright ascribes to it, but the rejection of the idea itself. The mind, according to Hume, does not perceive the sort of intelligible relations between ideas that would make possible *a priori* certain judgments about unobserved matters of fact. This was the sort of inference which the perception of the intelligible connection between events was thought to occasion. Hume rejects it outright. All our actual ideas being distinct and separable we could never 'be able to pronounce from a simple view of the one, that it must be follow'd or preceded by the other'(T.161). Hume, of course, allows that we suppose 'some power in the one, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the

greatest certainty and strongest necessity'(E.75). But he makes clear that when he talks of power or efficacy in this way, he has in mind what he calls the 'loose and popular' sense of the term(E.33). His two definitions of cause follow on from the 'more accurate explication' of the term(145). Wright cites Hume's observation that necessity makes 'an essential part of causation'(T.407). But the idea of necessity Hume has in mind here is not the necessity of Malebranche and the Cartesians, but the idea he says is derived from an impression of reflection, a peculiar feeling of expectation or inevitability, that accompanies the mind's customary transition from cause to effect or from effect to cause. It is this idea of necessary connection that the mind mistakes for an idea which it does not possess. The mind has no idea of causal power or necessary connection, as Malebranche understood it, at all. The 'generality of mankind' imagine that 'they perceive the very force or energy of the cause, by which it is connected with its effect, and is for ever infallible in its operation', and acquire, 'by long habit', the expectation that one will follow infallibly from the other(E.69), but we only deceive ourselves 'when we imagine we are possess of any idea of this kind, after the manner we commonly understand it'(T.161).

The mind has an idea of necessity or necessary connection but it is not the idea that Malebranche believed it to possess. Hume continues to regard necessary connection as essential to the causal relation, but he rejects the Cartesian notion of necessity, in favour of an idea arising from happenings in the mind which are the result of experienced constant conjunction. We have no idea of the sort of connection between objects or events which would ground *a priori* inferences and, so, give sanction to our inductive practices. The manner 'in which bodies operate on each other' remains 'entirely incomprehensible' to us(E.72). Nothing is more evident, Hume claims, 'than that the human mind cannot form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them, or comprehend distinctly that power or efficacy, by which they are united'(E.161). We draw our idea of the power or necessary connection we ascribe to objects and their relations from 'what we feel internally in contemplating them'(T.168-9). This represents strong textual evidence against the view that Hume believed necessity in the 'loose and popular' sense to make 'an essential part of causation'. I do not mean to defend the positivist view of Hume on causation. I see no reason to suppose that what Hume was offering was a reductive analysis of the concept. It is, to say the least, misleading to portray Hume as a regularity theorist about causation. The difficulty for this view is that Hume not only makes necessity an essential part of our idea of causation, but explicitly rates it of much greater importance than any of the other relations involved(T.77). Nevertheless, the sceptical-realist view itself faces serious difficulties arising from its demand that we have an understanding of causal power or necessary connection which Hume seems quite explicitly to argue we cannot have. Hume makes it perfectly clear that we have no impression and hence no idea of what it is for one event to be necessarily connected with another. A number of attempts have been made to deal with this difficulty for the sceptical-realist account(146). The most prominent among them is that presented by Galen Strawson.

Strawson rests his case on a distinction drawn from the *Treatise* which, he believes, can allow us to talk intelligibly of causal powers without committing us to claiming to have had an impression which Hume quite plausibly argues we cannot have. He points to a passage in which Hume seems to argue that there are some things of which we cannot 'conceive', of which we have no idea, yet which we can very well 'suppose' to exist. We may well 'suppose in general', Hume writes, 'but 'tis impossible for us distinctly to conceive, objects to be in their nature any thing but exactly the same with perceptions'(T.218). Hume makes the same point, in somewhat different terms, earlier in the *Treatise*. The farthest we can go in conceiving of external objects, he says, 'when suppos'd *specifically* different from our perceptions, is to form a relative idea of them, without pretending to comprehend the related objects. Generally speaking we do not suppose them specifically different; but only attribute to them different relations, connexions and durations'(T.68). We are able to form a 'relative idea' of things specifically different from those we comprehend directly, and so, according to Strawson, can talk intelligibly of causes in nature as something more than mere constant conjunctions of phenomena(147). Hume is supposed to have left room within the framework of his theory of ideas for us to mean more by causation 'in the objects' than regularity of succession. We can form a relative idea of natural necessity, and so talk intelligibly of it, without having any 'descriptively contentful'(148) idea of what it is. Although, in other words, we have no direct conception of what it is for one event to be causally dependent upon another, we may suppose that there is something, of which we have no idea, which is responsible for the regularities with which we are familiar. We have a relative idea of whatever it is 'in virtue of which reality is regular in the way it is'(149). Strawson provides an example of the kind of idea he has in mind. One has 'a referentially efficacious but in a sense contentless and hence "merely relative" idea of something x' in cases where one has an idea of a something 'and one can refer to it only as, say, "whatever it was caused this mess". One has no positive conception of the nature of x'(150). In the same way, Strawson believes, we can talk informatively about causal power or necessary connection in objects, although we have no impression and, hence, no positively contentful idea, of what we speak of.

The problem facing Strawson's analysis is that there is very little textual support for attributing this view to Hume, and none at all where we might most expect or hope to find it. The distinction between relative and specific ideas is certainly drawn by Hume, but only in the context of his discussion of our idea of body, and, even there, Hume gives every appearance of attaching little weight to it. The farthest we can go towards a conception 'of external objects', Hume tells us, is 'to form a relative idea of them'. We may 'suppose', but we can never 'distinctly conceive' objects to be different from the perceptions which represent them. Hume makes no use of the distinction in his discussion of causation, nor does he so much as refer to it in these important sections. He has good theoretical reasons for not doing so. Where Hume does employ the distinction it is, significantly, in the context of objects, and

never of relations. This is important. The kind of approach Strawson has in mind might be said to work better, or more naturally, where the relative idea in question is an idea of an object. But the idea of necessary connection is an idea of a relation. Hume is concerned not with whatever objects happen to stand in a certain relation to each other, but with the relation itself. So, the first thing we need to note is that the matter is not as straightforward as we might suppose to be the question of 'whatever it was caused this mess'. Strawson oversimplifies the case. We are not concerned with the cause, or causal objects, in this sense, but with the actual connectedness of cause and effect: something of which, for Hume, we have, and can have, no experience.

We can begin to see why this difference should be significant to Hume if we turn to the passages Strawson cites in support of his interpretation, and, in particular, to the context in which they arise. In neither of the two passages quoted above is Hume making out what could be termed a positive case for relative ideas as a way of understanding an object relationally, even though we lack any direct conception of it. In the earliest of the two passages (T.67-8), the context is given by Hume's insistence upon the impossibility 'for us so much as to conceive or form any idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions'. Let us 'chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe', Hume says, we never 'can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass'. Hume's concern is with the impossibility of the human mind conceiving anything 'specifically different' from its perceptions, and, while he seems to allow that we may 'suppose' something to exist which is specifically different, he is scathing about the results: 'Generally speaking we do not suppose them specifically different; but only attribute to them different relations, connexions and durations'. In the second passage (T.218), Hume is just as dismissive of such a move: 'Philosophers deny our resembling perceptions to be identically the same, and uninterrupted; and yet have so great a propensity to believe them as such, that they arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions, to which they attribute these qualities'. Hume's emphasis, once again, is on the impossibility of our advancing 'a step beyond ourselves' and understanding or conceiving of anything specifically different from the set of perceptions we start from. In the only other original reference to relational ideas in the *Treatise*, Hume writes that 'as every idea is deriv'd from a preceding perception, 'tis impossible our idea of a perception, and that of an object or external existence can ever represent what are specifically different from each other. Whatever difference we may suppose betwixt them, 'tis incomprehensible to us; and we are oblig'd either to conceive an external object merely as a relation without a relative, or to make it the very same with a perception or impression.' (T.241) In each case, Hume introduces the notion of a relative idea of external existence, as something specifically different from those qualities we already know, only to rubbish its effects. The philosophers who make such suppositions 'arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions' or attribute new relations to the old set. Whatever difference we suppose to obtain between perceptions and objects, their specific difference remains 'incomprehensible to

us'. Hume invokes the distinction between supposing and conceiving something to exist, only to dismiss the suggestion, made by Strawson and other recent commentators, that it can in any way add to our understanding of the objects in question to form a supposition of their existence. It would be surprising to find Hume taking these overwhelmingly pessimistic and sceptical passages as the basis for a form of sceptical-realism. Not only does Hume make no reference to the distinction in his discussion of causation, but, where he does make use of it, his use is about as remote from the use to which a sceptical realist should have put it, as one could imagine.

Strawson gives Hume's distinction between conceiving and supposing a specific difference between an object and an impression a crucial place within Hume's philosophy. Although, as Strawson admits, it follows from the theory of ideas that we can never form any 'genuinely contentful conception' of an external object, 'it is still an intelligible supposition that there should be such things'(151). It is on the basis of this supposition, Strawson thinks, that Hume is able to 'mean something like Causation, at least in the sense of genuinely *referring to it*'(152), and to formulate a relative idea of something 'in virtue of which reality is regular in the way it is'(153). Hume's realism can be characterised in the claim 'that there is something 'external' or 'out there' just in the sense of being independent of, or something other than, our perceptions - something which somehow gives rise to our perceptions, and is the reason why they are as they are'(154). Something like this claim may well characterise Hume's view. I have argued that it is no part of Hume's brief to deny that there exist causes. But unless we understand the sorts of demands that are placed on a fact of the sort Strawson has in mind, we will not have understood Hume's reasons for dismissing the effects of Strawson's supposition, nor will we have properly characterised Hume's main interest in causation. This is more than a matter of emphasis. If we cannot grasp Hume's reasons for insisting upon the impossibility of conceiving of the sort of fact Strawson identifies with 'fundamental forces'(155), then we will run the risk of attaching as much significance to Hume's realism about causation as we attach to his scepticism, and this, I suggest, would be a fundamental error(156).

Strawson's position is objectionable on a number of fronts, but its most decisive refutation has been provided by Simon Blackburn. Blackburn argues that Strawson is betrayed into underestimating the theoretical pressures on the kind of fact that would, as he puts it, 'soothe away inductive vertigo', by a failure to adequately distinguish between what he calls a 'thick nexus' and a 'thick straightjacket'(157). To see the point clearly we need to get a clear grasp of the distinction Blackburn has in mind. There are, he says, two things that might be asked of 'thick' causation(158). On the one hand, when we think of a causally related pair of events, 'we want there to be a further fact than (mere) succession, or even mere regular succession of these kinds of event', a fact making it so that 'when the first happens the second must happen'(159). Blackburn terms this the desire for a causal nexus. On the other hand, when we

shift our gaze to the 'whole ongoing course of nature', we feel that the pattern of regularities would be too much of a coincidence unless there is something in virtue of which it is regular in the way it is. We want there to be some ultimate cause, or 'thick straightjacket', whose 'existence at one time guarantees constancies at any later time'(160). This is what Hume terms an 'ultimate connexion'(T.91). Blackburn is quick to point out how peculiar a fact any fact that dispels this 'inductive vertigo' must be. It would have to be something the 'continuing efficacy' of which was subject 'to no possibility of change or chance of failure'(161). For this reason, it is important to separate out the question of the desire for a causal nexus from the question of the desire for a straightjacket.

Blackburn's suggestion is that Strawson conflates the desire for a nexus with the desire for a straightjacket, and, overlooking the additional demands on a straightjacket fact, thinks he can point to what he terms 'fundamental forces' as a fact with this sort of 'potency'. The notion of Causation, Strawson says, should be included 'in the class of fundamental, non-sensory properties of reality' which 'we attribute to objects and which are essentially constitutive of our fundamental (pre-scientific) conception of their nature'(162). Strawson uses one term 'Causation' for a thick nexus and a thick straightjacket. Hume, on the other hand, is very much aware of the distinction and makes his awareness clear in the text. He writes in the *Enquiry* that experience 'only shows us a number of uniform effects, resulting from certain objects, and teaches us that those particular objects, at that particular time, were endowed with such powers and forces.' When an object with similar sensible qualities appears, 'we expect similar powers and forces, and look for a like effect...But this is surely a step or progress of the mind that wants to be explained. When a man says, *I have found, in all past instances, such sensible qualities conjoined with such secret powers*: And when he says, *Similar sensible qualities will always be conjoined with similar secret powers*, he is not guilty of a tautology, nor are these propositions in any respect the same.'(E.37) Hume recognises that whatever the connection between events at one time, it is something that may change. Even were the appeal to experience to decide 'that that very object, which produc'd any other, was at that time endow'd with such a power...[it] can never prove, that the same power must continue in the same object or collection of sensible qualities; much less, that a like power is always conjoin'd with like sensible qualities'(T.91). All our ideas being distinct and separable, it is conceivable, and, therefore, possible, that the same 'powers and forces' which operated on an object at one point in time, will not operate in the future. The appeal to past experience 'decides nothing in the present case' and 'at the utmost' can only prove that a connection held between events at one time.

Hume makes the distinction in order to underline his conviction that 'if there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change...all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion'(E.37). But it also supports Blackburn's contention that the 'ongoing regularity and constancy even of a thick nexus between one kind of event and another is just

as much a brute contingent regularity as the bare concatenation of events'(163). In both cases, there is something 'that can engender the inductive vertigo'. Hume is clear that something could satisfy the desire for one without satisfying the desire for the other. He, nevertheless, repeatedly talks of the perception of 'thick' causal connections as though any such apprehension could make possible *a priori* certain judgments regarding unobserved causes and effects. Hume writes as though the idea of power or causal connection could only be an idea of necessary connection where "necessary" implies that it belongs to the kind of which *a priori* knowledge is possible'(164). This aspect of Hume's procedure has been criticised by a number of commentators, including Craig and Strawson. Strawson writes that one reason for Hume's confidence in his assertion that an impression of necessity is unavailable 'is that his conception of what something would have to be like in order to count as an idea of Causation or power or necessary connection in the objects is so demanding that it turns out to be simply obvious that nothing could ever count as such an idea, or such an impression'(165). Craig complains that it 'looks as if he has just ignored what the modern reader will think of as an obvious *prima facie* possibility, that there is a necessity, stronger than concomitance but weaker than the deductive, and it is of this that we are seeking the impression and idea'(166). Craig accuses Hume of doing no more than ruling out the possibility of an apprehension of necessity by making the conditions for such an apprehension unmeetably strict. Perplexingly, Hume appears not only to overlook the distinction between a nexus and a straightjacket, but to adopt an arbitrary assumption in order to derive a conclusion that is, on the face of it, unwarranted. Blackburn suggests a plausible answer to the puzzle.

Blackburn suggests that Hume 'sees that nothing would really count as apprehension of a particular "must" unless it carried with it implications of uniformity for the general case'(167). What this means is that, for Hume, to apprehend that an event of one sort must follow from an event of another on one occasion, is to apprehend that it must always do so. If an observation cannot be said to do this for 'the general case' then nothing at all can be said of it in so far as guaranteeing outcomes goes. To see a 'must' in one instance of conjunction, to see, in other words, that when one event occurs, the other must follow, is to see that it will hold for every pair of events of those kinds. One could not see that one event must happen, given the other, without seeing 'something with general implications', and this, in turn, 'makes it hard to see how a particular nexus could be an object of observation.' How could any time-limited observation apprehend 'something that essentially casts its net over the whole of space and time?'(168). Blackburn's explanation makes plausible sense of the apparent 'muddle' Craig finds in Hume's thought on causation. Hume rules out the possibility of any thick causal connection being apprehended not because he arbitrarily makes the standard for full apprehension the prohibitively strict one of making possible *a priori* certain judgments about unobserved matters of fact, but because he saw that to apprehend any kind of connection implying that one event must follow another is to apprehend a fact with implications for all and

future events of those kinds. Someone 'apprehending a straightjacket for what it is' will 'know the timeless "must" that it guarantees. He will be apprehending the impossibility that events should ever transpire otherwise'(169).

Hume argues that a perception of power or necessary connection in or between events would 'amount to a demonstration, and would imply the absolute impossibility for the one object not to follow, or to be conceived not to follow upon the other'(T.161-2). He thinks that even the apprehension of a particular thick connection between events must carry implications for the general case. This makes it difficult to see how even a particular nexus could be an object of observation. Any apprehension of a thick connection would have to have the consequence of enabling the subject to make *a priori* certain judgments concerning other events of the same sorts. Perception of a connection of this sort would 'amount to a demonstration', and, since the distinctness and separability of all ideas shows that such a demonstration is impossible, this is a perception which we cannot possibly have. Hume's concern is to show that we can have no idea of necessity or necessary connection understood in this way. He leaves no room for the lesser claim 'to have apprehended a particular, but not necessarily timeproof, thick connexion'(170). Strawson's failure to distinguish a thick nexus from a thick straightjacket explains his contention that the supposition of 'fundamental forces' can in some way dispel our fears about the collapse of the ongoing course of nature and for the legitimacy of our inductive practices. Hume makes clear that such a supposition can in no way help us. Not only have we no idea of the sort of 'ultimate connexion' that would be needed for such a straightjacket, but we have no conception of what it would be for such a connection to obtain between events. Hume does not deny that there may be 'several qualities' in objects with which we are entirely unacquainted, but he rubbishes the effects of such a supposition by adding that 'if we please to call these power or efficacy, 'twill be of little consequence to the world'(T.168). The desire for the sort of knowledge that would result if the mind had ideas of these connections is dismissed by Hume as 'presumptuous and chimerical'(T.xvii). The most natural science can hope to do 'is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the main particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasonings from analogy, experience and observation'. As to the cause of these 'general causes', we 'should in vain attempt their discovery; nor shall we ever be able to satisfy ourselves, by any particular explication of them. These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut off from human curiosity and enquiry'(E.30). The most perfect natural philosophy, he says, 'only staves off our ignorance a little longer'(E.31).

The mind does possess an idea of necessity and it is this idea which, Hume argues, it mistakes for an idea of that 'quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other'. We have a choice 'either to assert, that nothing can be the cause of another, but where the mind can perceive the connexion in its ideas of the objects: Or to maintain, that all objects, which we find constantly conjoin'd, are upon that

account to be regarded as causes and effects'(T.248). Hume continues to believe that necessity makes an essential part of causation as we understand it, but he replaces the Cartesian idea of necessary connection with an idea of necessity drawn from the impression of reflection the mind gets when it makes an inference on the basis of the impression of one of two constantly conjoined objects or events. The idea of necessity which the mind possesses is derived from the impression or feeling of determination it gets when its experience of the constant conjunction of two sorts of events causes it to infer the existence of one from an impression of its usual attendant. The 'several instances of resembling conjunctions' leads the mind to its notion of power or necessary connection(T.165). Hume uses the idea to explain how the mind 'spreads itself upon the world', forming habits of expectation, which it then projects upon the particular conjunctions of events in its experience, even though the events themselves 'seem entirely loose and separate'(E.74). He does not deny that there exist unknown causes, nor does he claim to be able to analyse causal propositions into propositions about the constant conjunction of phenomena. Looked at from this perspective, it can easily appear that Hume is offering two theories of causation, one to do with the evidence for a causal inference, and one to do with its effects on the mind(171). Hume's real intentions are very different. He does not argue for the abandonment of the Newtonian language of powers and forces. He is more interested in causally explaining how it is the mind comes to see the world in terms of causal connections, and to use the vocabulary it uses to describe it, faced with a reality which has none of the representational features our causal language leads us to expect. The idea of necessary connection the mind has arises from the regular succession of events in its experience. It has no idea, or, at best, a very 'obscure and uncertain' idea, of what it is that causes these regularities. It gets its idea of power from 'what we feel internally' as a result of these observed regularities. Our idea of necessary connection is an effect of those regularities. These are the two interconnected, and causally interdependent, parts of the causal story that Hume traces up as far as his two definitions.

Hume continues to insist that the mind must have an idea of necessary connection if it is to have any idea of the causal relation. Lacking any adequate idea of necessity or causal power as whatever is responsible for the regular succession of phenomena in nature, the mind substitutes for it an idea drawn from the regularities themselves. As already noted, neither of Hume's two 'definitions' of a cause can be said to be definitions in the sense of fully and accurately stating all that we mean by the term. There is good textual evidence for believing that Hume did not think of them as strict definitions. Hume admits in the *Enquiry* that 'it is impossible to give any just definition of cause, except what is drawn from something extraneous and foreign to it(E.76). Instead, the two definitions are intended to distinguish and encapsulate the two sides of the extended causal story sketched above. The part of Hume's story summed up by the first 'regularity definition' concerns the natural regularities which determine the mind in its customary transition from cause to effect. The second 'natural' definition of cause emphasises the contribution the mind makes to our apprehension of the

world. What the mind gives us is, of course, the idea of necessity as 'nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienc'd union'(T.166). The idea of necessity the mind has resembles the impression or feeling of determination from which it is derived. It does not represent or resemble any change or feature of the regularities themselves. The second definition describes the change that takes place in the mind when it is exposed to the regular succession of events. We go on to conduct our plans and expectations in accordance with our projection of this idea onto conjunctions of events. We can still form theories and make predictions on the basis of the regularities we find in nature, defining scientific laws and forces strictly on the basis of their supposed effects(E.77n), without pretending that we represent to ourselves any property or relation between objects when we do so. The first definition gives the empirical part of the story. It describes the non-causal reality which is the cause of the mind's reaction. It is only because the mind has experienced the constant conjunction of events that it is moved to form the idea of causal necessity. Hume is careful to keep intact the balance between what the world contributes and what the mind projects. The way the mind is depends upon experienced features of the world, and the way in which the mind apprehends the world is dependent upon features of those mental effects. Hume separates out the different aspects of this discourse, but they are nevertheless interdependent parts of the same causal story. If we are to avoid ascribing to Hume philosophical theses which he would not or could not have held we must remember to treat them as such.

# Notes

## Chapter Two

### Causality, Reason, and Causal Inference

1. In 2.2 I offer a summary and critique of recent debate concerning Hume's position on the existence of causal connections 'in the objects'. I suggest that the proposed replacement of what is termed the 'standard' sceptical view with the position frequently referred to as 'sceptical realism' is unsatisfactory. My reasons for saying so are developed at length in the second section of this chapter. The position these views are intended to replace is called the 'standard' view by, among others, Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion: Causation, Realism, and David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.8. It is also widely referred to as the 'positivist' or 'Humean' view.

2. See, for example, Anthony Flew, *op.cit.*; J.A. Robinson, 'Hume's Two Definitions of "Cause"' in *Philosophical Quarterly*, XII (1962); F.L. Will, 'Will the Future be Like the Past?' in *Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1995), Ed. Stanley Tweyman, Vol. II, pp.3-17; and W.D. Oliver, 'A Re-examination of the Problem of Induction', *ibid.*, pp.18-28. Stroud, *op.cit.*, treats Hume's account of inference from observed to unobserved, in Chapter Four of his book, as the negative phase of the story, and his account of the idea of necessary connection, in Chapter Four, as the positive phase. Annette Baier, *op.cit.*; P.J.R. Millican, 'Hume's Argument Concerning Induction: Structure and Interpretation' in *Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, pp.91-146; and Robert J. Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), are among those who are sensitive to the structure of Hume's argument as a whole. P.J.R. Millican, *op.cit.*, p.93, suggests that the more free-standing nature of the corresponding argument concerning induction in the *Enquiry* (E.26-39) is a reason for preferring that version.

3. Robert J. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.38.

4. Defenders of the standard or positivist view include John Passmore, *op.cit.*; Karl Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), see p.369; Wesley Salmon, *The Foundations of Scientific Inference* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967); and D.C. Stove, *Probability and Hume's Inductive Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

5. The case against is presented by, among others, Tom L. Beauchamp and Alexander Rosenberg, *Hume and the Problem of Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); N.Scott Arnold 'Hume's Scepticism about Inductive Inference' in *Journal of the History of*

*Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No.1,1983, pp.31-55; and Janet Broughton, 'Hume's Skepticism about Causal Inferences' in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 1983, Vol. 64, No.1, pp.2-18.

6.Proponents of the sceptical realist or 'New Humean' view include Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and The Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) pp.69-130; Galen Strawson, *op.cit.*; and John P. Wright, *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

7.I refer, once again, to the impasse in the debate between proponents of the traditional sceptical and sceptical realist or nonsceptical views, particularly evident between the so-called Humean and New Humean positions on Hume on causation.

8.Robert J. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.38.

9.I have in mind the work of Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, Arnold Scott, *op.cit.*, and, most recently, Annette Baier, *op.cit.* Significant variations of the sceptical view are presented by Robert. J. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, and Don Garrett, *op.cit.*

10.See, for example, Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, p.43.

## 2.1 The Argument Concerning Induction

11.It is worth making the point here that if critics like Baier, Beauchamp and Rosenberg, and Arnold, are correct about what Hume's argument concerning induction is meant to establish, Hume would appear to beg or even to settle the question at issue decisively several pages before the section in which he presents it. The conclusion that causal inference does not give us knowledge as demonstration does was already argued for at T.86-7. Baier, *op.cit.*, p.63, admits that what Hume says here appears to 'prejudge the question of whether causal inference can be recast as sound deductive argument', the question he is supposed to be answering in the section on inductive argument.

12.Don Garrett, *op.cit.*, p.85, points out that Hume's use of 'reason' here is rather close to that of Locke. 'Reason', Locke says, is 'the discovery of the Certainty or Probability' of propositions and truths, *op.cit.*, IV.xviii.2. For Locke, as, in the most part, for Hume, reason is to be considered the faculty of mind responsible for both knowledge and probability.

13.Barry Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.43-4, observes that Hume has failed to establish that contiguity is 'a necessary condition for two things' being related as cause and effect'. Hume claims that 'nothing can operate in a time and place, which is ever so little remov'd from those of its existence'(T.75). Although distant objects 'may sometimes seem productive of each other' we still 'presume' there to be a chain of causes 'contiguous among themselves'. The problem for Hume is that he needs to show that we *always* get an impression of contiguity when we identify a causal relation among objects. Hume sets out to discover the impressions from which the idea of causality is derived. The question of what we presume to be the case is not really relevant. It does not explain how we get the idea that all causally related objects are contiguous in the first place. A similar problem emerges from Hume's treatment of priority. The temporal priority of cause to effect is also said by Hume to be 'essential to causes and

effect'(T.75-6). However, it is not true to say that we always get such an impression. As Stroud remarks, when we attribute a causal relation between two moving billiard balls, we 'do not actually see the contact of two billiard balls to be slightly earlier than the beginning of the motion of the second ball.'(p.44)

14.Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: MacMillan, 1941), pp.91-2, makes much of the point in opposing the regularity view of Hume on causation. Kemp Smith can point to a number of passages in the *Treatise* which appear to support his reading (see, for example, T.77; T.407; T.409). These passages seem to support the suggestion that, for Hume, necessity is an essential part of the idea of causation. Nevertheless, commentators have continued to take Hume's first definition of causation(T.170) as the basis for the sort of reading of Hume on causation that Kemp Smith objects to. I offer my own reading of Hume's two definitions and the interpretive puzzle surrounding them in 2.2.

15.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.47, remarks the importance of the argument for Hume, but adds that it is nonetheless 'difficult to know what to make of it'. He argues, on the familiar grounds that conceivability is not an adequate test of possibility, that Hume has failed to show that it is not impossible for something to begin to exist without a cause. I offer my own treatment of some of these themes and of their role in Hume's philosophy, in 2.2. Hume's treatment of the subject is sketchy, to say the least, but, as Stroud points out, Hume's real interests, at this point at least, lie elsewhere(p.50).

16.Baier, *op.cit.*, p.64-5, treats Hume's conclusion as anticipating the whole of his story about inductive inference. She writes: 'as early as Section III we find Hume implicitly anticipating his claim, made explicitly in Section VI, that it is only experience, not deductive reason even when it is helped by experience, that is responsible for our conviction that fire will continue to bring painful burns to human flesh coming in contact with it, that water in human lungs will continue to bring death.' Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.42, observes, I think rightly, that Hume anticipates only 'one half of the dilemma' he poses for inductive reasoning.

17.Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.47. Fogelin describes this as Hume's 'reversal of his field', but appears to believe it to take place only in Section VI of Part III.

18.I will show in 2.2 how Hume thinks the idea of necessity arises from the inferences we make to unobserved matters of fact. This is an important part of Hume's account. But it is not, as, for example, Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.47, appears to believe, Hume's main or only task in Part III.

19.Millican, *op.cit.*, p.95, makes the point in contrast to Flew, *op.cit.*, pp.71-2, who appears to think of Hume's argument concerning induction as having to do exclusively with inferences from particular cases to general conclusions.

20.Like Hume, I prefer to concentrate my attention on those sorts of probable inferences he characterises as 'proofs'. In Sections XI and XII, Hume discusses the origins of those beliefs which are 'still attended with uncertainty'(T.124). Much of our reasoning concerning causes proceeds on the basis of 'mixed' or imperfect correlations of events. 'Contrary experiments', Hume tells us, 'produce an imperfect belief, either by weakening the habit, or by dividing and afterwards joining in different parts, that *perfect* habit, which makes us conclude in general,

that instances, of which we have no experience, must necessarily resemble those of which we have.'(T.135) It is with inferences arising from a perfect habit or perfect correlation of events that Hume is most concerned. He presents the sections on probability in support of the principles which he has used to explain those arguments 'which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty'(T.124) and, in particular, of the role played by constant conjunction in that explanation. He appears to have seen probability in terms of a dropping-off or degradation of proof. For a fuller account, touching on some of the issues I raise in 2.2, see Baier, *op.cit.*, pp.83-5.

21. Stove, *op.cit.*, p.32, makes Hume's stress on conceivability take all the weight of the argument. It suits Stove to do so because it is part of his case to suggest that Hume is concerned exclusively with deductive forms of argument. Hume is alleged to have made the assumption that causal inference is only justified where the separation of cause and effect is inconceivable. But Hume places only part of the stress on the conceivability of alternatives. Less dramatically, what he seems to argue is that the *a priori* justification of an inductive inference would require some discernible causal connection between cause and effect such that the survey of one would suggest the other. Hume's reasons for thinking that the apprehension of such a fact would imply 'the absolute contradiction and impossibility of conceiving any thing different'(T.87) will be explored in 2.2.

22. Simon Blackburn, *op.cit.*, pp.98-9, shows that Hume is sensitive to the distinction between what he calls a desire for a causal nexus and the desire for 'a straightjacket'(see T.90-91). Hume nevertheless appears to exclude the possibility of apprehending a nexus, or a particular 'must', on the grounds that no apprehension could have the consequences of a straightjacket, which is to say, of 'casting its net' over all future events of the sort. Blackburn argues, convincingly, I think, that Hume saw 'that nothing would really count as an apprehension of a particular "must" unless it carried with it implications of uniformity for the general case'(p.99). I put off a consideration of these issues until 2.2.

23. In terming the proposition upon which Hume thinks all probable argument is 'founded' the 'uniformity principle' I take over the usage adopted by P.J.R. Millican, *op.cit.*, p.94, among others. The principle is also sometimes termed the 'resemblance thesis'. See, for example, N. Scott Arnold, *op.cit.*, p.34.

24. Millican, *op.cit.*, p.91, describes Hume's argument as 'the foundation stone of his philosophical system'. Don Garrett, *op.cit.*, p.76, writes that it is usually thought to constitute 'the essential core of Hume's philosophy'. One dissenting voice belongs to Ruth Weintraub, 'What was Hume's Contribution to the Problem of Induction?' in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.45, No.181, pp.460-470. Weintraub argues that Hume's argument is neither original nor especially significant, at least, not in any of the ways in which it is usually thought of as being.

25. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.52. The argument is said by Stroud to form an important part of what he characterises as the 'negative phase' of Hume's philosophy.

26. Similar arguments have now been made out by a number of distinguished commentators, including Baier, *op.cit.*; and Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*

27.D.C. Stove, *op.cit.* Flew, *op.cit.*, p.82, gives a classic statement of this sort of view when he writes of Hume that he 'presupposes an exclusively deductive ideal of reason' which leads him to reject as unwarranted any argument that is not deductively valid.

28.Stove, *op.cit.*, p.59.

29.*Ibid*, p.43.

30.*Ibid.*, p.43. See also, Stove, 'Hume, Probability and Induction' in *Hume*, Ed. V.C. Chappell (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p.203.

31.Stove, *op.cit.*, 1973, p.44.

32.P.J.R. Millican, *op.cit.*, p.104, makes explicit the role Hume's 'middle term' is alleged to be playing in this argument. He also points up the parallel between Hume's use of the notion and that of Locke (pp.105-6).

33.See Millican, *op.cit.*, pp.103-109; and Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.256.

34.John Locke, *op.cit.*, IV.XV.1.

35.Millican, *op.cit.*, p.105.

36.Locke, *op.cit.*, IV.XV.1.

37.*Ibid.*, IV.II.3.

38.*Ibid.*, IV.XVII.15.

39.*Ibid.*, IV.XVII.16.

40.See Millican, *op.cit.*, p.106-7. Millican argues that Hume, like Locke, 'is quite untainted by the now apparently common but always gratuitous assumption that only a demonstrative argument can contain a "middle term"'. Millican has little direct textual evidence to call upon. He does, however, cite a passage in Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Nelson, 1947) Ed. Norman Kemp Smith, p.143, in which Hume has Demea talk dismissively of the merely probable 'mediums' by which Cleanthes attempts to establish the existence of God.

41.Stove, *op.cit.*, 1973, p.30, claims to base his version of Hume's argument on a close reading of the texts of the *Treatise*, the *Enquiry*, and the *Abstract*. He nevertheless presents a number of his 'translations' of theses he alleges were held by Hume without full textual support. Among these is his translation of Hume's statement of 'inductive scepticism'.

42.Stove, *op.cit.*, 1966, p.198.

43.Stove, *op.cit.*, 1973, p.120.

44.*Ibid.*, p.120.

45.Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp.110-2, shows that the section 'Of Miracles' which appears in the *Enquiry* and from which the quotation is taken had originally been intended for inclusion in the *Treatise*. Hume took the decision to withdraw the section in order to avoid causing offence to Joseph Butler, then Dean of St Paul's, whose endorsement of the work Hume had hoped to solicit.

46.Millican, *op.cit.*, p.123, presents a version of this argument which shows up the weaknesses in Stove's structure-diagram of Hume's argument.

47.Stove, *op.cit.*, 1973, p.43.

48.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.255.

49. *Ibid.*, pp.255-6.

50. As argued by N. Scott Arnold, *op.cit.*, p.35.

51. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.256.

52. Robert J. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.157.

53. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.56.

54. *Ibid.*, pp.56-7.

55. *Ibid.*, p.60.

56. *Ibid.*, pp.60-1.

57. *Ibid.*, p.61.

58. *Ibid.*, p.61.

59. *Ibid.*, p.62.

60. *Ibid.*, p.62.

61. This sort of objection is made by N. Scott Arnold, *op.cit.*, p.36.

62. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.62.

63. T.175. Hume is clear about the fallibility of inductive argument. He writes that in arguing from experience we can never be sure that we have taken into account the full 'complication of circumstances', many of the factors responsible for a given effect being 'not only unaccountable in their causes, but even unknown in their existence.'

64. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.63.

65. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.65-66, notes that Hume would also be obliged to reject any appeal to a *priori* knowledge of what sort of thing is a good reason to believe a thing of another sort. It is possible, Hume thinks, for two things to be merely accidentally correlated, and, so, there being some reason to believe that it will continue could not, for Hume, follow logically from the fact that the correlation has held up to now.

66. See, for example, Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*; Annette Baier, *op.cit.*; N. Scott Arnold, *op.cit.*; Janet Broughton, *op.cit.*; and Beauchamp and Mappes, 'Is Hume Really a Sceptic about Induction' in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.12. No.2, pp.119-129.

67. Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, p.74.

68. Scott Arnold, *op.cit.*, p.41.

69. *Ibid.*, p.55.

70. Beauchamp and Mappes, *op.cit.*, p.119.

71. As Garrett, *op.cit.*, pp.78-80, argues. Garrett observes that: 'Hume's theories about the psychology of philosophizing entail that philosophers will sometimes say radically different things in radically different moods'(p.78).

72. Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, p.44.

73. *Ibid.*, p.43.

74. *Ibid.*, p.41.

75. *Ibid.*, p.37.

76. Baier, *op.cit.*, p.60. Baier quotes in this context the OED definition of 'intelligible' as: 'Capable of being apprehended only by the understanding (not the senses)'.

77. Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, p.43.

78. Baier, *op.cit.*, pp.60-1.

79. Locke, *op.cit.*, IV.XVII.2.

80. *Ibid.*, IV.XVII.1.

81. With some small adjustment, the same general points can be extended and made to count effectively against the broadly similar readings of Baier, Broughton and Scott Arnold.

82. Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, p.44.

83. Millican, *op.cit.*, p.136, notes that such a claim would amount to no more than a re-affirmation of the 'Lockean orthodoxy'. He cites Locke's remark that 'most of the Propositions we think, reason, discourse, nay act upon, are such, as we cannot have undoubted Knowledge of their Truth', *op.cit.*, IV.XV.2.

84. John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), Ed. W. von Leyden, p.111.

85. Locke describes reason as that 'natural *Revelation*, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge communicates to Mankind that portion of Truth, which he had laid within the reach of their natural Faculties', *op.cit.*, 1979, IV.IXX.4. For an account of the prevalence of this conception of reason, see Edward Craig, *op.cit.*

86. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.46, aptly calls this argument of Hume's the '*no-argument argument*'.

87. Locke, *op.cit.*, 1979, IV.XVII.2.

88. *Ibid.*, IV.XVII.11.

89. *Ibid.*, IV.XV.1.

90. Baier, *op.cit.*, pp.93-96, gives an account of how Hume observes each of the eight rules in the sections leading up to their endorsement. She suggests that the rules get their 'normative force' from the fact that the 'reasoning conformable to them' has been demonstrated to be capable of being turned successfully on itself (p.93).

91. The success of Hume's reflexive move in the case of causal reasoning can be contrasted with the failure of demonstrative reasoning to survive its own reflexive examination in Section I of Part IV.

## 2.2 Hume and the New Hume

92. John Mackie, *The Cement of The Universe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) p.3.

93. See, for example, J.A. Robinson 'Hume's Two Definitions of Cause' in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.12, 1962; and Mackie, *op.cit.*, p.3-4.

94. Galen Strawson, *op.cit.*, p.7.

95. A.J. Ayer, *The Central Questions of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p.183.

96. Similar view's to Ayer's are defended by, among others, Mackie, *op.cit.*; Terence Penelhum, *Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1975); and J.A. Robinson, *op.cit.* Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* in *The Works of Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1863), p.627, describes Hume's position as follows: 'I know of no

author before Mr. Hume, who maintained, that we have no other notion of a cause, but that it is something prior to the effect, which has been found by experience to be constantly followed by the effect.'

97.As mentioned, these include Edward Craig, *op.cit.*; Galen Strawson, *op.cit.*; and John Wright, *op.cit.*

98.Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.300-1, is among those commentators who ascribe this mistake to Hume. According to Bennett, in considering the 'intellectual standing' of a belief, 'all Hume will do is demand its birth-certificate; and so, confronted with a belief for which there are reasons, he asks only whether it is arrived at through a consideration of reasons'. Bennett argues that Hume has confused the genetic question of a belief's causal origin with the normative question of its reasonableness. We saw in 2.1, however, that Hume keeps these questions firmly separate, answering, as, in Section VI, he does, a straightforward question within cognitive psychology. The 'logical' or normative question of the reasonableness of inductive belief is not treated of until Part IV of Book One.

99.Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.47. Fogelin, however, is wrong to suggest that Hume's 'reversal of field', away from the search for an impression of necessary connection 'in objects' and towards an account using 'transparently causal notions', occurs only after Section VI. Hume has already abandoned the idea of grounding our causal inference in the idea of a necessary connection, and done so as early as Section III of Part III.

100.Norman Kemp Smith, *op.cit.*, p.401, was, I think, the first commentator to give special emphasis to the causal nature of Hume's account of causal belief.

101.Kemp Smith, *op.cit.*, is aware of the difficulty. He argues that Hume's second 'natural' definition of causation, in which the causal notion 'determines' occurs, should be understood as 'in the main ostensive'(p.401). Wade L. Robison 'Hume's Causal Scepticism' in *David Hume: Bicentenary Papers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977) pp.156-166, puts an alternative view.

102.Robison, *op.cit.*, p.159, makes this point.

103.As argued by Garrett, *op.cit.*, p.112.

104.Baier, *op.cit.*, p.99.

105.Kemp Smith, *op.cit.*, p.401.

106.Hume, like Malebranche, associates necessary connection with the notion of active causal powers. He describes the terms 'agency', 'power' and 'force' as 'nearly synonymous' with 'necessity' and 'connexion'(T.157).

107.Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, translated and edited by Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p450.

108.See Malebranche, *op.cit.*, pp.449-51.

109.*Ibid.*, p.449.

110.They are discussed by, among other, Charles McCracken, *op.cit.*, pp.254-290; and John P. Wright, *op.cit.*, pp.126-176.

111.Hume writes: 'I begin with observing that the terms of *efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion, and productive quality*, are all nearly synonymous'(T.157).

112.See T.78. One of the ways in which Hume sets out his store to investigate the idea of necessary connection is by asking why we believe that a particular cause must necessarily have a particular effect?

113.Hume writes in the *Enquiry* that 'the knowledge of this relation is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings *a priori*; but arises entirely from experience, when we find that any particular objects are constantly conjoined with each other'(E.27). It is clear from this the nature of the experience Hume has in mind. In other passages, Hume does not always make clear whether he has in mind reasonings ahead of all experience or reasonings prior to the experience of constant conjunction(E.28). I take him to mean the latter. Hume makes clear that he considers there to be nothing in our experience of single instances of conjunction that would warrant a projection into the future. The mind, he writes, 'can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause, by the most accurate scrutiny and examination. For the effect is totally different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it.'(E.29).

114.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.80.

115.See Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.80-1.

116.For a discussion of this aspect of Hume's procedure, see Blackburn, *op.cit.*, 1993, pp.98-100. Craig, *op.cit.*, p.97, offers a significantly different interpretation to Blackburn's. I pick up these themes again in my discussion of the sceptical realist view of Hume on causation.

117.Kemp Smith, *op.cit.*, pp.91-2.

118.The version of the two definitions presented in the *Enquiry* is similar to that of the *Treatise*, but not identical(E.76-7). The first definition of the *Enquiry* makes no mention of spatial contiguity. Hume indicates in the *Treatise* that he finds this relation problematic, adding that we may suppose the relation of contiguity essential to causation at least 'till we can find a more proper occasion to clear up the matter, by examining what objects are or are not susceptible of juxtaposition and conjunction'(T.75). Beside the omission of any reference to the relations of precedence and contiguity, the second definition of the *Enquiry* also differs somewhat from that of the *Treatise*. These differences reflect Hume's concern with the refinement of his definitions rather than any significant change in his thinking. The *Enquiry* definition does not mention the inference from original impression to enlivened idea, nor does it contain the *Treatise* definition's reference to inference from idea to idea.

119.I have in mind, in particular, J.A. Robinson, 'Hume's two Definitions of "Cause"', in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.XII, 1962, pp.162-171; Nicholas Capaldi, *David Hume: The Newtonian Philosopher* (Boston: Twayne, 1975) pp.95-129; and A.H. Basson, *David Hume* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), pp.73-76.

120.Robinson, *op.cit.*, p.67.

121.*Ibid.*

122.*Ibid.*

123.T.J. Richards, 'Hume's Two Definitions of "Cause"', in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.XV, 1965, pp.247-253, criticises Robinson on these grounds.

124.Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, p.16, suggest that the second definition could just as plausibly be taken as the only true definition as the first. There is some textual support for the view. In the *Enquiry*, Hume writes that when we say that one object is connected with another 'we mean only that they have acquired a connexion in our thought, and give rise to this inference, by which they become proofs of each other's existence'(E.76). This would suggest that only the second definition, referring as it does, albeit obliquely, to the impression from which the 'essential' idea of necessity is derived, could strictly be considered the correct one. This view should be resisted. Not only is there no direct textual evidence in its favour, but holding it would commit Hume to the unpalatable view that any instance of conjunction, however unrepresentative, could properly be regarded as causal, provided one event is psychologically associated with the other.

125.See Wright, *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp.123-186. A similar defence is laid out by Galen Strawson, *op.cit.* Strawson writes that 'even if there were good grounds for thinking that Hume's theory of ideas licensed the strange claim that all we can suppose a thing to be is what we can detect or experience or know of it, because we cannot manage to mean anything more than what we can detect or experience or know of it when we think or talk, the following problem would remain: the claim that causation is nothing but regular succession, which makes a positive ontological assertion, is violently at odds with Hume's scepticism - his strictly non-committal scepticism with respect to knowledge claims about what we can know to exist, or know not to exist, in reality.'(p.276)

126.Hume's free use of these terms is reflected, in particular, in Section IV of the *Enquiry*.

127.Wright, *op.cit.*, p.13.

128.*Ibid.*, p.129.

129.*Ibid.*, p.135.

130.Malebranche, *op.cit.*, p.451.

131.*Ibid.*, p.450.

132.*Ibid.*, p.450.

133.Of these philosophers, it is only to Malebranche that Hume refers directly, citing him as among those 'who have pretended to explain the secret force and energy of causes'(T.158). It is obviously Malebranche's occasionalism which Hume has in mind during his attacks on the theory of causation of the 'Cartesians'. The influence of Malebranche on Hume has been well enough attested to by, among others, Wright, and McCracken, *op.cit.* Wright singles out Malebranche's insistence that when we lack knowledge of necessary connection we lack awareness of the power by which a cause produces its effects as particularly important to Hume(p.139).

134.Wright, *op.cit.*, p.127.

135.*Ibid.*

136. Martin Bell, 'Hume and Causal Power: The Influences of Malebranche and Newton' in *The British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol.5, No.1, 1997, pp.67-86.
137. Bell, *op.cit.*, p.76.
138. *Ibid.*, p.77.
139. *Ibid.*, pp.77-8.
140. Malebranche, *op.cit.*, pp.236-7.
141. There is no doubt that Hume was a highly attentive reader of Malebranche. Hume not only refers the reader to his work, and to crucial passages in it, but clearly models the wording of a number of important passages on passages from Malebranche. McCracken, *op.cit.*, pp.257-258, cites a number of them. Such passages, he argues, 'suggest that Hume not only kept the *Search* in mind, as he wrote on causality, but that he even had it open for consultation while writing'.
142. Bell, *op.cit.*, p.78.
143. *Ibid.*, pp.78-9.
144. Wright, *op.cit.*, p.143.
145. Hume warns us that when he talks of our ignorance of 'natural powers' he has in mind the 'loose and popular' sense of the term (E.33), which, he explains later, is 'obscure and uncertain' (E.66). This is the use of the term Hume has in mind when he writes of 'secret' and 'conceal'd' powers and forces. The causal power or necessary connection itself remains 'entirely incomprehensible' (E.72) to us. The mind has no idea of causal power, so understood (T.160-1). Sight or feeling 'conveys an idea of the actual motion of bodies; but as to that wonderful force or power, which would carry on a moving body for ever in a continued change of place, and which bodies never lose but by communicating it to others; of this we cannot form the most distant conception' (E.33).
146. See, for example, Strawson, *op.cit.*; and Craig, *op.cit.* Both Craig and Strawson exploit the distinction between relative and specific ideas.
147. Strawson, *op.cit.*, p.279.
148. *Ibid.*
149. *Ibid.*
150. *Ibid.*, p.281.
151. *Ibid.*, pp.281-2.
152. *Ibid.*, p.284.
153. *Ibid.*, p.279.
154. *Ibid.*, p.282.
155. *Ibid.*, p.91.
156. Blackburn, *op.cit.*, p.94, describes it as at best 'an error of taste to make sceptical realism a fundamental factor in the interpretation of Hume',
157. Blackburn, *op.cit.*, pp.100-101; p.101n.
158. Blackburn, *op.cit.*, p.94, describes a thick concept of the dependence of one object on another as 'any concept of one event producing another, or being necessarily a cause or

consequence of another, and that involves something in the events beyond their merely being kinds of events that regularly occur together'.

159. *Ibid.*, pp.97-8.

160. *Ibid.*, p.98.

161. *Ibid.*

162. Strawson, *op.cit.*, pp.254-5.

163. Blackburn, *op.cit.*, p.99.

164. Craig, *op.cit.*, p.97.

165. Strawson, *op.cit.*, p.110.

166. Craig, *op.cit.*, p.97.

167. Blackburn, *op.cit.*, p.99.

168. *Ibid.*

169. *Ibid.*, pp.99-100.

170. *Ibid.*, p.100.

171. This is the view that Pears, *op.cit.*, p.117, ascribes to Beauchamp and Rosenberg, *op.cit.*

## Chapter Three

### Hume's Scepticism with Regard to the Senses

Hume argues that the mind has no adequate idea of causal power or necessary connection as it is commonly understood. The 'generality of mankind' believe that in apprehending a particular causal relation 'they perceive the very force or energy of the cause, by which it is connected with its effect, and is forever infallible in its operation'(E.69). The negative conclusion of the section '*Of the idea of necessary connection*' is that we have no idea of necessity so understood. Hume's positive theory of causation gives an account of how the mind comes to mistake the idea of necessary connection which it does possess for an idea of necessary connection as that 'quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other'(E.63). The tendency the mind has of projecting qualities onto objects is to be explained on the basis of the principles of the association of ideas. The mind has 'a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion, and which always make their appearance at the same time that these objects discover themselves to the senses'(T.167). Hume shows how the idea of necessity arises from the customary transition the mind makes from cause to effect. This is an important part of Hume's constructive project in Part III. In Section XV, Hume offers a set of normative rules for judging of causes and effects. We can be confident, Hume thinks, in endorsing those rules which have survived their own reflexive scrutiny(1). Most of Hume's applications of causal reasoning to itself in Part III can be described as constructive. Certain of our central habits of mind are endorsable because they bear up under their own standards of evaluation. The same process of reasoning leads Hume to reject unphilosophical species of probability(T.143-154). Hume's rules for judging of causes and effects, his account of necessity and his two definitions of causation, are all the outcome of reflexive causal reasoning. This is in line with Hume's intention, announced in the introduction to the *Treatise*, of giving to the science of man a foundation 'laid on experience and observation', and so providing a 'compleat system of the sciences', the only one upon which they can stand with any security(T.xvi). In Part IV of Book One, however, Hume unravels a knot of sceptical doubts which threaten to 'turn into ridicule all our past pains and industry, and to discourage us from future enquiries'(T.266). He proposes a number of sceptical arguments and treats of a number of important assumptions and beliefs which, he argues, are unwarranted or false. By the end of Part IV, Hume is reduced 'almost to despair' at the weakness and disorder to which these 'desponding reflections' have exposed his faculties and beliefs(T.264). Our normal assumptions about ourselves, and about the external world, are exposed as 'fictions', mere tricks of the imagination. Hume's sceptical arguments raise important questions about the nature and viability of his constructive project. My purpose

in this and in the following chapter is to critically examine Hume's arguments, and the assumptions which underpin them, and to consider some of the difficulties urged against them.

It is in these sections that Hume displays the arguments of 'that fantastic sect' of radical or 'total scepticism'(T.183), appearing, to some commentators, to endorse the same Pyrrhonian arguments which seem to throw into uncertainty the theoretical and scientific ambitions announced at the outset of the *Treatise*(2). We found in Chapter Two that there were compelling textual grounds for resisting the positivist reading of Hume on causation and induction. The upshot of Hume's argument concerning induction, I argued, is not sceptical. The normative question of the justification of inductive inference only arises in Part IV, once Hume has considered those conclusions 'that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body'(T.231). Questions are posed about the legitimacy of causal reasoning by the serious doubts its application raises about the 'equally natural and necessary' operations of the senses(T.266). There is, Hume finds, a 'direct and total opposition' between reason and the senses(T.231). Not only do certain of our basic beliefs about the world and about ourselves go beyond what causal reasoning can strictly warrant, but, when applied to our perceptual judgments and beliefs, causal reasoning appears to 'leave nothing in the universe' which has a continued and distinct existence(T.231). The experimental method of reasoning shows that a number of our common sense beliefs are false, and, in Part IV, at least, appears to tip the scales against the possibility of founding upon its basis the sort of Newtonian enterprise Hume has in mind.

Hume expects his theory of mind to be able to explain not only those beliefs which causal inference can warrant, but those which it cannot. This reflects a fundamental aim of the first book of the *Treatise*. Hume intends to investigate the origin of our basic ontological beliefs. He uses the principles of the association of ideas to explain the tendency of the mind to mistakenly attribute necessity to objects. Hume's finished position has to be understood with care. Hume argues that we make a mistake when we think we perceive a necessary connection between causally-related objects or events. But he does not suggest that we are mistaken or unjustified in forming the habits of expectation we form on the basis of past regularities. He does not deny that there exist unknown causes. It is important to separate the genetic question from the question of justification. When we talk of causes in this sense, however, we do so in a 'loose and popular' way, as do the 'generality of mankind'. We do not possess an idea of the cause of the regularities we observe in nature. The idea we do possess is an effect of those regularities. The mind has a tendency to mistake the latter for the former and to project the effect of natural constancy back upon its cause. Two important features of Hume's treatment are worth underlining: Hume is concerned with the opinion of the 'generality of mankind' rather than with the view of philosophers; he is not concerned to deny that there are secret or concealed causes, powers or forces, in nature. I have argued against

the positivistic regularity interpretation of Hume's theory of causation. Hume can give us no strict definition of cause because, as he recognises, 'any just definition of cause'(E.76) must involve ideas drawn from the supposed effects of causes of which we have no adequate idea(3).

A third important point warrants reiteration. I complained in Chapter Two that Hume has said far too little about the way in which he thinks something which 'belongs entirely to the soul'(T.166) comes to be thought of as a quality or relation of or between the objects. The pressures of his theory of ideas lead him to attempt to characterise the content of the 'internal impression' in terms of an impression of inevitability or determination of the mind which is something like, or even identical with, an impression of necessity. In the *Enquiry*, Hume is at great pains to distance his account from any such implication(E.60-73), and, indeed, in the *Treatise* itself, he makes clear that there can be no apprehension of necessary connection, even between events in the mind(T.168). He is nevertheless led in this unfortunate direction by his commitment to accounting for the feeling of inevitability which accompanies the customary transition of the mind from cause to effect in terms of an impression. Hume is, at times, prepared to go as far as to say that we 'feel' the 'connexion' by which the mind is carried to form the idea of an object upon the appearance of its usual attendant(E.75). Hume leaves himself open to the sort of interpretation he has spent much of the past fifteen pages of the *Enquiry* attempting to prevent. He wants to avoid saying that the impression from which the idea of necessity which the mind possesses arises is itself an impression of necessary connection. What Hume needs is some means of saying that we experience the customary transition from cause to effect as inevitable without saying that we have an impression of inevitability or determination. But his commitment to the theory of ideas means that he can only characterise the way in which necessity gets to be regarded as part of the world in the most misleading terms. It is important to note the sort of hold this theory has on Hume's philosophical imagination. He perseveres with it even where it is obviously at odds with his attempts to causally explain our fundamental concepts and beliefs(4). It will not do simply to elevate one commitment of Hume's at the expense of another. Such an attempt, even coming from those sympathetic to Hume, is misguided. Whatever the faults of Hume's account it must, at least, be taken for what it is. Hume's advocacy of, and commitment to, the theory of ideas will be to the fore in the sections to follow, and, as I will argue, it is only against its background that his associationalist investigation of the causes which induce us to believe in lasting bodies and identical persons can be understood. In the first part of this chapter, I attempt to show the role Hume's commitment to the theory of ideas plays in the development of his argument.

In Section 3.2 I will argue against the suggestion that Hume sought to offload some or all of his commitments to the theory of ideas(5). It is doubtful whether Hume would have welcomed any such favours from sympathetic commentators. The theory of ideas had its value for

Hume, in providing a means of impartially challenging or placing under suspicion certain of our ideas and of interrogating our everyday beliefs. It also brings with it certain constraints. At times, these constraints restrict Hume to giving an explanation of a certain sort, or to pointing the reader in a certain, sometimes misleading, direction. It is true that Hume does not put forward any strong or convincing sceptical arguments against our faculties of sense, nor, indeed, does he give the issue any sustained treatment at all(6). It quickly becomes clear, however, that among the common perceptual judgments which Hume believes to be false is the belief that we are aware of a world of public objects, located in physical space, with an existence independent of our perception of them. By the end of Section II of Part IV, Hume writes that he is inclined 'to repose no faith at all in my senses'(T.217). It is, he complains, a 'gross illusion to suppose, that our resembling perceptions are numerically the same; and 'tis this illusion, which leads us into the opinion, that these perceptions are uninterrupted, and are still existent, even when they are not present to the senses'(T.217). Despite beginning Section II by promising to take for granted the vulgar belief in 'continu'd and distinct existence', by the end of the section Hume complains that he cannot 'conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system'(T.217).

The '*intense* view' of these 'manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason', leads him, by the end of Part IV, to consider the rejection of all belief and reasoning and to 'look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another'(T.268-9). Hume's constructive project of giving a reflexive turn to causal reasoning, so as to found a 'compleat system of the sciences', has been thrown into doubt by Hume's own destructive sceptical work. It is not until the second half of the conclusion to Book One of the *Treatise* that the mask of the Pyrrhonian sceptic begins to slip. It has seemed to a number of commentators that Hume's own position cannot survive the sorts of sceptical doubts he raises(7). Hume's attempts to mitigate his sceptical doubts, and so to save science, and his own scientific programme, fails, because, in Passmore's words, 'Hume could not succeed in the impossible - a science founded on scepticism no degree of ingenuity can successfully construct'(8). Hume's sceptical arguments seem, on the face of it, impossible to reconcile with his now largely ignored or too-readily dismissed scientific ambitions. A consideration of Hume's own assessment of his sceptical arguments will have to wait a while(9). In this chapter, I attempt to unravel Hume's particularly tangled and difficult discussion of our idea of body, and of the causes of our belief in lasting objects. In Chapter Four, I critically examine Hume's treatment of our assumptions about the identity of our own minds over time. In both sections, Hume is concerned with our common assumptions about identity over time. But it is the difficult Section II '*Of scepticism with regard to the senses*' that, I think, best captures the temper and ambition of Hume's sceptical philosophy, raising, as it does, important questions about the role and purpose of philosophical thought(T.267), and it is to the main argument of this section that I now turn.

### 3.1 The Argument in Detail

While few philosophers would wish to endorse its conclusions, Section II of Part IV is among the most widely discussed and admired passages of Hume's philosophy(10). Having dealt, in the main, with beliefs about future events in Part III of Book One, Hume turns to a second class of beliefs about the unobserved. He has in mind the 'simple supposition' of the continued and distinct existence of bodies or objects(T.198). His interest is in the causes which induce us to believe in the existence of such objects. The problem concerns what leads us to attribute identity to an object over gaps in observation. It is the tendency of the mind to assume that its objects have an uninterrupted existence that Hume wants to investigate. The section begins with Hume drawing a comparison between the sceptical doubts he has raised about demonstrative reason and the doubts he is about to raise concerning the senses. The sceptic, he says, 'still continues to reason and believe, even tho' he asserts, that he cannot defend his reason by reason; and by the same rule he must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, tho' he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity'(T.187). Hume concludes the first section of Part IV by remarking that, while the sceptical arguments directed at demonstrative reason are unanswerable, 'nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time, and keeps them from having any considerable influence on the understanding'(T.187). Hume's argument attempts to turn reason on itself by showing how the probability of error in calculation reduces the probability of the conclusions of chains of reasoning 'to nothing'(182-4). Hume concludes that 'all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence'(11). While Hume does not direct any sustained sceptical arguments against the faculties of sense, he does call into serious question the supposition that the objects of which we are aware have a distinct and continued existence. By the end of Section II, Hume is inclined, he says, to repose no faith at all in his senses(T.217). He believes the arguments against the supposition to be rationally unanswerable, although they produce little conviction, and have only slight effect upon our beliefs. Nature keeps them from having any lasting or 'considerable influence' on the understanding, although, as we will see, they are not without some influence. Unchecked by nature, sceptical arguments would 'utterly subvert all belief and opinion', terminating in 'a total suspense of judgment'(T.184). These effects of nature seem to be what Hume has in mind when he adds that '[W]e may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but 'tis in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings.'(T.187) There is no point in asking the question with a view to establishing what we ought to believe. Nature, it appears, has not left this to choice, esteeming it 'an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations.'(T.187) We have no choice but to proceed upon the supposition Hume has himself followed up to now that 'there is both an external and internal world'(T.217).

The subject of our present enquiry, Hume says, 'is concerning the *causes* which induce us to believe in the existence of body'(T.187-8). The contrast Hume has in mind is clear. He wishes to distinguish the legitimate causal investigation of a belief, and its findings, the result of empirical analysis, from the vain endeavours of the sceptic, who must assent to the belief, in spite of all his philosophy. His own scepticism is one which is '*consequent* to science and enquiry'(E.150). The connection between Hume's sceptical arguments and his genetic account of belief is carefully brought out in Section I. Hume describes his intention in displaying the arguments of 'that fantastic sect', the Pyrrhonian or total sceptics, as being 'only to make the reader sensible of the truth of my hypothesis, *that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom: and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures.*'(T.183) Hume's claim that many of our normal perceptual beliefs are false is the result of causal reasoning from observation and experience. When he finds that some of our beliefs go beyond what inference of this sort can warrant, he turns his mind to causally explaining what leads us to subscribe to the erroneous beliefs. I have attempted to stress the importance of this sceptical dimension in Hume. There is no doubt that Hume does regard many of our ordinary perceptual beliefs as false. But he does not suggest we abandon them or that we suspend our judgment about them. His is not that sort of scepticism. He is not asking what we should believe. As a good Newtonian, Hume is interested in the causes of the beliefs we have. The discovery of the falsehood of certain ordinary perceptual judgments is the outcome of an empirical investigation of their causes. One part of this investigation will have to do with the question of whether or not we can supply reasons for these beliefs.

Hume sees the question of our belief in the continued and distinct existence of body as a straightforward empirical question which falls naturally within the province of his science of man. Hume is interested in the sceptical arguments, but he no more than alludes to them, before moving on to his difficult, lengthy and extremely complicated examination of the causes of that belief(12). It is important to note that the belief Hume is interested in is the belief of the '*generality of mankind*', including, for the greater part of their lives, philosophers themselves(T.206). He looks to start his investigation from what he thinks is a theoretically uncommitted starting point. Hume wants to explain the origin of the vulgar belief in the distinct and continued existence of bodies. This is significant. The vulgar belief in body entails that '[T]hose very sensations, which enter by the eye or ear, are with them the true objects, nor can they readily conceive that this pen or paper, which is immediately perceiv'd, represents another, which is different from, but resembling it'(T.202). Hume needs to be able to formulate the problem and describe the pre-theoretical condition of our beliefs without committing himself or us to holding the '*objects*' in question to be either physical objects causing impressions, or sense-impressions going proxy for unobserved objects which are their causes. The pre-theoretical belief in body is, importantly, uncommitted to either of these two alternatives. Hume must not presuppose that we already, in this pre-theoretical stage, have

some notion of what it is for a body to have a distinct and continued existence. This is what is to be explained. He intends his account of the belief in question to conform to what he understands to be the belief of the vulgar(13). The distinction between perceptions and physical objects is one which the vulgar are in no position to make. Hume attributes to the vulgar two important suppositions. The vulgar, Hume says, 'confound perceptions and objects, and attribute a distinct continu'd existence to the very things they feel or see'(T.193).

Hume begins his argument by drawing a distinction between the elements of the vulgar belief in body, which is to say, between our belief in the continued existence and our belief in the distinct existence of objects. We ought, Hume says, 'to examine apart those two questions, which are commonly confounded together, viz. Why we attribute a CONTINU'D existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses; and why we suppose them to have an existence DISTINCT from the mind and perception.'(T.188) Under this last heading, Hume goes on, 'I comprehend their situation as well as relations, their *external* position as well as the *independence* of their existence and operation.'(T.188) The questions, Hume allows, are 'intimately connected together', for 'if the objects of our senses continue to exist, even when they are not perceiv'd, their existence is of course independent of and distinct from the perception; and *vice versa*, if their existence be independent from the perception and distinct from it, they must continue to exist, even tho' they be not perceiv'd'(T.188). The second of these two points is perhaps arguable. It does not seem that the independence of an object of perception need imply its continued existence when unperceived(14). Hume does not attempt to defend the claim. He is more interested in stressing that our belief in enduring bodies is a belief in both the continued existence of these objects when unperceived and in their distinctness or independence of mind. A satisfactory account will need to explain the origin of both attributions. So intimate is the connection Hume believes to hold between these two beliefs that 'the decision of the one question decides the other'(T.188). He nonetheless sets out to keep the distinction in mind in considering 'whether it be the *senses*, *reason*, or the *imagination*, that produces the opinion of a continu'd or of a distinct existence'(T.188).

Hume's strategy over the next few pages will be familiar from his discussion of our idea of necessary connection. He draws a similar conclusion. The notion of continued and distinct existence must, Hume thinks, arise from either the senses, reason or the imagination. Hume considers the three possible origins of our belief in body, only to reject the first two in favour of the third. Hume begins with a number of arguments intended to show that the senses cannot by themselves give rise to the opinion of the continued and distinct existence of bodies. Like so much in Hume, these arguments are the tip of a substantial theoretical iceberg. He observes first that we cannot get the idea of *continued* existence directly from the senses since that would imply that we had a perception of something continuing to exist when unperceived, and that, he says, 'is a contradiction in terms, and supposes that the senses continue to operate, even after they have ceased all manner of operation'(T.188). Hume can

make out this argument without violating his commitment to maintaining the 'ontological neutrality'(15) of the vulgar belief in body. His point is simply that the senses cannot convey the idea since this would involve perceiving what is unperceived.

If the senses are to have any influence in the present case it must be in the production of the opinion of the *distinct* existence of body. In order to produce the idea of distinct existence our senses would need to 'present their impressions either as images and representations, or as these very distinct and external existences'(T.189). It is obvious, Hume thinks, that our senses do not offer their impressions as images or representations of something distinct or independent 'because they convey to us nothing but a single perception, and never give us the least intimation of anything beyond'. A single perception, Hume says, can never produce the idea of an existence distinct from ourselves, except with the aid of some inference 'either of the reason or imagination(T.189). To offer an impression 'as represented' the senses must present both the image and the original. It is obvious, for reasons already stated, that they cannot possibly do so. We cannot tell how or whether an impression adequately represents the world as long as we have only the impression to go by. It is important to note that Hume is asking what causes us to believe that the objects of the senses have an independent existence. He is not asking what causes us to believe that there is an object beyond the impressions of the senses, causing them. The mind must look farther than the senses if it is to infer a 'double existence' and suppose the relations of resemblance and causation to hold between them. As I have already noted, Hume is extremely dismissive of such attempts. Much of his sceptical ire, in this section, and elsewhere in the *Treatise*, is directed against the doctrine of double existence. Near the end of Part II of Book One of the *Treatise*, Hume writes that since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, 'and since all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedantly present to the mind; it follows, that 'tis impossible for us to so much as conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions.'(T.67) The mind cannot advance a step beyond its perceptions, nor can it 'conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass'(T.67).

Do our senses then present their impressions as these 'very distinct and external existences' Hume writes about? Once again, Hume thinks it is evident that they do not. He has already argued that the senses present to the mind only the image or 'representation' and not the supposed object. If our senses do suggest any idea of distinct existences 'they must convey the impressions as those existences, by a kind of fallacy and illusion'(T.189). To make an impression appear as the original, the senses must 'convey a falsehood'(T.192). This, as Hume explains, is because all our perceptions, external or internal, pains and pleasures, as well as sensations, are originally 'on the same footing; and whatever other differences we may observe among them, they appear, all of them, in their true colours, as impressions or perceptions'(T.190). When we doubt whether our impressions present themselves as distinct

objects or mere perceptions, our doubt concerns not their nature, for they are all felt by the mind 'such as they really are', but 'their relations and situation'(T.189). If the senses presented our impressions as distinct and external existences, both the objects and ourselves would need to be obvious to the senses. But to what extent, if any, are we really aware of ourselves? The difficulty in this, according to Hume, concerns 'how far we are *ourselves* the objects of our senses'(T.189). Hume thinks this question too abstruse a one to be settled without 'recourse to the most profound metaphysics'(T.189). In common life, we have no fixed or determinate idea of self or person and it is, therefore, absurd to suppose that the senses can ever distinguish between ourselves and external objects(T.189-90).

Even if we ignore the complexities of personal identity and think of 'ourselves' as bodies we run into difficulties, for, strictly speaking, 'tis not our body we perceive, when we regard our limbs and members, but certain impressions, which enter by the senses; so that ascribing a real and corporeal existence to these impressions, or to their objects, is an act of mind as difficult to explain, as that which we examine at present'(T.191). Everything that enters the mind 'being in *reality* a perception'(T.190), an impression or an idea, we cannot appeal to something distinct from our own bodies in explaining the origin of the idea of external existence, without presupposing that we already possess the idea which we are interested in explaining. Hume believes that when we perceive parts of our bodies, we in fact perceive only 'certain impressions'(16). How do we come to ascribe external existence to our bodies in the first place? In order to explain how we get the idea of external existence by perceiving something independent of our own bodies, we must first explain how we come to ascribe 'a real and corporeal existence' to the impressions which are, strictly speaking, all we ever perceive. In no way better off for our excursion, we are brought back to our original difficulty. We may, Hume thinks, 'conclude with certainty, that the opinion of a continu'd and of a distinct existence never arises from the senses.'(T.192).

Hume argues that we cannot possibly have the illusion that perceptions are distinct and independent from ourselves since this would be to suppose 'that even where we are most intimately conscious, we might be mistaken'(T.190). This is impossible 'since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness' and 'must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear'(T.190). To confirm his thesis, Hume observes that there are broadly only three different kinds of impression conveyed to us by our senses: 'The first are those of the figure, bulk, motion and solidity of bodies. The second those of colours, tastes, smells, sounds, heat and cold. The third are the pains and pleasures, that arise from the application of objects to our bodies, as by the cutting of our flesh with steel, and such like.'(T.192) Both philosophers and the vulgar consider the first, primary, qualities, to have 'a distinct continu'd existence'. The vulgar alone regard secondary qualities as having the same status, while philosopher and non-philosopher alike consider pains and pleasures to have no such existence in objects. Hume is not here concerned with whether or not these

ascriptions are correct or justified. His point is that we do as a matter of fact make these distinctions, and that we make them on some basis other than the senses alone. It is evident, Hume says, that 'whatever may be our philosophical opinion, colours, sounds, heat and cold, as far as appears to the senses, exist after the same manner with motion and solidity, and that the difference we make betwixt them in this respect, arises not from the mere perception'(T.192). So great, and, indeed, pervasive, is the 'prejudice' for the distinct existence of primary qualities 'that when the contrary opinion is advanc'd by modern philosophers, people imagine they can almost refute it from their feeling and experience, and that their very senses contradict this philosophy'(T.192). Hume is happy to make the assumption that the immediate objects of our awareness are perceptions(17). Our impressions of primary qualities are on the same footing as our impressions of secondary qualities, and of pains and pleasures, when seen 'in their true colours'(T.190), as perceptions. As far as the senses are the judges 'all perceptions are the same in the manner of their existence'(T.193). The idea of distinct existence must therefore be derived from some source other than from the senses alone.

Despite the surface lucidity of Hume's argument, there are a number of difficulties arising from it, and a number of important assumptions, as yet unargued for, which need to be assessed. Hume has tended thus far to construe externality and independence almost exclusively in terms having to do with physical bodies lying beyond the senses. This is problematic. Not only does Hume fail to observe the commitment to ontological neutrality which, as we saw, he needs to observe at this point in his argument, but in failing to do so, he effectively ignores alternative possibilities which he ought to have considered. We should keep in mind that Hume is attempting to explain a belief in body which, as Pears observes, 'antedates the categorical question and does not presuppose an answer to it'(18). Crucially, it is Hume's assumption about the actual nature of the objects of sense that counts against the vulgar view. He has in mind a number of other assumptions, among them, as I will argue, a physicalist understanding of body, which we will need to grasp if we are to appreciate why Hume places belief in body 'in a far weaker position than belief in causation or belief in personal identity'(19). The special difficulties which attend Hume's account of the vulgar belief in body quickly become apparent in his description of the character of that belief and in his account of its origin.

Hume thinks the question of personal identity too abstruse a one to allow us, in common life, to distinguish, on the basis of our awareness of ourselves, our awareness of something distinct from ourselves. We might proceed by ignoring the metaphysical question and construing 'ourselves' as physical bodies. This line, however, is not open to us, since, properly speaking, it is not our 'limbs and members' we perceive, but certain impressions 'which enter by the senses'(T.191). Hume makes a valid point. The idea of external existence cannot simply be 'read off' from our impressions(20). The claim that my limbs and members have 'a

real and corporeal existence' itself stands in need of explanation and cannot be appealed to in explanation of the origin of the idea of externality. But Hume's opponent might complain, as Jonathan Bennett does, that 'he has been made to construe "external" as meaning (a) "somewhere other than where my body is" rather than (b) "somewhere other than where I am".'(21) While the apparent distinctness of our impressions of objects from our impressions of body is no basis upon which to ground our belief in distinct existence, the distinctness of these impressions from one's perceptual point of view might well be. The notion of 'where I am' does not require the supposition of a physical body, located in space, but 'can be adequately based on my perceptual slant on the world'(22). Hume does not consider the possibility. Nor does he give any weight to the possibility that the idea of distinct existence might be derived from our awareness of an impression existing apart from any of the perceptions which might constitute a mind. What he ought to mean by 'distinct existence', as Pears points out, 'is existence outside any mind, and this should cover impartially the two possible ways in which an object might exist independently of any mind: it might be an impression existing in complete isolation from the impressions and ideas which constitute any mind, or it might be a physical object in physical space'(23). Hume's problem is that he neglects entirely the first alternative, or any variation of it, preferring to ask whether our senses offer their impressions as something distinct from perceptions, from what appears immediately to the mind(T.189). He considers only one way in which an object might exist independently of a mind: as a physical object lying beyond the impressions of the senses. But the belief Hume is attempting to explain is supposed to be impartial between this and the alternative possibility. Hume already has in mind the representative theory of double existence, identified with Locke, which he later argues is philosophically unacceptable and fails to consider, or give any weight to, the possibility that our idea of distinct existence is founded on the distinctness of an impression from a perceptual view-point or from the impressions and ideas which make up the mind. The problem is that Hume bases his argument on two important and pervasive assumptions: one concerning the nature of the objects which are before the senses; the other having to do with the possible ways in which an object might exist independently of a mind. Hume is already facing difficulties in maintaining his commitment to ontological neutrality in explaining the vulgar belief in body, and, as we will see, the difficulties prove endemic in Hume's attempts to characterise the content of the vulgar belief.

Hume gives even shorter shrift to the pretensions of reason to be the source of our idea of and belief in the continued and distinct existence of bodies. The arguments of philosophers, however convincing in themselves, are of no interest to 'the greatest part of mankind'(T.193), who neither know of them, nor are influenced by them. The conclusions which the vulgar form are 'directly contrary to those, which are confirm'd by philosophy'(T.193). The vulgar 'attribute a distinct continu'd existence to the very things they feel or see' and fail to observe the philosophical conclusion that 'every thing, which appears to the mind, is nothing but a

perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind'(T.193). It cannot then be by the arguments of the philosophers that we are 'induc'd to attribute objects to some impressions, and deny them to others'(T.193). Even after we have distinguished our perceptions from our objects, we find that we are still incapable of 'reasoning from the existence of the one to that of the other'(T.193). We can infer one from the other only on the basis of the relation of cause and effect. But the acquisition of the relevant habit of inference demands, in this case, the perception of a constant conjunction between perception and object. Since the only immediate objects of sense are perceptions, a conjunction between perception and object can never be perceived. Causal inference cannot take us from perceptions to their objects. Perceptions are perceived; their objects are not. This assumption of Hume's is pervasive. Once again, he appears not only to assume the unobserved 'object' to be of a kind specifically different from the objects of mind with which we are familiar, but to have in mind a particular conception of the kind of object which is unobserved: one which makes the problem of explaining gaps in observation in terms of continued and distinct existence seem doubly difficult. This is an important point. Hume's case, as he presents it here, amounts to the claim that reasoning cannot give rise to our belief in the distinct continued existence of body, and rests on the premise that distinguishing perception from object involves treating the object as lying beyond those perceptions, which are our only immediate objects of awareness, and which cause them. Reason, Hume is able to conclude, 'neither does, nor is it possible it ever shou'd, upon any supposition, give us an assurance of the continu'd and distinct existence of body. That opinion must be entirely owing to the IMAGINATION: which must now be the subject of our enquiry'(T.193). The imagination triumphs by default.

Since all of our impressions, Hume writes, 'are internal and perishing existences, and appear as such, the notion of their distinct and continu'd existence must arise from a concurrence of some of their qualities with the qualities of the imagination; and since this notion does not extend to all of them, it will arise from certain qualities peculiar to some impressions'(T.194). Hume's first task is to identify the features of our experience which, together with the qualities of the imagination, produce the belief in the distinct and continued existence of body. Hume observes that we do not attribute a distinct and continued existence to all our impressions. In what circumstances are we led to make the attribution of external existence to our perceptions? There must be some qualities which are peculiar to these impressions. Hume begins with a comparison of those impressions to which we attribute existence and those which we regard as 'internal and perishing'. We may observe, Hume writes, 'that 'tis neither upon account of the involuntariness of certain impressions, as is commonly suppos'd, nor of their superior force and violence, that we attribute to them a reality, and continu'd existence, which we refuse to others, that are voluntary or feeble'(T.194). It is evident, he goes on, that pains and pleasures, to which we would never think to attribute such an existence, are apprehended with as much violence, and as involuntarily, as those impressions to which we do. It cannot then be on account of these features of certain of our impressions that we come

to have this belief about them. We are led to attribute a distinct and continued existence only to some of those impressions which can be characterised as involuntary or as violent and forceful.

Hume finds that there are two distinct qualities of impressions which cause us to ascribe to them an independent, enduring existence. After a little examination, Hume writes, we find 'that all those objects, to which we attribute a continu'd existence, have a peculiar *constancy*, which distinguishes them from the impressions, whose existence depends upon our perceptions'(T.194), and that, even, where change is evident after an absence or interruption, 'they preserve a *coherence*, and have a regular dependence on each other'(T.195). Hume describes the constancy in our experience in the following terms. It is worth quoting him at length: 'These mountains, and houses, and trees, which lie at present under my eye, have always appear'd to me in the same order; and when I lose sight of them by shutting my eyes or turning my head, I soon after find them return upon me without the least alteration. My bed and table, my books and papers, present themselves in the same uniform manner, and change not upon account of any interruption in my seeing or perceiving them. This is the case with all the impressions, whose objects are suppos'd to have an external existence; and is the case with no other impressions, whether gentle or violent, voluntary or involuntary'(T.194-5).

Bodies, however, often change in their qualities and positions, Hume says, 'and after a little absence or interruption may become hardly knowable. But here 'tis observable that even in these changes they preserve a *coherence*, and have a regular dependence on each other; which is the foundation of a kind of reasoning from causation, and produces the opinion of their continu'd existence'(T.195). Hume treats coherence as a kind of 'imperfect' constancy(24). When he returns to his chamber after an interval of an hour he finds the situation of his fire altered, but supposes something to have been existent the whole time of his absence: 'But then I am accusom'd in other instances to see a like alteration produc'd in a like time, whether I am present or absent, near or remote. This coherence, therefore, in their changes is one of the characteristics of external objects, as well as their constancy'(T.195).

Constancy and coherence are the qualities of our impressions with which the imagination interacts to produce the belief in their continued and distinct existence. These qualities provide the only basis for the supposition that there is a world of objects with a continued existence, independent of a perceiver. Having found, Hume writes, 'that the opinion of the continu'd existence of body depends on the COHERENCE and CONSTANCY of certain impressions, I now proceed to examine after what manner these qualities give rise to so extraordinary an opinion'(T.195). In the following few pages, Hume presents his complex and highly demanding account of the way in which these features of our experience combine with the imagination to cause our belief in body. We should bear in mind that in the account Hume gives he is explaining not the philosophical belief in double existence, but the pre-theoretical vulgar belief

in body. It would also be a mistake to identify the belief in question with a kind of phenomenalism. The belief Hume is examining is a belief about what *actually* occupies the gaps in our observation. The vulgar, Hume tells us, attribute a continued and distinct existence to the immediate objects of sense without ascribing to them either physical or mind-dependent existence. The causal explanation which Hume offers of the opinion 'that any of our objects, or perceptions, are identically the same after an interruption' is intended to show both the falsity of the belief and how the imagination is seduced into such an extraordinary and groundless opinion (T.209). As we shall see, Hume does consider what he thinks of as the only philosophical alternatives to the 'vulgar system', but only once he has completed his explanation of our pre-theoretical belief. He goes on to suggest that what strength or influence they have is imported directly from the 'false opinion' of the vulgar. Certain restrictions should be borne in mind in the assessment of Hume's account. If the features of our impressions which Hume identifies as responsible for the supposition of continued and distinct existence are to do the job Hume wants them to do, it must be possible to characterise them in terms which do not presuppose our already possessing the belief, or already having an idea of external existence. We must be able to get the idea, from the features of our experience described by Hume, without having the idea in the first place. In the passages quoted above, Hume describes constancy and coherence as though they were the observable properties of objects in physical space and not of our impressions. The task Hume has is to find the qualities of constancy and coherence in the observable features of our impressions, and not in the 'objects' we assume them to be.

Hume has identified two important features of our experience which he thinks help persuade us that the objects of our observation have a continued and distinct existence during absences or interruptions in observation. I receive a letter, Hume writes, 'which upon opening it I perceive by the hand-writing and subscription to have come from a friend, who says he is two hundred leagues distant. 'Tis evident I can never account for this phaenomenon, conformable to my experience in other instances, without spreading out in my mind the whole sea and continent between us, and supposing the effects and continu'd existence of posts and ferries, according to my memory and observation' (T.196). In accounting for the phenomenon Hume describes, we cannot, it seems, help but form conclusions about the continued existence of objects on the basis of memory and observation. There is scarcely a moment of life, Hume says, 'wherein there is not a similar instance presented to me, and I have not occasion to suppose the continu'd existence of objects in order to connect their past and present appearances, and give them such an union with each other, as I have found by experience to be suitable to their particular natures and circumstances' (T.197). We are led quite naturally to regard the world as something 'real and durable' which preserves its existence 'even when it is no longer present to my perception' (T.197). We appear to be led to our conclusions about the continued existence of body on the same basis upon which we form our inferences from cause and effect. However, Hume continues, 'tho' this conclusion from the coherence of

appearances may seem to be of the same nature with out reasonings concerning causes and effects; as being deriv'd from custom, and regulated by past experience; we shall find upon examination, that they are at bottom considerably different from each other, and that this inference arises from the understanding, and from custom in an indirect and oblique manner'(T.197). Since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, 'tis not only impossible, that any habit shou'd ever be acquired otherwise than by the regular succession of these perceptions, but also that any habit shou'd ever exceed that degree of regularity. Any degree, therefore, of regularity in our perceptions, can never be a foundation for us to infer a greater degree of regularity in some objects, which are not perceiv'd; since this supposes a contradiction, viz. a habit acquir'd by what was never present to the mind'(T.197).

Any analogy between the production of this belief and the conclusions of causal inference is bound to be misleading. I want to consider Hume's argument for this conclusion in detail. The conclusion Hume forms about the continued existence of his object appears to be of the same nature as those drawn on the basis of the causal relation. It may well appear, in other words, that we arrive at our belief by means of an inference from a present impression to an enlivened idea of its regular conjunct, which memory and observation has afforded us. But Hume wants to draw a clear line between these two species of belief. There is more than one way in which we come to form beliefs about the unobserved. Since, as Hume remarks, nothing is ever present to the mind 'besides its own perceptions', we can never, in this or similar cases, acquire the habit required for an inference from cause to effect. We can infer the existence of an unobserved effect on the basis of an observed cause only on the basis of an observed constant conjunction between cause and effect. It is evident, Hume goes on, 'that whenever we infer the continu'd existence of the objects of sense from their coherence, and the frequency of their union, 'tis in order to bestow on the objects a greater regularity than what is observ'd in our mere perceptions'(T.197). In making the inference we seek to go beyond the degree of regularity which we find in our perceptions, from which, Hume thinks, we might 'directly and naturally' be led to infer the one from the other. The habit which serves as the basis of all 'causal reasoning' can be acquired only by the repeated conjunction of perceptions. We observe 'a connexion betwixt two kinds of objects in their past appearance to the senses, but are not able to observe this connexion to be perfectly constant, since the turning about of our head, or the shutting of our eyes is able to break it.' In this case, we suppose that these objects continue their usual connection, notwithstanding the apparent interruption, and that their appearances are connected by something of which we are insensible: 'But as all reasoning concerning matters of fact arises only from custom, and custom can only be the effect of repeated perceptions, the extending of custom and reasoning beyond the perceptions can never be the direct and natural effect of the constant repetition and connexion, but must arise from the co-operation of some other principles'(T.197-8).

The distinction Hume draws between these two kinds of belief underlines both his distinct construal of the two problems and the special difficulties which attend his characterisation of the vulgar idea of body. Hume sees the conclusions we form concerning the continued existence of the objects of the senses as especially problematic. He argues that causal inference can never produce the vulgar belief in distinct and continued existence. The problem, as Hume sees it, concerns what the vulgar believe to actually fill the gaps during interruptions in observation. As already noted, the vulgar position is not to be identified with any form of phenomenalism. Had Hume construed it in this way, the problem would indeed have been susceptible of the same sort of treatment Hume gives to causation(25). The problem would have to do merely with what would have happened had observation occupied the appropriate gaps: a question parallel to that which would arise from our considering what would have happened had Hume added fuel to his fire rather than not. What is inferred is, in other words, a fact of the same nature as those upon which the inference is based. In the case in hand, however, what Hume believes we infer is the existence of a thing of an essentially different kind, which is, of its nature, unobservable, and which no appropriately directed observation could disclose(26). Hume directs his attention to the question of what actually exists during these gaps in observation. He construes the problem as having to do with inference to 'objects' lying inaccessibly behind the veil of perception, objects of a specifically different kind from those of sensation. He does not consider the possibility that unobserved objects might themselves be impressions: objects of the same sort as those with which we are familiar. It is the nature of Hume's construal of the problem of perception which gives his inquiry its distinct and distinctly pessimistic character. Just how Hume's construal of the question influences his conclusions becomes clear once we begin to look at his argument in detail.

Objects, Hume writes, 'have a certain coherence even as they appear to our senses; but this coherence is much greater and more uniform, if we suppose the objects to have a continu'd existence; and as the mind is once in the train of observing an uniformity among objects, it naturally continues, till it renders the uniformity as compleat as possible'(T.198). The 'simple supposition' of the continued existence of bodies gives us a notion of much greater regularity among objects than we could ever get from the senses alone. To give a satisfactory account of the opinion of 'the continu'd existence of all external bodies', however, we must 'join the *constancy* of their appearance to their *coherence*'(T.199). Coherence alone is 'too weak to support so vast an edifice, as is that of the continu'd existence of all external bodies'(T.198-9). It is the inference from the constancy of our perceptions that 'gives rise to the opinion of the *continu'd* existence of body, which is prior to that of its *distinct* existence, and produces that latter principle'(T.199). Hume explains this in the following way: When we have grown accustomed to observing a constancy in certain impressions, as, for example, we do, when we find that the perception of the sun or ocean returns to us, after an interruption in observation, 'with like parts and in a like order', we are led to regard these interrupted

perceptions not as different, as they really are, but 'as individually the same'(T.199). But as this interruption of their existence is contrary to the 'perfect identity' of these perceptions, 'and makes us regard the first impression as annihilated, and the second as newly created', we find ourselves involved in a kind of conflict or 'contradiction'. In order to free itself from this conflict, the mind seeks to 'disguise, as much as possible, the interruption, or rather remove it entirely, by supposing that these interrupted perceptions are connected by a real existence, of which we are insensible'(T.199).

Having found in certain of our impressions, or in certain series of impressions, a constancy of appearance, we are inclined, upon account of their resemblance, to ascribe to the perception following a gap in observation a perfect identity with that preceding it. But our awareness of the interruption, which, Hume says, we have no way of avoiding, involves us in 'a kind of contradiction'. Our way of dealing with this contradiction is to suppose, contrary to appearances, a real existence beyond our interrupted impressions, connecting them. The idea of continued existence gains its force and vivacity, the qualities which are are 'the very essence of belief', from 'the memory of these broken impressions', and our natural propensity to treat them as identical(T.199). The imagination, Hume explains, once set upon a certain course, 'is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and like a galley set in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse'(T.198).

It is, Hume thinks, the constancy in certain of our impressions which produces in the mind the propensity to ascribe a perfect identity to our impressions(27). The conflict into which this throws the mind can be resolved only by the supposition of real existence. It must be possible for us to get the idea of constancy, crucial as it is to the above account, without already having the belief, and the idea, Hume wants to explain in terms of it. It was suggested earlier that Hume needs to give a more precise characterisation of constancy than the one sketched above. He is less than careful when it comes to characterising these features of our experience, as he must, in terms other than those of objects, and physical objects, in particular. It may still be that Hume's lack of sensitivity on this point can be ascribed more to a slip of the pen, understandable given that he is endeavouring to account for a belief he and everybody else already holds, rather than to a potentially fatal explanatory error. We must see whether we can gather from his account a characterisation of constancy in terms conducive to the good conduct of Hume's inquiry.

What, according to Hume, does it mean to 'observe a constancy' in our impressions? An uninterrupted perceptual series could, following Stroud(28), be described as having the form P P P P P P P P P P where each P stands for one separate, 'fleeting' impression in the series. An interrupted series would then have the form: P P P P Q Q P P P P. In this case, we can take Q to denote 'the turning about of our head, or the shutting of our eyes'(T.198). This is the situation Hume has in mind in talking about constancy. The similarity between the two situations, as

well as the similar mental effects produced by the two kinds of series, leads the mind to slip easily into taking both series to be of the same sort, and to take the perceptions either side of the interruption to be 'individually the same'. In other words, we ascribe to the impressions either side of the gap a 'perfect identity'. Hume regards the idea of identity, much as Locke did, as an idea of a thing being individually the same at a number of different times(29). We ascribe perfect identity to an uninterrupted series of impressions. An interrupted series of similar perceptions is almost the same to the mind as an uninterrupted series and places it in a similar disposition. Whatever ideas place the mind in the same or similar dispositions, 'are 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'(T.203). The mind's natural inclination to take one of the two dispositions for the other explains how we come mistakenly to take the second case to be an instance of the first. Despite the obvious difference between the two series, their effects on the mind are similar, and this helps explain the conflict into which the mind gets itself. The other side of the conflict or 'contradiction' is the 'interrupted manner' of the appearance of the perceptions(T.205). More than this, though, we falsely believe that what is now observed is identical with what was observed prior to the break in observation. What this means is that we must take the first situation as being a 'continu'd view' of an object 'individually the same', rather than what Hume takes it to be, a series of momentary, fleeting impressions. But if this is all there is to our perception of an uninterrupted series of impressions, how do we get the idea that the first sequence represents 'a continued view of the same object'?

Hume must explain how it is we come to think of an uninterrupted series of similar or 'resembling' impressions as being 'individually the same'. We must come by the idea of identity or 'perfect identity' somehow before we can make the mistake of attributing it to an interrupted series of impressions. The nature of our experience means that we cannot get it from the senses. All we are ever aware of is a constant flux of diverse, discrete perceptions. Hume is aware of the difficulty. He is aware that he needs the idea to explain how we come to make the original mistake of taking an uninterrupted series of discrete objects for a 'continu'd view of the same object'. The view of any one 'object', Hume writes, 'is not sufficient to convey the idea of identity. For in that proposition, *an object is the same with itself*, if the idea express'd by the word, *object*, were no ways distinguish'd from that meant by *itself*; we really shou'd mean nothing, nor wou'd the proposition contain a predicate and a subject, which however are imply'd in this affirmation'(T.200). A single object cannot produce the idea of identity. Nor can 'a multiplicity of objects' produce the idea, since 'the mind always pronounces the one not to be the other, and considers them as forming two, three, or any determinate number of objects, whose existences are entirely distinct and independent'(T.200). Since both 'number' and 'unity' are 'incompatible with the idea of identity', Hume says, the idea 'must lie in something that is neither of them'(T.200). Hume looks to 'the idea of time or duration' to remove the difficulty. Time, Hume writes, implies succession, and it is only 'by a fiction of the

imagination' that 'the unchangeable object is suppos'd to participate of the changes of the co-existent objects, and in particular of that of our perceptions'(T.201). This 'fiction', he continues, 'almost universally takes place; and 'tis by means of it, that a single object, plac'd before us, and survey'd for any time without our discovering in it any interruption or variation, is able to give us the notion of identity'(T.200-1).

The idea of identity, Hume explains, combines both our idea of unity and our idea of multiplicity. If we consider any two points of time, we can place them in different lights: 'We may either survey them at the very same instant; in which case they give us the idea of number, both by themselves, and by the object; which must be multiply'd, in order to be conceived at once, as existent in these two different points of time: Or on the other hand, we may trace the succession of time by a like succession of ideas, and conceiving first one moment, along with the object then existent, imagine afterwards a change in the time without any *variation* or *interruption* in the object; in which case it gives us the idea of unity. Here then is an idea, which is a medium betwixt unity and number; or more properly speaking, is either of them, according to the view, in which we take it: and this idea we call that of identity'(T.201).

The idea, in other, simpler, words, is that of a single object existing at a number of different times. It could not arise merely from the consideration of a unitary object perceived at one moment of time. Nor could we come by it from the observation of different objects existing at a multiplicity of different times. However, if we consider either instance from the perspective of the other we can thereby account for the origin of this 'fiction'. Given that sense experience cannot supply us with the requisite impressions for such an idea, it is to the imagination that we must look to supply the deficit. The 'principle of individuation' is nothing other than 'the *invariableness* and *uninterruptedness* of any object, thro' a suppos'd variation of time, by which the mind can trace it in the different periods of its existence, without any break of the view, and without being oblig'd to form the idea of multiplicity or number'(T.201). When we fix our attention on any object, Hume goes on to say, 'and suppose it to continue the same for some time; 'tis evident we suppose the change to lie only in the time, and never exert ourselves to produce any new image or idea of the object'(T.203). The passage from one moment to the next in an uninterrupted series of impressions 'is scarce felt, and distinguishes not itself by a different perception or idea, which may require a different direction of the spirits, in order to its conception'(T.203). We make no distinction among the fleeting moments of the impression series. Instead, the mind reposes itself so as to 'take no more exercise, than what is necessary to continue that idea, of which we were formerly possess, and which subsists without variation or interruption'(T.203). As was the case in our confounding of the interrupted with the uninterrupted series of impressions, we slip into the fiction not by any action of the mind but rather by its inaction and inattention(30). We simply fail to remark the change from moment to moment, wrongly supposing 'the change to lie only in the time'. The mind

'perceives not' the passage from one moment to the next 'without a strict attention, of which, generally speaking, 'tis wholly incapable'(T.203).

Hume then finds the idea of identity to be that of an object, invariable and uninterrupted, existing through a 'suppos'd' variation of time. We get the idea, Hume thinks, by first conceiving of an object existing at a point of time, then imagining that unitary object to persist, without variation, through changes in time. Since nothing in our experience corresponds to this supposition, the idea of identity, or perfect identity, is a fiction. We have already noted the importance of this idea to Hume. Hume must have the idea of identity in hand before he can explain our ascription of perfect identity to a series of uninterrupted impressions, and our confounding of this series with our 'broken and interrupted perceptions'(T.200). I do not think Hume has succeeded. It is difficult to see how the above account can do the job he intends it to. The problem lies in our imagining a unitary object to exist continuously through a change in time 'without any variation or interruption'. In order to make such a bold imaginative step it would appear we must already have in hand the idea of what it is for a body to continue with no variation or interruption through time. Before we reach the point of imagining the object to exist unbrokenly we must, it seems to me, have some understanding of what it is for a thing to do so. We must, in other words, already have an idea of something other and more than Hume's fleeting impressions of the senses. We must know what it is for a unitary object to endure through changes in time. To imagine one must first have some idea of what it is one is imagining. Without our already having a notion of what it means to have a 'continued view' of the same object, it is difficult to understand how we can conceive of or imagine such a thing. Hume's account of the origin of our idea of identity seems to presuppose our already having that idea in the first place. And Hume needs this idea if he is to successfully explain the error from which arises the conflict which the 'simple supposition' of continued existence is meant to resolve.

Once the idea of identity is in hand, Hume thinks he is in a position to explain how we come to ascribe identity to the interrupted but resembling impressions of the senses, and so succumb to the conflict we propose to resolve through the supposition of continued existence. The constancy of our impressions 'makes us ascribe to them a perfect numerical identity, tho' there be very long intervals betwixt their appearance, and they have only one of the essential qualities of identity, viz. *invariableness*'(T.202). The invariableness of the impressions in the uninterrupted sequence leads us to slip, in virtue of a disposition of the mind, into making, on the basis of their similarity, the same mistaken ascription of numerical identity to the interrupted series. It is in virtue of the invariableness shared by both sequences that the mind is placed in the resembling dispositions it is so apt to confound. The passage 'betwixt related ideas', Hume observes, is 'so smooth and easy, that it produces little alteration on the mind, and seems like the continuation of the same action; and as the continuation of the same action is an effect of the continu'd view of the same object, 'tis for this reason we attribute

sameness to every succession of related objects. The thought slides along the succession with equal facility, as if it consider'd only one object; and therefore confounds the succession with the identity'(T.204). In both cases the mind finds itself with the same disposition to attribute numerical identity on the basis of the perceived invariableness of our perceptions. An easy transition or passage of the imagination, 'along the ideas of these different and interrupted perceptions, is almost the same disposition of mind with that in which we consider one constant and uninterrupted perception. 'Tis therefore very natural for us to mistake the one for the other'(T.204). The similarity of the dispositions in virtue of which the mind slips as easily from the observation of an interrupted series of perceptions to an assignment of perfect identity as it does from the observation of an uninterrupted series inclines us to believe that those impressions either side of a gap in observation are individually the same.

We are led, by these resembling dispositions, to ascribe to the interrupted series the same fiction of numerical identity we attributed to the uninterrupted series. It is to these interrupted images, those fleeting impressions presented to the senses, that we ascribe identity: 'But as the interruption of the appearance seems contrary to the identity, and naturally leads us to regard these resembling perceptions as different from each other, we here find ourselves at a loss how to reconcile such opposite opinions'(T.205). Once we have the fictional idea of identity we can deny it to a series on the grounds of interruptions. The perplexity arising from this conflict, Hume says, 'produces a propension to unite these broken appearances by the fiction of a continu'd existence'(T.205).

Nothing, Hume writes, is more certain from experience 'than that any contradiction either to the sentiments or passions gives a sensible uneasiness, whether it proceeds from without or within; from the opposition of external objects, or from the combat of internal principles'(T.205). There being in this case 'an opposition betwixt the notion of the identity of resembling perceptions, and the interruption of their appearance, the mind must be uneasy in that situation, and will naturally seek relief from the uneasiness'(T.206). Since the uneasiness in this case arises from the opposition of two contrary principles, the mind 'must look for relief by sacrificing the one to the other'. But 'as the smooth passage of our thought along our resembling perceptions makes us ascribe to them an identity, we can never without reluctance yield up that opinion'. We are led instead to suppose that our perceptions are not interrupted but 'preserve a continu'd as well as an invariable existence'. But here too, we find the supposition psychologically unsupportable. The interruptions in the appearance of our perceptions 'are so long and frequent, that 'tis impossible to overlook them' and 'it may be doubted, whether we can ever assent to so palpable a contradiction, and suppose a perception to exist without being present to the mind'(T.206). The conflict into which the mind is thrown is not to be resolved by the sacrifice of one opinion for the other. The contrary opinions are, however, in a sense, both satisfied by our postulating the connection of these interrupted perceptions 'by a real existence, of which we are insensible'(T.199). The conflict is

resolved by means of this further fiction in virtue of which we disguise the interruption in our perceptions, 'or rather remove it entirely'(T.199).

Hume is troubled by the possibility that the belief which he ascribes to the vulgar is not merely false but conceptually absurd. It may be doubted, he concedes, whether 'so palpable a contradiction' could meet so readily with our assent. The problem, the apparent contradiction, as Hume understands it, has to do with the identification of the 'appearance' of a perception with its 'existence', the attribution of continued existence to the very things we perceive, which are for Hume, of course, the perceptions themselves. Given that everything that is present to the mind is a dependent perception, can the false vulgar belief in real existence be defended, or even conceived of, without self-contradiction? The vulgar, Hume tells us, 'take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence'(T.206). Hume does not mean to say that the vulgar really confuse two sorts of thing(T.202). His point is that the vulgar simply never do distinguish perception from object. For Hume, we should remember, the fleeting and perishing impressions of the senses are the only objects of our perception. The vulgar, while not countenancing this philosophical view of impressions, nevertheless take them to be 'their only objects'. They simply fail to distinguish perception from object and so, of course, can have no notion of perceptions as Hume understands them. Hume, however, at times, appears to forget the point. This is important because it is not at all clear that the contradiction, which Hume takes to threaten with absurdity the vulgar belief, would arise, or be at all relevant, were Hume to stick to his official account of what the vulgar think. I will return to this in a moment. It will be useful to allow Hume the leisure to conclude his argument.

It is to the undistinguished objects of their senses, their very perceptions, Hume thinks, that the vulgar, which is to say, 'almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives'(T.206), ascribe a continued existence when not perceived. It is certain, Hume continues, 'that this very perception is suppos'd to have a continu'd uninterrupted being, and neither to be annihilated by our absence, nor to be brought into existence by our presence'(T.206-7). How, he asks, can we satisfy ourselves 'in supposing a perception to be absent from the mind without being annihilated'(T.207)? We may observe 'that what we call a *mind*, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and suppos'd, tho' falsely, to be endow'd with a perfect simplicity and identity'(T.207). Every perception being allowed to be distinguishable and, so, separable, from another, 'it evidently follows, that there is no absurdity in separating any particular perception from the mind; that is, in breaking off all its relations, with that connected mass of perceptions, which constitute a thinking being'(T.207). To say of a perception that it is present to the mind is to say no more than that it is one perception among others in 'a heap or collection of perceptions'. The mind, for Hume, is no more than this, a bundle of perceptions, each of which may properly be considered as separately existent from the others. Since all our

perceptions are different from each other, Hume writes later, 'and from everything 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 anything else to support their existence'(T.233). There need then be no absurdity in taking any perception to be separately existent from the other perceptions found in the same heap or bundle. There is then no inconsistency in our supposing any perception to exist during gaps in its appearance to the mind. By that same token, there is no evident absurdity in the vulgar ascribing a continued existence to their only objects, which are, according to Hume, their perceptions. The belief, on the account Hume gives, is simply false. It is not self-contradictory.

Hume's concern is with whether 'so palpable a contradiction' could sensibly be ascribed to the vulgar. He has Berkeley in mind when he raises the question. Berkeley argues that the opinion that there are things which exist independently of the mind is conceptually absurd or incoherent, a 'contradiction'(31). Hume follows Berkeley in saying that everything which can be present to the mind is a perception and 'dependent upon the mind'(T.193). But, unlike Berkeley, he does not conclude that it is, on these grounds, a 'manifest contradiction' to suppose that 'sensible objects' have an existence distinct from their being perceived. He wants to save the vulgar from commitment to a belief so obviously absurd that their assent might appear to us less than credible. This at least is his announced intent. It is evidently not to his purpose to establish the philosophical well-groundedness of the belief. This is not his intention. However, when it comes to developing his defence against the charge of inconsistency he seems intent on attributing to the vulgar his own sophisticated, eminently arguable, philosophical account of mind and personal identity(32). What Hume is doing here is clearly not in line with what he ought to be arguing given the explanatory commitment he incurs at the outset. As we have seen, Hume has already argued that the difficulties inherent in such a reasoning place them beyond the thought of the plain man. He does not, I think, want to suggest that such a thesis can be attributed to him now. He wants to argue that the vulgar belief does not involve any conceptual absurdity in fact, irrespective of what thinking leads to their assent. It is enough, for the moment, to remark the irrelevancy of the point to this stage of Hume's argument. For the real source of Hume's problems here we must trace our path back a step or two.

The contradiction which appears to Hume to threaten the credibility of our ready assent to the vulgar belief arises only if they already have in mind the sort of thesis about perception which he would regard as philosophical. The vulgar would have already to subscribe to the view that what we see and feel are themselves perceptions, fleeting appearances, in order to be troubled by the possibility of inconsistency in their attribution to these of continued existence. But this is a view which Hume ought not ascribe to them, given both his official line about the content of the vulgar belief, and his account of how the philosophical belief arises. It is important to bear in mind that it is the non-philosophical belief in body that Hume is attempting

to explain. As we will see shortly, the belief in double existence imports all its force and influence from the non-philosophical belief to which, Hume thinks, we all at some point subscribe. Hume's account of the origin of this belief requires that it never occur to us in the pre-theoretical stage of belief that there is a distinction to be made between perception and object. If we realised that all we perceived were in fact momentary and fleeting perceptions we would never get the idea of identity or the belief in distinct and continued existence. Even if we take Hume at his word and work on the basis of what he clearly takes the vulgar belief about our perceptions to be, then we will find still further difficulties along the line. The vulgar, Hume thinks, simply fail to make any distinction between perceptions and objects. This makes it difficult to see how they would be able to make the necessary attribution unless they already possessed an idea of continued and distinct existence. In order to believe that the things we see and feel continue to exist independently, even when we no longer see or feel them, it seems that we must already have some idea of what it is for something to have continued and distinct existence. We must already have the idea of continued, distinct existence before we can have the belief that the things we see and feel have a continuous independent existence. Some explanation of how we come by this idea in the first place is needed. It remains to be seen whether Hume can provide a formulation of his problem, and the situation in which it arises, which is successful on the terms within which he is bound to work. What is clear is that he cannot do this if he takes the vulgar to make the sort of philosophical distinction between perceptions and objects which he makes.

Hume, we have seen, does not want to argue against the vulgar belief in body on grounds of its conceptual incoherence. For important theoretical reasons of his own, Hume is committed to saying that in holding such a belief we are safe from the charge of self-contradiction(33). Hume's principle of the separability of our ideas and impressions plays a crucial role in his discussions of substance and personal identity. The supposition 'of the continu'd existence of sensible objects or perceptions', Hume says, 'involves no contradiction'(T.208). We get the idea of identity and, so, get into the conflict which this 'simple supposition' is supposed to resolve, through our misapprehension of certain facts about perception and the nature of the things that we perceive. All we ever perceive are 'internal and fleeting existences' which 'appear as such'(T.194). Though false, the belief is nevertheless conceivable and that without absurdity. The vulgar belief in body, a belief which we all at one time or another have held, gains our assent by means of a propensity already familiar to us. Our memory, Hume writes, 'presents us with a vast number of instances of perceptions perfectly resembling each other, that return at different distances of time, and after considerable interruptions. This resemblance gives us a propensity to consider these interrupted perceptions as the same; and also a propensity to connect them by a continu'd existence, in order to justify this identity, and avoid the contradiction, in which the interrupted appearance of these perceptions seems necessarily to involve us.'(T.208-9). We have a natural propensity to 'feign the continu'd existence of all sensible objects', and it is the lively perceptions of the memory which, Hume

says, bestow upon this fiction a forcefulness and vivacity and 'makes us believe the continu'd existence of body'(T.209).

Hume claims that the vulgar 'take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence'(T.206). Their supposition gathers force and vivacity from the impressions of the memory sufficient to make that supposition a belief. Hume provides a naturalistic explanation of the vulgar belief in body which shows it to be both false and incredible. The imagination is seduced into the opinion in virtue of the resemblances it finds in our experience and its natural propensity to consider resembling perceptions the same. He provides us with a summary of his method. Given that the vulgar suppose 'their perceptions to be their only objects' while at the same time believing in 'the continu'd existence of matter', we must, Hume has argued, 'account for the origin of the belief upon that supposition'(T.209). Upon the basis of that supposition, it can only be a false opinion that our only objects of awareness, our perceptions, are 'identically the same after an interruption; and consequently the opinion of their identity can never arise from reason, but must arise from the imagination'. The imagination is seduced into this groundless opinion only because of its 'propension' to 'bestow an identity on our resembling perceptions', which, in turn, 'produces the fiction of a continu'd existence'(T.209). This natural propensity of the imagination 'causes belief by means of the present impressions of the memory; since without the remembrance of former sensations, 'tis plain we never shou'd have any belief of the continu'd existence of body'(T.209-10).

Once Hume has the fiction of identity, he is in a position to explain the conflict into which the mind is thrown, a conflict which we can resolve only by postulating another fiction, that of the continued and distinct existence of body. It is by means of this fiction that we disguise the interruption in our resembling perceptions and ascribe to the 'very image which is present to the senses' a 'real body' and perfect identity(T.205). A 'very little reflection and philosophy' is all that is needed 'to make us perceive the fallacy of that opinion'(T.210). Only by means of the errors Hume describes can we come by the belief, for 'when we compare experiments, and reason a little upon them, we quickly perceive, that the doctrine of the independent existence of our sensible perceptions is contrary to the plainest experience'(T.210). Since, as we saw, all we ever perceive are internal and perishing existences(T.194), what inferential habits we might acquire can never 'exceed the degree of regularity' we find in our perceptions, nor can that regularity 'be a foundation for us to infer a greater degree of regularity in some objects, which are not perceiv'd'(T.197).

A comparison of experiments and a little reasoning thereon might serve to convince us that our perceptions 'are not possess of any independent existence'. Hume uses a number of arguments which appeal to perceptual variability. He writes:

When we press one eye with a finger, we immediately perceive all the objects to become double, and one half of them to be remov'd from their common and natural position. But as we do not attribute a continu'd existence to both these perceptions, and as they are both of the same nature, we clearly perceive, that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits. This opinion is confirm'd by the seeming encrease and diminution of objects, according to their distance; by the apparent alterations in their figure; by the changes in their colour and other qualities from our sickness and distempers; and by an infinite number of other experiments of the same kind; from all which we learn, that our sensible perceptions are not possest of any distinct or independent existence.(T.210-11)

The brevity with which Hume acquits himself here suggests that he has presented a case to which he thinks no adequate response can be argued. It is far from clear that he is right. Hume recycles some familiar arguments but it is easily seen that they fall short of their intended mark. Evidently, the vulgar view as Hume outlines and develops it can, to his mind, do little to offset the force of the weakest, or most cursory, critical scrutiny. No doubt, the belief as he presents it has little to recommend it, even to those to whom he attributes it. Given that it is to the very things they see and feel, their perceptions as such, that the vulgar are meant to ascribe continued and distinct existence, it is unsurprising that Hume should feel able to dispose so quickly of the belief. Nevertheless, it is worth remarking that Hume's aim is not good in this case. All that he can be said to have shown is that the appearance of what is perceived depends upon the successful functioning of our faculties of sense. This is not to say that the objects of that perception are themselves mind-dependent, just that our perception of them is. He goes no way here towards establishing what we see and feel to be those very 'internal and perishing existences' he takes them to be. It is perhaps not all that surprising that we should observe an 'encrease and diminution of objects' according to the position we occupy in relation to them. As Reid shows, in an exemplary passage, this is precisely what we would expect to observe were it a real object we were seeing(34). The object would *appear* to alter in magnitude according to our distance from it, though its actual magnitude remains the same. Hume fails to provide any good or convincing argument for his understanding of the problem of perception, or for the theory of ideas which supports it. Hume does not seem to have thought it a point much worth arguing for. What I want to suggest is that the assumptions Hume makes determine the sort of questions he asks and are ultimately restrictive of the sorts of answers he can give to them.

Convinced that what we perceive are internal and perishing existences, momentary and fleeting impressions of the senses, it is tempting to suggest that some of our impressions are images of external objects lying beyond them. Hume's response to this view, which he ascribes to Locke(T.202), is highly sceptical. Philosophers, Hume writes, 'have so far run into

this opinion, that they change their system, and distinguish, (as we shall do for the future) betwixt perceptions and objects, of which the former are suppos'd to be interrupted, and perishing, and different at every turn; the latter to be uninterrupted, and to preserve a continu'd existence and identity'(T.211). The doctrine of double existence, while allowing that our private perceptions are all we are directly aware of, insists upon there being a world of real and continuously existent objects for which these momentary images go proxy in our experience. This 'remedy', such as it is, can be no more than a 'palliative'. There are no arguments or principles, Hume says, 'either of the understanding or fancy, which leads us directly to embrace this opinion of the double existence of perceptions and objects, nor can we arrive at it but by passing thro' the common hypothesis of the identity and continuance of our interrupted perceptions'(T.211). Were it not for our being first convinced of the 'false opinion' of the vulgar, that it is the very things we see and feel that continue to exist unperceived, we could never be persuaded that our perceptions are different from our objects 'and that our objects alone preserve a continu'd existence'(T.211). The hypothesis of double existence 'has no primary recommendation either to reason or the imagination, but acquires all its influence on the imagination from the former'(T.211). Only by having first been seduced by the fictions and fancies of the imagination into the vulgar belief can we be led to accept the doctrine of double existence.

The philosophical theory of double existence arises, quite naturally, from philosophical reflection upon the inadequacies and falsity of the vulgar view. The vulgar falsely attribute continued and distinct existence to their own perceptions. A 'little philosophy' exposes this ascription as false(T.210-11). This new contradiction in our opinions 'we elude by a new fiction, which is conformable to the hypotheses both of reflection and fancy, by ascribing these contrary qualities to different existences; the *interruption* to perceptions and the *continuance* to objects'(T.215). But, like the vulgar view, this opinion is found to have no 'primary recommendation' to reason(T.212). Causal reasoning can prove of no use since, perceptions being the only objects 'immediately present to us by consciousness'(T.212), we observe only the effect but never the cause and so can form no appropriate habit of inference(35). Nor could the imagination 'of itself, and by its original tendency, have fallen upon such a principle'(T.212). Having no authority of its own, it derives 'all its authority from the vulgar system'(T.213). Philosophers 'deny our resembling perceptions to be identically the same, and uninterrupted', but the force of this original belief is such that, instead of rejecting the notion, 'they arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions to which they attribute these qualities'(T.218). Were we secure from the pull of our former beliefs, which incline us to attribute a continuous existence to something independent of ourselves, we would be led by reason to conclude there to be no such thing as body.

Since 'a little reflection' suffices to destroy the conclusion that our resembling perceptions have a continued existence, "twou'd naturally be expected, that we must altogether reject the

opinion, that there is such a thing in nature as continu'd existence, which is preserv'd even when it no longer appears to the senses'(T.214). However, while we clearly perceive the 'dependence and interruption' of our perceptions, 'we stop short in our career, and never upon that account reject the notion of an independent and continu'd existence. That opinion has taken such deep root in the imagination, that 'tis impossible ever to eradicate it, nor will any strain'd metaphysical conviction of the dependence of our perceptions be sufficient for that purpose.'(T.214) While seeing clearly the flaws of the vulgar belief, Hume's philosophers nevertheless continue to find a place in their systems for a notion the appeal of which lies purely with their former opinion. Nature, Hume writes, 'is obstinate, and will not quit the field, however strongly attack'd by reason; and at the same time reason is so clear in the point, that there is no possibility of disguising her. Not being able to reconcile these two enemies, we endeavour to set ourselves at ease as much as possible, by successively granting to each whatever it demands, and by feigning a double existence, where each may find something, that has all the conditions it desires'(T.215).

The persuasiveness of the philosophical opinion of double existence is based entirely on the irresistible pull of the vulgar system. It has no primary recommendation either to reason or the imagination because all its influence derives from the vulgar belief in continued and distinct existence which, as Hume has argued, has no basis in causal reasoning. Hume offers an explanation of the philosophical doctrine which shows it to be based on error, albeit an error to which our natures, happily or unhappily, dispose us. The doctrine of double existence corrects the errors of the vulgar system by showing that our perceptions do not have a continued and distinct existence. Hume offers a number of arguments intended to show the dependency of perceptions on the perceiver. I noted that, at best, these arguments might be said to establish only the dependency of how a thing appears on the status, situation and condition of the perceiver. Hume's arguments tell against the vulgar system in the way intended only on the basis of the characterisation of that view in terms of the philosophical view of perceptions with which it is to be replaced. What is not addressed, or argued for, in these arguments is the question of just what is the nature of the things we observe. It is this question which Hume, in explaining the origin of the vulgar belief in body, must not prejudge. Hume must not attribute his own philosophical thesis about perception to the plain man who has no tincture of philosophy. The vulgar are in no position to make the necessary philosophical distinctions. Not only does the attribution of this belief to the vulgar conflict with what we outlined as Hume's official line, but the possession of the opinion at this stage would seem to rule out our ever coming by it in the way Hume describes. It is only by way of the errors of the vulgar system that we come to indulge the belief in the first place and it is only by its association with this view that the philosophical doctrine gains what recommendation it has to reason and the imagination.

The conflict which the philosophical doctrine of double existence is intended to disguise or remove altogether can only gain a hold on the imagination once we have been persuaded of the continued and distinct existence of our perceptions. This much is, I think, clear. What is less so is the way in which Hume thinks we come by the idea of continued and distinct existence in the first place. Hume has argued that it is impossible that reason should, 'upon any supposition, give us an assurance of the continu'd and distinct existence of body' and that this opinion is owing entirely to the imagination (T.193). Hume argues that the mind forms the simple supposition of continued and distinct existence of objects in order to remove the conflict into which it is thrown by its propensity to ascribe numerical identity to its resembling impressions and its awareness of their interruptedness. But this, by itself, does not tell us how we come to be able to attribute a distinct and continued existence to these perceptions in the first place (36). It is important to note that in forming the supposition that our perceptions have a continued and distinct existence we do not simply select, on the basis of its greater explanatory power, one from a number of competing ready-formed hypotheses. We make use of an idea we did not already have. As Barry Stroud points out, 'coming to have a certain belief on a particular occasion, once one already has the ideas that form the content of that belief, is much easier to explain than coming to have a certain very complicated idea in the first place' (37). In acquiring an idea 'we come to find something intelligible or to understand something that we did not understand before'. The vulgar supposition that it is the things we see and feel which continue to exist during the gaps in our observation requires that we already have in hand some idea of what it is for a thing to have a continued and distinct existence. Without this idea, there would be no belief, no conflict for philosophers to explain, no reason for, or source of, the philosophical doctrine of double existence. That theory, as Hume presents it, seems all the less credible and more fantastic, for his initially denying to the vulgar any grounds or even any inclination to distinguish perceptions from objects. It is against this background that Hume develops his account and it is because of it, I would suggest, that it must ultimately fail. Hume, as I have already suggested, formulates the problem in such a way that the belief is bound, by the end of his story, to appear indefensible. Yet in formulating it in a way so obviously bound to prove restrictive of any solution, as we will now see, he makes use of the very tools by which a ready solution might have been wrought (38).

If Hume is to make out his case successfully, if he is to explain how the vulgar belief in continued and distinct existence arises in the first place, he must avoid from the outset attributing to the vulgar either his own philosophical view of perceptions, or any idea of what it is for a thing to exist independently and continuously. In the pre-theoretical condition Hume describes, we are simply in no position to make the necessary philosophical distinction between perceptions and objects. It is not a distinction which, according to Hume, it even occurs to us to make. Is Hume able to explain the circumstances from which the vulgar belief in body arises without presupposing that we have already some idea of continued and distinct existence? What Hume must not do is to formulate the problem in the terms which we use in

our ordinary way of describing the world. To account for gaps in observation in these terms, as, in fact, Hume attempts to, for example, in describing the coherence of his observations of the fire in his chamber 'after an hour's absence'(T.195), obviously takes for granted a theory of objects as occupying fixed points in physical space, apart from, and independent of, the observer. But this is far from the description of vulgar consciousness which Hume needs. We need to know what it is about these features of our experience which give rise to the idea of continued and distinct existence in the first place. To appreciate the difficulties Hume faces, we need to be clear about the position in which Hume initially places us. It is our inability at this stage to distinguish our sense impressions from objects which gives the problem raised by interruptions to our observation its seemingly inexplicable character. In our pre-theoretical condition, we do not distinguish, even implicitly, between perceptions and objects. Gaps in observation would, in such a world, have the character of unexplained interruptions, not of gaps in observation *per se*. If we really made no use of the distinction between sense experience and physical objects, we would, as Pears says, 'regard the changes merely as changes in our sensory fields. It would not even occur to us that they involved gaps in our observation'(39). At this point, according to Hume, we can have no understanding of what it would be for a body to exist in physical space. Without our already having some idea of what it is for an object to have a continued and distinct existence how could we begin to suppose these theoretically-neutral objects to have qualities of this sort? Were we given, at this stage, the cognitive tools we would need to distinguish our impressions from their objects, then the gaps would be susceptible of a ready explanation - one we were fully-equipped to make. Hume himself makes use of these resources when he describes the gaps in our observation in terms that take for granted our ability to distinguish objects from sense impressions. In presenting the problem as he does, however, Hume makes it seem hopelessly restrictive of any possible solution. But his own, admittedly misleading, account of the problem presupposes the very resources which he could make use of, were he of a mind to, in resolving the difficulty.

The problem for Hume lies in giving an account of these inexplicable gaps in a way which does not presuppose our having the cognitive tools with which to solve the mystery. Clearly, Hume cannot do this if he begins by taking constancy and coherence to be qualities of objects rather than of series of impressions as he describes them. On the basis of the account Hume gives of pre-theoretical vulgar consciousness, we are in no position even to distinguish changes in the condition of an observed object from changes in the circumstances of the observer. But this is the very distinction Hume exploits in explaining how his observation of the fire gives rise to the idea of coherence. Had we already in hand the tools with which to make such a distinction we would have far less cause to be puzzled by these interruptions when they occur. But on Hume's own account this is not a distinction we are in any position to make. Hume wants to be able to describe these gaps in such a way as to present them as problematic, but in attempting to do so makes use of the very distinction which, on the one

hand, would make them seem a good deal less hard of explanation and, on the other, would serve us well, at this initial stage, in dissolving the problem altogether. What Hume needs to do is to describe these gaps so as to make them truly problematical for those lacking the ideas with which to make the relevant distinctions. But he is unable to do so.

If the features of our impressions are to serve in the manner Hume intends he must be able to characterise them in terms not presupposing our having already in hand the belief or the idea the origin of which they are intended to explain. We must be able to explain how we acquire the idea of constancy without having the belief which Hume wants to explain in terms of it. We saw much earlier that in considering what influence the senses might have upon the belief in question, Hume effectively fails to consider the possibility that the distinction of impressions from our perceptual point of view might provide some basis upon which to ground a belief in distinct existence. Hume, as I suggested, seems already to have in mind an especially problematised form of inference. The point looks more plausible when we consider how Hume's treatment of the problem of the external world differs from his treatment of causality. What makes the question in hand seem to him especially problematic is his implicit construal of it in terms of inference not merely to objects lying beyond observation but to facts of a specifically different kind to those of sensation - to a thing which no amount of appropriately directed observation could disclose. The kind of thing subject to the inference ought to have been characterised in terms neither of physical nor mind-dependent existence. Instead, Hume chooses to formulate the question of whether it is possible to make any causal inference from one thing to another in such a way as to admit only of one answer. Not only does Hume appear to be addressing a question tellingly different from the one initially posed but he does so using resources which the terms of his argument ought to have led him to disavow. From the start of his argument, Hume would appear to construe the problem as having to do with inference to physical objects lying beyond the veil of perception - objects which, on the traditional empiricist account, are of a highly problematic and specifically different kind to those with which we are familiar from perception. The failure of Hume's account of the origin of the vulgar belief in body is the price he pays for his uncritical adoption of the theory of ideas he inherited from Locke.

Before we can even get into the conflict Hume describes as giving rise to our belief in continued and distinct existence we must have in hand the idea of identity. But to imagine a unitary object to exist through changes in time without either variation or interruption it seems we must have already at our disposal some idea of what it is for a thing to exist through time without variation or interruption. As we saw, the account Hume offers of how we come by this idea seems to require, for its success, our having the idea in question in the first place. Hume needs to have the idea of identity safely under his belt before he can go on to explain the error in virtue of which the mind is thrown into the state of conflict it seeks to remove with the supposition of real existence. The doctrine of double existence, Hume explains, cannot arise

unless we have already passed through 'the common hypothesis of the identity and continuance of our interrupted perceptions'(T.211). Were we not in the first case convinced of the vulgar hypothesis we could never be persuaded of the view that our perceptions are different from our objects and that it is those objects which continue unobserved. Yet this is a distinction which Hume seems unable to do without in formulating the problem which the vulgar ultimately seek to resolve by the fiction of continued and distinct existence. That he does so suggests both the restrictive nature of the problem as he formulates it, and his inability, in articulating it, to do without those resources with which he might well have forged a solution.

Despite his initial urging that we ought to have an 'implicit faith' in our senses, Hume, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the error-strewn route he has described, by the end of his story, inclines 'to repose no faith at all' in his senses 'or rather imagination'(T.217). 'I cannot conceive', he writes, 'how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system'(T.217). The philosophical theory fares no better than the vulgar one, being 'over-and-above loaded with this absurdity, that it at once denies and establishes the vulgar supposition'(T.218). This sceptical doubt, Hume concludes, 'both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chace it away, and sometimes may seem entirely free from it. 'Tis impossible upon any system to defend either our understanding or senses; and we must expose them farther when we endeavour to justify them in that manner'(T.218). The sceptical doubt, arising as it does, quite naturally, from 'a profound and intense reflection' on these subjects, 'always encreases, the farther we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it. Carelessness and in-attention 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'(T.218).

Both vulgar and philosophical beliefs in continued and distinct existences depend on the trivial qualities of the imagination and are 'conducted by such false suppositions' as the fiction of numerical identity. As such, they can never lead to 'any solid and rational system'(T.217). We can have no reason to believe, Hume suggests, that either the workings of the senses or the imagination, or the operations of reason upon them, will provide us with a set of perceptual beliefs which we have reason to think are true. The more we reason, the worse our position becomes. Given the respect, or lack of it, with which Hume suggests we treat the conclusions of philosophy, we are led to ask again the question, posed at the outset, of just what is the relation between Hume's sceptical arguments, and his constructive philosophical programme. Hume seems, quite explicitly and self-consciously, to be undermining the very practice he is engaged in. It is to the moral which might be drawn from this that I wish to turn in the section that follows. Philosophy, Hume argues, can provide us with no solution to these doubts. It just

makes things worse. We must ask to what degree, if any, Hume's scepticism can be mitigated in light of his Newtonian ambitions? Hume's interest in the question of the vulgar belief in body takes the form of asking what the causes of the idea of, and the belief in, continued and distinct existence are. But his conclusions seem to call into question the whole edifice of experimental reasoning. What role has Hume left for science or philosophy among the debris of his sceptical attack? Why should we continue to do philosophy at all? We need to ask to what degree Hume thinks it proper for us to yield to 'an illusion of the imagination'(T.267)?. The role which Hume thinks ought properly to be ascribed to philosophy will here again, I suggest, prove significant to an understanding of Hume's thought. One important corollary of all of this will be an answer to the question of how, if at all, Hume's sceptical doubts can be squared with the presumption, felt throughout the *Treatise*, that there is both an internal and an external world. In the next section, I will attempt to convey something of the nature of Hume's sceptical thought, and its relation to his own constructive scientific ambitions. I take seriously Thomas Reid's impressive and important critique of Hume's section '*Of scepticism with regard to the senses*' and attempt to develop some responses to it. In doing so, I seek to explain the implications of Hume's sceptical arguments and conclusions, and to assess the nature of Hume's own attitude to them.

### 3.2 Common Sense and True Philosophy

The problem of understanding the relationship between Hume's sceptical arguments and conclusions and his constructive philosophical project is perhaps the central interpretive problem for students of Book One of the *Treatise*(40). Hume proposes a 'compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security'(T.xvi). But in Section II of Part IV, Hume considers a number of sceptical arguments which seem to call into question these ambitions. The experimental method of reasoning, which, in Part III, had led Hume to the formulation of a set of normative rules by which to judge of causes and effects, in Part IV, seems to show that many of our ordinary beliefs, and, in particular, most of our common perceptual judgments, are false. In the section '*Of the idea of necessary connexion*', Hume argued that, while the causal theorist may make the mistake of taking the mind to have an idea of necessary connection which it does not have, and so, of misrepresenting the nature of the inference we make from cause to effect, we make no comparable mistake in our ordinary use of causal language to express our belief in the existence of a causal relation. We found that there was decisive textual evidence supporting the view that Hume believed causal reasoning, and our commitment to seeing the world in causal terms, to be justified. Hume goes on to offer a set of rules to tell us how we can best discover whether one thing is the cause of another. His objection turns out to be to the philosophical presumption that when we talk about causal connections in nature we represent to ourselves some feature of reality which sanctions or legitimises causal practice. It is important to note how different Hume's position is with regard to the external world and why

this scepticism of his calls into question the positive and constructive applications of causal reasoning in Part III. Hume not only raises doubts about the philosophical view that we know about external objects through the perceptions we have of them, but also attacks the natural belief in the external world. He shows that our common belief in the external world involves a mistake, or a series of mistakes, and that the natural propensities of the human mind lead unequivocally to a falsehood. Hume believes that most of our everyday perceptual judgments and beliefs are simply false. Section II is, for the most part, concerned with Hume's genetic account of the origin of these beliefs. But Hume is also sceptical about the philosophical doctrine which is supposed to improve upon and correct the vulgar belief. He believes that there are irrefutable sceptical arguments against the philosophical position and offers an account of the origin of the belief which explains how so extraordinary a view can come to command the assent of theorists. Hume argues that only causal reasoning could assure us of the continued and distinct existence of bodies, but, since we observe only perceptions, and, so, can never observe a conjunction of perception and object, it is impossible that from the existence of any of the qualities of perceptions 'we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence' of external objects, 'or ever satisfy our reason in this particular'(T.212). The false opinion of the continued and distinct existence of body is entirely owing to the imagination.

I remarked in 3.1 that Hume was aware of some of the possible pitfalls facing the sort of account of the belief in continued and distinct existence he was attempting to give(41). I attributed Hume's failure to avoid a number of these to his uncritical commitment to the theory of ideas, and to the substantial, though implicit, influence Locke's theory had on the development of his argument. In the *Enquiry*, Hume makes no attempt to explain the origin of the vulgar belief in continued and distinct existences. He remarks merely that 'we always suppose an external universe, which depends not upon our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated'(E.151). It could be argued that Hume's decision to drop the argument altogether from his later work should be put down to his growing dissatisfaction with the argument. Such a view should be resisted. There is no real textual evidence of Hume's dissatisfaction and no reason to suppose that Hume's decision to omit the discussion is attributable to anything other than the different set of intentions with which he approached the writing of the *Enquiry*(42). In any case, Hume seems to have seen no reason to relent of the sceptical conclusions of his argument. He writes that it seems evident 'that men are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses; and that, without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe'(E.151). This, he tells us, is a topic 'in which the profounder and more philosophical sceptics will always triumph, when they endeavour to introduce an universal doubt into all subjects of human knowledge and enquiry'(E.153).

Hume continues to regard the arguments of the sceptics as irrefutable. He makes no bones about his acceptance of the force of these arguments. He also continues to stress the naturalness of the vulgar belief. Philosophy, Hume tells us in the *Abstract*, 'wou'd render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it'(T.657). He writes in the *Enquiry*, that men, in following 'this blind and powerful instinct of nature', always 'suppose the very images, presented by the senses, to be external objects, and never entertain any suspicion, that the one are nothing but representations of the other'(E.151). At the beginning of Section II of the *Treatise*, Hume wrote that it is 'in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings'(T.187). Fogelin observes that this last sentence 'admits of a double reading that reflects the two sides of Hume's position. We must take the existence of body for granted, first, because it is incapable of proof and, second, because we are incapable of doubting it'(43). I see no reason to suppose that in emphasising the second of these two points in the body of the *Enquiry*, Hume was neglecting or dismissing the first.

Despite the 'implicit confidence' which Hume is prepared to place in the existence of both an external and an internal world at the beginning of Section II, by the end of that section, he is ready to admit that this confidence rests on a 'gross illusion'(T.217). He nevertheless continues to insist that we proceed upon the supposition that there is a world of external objects which continue to exist when unperceived. Hume takes the view that while philosophy reveals the errors upon which the false belief of the vulgar rests, bringing us to a point at which we are fully prepared to suspend our judgment on these matters altogether, its influence is shortlived. Nature, it seems, has 'esteem'd it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations'(T.187). We are carried to the opinion by a kind of 'natural instinct or prepossession'(E.151). The naturalness of the vulgar belief also provides the philosophical view of these matters with what persuasiveness it has. Were we not in the first instance convinced that our 'resembling perceptions' were 'continu'd, and identical, and independent' we should never come to the opinion that while our perceptions are mind-dependent 'and different at every turn'(T.211), there are other objects, which are the causes of our impressions, and which have a continued and distinct existence and identity. The philosophical system, Hume says, 'is over-and-above loaded with this absurdity, that it at once denies and establishes the vulgar supposition'. Philosophers, like the rest of mankind, have so great a propensity to believe their perceptions to be identically the same and uninterrupted that 'they arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions, to which they attribute these qualities'(T.218). Reason, however, is, in this matter, 'so clear in the point, that there is no possibility of disguising her'(T.215). A 'very little reflection and philosophy' is all that is needed to show that the attribution of continued and distinct existence to impressions is mistaken. Reason does not convince us of the continued and distinct existence of bodies. Hume is prepared to suggest not only that the process is entirely owing to the principles of the imagination, but

that those principles are themselves 'trivial qualities' which can never 'lead to any solid and rational system'(T.217).

Nevertheless, without these apparently trivial qualities of the fancy, neither the vulgar, nor the philosopher, could ever 'attribute any existence, but what was dependent on the senses'(T.265). This is the point of Hume's argument to show that the doctrine of double existence has no primary recommendation to the imagination(T.212). The philosophical fiction of double existence is causally dependent on the 'common hypothesis of the identity and continuance' of our perceptions(T.211). The natural view of the vulgar alone has primary recommendation to the imagination even though it is obviously false. The upshot of this is the replacement of the fiction of the vulgar supposition of continued and distinct existence with 'a new fiction' which ascribes the interruption to the perceptions and the continuance to the objects(T.215). This new fiction arises as naturally and inevitably as the first from a critical reflection upon the vulgar opinion. But we are led to accept it only because of the appeal and persuasiveness of the false belief of the vulgar. This is the only source of the notion of continued, unperceived existence which the philosopher applies to external objects. The doctrine of double existence is, at best, a 'palliative remedy' in that 'it contains all the difficulties of the vulgar system, and some others, that are peculiar to itself'(T.211). The sceptical doubt with respect to reason and the senses can 'never be radically cur'd' but by '[C]arelessness and in-attention' which alone can afford us any remedy(T.218).

Hume's conclusion prompts a number of important questions, not least concerning the degree to which we can, or ought to, withhold our assent from 'this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions'(T.218). Why, indeed, should we continue to do philosophy at all given what appears to be our ultimate and inevitable alienation from its conclusions? Philosophy, it would seem, can do no more than inform us of its own inadequacies. The more we reflect, the deeper into the mire of doubt we sink. Despite his suggestion that Pyrrhonian arguments can have little influence, Hume nevertheless goes on to complain that the '*intense* view' of the 'manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason' he presents in Part IV has 'so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another'(T.268-9). Nature alone can dispel these doubts and cure me 'of this philosophical melancholy and delirium' either 'by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses'(T.269). When, after two or three hour's amusement, Hume returns to these speculations 'they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further'(T.269). The philosopher finds himself 'absolutely and necessarily determin'd to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life' and in his blind submission to the current of nature shows most perfectly his sceptical disposition and principles(T.269).

Must Hume's use and endorsement of those intense sceptical arguments which expose the 'infirmities and imperfections' of human reason redound against reason itself and undo the constructive philosophical work of Part III and the subsequent books of the *Treatise*? A number of influential critics have believed so(44). Hume appears to have left philosophy in the absurd and embarrassing position of having undermined whatever confidence we might have entertained about its conclusions at the beginning of our philosophical investigation. Hume does not discuss the implications of the sceptical arguments of Section II in much depth until near the end of Part IV. But he makes it clear that he does not consider the matter to end here. He does not think that the amusements and diversions by which nature deflects the 'philosophical melancholy and delirium' induced by these arguments constitute the answer to the important theoretical question of whether or not scepticism can be reconciled with science and psychology. Hume's solution turns out to be much more complex and considerably more interesting. The distaste we feel for the 'cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous' speculations of philosophy after a few hours avocation is itself just a stage in the development of the philosophical consciousness. We cannot 'forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations' by which we are governed(T.271). Scepticism and philosophical curiosity return but their return is not an atavistic reversion to type or a slide back into the morbidly self-reflective meditations of the solitary philosopher. In the sections to follow, and in the final chapter and conclusion to this work, I attempt to show the sort of solution Hume has in mind to his sceptical doubts, and the nature of his eventual recommitment to reason and philosophy. Hume characterises the move towards this reconciliation as the development of 'true philosophy' or 'true scepticism'. In the remainder of this chapter, I begin my account of this development, and of its ambitious aim to base upon sceptical principles a system of the sciences within which both reason and philosophy retain their special value and integrity(T.270).

H.A. Prichard describes Hume's chief philosophical object as being 'to carry further the negative argument initiated by Berkeley, by showing that what we know is limited to a series of sensations, passions and emotions, together with mental images of them, and that it is groundless to believe in the existence of anything else, even ourselves'(45). The characterisation of Hume's philosophy as 'a form of phenomenalism'(46) can be traced back to the critical work of Thomas Reid, who, in his *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, presented Hume as a radically sceptical philosopher concerned to draw the overwhelmingly negative conclusion that since 'my impressions and ideas are the only existences of which I can have any knowledge or conception' the 'whole universe about me' and everything 'which I imagined to have a permanent existence, whether I thought of them or not, vanish at once'(47). Hume took Reid's criticisms of his work seriously(48). I do not believe that they are as easily dismissed as some recent commentators have suggested(49). There is decisive textual evidence against the view that Hume's intention in the *Treatise* was to carry further the negative philosophy of

Berkeley. Hume's chief philosophical interests and intentions are constructive. He writes dismissively that the arguments of Berkeley's philosophy are 'in reality, merely sceptical' and *'that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism'*(E.155n). Nevertheless, as Passmore remarks, quite rightly, in my view, 'it is still necessary to insist upon the merits of the Reid-Green criticism of Hume, still necessary to insist upon the importance of the "theory of ideas" in Hume's philosophy, for all that the destruction of that theory does not carry with it, as an inevitable consequence, a complete "answer to Hume"'(50). While the important constructive side to Hume's intentions should be acknowledged, it is important not to neglect the real and significant sceptical dimension to his thought and the theory of ideas within which he developed it. I give weight to this part of Hume's philosophy and to Reid's criticism of it. Hume, of course, is not the sceptic Reid thinks he is, and, as I suggest later in the chapter, Reid would have been surprised by the amount of ground he shared with his famous adversary. The comparison, however, should not be pushed too far. An assessment of Reid's common-sense solution to the problems raised by Hume not only sheds light on the nature and difficulty of those problems but shows that the two philosophers drew some very different conclusions.

The theory of ideas Hume inherited from Locke and Berkeley has not stood up well. Hume has frequently been castigated for failing to examine in any great detail the assumptions of that theory(51). The exposition of the theory of ideas in Hume's philosophy is careless, even nonchalant, and, at times, quite confused. Hume, nevertheless, continued to insist upon its importance, as well as its obviousness. He observes that "Tis universally allowed by philosophers, and is besides pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions, or impressions and ideas, and that external objects become known to us only through those perceptions they occasion"(T.67). Hume's commitment to the theory is such that he perseveres with it even where it seems to be at odds with his genetic account of belief. Some of Hume's arguments can be translated quite happily into more neutral terms without serious loss of content or damage to his naturalistic programme. At a number of other places, however, Hume's commitment to the theory of ideas plays a significant part in the development of his argument. In accounting for the idea of necessary connection, the background of the theory of ideas restricted Hume to giving an explanation of the content of that idea in terms so misleading that he felt obliged to devote a large portion of the *Enquiry* to clearing up any misunderstanding(E.60-73). As I argued in 3.1, it is Hume's uncritical commitment to this theory in his discussion of scepticism with regard to the senses which leads him to formulate the problem of the origin of the vulgar belief in body in terms certain to prove restrictive of any possible solution. It is, however, important to see the value which the theory had for Hume. It provided him with a means of impartially interrogating the beliefs of the vulgar and of challenging the presumptions of the philosophers. He brings the theory into play in the context both of meaning and of belief. I have argued that it is the second of these

concerns which best captures Hume's intentions in Book One of the *Treatise*. An overattentiveness among commentators to the first of these concerns has led to Hume being quite erroneously characterised as a positivist concerned with the conceptual analysis of ordinary language terms. I have argued against this view. To understand the importance of the theory of ideas to Hume we need to appreciate the interests it serves, and, in particular, the role it plays in his explanations of the origins of our fundamental beliefs.

One puzzling aspect of Hume's procedure in his discussion of the belief in the continued and distinct existence of bodies is his failure to make use of his theory of meaning where it would seem it would have been most appropriate. Hume argues that the doctrine of double existence has no primary recommendation either to reason or to the imagination on the grounds that it is causally dependent on the false vulgar view of body and owes its influence on the imagination entirely to the force of that view. There is no doubt that Hume took the vulgar attribution of continued existence to sense impressions to be flatly false. He does consider, briefly and unsystematically, at a number of points in the text, the possibility that the vulgar belief in body might be something other than what he has, for the most part, unquestioningly taken it to be. He argues that the senses do not present their impressions 'as external to, and independent of ourselves'(T.189). Properly speaking, it is not our body we perceive when we regard our 'limbs and members' but 'certain impressions, which enter by the senses'(T.191). According to Hume, there are only two possible categories of object to which a continued and distinct existence could be attributed. We can take our objects to be either sense impressions or physical objects causing our impressions. Hume spends some time clearing of self-contradiction and absurdity what he takes to be the vulgar attribution of continued and distinct existence to their perceptions or sense impressions. I tried to show that the vulgar view is threatened with contradiction only if, *per impossibile*, they already subscribe to something like Hume's philosophical theory of perception. The vulgar, Hume tells us, 'take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence'(T.206). This is not to say that the vulgar distinguish their perceptions from material objects. Almost all mankind fail to distinguish between perceptions and objects and suppose there to be only a 'single existence' to which they attribute an uninterrupted existence. Hume is nevertheless at pains to show that the attribution of a separate, independent existence to sense impressions does not involve a conceptual impossibility and so can be intelligibly made out on the basis of his theory of meaning. Berkeley had argued that the attribution of 'absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived' is 'perfectly unintelligible'(52). His argument is an attempt to show that the vulgar belief in the continued existence of perceptions is conceptually incoherent and, for that reason, unintelligible. Hume rejects Berkeley's conceptual scepticism(T.207). Instead, he argues that a few simple experiments will convince us that 'our sensible perceptions are not possess of any distinct or independent existence'(T.210). This opinion, Hume says, 'is confirm'd by the seeming encrease and diminution of objects,

according to their distance; by the apparent alterations in their figure; by the changes in their colour and other qualities from our sickness and distempers; and by an infinite number of other experiments of the same kind'(T.211). Hume argues that the attribution of continued and distinct existence to perceptions is simply false(T.219). The supposition that our perceptions continue to exist when unperceived, while not, according to Hume, involving a conceptual absurdity, is, nevertheless, at odds with other things that we know about our perceptions.

Hume does consider what might be thought an alternative interpretation of the vulgar belief in body. It might be argued that it is to a second class of 'objects', lying beyond the impressions of the senses, and causing them, that the vulgar attribute a continued and distinct existence. Philosophers, Hume writes, have been so far convinced by the arguments against the attribution of uninterrupted existence to perceptions that 'they change their system, and distinguish...betwixt perceptions and objects' of which the former are interrupted while the latter preserves 'a continu'd existence and identity'(T.211). Hume argues that the philosopher's adoption of the theory of double existence has no primary recommendation either to reason or the imagination. The doctrine cannot be a demonstrative or *a priori* truth since "[T]he only conclusion we can draw from the existence of one thing to that of another, is by means of the relation of cause and effect'(T.212). The philosophical theory can be based only on causal reasoning, but this too is impossible since 'no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions' and '[T]he idea of this relation is deriv'd from past experience, by which we find, that two beings are constantly conjoin'd together, and are always present at once to the mind'(T.212). The theory of double existence only arises because of the influence of the discredited vulgar view that it is 'our resembling perceptions' that have a continued and uninterrupted existence.

Once again, Hume concerns himself not with the meaningfulness of the attribution of continued and distinct existence to objects, but with the question of whether or not the doctrine of double existence can be derived directly from either demonstrative or causal reasoning. Hume's conclusion is, of course, from his point of view, damning enough. But it would seem that there is a much simpler and more direct argument concerning the meaningfulness of such attributions which Hume might have employed to discredit the philosopher's theory. Given Hume's endorsement of Berkeley's theory of ideas, he might very well have argued, as Berkeley does, that we have no adequate idea of body or external existence, and so employ these words without design or signification. Hume could have argued, quite simply, on the basis of the theory of ideas, that as all our ideas are derived from impressions, and we have no impressions of external objects, we can have no adequate idea of material existences. He uses a similar argument when, a little later in the *Treatise*, he argues that those philosophers who fancy there to be a substance in which the accidental qualities of objects inhere 'carry their fictions still farther in their sentiments concerning *occult qualities*, and suppose a substance supporting, which they do not understand, and an accident supported, of which

they have as imperfect an idea. The whole system, therefore, is entirely incomprehensible'(T.222). A few pages on, he writes that '[A]s every idea is deriv'd from a precedent impression, had we any idea of the substance of our minds, we must also have an impression of it; which is very difficult, if not impossible, to be conceiv'd. For how can an impression represent a substance, otherwise than by resembling it?'(T.232-3) He goes on to say that '[W]e have no perfect idea of any thing but of a perception. A substance is entirely different from a perception. We have, therefore, no idea of a substance'(T.234). It seems that Hume might very naturally have made use of the same sort of argument in discrediting the philosophical theory of double existence. He could have argued, on the basis of the same sort of premises used in the argument concerning substance, that the philosophical system of Locke was entirely incomprehensible. That he does not do so poses an interesting interpretive question.

Hume avoids invoking any argument from the meaningfulness of our attributions in Section II. But he does, elsewhere in the *Treatise*, make explicit his commitment to the general thesis that we have no idea of anything specifically different from ideas and impressions. Hume makes the point somewhat earlier in the *Treatise*, as prelude to the discussion of Part IV, Section II. Observing that it is 'pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present with the mind but its perceptions', Hume goes on to argue that 'since all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows, that 'tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions'(T.67). The farthest we can go 'towards a conception of external objects, when supposed specifically different from our perceptions, is to form a relative idea of them, without pretending to comprehend the related objects'. Generally speaking, however, 'we do not suppose them specifically different; but only attribute to them different relations, connexions and durations'(T.68). Hume appears to reaffirm his commitment to the general thesis in Section II when he writes that philosophers who adopt the view that it is material objects which preserve a continued existence and identity 'arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions' to which they attribute an uninterrupted existence, for, in general, 'tis impossible for us distinctly to conceive, objects to be in their nature any thing but exactly the same with perceptions'(T.218). Hume does not deny that we have some idea of material existence. We have a 'relative idea' of these objects. But he does deny that we have any idea of anything specifically different from impressions. The distinction is important. A number of recent commentators have seized upon the notion of 'relative ideas' in support of the claim that Hume's scepticism about the external world is of less importance to his philosophy than his realism(53). These commentators downplay the significance of Hume's conceptual scepticism to his accounts of causal connections and the vulgar idea of body. They take less seriously than Hume appears to his sceptical attack on our ideas of body and necessary connection. The above passages are supposed to provide the basis for a form of realism or 'sceptical realism'. Hume's suggestion that we might form a relative idea of something whose specific

difference from the things we know about is incomprehensible to us is to be understood as an important concession to realism. I have already given reasons for disputing this view(54). The passages in question give us no reason to suppose that Hume thought that by forming a relative idea of external existence we somehow gain an improved understanding of what it is supposedly lying beyond our perceptions. In both cases, Hume's emphasis is on the impossibility of our conceiving of anything specifically different from our perceptions. It is hard to believe that Hume understood them to provide the basis for a form of sceptical realism. Nevertheless, Hume's concession has been read as an important qualification of his theory of ideas. Although Hume stresses the impossibility of forming a conception of anything *specifically* different from our perceptions, he does not argue that we have no idea at all. We need to take seriously the suggestion that Hume might have entertained what Pears calls 'a more liberal theory of meaning'(55) than that usually attributed to him.

The suggestion implicit in the sceptical realist view is that Hume intends the relative ideas we form 'towards a conception of external objects' to count as genuine exceptions, or, at least, substantive modifications, to his first principle of the derivation of ideas from impressions. It might be argued that Hume's failure to explicitly invoke his theory of meaning in the context of his discussion of continued and distinct existence bears out the suggestion that we can have a genuine or 'referentially efficacious'(56) idea of external existence which does not require a precedent impression. The 'first proposition', as Hume describes it in the *Abstract*, 'is that all our ideas, or weak perceptions, are derived from our impressions, or strong perceptions; and that we can never think of anything we have not seen without us or felt in our own minds'(T.647-8). He reiterates the point in the *Enquiry*, observing that all our ideas or 'more feeble impressions' are 'copies of our impressions or more lively ones'(E.19). When we entertain any suspicion that a philosophical term is used without meaning or signification, Hume says, 'we need but enquire, *from what impression is that supposed idea derived?* And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion'(E.22). He makes the same point in the *Abstract*. If no impression can be produced for a supposed or 'pretended' idea we must conclude that the term which is supposed to signify it 'is altogether insignificant'(T.649). This principle provides Hume with a framework for impartially interrogating our everyday beliefs and for exposing the pretensions and chimeras of philosophical thinking. It also provides him with the background against which he investigates 'that set of complicated, but primitive operations or dispositions of the mind which lead us to acquire, manipulate, shuffle and even confuse the multitude of perceptions that come to us'(57). Hume treats the copy principle as the conclusion of a well-grounded inductive inference(58). I argued that the premises from which Hume derives his conclusion only support it on the basis of the assumptions that what is before the mind, when it thinks, tastes, sees, or smells, is a perception, and that the perceptions which are before the mind in sense perception are impressions. It is the first of these assumptions which Hume has in mind when he writes just prior to the first passage concerning relative ideas that "[T]is universally allowed

by philosophers, and is besides pretty obvious of itself, that nothing is ever really present to the mind but its perceptions, or impressions and ideas'(T.67). We saw the sort of work Hume's uncritical commitment to the theory of ideas does in the development of his argument in Section II. It also plays a part in the development of his argument for the copy principle. Hume uses the copy principle to challenge the legitimacy of certain ideas, including, most famously, the idea of necessary connection. My suggestion is that Hume might well have used this principle to argue against the meaningfulness of attributions of continued and distinct existence to external objects, and that, in fact, he does so, implicitly, in arguing for the general thesis that we can have no idea of anything lying beyond our perceptions, and, explicitly, in reiterating the point in Section II. Hume, in my view, considers such attributions to be unintelligible since, as he argues, 'a single perception can never produce the idea of a double existence'(T.189), and only an idea which we really have can feature in a belief. It is because we lack any adequate idea of external existence that the philosophical system must 'acquire all its influence on the imagination from the vulgar one'(T.213). Hume, nevertheless, goes on to complicate the picture by suggesting that we can form a relative idea of external objects, and, as Strawson remarks, 'a relative idea is not no idea at all'(59). Strawson argues that while we can form no 'positively or descriptively contentful conception of the nature of external objects' where they are considered as something specifically different from perceptions, we can, nevertheless, 'conceive it as something that stands in a certain relation (the relation of cause) to our perceptions'(60). In the last chapter, I argued against taking the few passages in which Hume discusses relative ideas as the basis for anything like the sceptical realist view of causation advocated by Strawson, Wright, and others. Hume introduces the notion only in the context of his affirmation of the sceptical thesis that 'we never really advance a step beyond ourselves'(T.67), and, then, only to dismiss its effects, arguing that the philosophers who form such suppositions 'arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions'(T.218). Hume does nevertheless introduce the notion and we need to consider what weight we are to attach to it.

We need to ask whether Hume's remarks about relative ideas amount to a significant revision or modification of the theory of ideas, allowing us to form a genuine idea of material objects without any directly corresponding impression. It is important to note that, in the above two passages, Hume is dismissive of the Lockean suggestion that we can form some idea of those objects which are supposed to lie beyond the impressions of the senses, causing them. It would be surprising to find Hume taking such a line if his concern here was to show that we can form a 'referentially efficacious' idea of external body. Hume makes clear that to form an idea of external existence would be to form an idea of something specifically different from impressions and ideas(61). He rejects Locke's claim that there is a resemblance between our ideas of primary qualities and the actual qualities of objects. Hume's object in raising the distinction between relative and specific ideas is not to press upon the reader his belief that we can have some notion of external existence, although we have no way of verifying our belief in such objects, but to argue that we can have no intelligible notion of external objects, and no

adequate idea which can figure in this belief. The philosophers who adopt the theory of double existence take themselves to attribute continued and distinct existence to a new class of object specifically different from their perceptions, but, in fact, only 'invent a new set of perceptions'. In the only other original reference to relative or relational ideas in the *Treatise*, Hume complains that whatever difference we may suppose between a perception and an object or external existence 'tis still incomprehensible to us; and we are oblig'd either to conceive an external object merely as a relation without a relative, or to make it the very same with a perception or impression'(T.241). Hume is endorsing the sceptical conclusion Berkeley draws directly from his understanding of the theory of ideas that relative ideas are comprehensible to us only in contexts where we have particular examples of the sort of relation in question to go on. If we do what Hume is supposed to have done and 'assert, that matter is an unknown somewhat, neither substance nor accident, spirit nor idea, inert, thoughtless, indivisible, immoveable, unextended, existing in no place' we shall 'use the word *matter* in the same sense, that other men use *nothing*' since 'I do not find that there is any kind of effect or impression made on my mind, different from what is excited by the term *nothing*'(62). When those 'who pretend to the faculty of framing abstract general ideas' talk as though they had such an idea 'which is, they say, the most abstract and general notion of all, that is to me the most incomprehensible of all others'(63). This is why, as Hume says, it is impossible for us to conceive distinctly of external objects as 'in their nature any thing but exactly the same with perceptions'. Hume would, I think, agree with Berkeley that 'if what you mean by the word *matter* be only the unknown support of unknown qualities, it is no matter whether there is such a thing or no, since it no way concerns us'(64). These are the sort of sentiments Hume echoes when he writes of the suggestion that there may be qualities of material objects with which we are unacquainted that 'if we please to call these *power* or *efficacy*, 'twill be of little consequence to the world'(T.168). Hume's concern is overwhelmingly to do with the denial of sense to propositions which make attributions of this sort to objects or entities of which we have no adequate idea. He is dismissive of philosophers who conduct their enquiries in these terms. We can have an idea of something as 'whatever it is causes these impressions' but whatever we say of this something will be of 'little consequence to the world' and, as Berkeley suggests, this is as good, or as bad, as having no idea of matter or external existence at all.

Hume's attitude to notions of external existence and material objects is the same as the attitude he, like Berkeley, takes towards the 'unintelligible chimera' of substance(T.222). Hume writes that '[W]e have no perfect idea of any thing but a perception. A substance is entirely different from a perception. We have, therefore, no idea of a substance'(T.234). The 'whole system' of substance and accident is, Hume says, for that reason, 'entirely incomprehensible'(T.222). Relative ideas, whether of substance or of the external world, play no part in our understanding of ourselves or of our experience of the world. Hume's aim in the passages in which he draws his distinction between relative and specific ideas is to discredit

or dismiss the suggestion that such ideas in any way add to our understanding of the world. To make his point Hume does not need to traverse the line between impressions and ideas and the supposed causes of our impressions, he has merely to show that this line is untraversable. This seems to me to be Hume's chief purpose in raising the notion of relative ideas of external objects. It would be a serious mistake to take these passages as the basis for some kind of realism about the external world. The question of whether or not there are such things as external objects is not really relevant to Hume's intentions here. He does not deny that there is a world of external objects, any more than he denies that there exist causes. He is more interested in saying that an idea of 'whatever it is causes our impressions' can play no part in our scientific understanding of the world or in the formation of the concepts we use to talk about it. Our normal sayings and commitments need to be explained on the basis of real features of our experience, and of our natural ways of responding to them. Hume's real critical target is the belief that ideas of this sort can give us some understanding of nature, or ourselves, which, on the basis of these principles, we cannot possibly have.

The conclusion of Hume's discussion of continued and distinct existence is that neither the vulgar belief in body, nor the philosophical theory of double existence with which it is to be replaced, can be defended on rational grounds. The philosophical theory is in an even worse position than the vulgar opinion. Not only does it have all the difficulties of the vulgar system, but 'is over-and-above loaded with this absurdity, that it at once denies and establishes the vulgar supposition'(T.218). The philosopher too has a strong propensity to believe in the continued and distinct existence of the things he perceives. This simple supposition is, Hume says, *unequivocally false*. The vulgar attribute continued and distinct existence to the immediate objects of awareness, their perceptions. It is the failure of the vulgar to distinguish, at the pre-theoretical stage of belief, between physical objects and sense impressions that makes the acquisition of the idea of continued and distinct existence particularly problematic. As noted in 3.1, Hume is unable to do without the distinction in giving an account of the vulgar consciousness from which this idea emerges. The vulgar attribute an uninterrupted existence to their sense impressions and believe that it is these impressions that continue to exist during gaps in observation. Hume's view, as I understand it, is that we come to see the world of experience as a public world of lasting objects, located in space, on the basis of sets of private perceptual experiences. He does not consider the possibility that we start by accepting the distinction between our impressions and the world even though he is unable to account for the vulgar experience of observational gaps without these resources. Hume's pessimism about the belief in body stems from his peculiar construal of the problem and his contention that the vulgar belief is a belief about private images or impressions. A number of recent commentators have challenged the view that Hume thought about perceptions in this way. These commentators take issue with the standard interpretation, also Reid's, that for Hume 'nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it: That we do not really perceive things that are external, but only certain images and pictures of them imprinted upon the mind,

which are called *impressions and ideas*'(65). William Davie contrasts Reid's view of Hume with his own, that Hume's perceptions 'are the things that we know, both private and public'(66). Donald Livingston too urges 'a radically different and distinctively Humean' usage of the term(67). His case is developed in more depth. He quotes approvingly Hume's remark that the mind 'can never exert itself in any action, which we may not comprehend under the term perception'(T.456), but adds that 'Hume is not saying that the actions are perceptions (in the sense of logically private mental images); he is saying, rather, that we are to understand perceptions to include actions conceived of in the common way. And because perceptions can be thought of in a physicalist context, the actions of one mind can be public to another.'(68) The standard interpretation, according to Livingston, consists of two theses: '(1) that ideas are nothing but logically private images and (2) that the meanings of words are ideas.'(69) The first thesis, he goes on to say, 'is false: ideas are internal to the public world of common life, and, therefore, admit of different sorts of physical interpretation including the extreme possibility that identifies them with motions of the brain. The second thesis is so far undetermined because Hume did not develop a theory of how words have meaning'(70). Livingston suggests that Hume's account of perception, such as it is, be understood 'narratively', which is to say, we ought to consider Hume's starting point in the *Treatise* in the light of his more studied conclusions towards the end of the book(71). The view is worth considering, given that, in both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, Hume often writes as though he were a realist about external objects.

If Livingston's contention is correct, we might reasonably expect to find the mature Hume of the *Enquiry* playing a rather different tune to that played in the *Treatise*. Instead, we find the mature Hume little disposed to change his earlier view. The 'universal and primary opinion of all men' that supposes the 'very images' presented by the senses to be external objects, Hume writes, 'is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object'(E.152). Hume reiterates the standard sceptical arguments of the *Treatise*: 'The table, which we see, seems to diminish, as we remove farther from it: but the real table, which exists independent of us, suffers no alteration: it was, therefore, nothing but its image, which was present to the mind. These are the obvious dictates of reason; and no man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existences, which we consider, when we say, *this house* and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent.'(E.152) It is by arguments of this sort that the sceptical philosopher of the *Treatise* convinces himself 'that our perceptions are not possess of any independent existence'(T.210). Hume rejects the 'pretended philosophical system' of double existence not because he still entertains the possibility that our perceptions are something other than the very images to which, he says, the vulgar attribute uninterrupted existence, but because he

can find no argument to prove 'that the perceptions of the mind must be caused by external objects, entirely different from them, though resembling them'(E.152-3). The mind, he says emphatically, 'has never anything present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connexion with objects. The supposition of such a connexion is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning'(E.153). It is only in virtue of a 'natural instinct or prepossession'(E.151) that we continue to repose any faith at all in our senses.

Livingston, I think, is wrong on a number of counts, but his problems really start with his account of the 'popular' system Hume unequivocally rejects as false. Under the popular system, Livingston writes, 'perceptions are conceived as objects (continuous, independent existences)'(72). The philosopher's consciousness, he continues, 'contains within itself a "struggle and opposition" between the belief that we perceive public objects and the belief that we perceive only private mental images'(73). This rather misrepresents what Hume actually says. The vulgar, in their pre-theoretical condition, do not, as Livingston suggests, make any distinction at all between perception and object, let alone subscribe to the philosophical theory that what we experience is a world of public objects distinct from their impressions. The opposition Livingston describes simply does not arise. It is only because it is to their very perceptions that the vulgar unreflectively attribute continued existence that the mind can be thrown into the conflict between this attribution and the obvious interruptedness of our perceptions that Hume actually describes. The vulgar do not entertain any philosophical notions about these perceptions. They do not take them to be the internal and perishing existences which Hume takes them to be. It is, however, for Hume, a straightforward matter of fact that it is to such internal objects that the vulgar make their attributions of distinct and continued existence. A 'very little reflection and philosophy' is all that is required to show that these attributions are false. The theory of double existence fares no better, being in the absurd position of needing both to affirm and deny 'the vulgar supposition'(T.218) Hume describes as false. Philosophy, Hume is able to conclude, 'would render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it'(T.657). Philosophical scepticism about the senses is the natural outgrowth of reflection upon the nature of the objects to which the vulgar make their common-sense attributions. Such scepticism is 'extravagant'(T.214) not because, as Livingston suggests, Hume thinks it false or even refutable, but because its conclusions, though soundly drawn, are nevertheless absurd and self-stultifying, neither producing conviction nor admitting refutation(E.155n). This is a topic, Hume concludes, 'in which the profounder and more philosophical sceptics will always triumph, when they endeavour to introduce an universal doubt into all subjects of human knowledge and enquiry'(E.153). This is some way from meeting Livingston's claim that, for Hume, scepticism is 'somehow cognitively defective'(74). The problem with the popular system, Livingston writes, 'is that in identifying perceptions with objects it completely ignores the world of consciousness'(75) brought to our attention by the apparent dependency of our perceptions on the successful functioning of our sense organs. But, as we have seen, the vulgar are in no position to subscribe in the first place to the idea

Livingston attributes to them, that 'what we perceive is a public world of objects'(76). There is no question of the vulgar making the philosophical distinction between perceptions and objects, let alone of their embracing a relatively sophisticated philosophical thesis about the nature of those objects. Our conception of things in the world cannot be simply read off from reality. The vulgar ascribe an uninterrupted existence to the very images they find before their minds, unreflectively, without countenancing any refined or philosophical distinctions between sensation and object. Their position, the position in which we all at some stage must have found ourselves, is not theoretical, not, strictly, even a system in the sense in which Livingston intends it. Were it not for the operation of the imagination 'by which the mind enlivens some ideas beyond others' we could never 'assent to any argument, nor carry our view beyond those few objects, which are present to our senses'(T.265). Hume argues succinctly that no argument can establish the existence of external objects because 'no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions' and, for this reason, we can never observe a constant conjunction between perceptions and objects(T.212). The same argument is sketched in the *Enquiry*: '[T]he mind has never anything present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connexion with objects. The supposition of such a connexion is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning'(E.153). The relevant habit of inference is, in principle, unavailable to us. This appears to Hume to be the case just because he construes the inference in question as being to a special sort of object specifically different to those met with in perception. Even to these latter objects, 'we cou'd never attribute any existence, but what was dependent on the senses; and must comprehend them entirely in that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person'(T.265).

It is evident, Hume writes near the beginning of Section II, that 'our senses offer not their impressions as the images of something *distinct*, or *independent*, and *external*. Our impressions 'convey to us nothing but a single perception, and never give us the least intimation of any thing beyond'(T.189). The philosophical theory of double existence arises quite naturally from a critical assessment of the vulgar opinion that it is the things of which we are directly aware that have a continued and distinct existence. This view turns out to be as indefensible as the vulgar one. The philosopher's theory has no foundation either in demonstrative or causal reasoning. We cannot infer the existence of uninterrupted external objects from our episodic and internal impressions because, Hume says, 'no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions'(T.212). Philosophical reflection on the nature of our perceptual judgments leads inevitably to scepticism. Philosophers who insist that they have an idea of an external world of lasting and identical objects, if only a relative one, do no more than 'arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions, to which they attribute these qualities'(T.218). We found there to be little sign of Hume having modified or revised, in any significant way, the theory of ideas he inherited from Locke and Berkeley. His uncritical commitment to the theory plays a significant part in the development of his argument in Section II. Since 'nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all ideas are deriv'd from something

antecedantly present to the mind; it follows, that 'tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions'(T.67). It is impossible for us to form an idea of anything which can be thought of as being specifically different from our perceptions. Our philosophical conception of things in the world is the natural result of a number of the fictions of the imagination and of the continuing influence of the vulgar view of the uninterrupted existence of perceptions.

The way in which Hume formulates the problem of the vulgar idea of body, together with his underlying commitment to the thesis that all we ever perceive are only mental contents, makes it highly unlikely that he will find any explanation of our belief in continued and distinct existence that is at all defensible. He is too much constrained as to the sorts of answers he can give to the questions he raises. Our senses do not offer their impressions as images of anything external or independent. The relevant habit of inference which might allow us to reason our way to a conception of external objects apart from and independent of our senses is in principle unobtainable. The explanation Hume does give of our ordinary belief shows it up as false and incredible. There is little comfort here for those who would read Hume as defending something like a common sense view of perception. Hume thinks this view hopelessly confused. A few simple experiments convince us that the perceptions which the vulgar believe to be 'their only objects' are not 'possest of any independent existence'. Hume presents a number of standard arguments from perceptual variability to show that the objects of our awareness do not have an existence independent of the mind that perceives them(T.210-11). The arguments do not show what Hume thinks they show. At best, they can be said to establish the dependence of how the things perceived appear on the successful operation of the faculties of sense which perceive them. This falls rather short of showing that the things perceived are the mind-dependent, internal existences, 'interrupted, and perishing, and different at every turn'(T.211), that Hume believes them to be. Reid pointed out that these arguments afford a very weak foundation for the theory of ideas(77). In defence of Hume, it needs to be said that he did not expect these arguments to perform this role. The truth of the theory of ideas is assumed by Hume from the beginning of the *Treatise*(78). He considers it an obvious point, too obvious to require much explanation or argument, that nothing is ever really present to the mind but perceptions, or impressions and ideas(T.67). Philosophers 'have so far run into this opinion, that they change their system, and distinguish, (as we shall do for the future), betwixt perceptions and objects'(T.211). Hume feels safe in assuming the truth of what he regards as a fairly uncontroversial fact about human experience, well-supported and well-argued-for by philosophers like Berkeley and Malebranche. It is still necessary to insist upon the importance the theory of ideas had for Hume. We have seen, in a number of instances, the kind of influence Hume's acceptance of the theory has on the development of his thinking(79). To see, feel, think, taste, or smell, is, Hume thinks, for there to be a perception before the mind. Our ideas 'reach no farther than our experience'(80) and our experience is restricted to this succession of private and momentary images, objects or

entities. We can have no ideas of anything which has not been a perception and can form no intelligible, rational beliefs in which such ideas figure. The senses are only the inlets through which the image or perception is conveyed and can never 'produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object'(E.152). Hume, as Passmore notes, regarded phenomenalism as a 'variety of "excessive scepticism"'(81). He does not argue that we should abandon our attempts to go beyond the appearances of the senses or suspend judgment on the question of whether or not there is such a thing as continued and distinct existence. Hume is committed to thinking of reality and of science in terms like these. It is, nevertheless, quite clear from the text that Hume believed the only objects of awareness to be perceptions and that he thought we could have no reason to infer upon their basis the existence of anything else.

Hume has been widely portrayed, by Reid, Green and others, as presenting a *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of ideas. Reid drew the conclusion that the theory of ideas should, on the basis of Hume's argument, and its lack of any real evidential support, be abandoned. If the assumptions of the theory were true, Reid complains, then 'supposing certain impressions and ideas to exist in my mind, I cannot, from their existence, infer the existence of anything else: my impressions and ideas are the only existences of which I can have any knowledge or conception; and they are such fleeting and transitory beings that they can have no existence at all, any longer than I am conscious of them'(82). To Reid's mind, Hume's difficulties in accounting satisfactorily for the plain man's belief in body have to do with the starting point he adopts. Reid does not disagree with Hume's claim that it is the perceptions which are before the mind when an agent thinks, sees, tastes, or feels, which are the empirical data of natural science. But he does question Hume's understanding of what perception is. The assumptions upon which the theory of ideas rests are not only unfounded, but lead, on Reid's account, to absurd and highly sceptical conclusions which are at odds with the truth, most notably, the ontological thesis that there exist no entities but ideas and impressions. It is worth noting that this not a conclusion Hume himself draws. We need to consider whether, as Reid suspects, he is committed to it. I want first to examine Reid's account of the assumptions of the doctrine of ideas and the data of empirical enquiry.

Reid writes that no solid proof 'has ever been advanced of the existence of ideas'. They are, he complains, 'a mere fiction and hypothesis, contrived to solve the phaenomenon of the human understanding'(83). But the fiction, as stated, is ill-equipped to solve and explain even the questions and phenomenon for which it was framed in the first place. Reid, as we saw, gives short shrift to the arguments from perceptual variability which Hume uses to show the dependency of what is perceived upon the mind of the perceiver(84). The fact that an object appears to be of a greater or lesser magnitude according to the spatial relation of the perceiver to it does not establish that object's dependence upon the mind of the perceiver. I warned against attaching too much significance to these arguments within Hume's system.

Reid, however, is more interested in the explanatory value of the theory, in the question of whether or not it is fitted to do what, Reid thinks, it is intended to do. What is to be shown, according to Reid, is 'the manner in which our senses make us acquainted with external things'(85). To this purpose, Reid writes, human invention appears to have produced but one hypothesis, that is, 'that the mind, like a mirror, receives the images of things from without, by means of the senses; so that their use must be to convey these images to the mind'(86). If we suppose that these momentary existences or images are all we are directly acquainted with, Reid complains, we could never be in a position to infer the existence of anything else. The principle, or 'prejudice', that 'in all the operations of the understanding, there must be some immediate intercourse between the mind and its object, so that one may act upon the other', Reid writes, 'has led philosophers to think that, as the external objects of sense are too remote to act upon the mind immediately, there must be some image or shadow of them that is present to the mind, and is the immediate object of perception. That there is such an immediate object of perception, distinct from the external object, has been very unanimously held by philosophers, though they have differed much about the name, the nature, and the origin of those immediate objects'(87).

This is the first of two 'prejudices' which Reid thinks are the source of the theory of ideas. The notion that 'in perception, the object must be contiguous to the percipient, seems, with many other prejudices, to be borrowed from analogy', Reid observes. Many philosophers, he continues, with Hume very much in mind, 'resolve almost every operation of the mind into impressions and feelings, words manifestly borrowed from the sense of touch. And it is very natural to conceive contiguity necessary between that which makes the impression, and that which receives it'(88). However, as Reid is quick to note, the presence of an image or representation in the mind, in no way instructs us as to how the mind could perceive the image or how the presence of the image in the mind facilitates the perception of anything else. This, Reid says, is what wants explaining. We are no better off for admitting there to be an image or impression which is present with or contiguous to the mind during perception, for 'we know as little how perception may be produced by this image as by the most distant object'(89). We are no closer to an understanding of how it is our senses acquaint us with the external world. The 'manner and mechanism' of mind's perception remains, as before, 'quite beyond our comprehension'(90). It makes no difference whether we construe what is present to the mind as a physical or as a mental object. When we posit such existences and take them to be the first and only direct objects of experience, we make it difficult to see how we can have any knowledge of anything beyond them. The theory of ideas, in attempting to account for the phenomena of perception, leads only to scepticism about the senses. Hume, Reid concludes, 'proceeds upon the same principles' as Berkeley, 'but carries them to their full length', leaving, he says, 'nothing in nature but ideas and impressions, without any subject on which they may be impressed'(91).

The second 'prejudice' which Reid believes to have given rise to the theory of ideas is that 'in all the operations of the understanding, there must be an object of thought, which really exists while we think of it; or, as some philosophers have expressed it, that which is not cannot be intelligible'(92). Philosophers, Reid believes, have been led by this principle to conclude that any given object of thought or belief must be an idea or perception. There must, he writes, 'be an immediate object which really exists; for that which is not, cannot be an object of thought. The idea must be perceived by the mind, and, if it does not exist there, there can be no perception of it, no operation of the mind about it'(93). But this, Reid thinks, is flatly contradicted by the fact that we can conceive distinctly of things which never existed:

The philosopher says, I cannot conceive a centaur without having an idea of it in my mind. I am at a loss to understand what he means. He surely does not mean that I cannot conceive it without conceiving it. This would make me no wiser. What then is this idea? Is it an animal, half horse and half man? No. Then I am certain it is not the thing I conceive. Perhaps he will say, that the idea is an image of the animal, and is the immediate object of my conception, and that the animal is the mediate or remote object.(94)

But this too will not do, for this 'one object which I conceive, is not the image of an animal - it is an animal. I know what it is to conceive an image of an animal, and what it is to conceive an animal; and I can distinguish the one of these from the other without any danger of mistake. The thing I conceive is a body of a certain figure and colour, having life and spontaneous motion'(95). To conceive of a centaur, a mythical being, half-man and half-horse, is not the same thing as to conceive of an image of such a creature. A centaur is evidently not the same as an image or representation of a centaur. To have a distinct image before the mind is, for the plain man, Reid says, just to have a distinct conception, but 'to infer from this that there is really an image in the mind, distinct from the operation of conceiving the object, is to be misled by an analogical expression'(96). Reid, here as elsewhere, insists upon a distinction between the operations of the mind, which are really in the mind, and their objects, which are not. All those who use language with understanding, Reid writes, distinguish as different 'the operations of the mind, which are expressed by active verbs; the mind itself, which is the nominative to those verbs, and the object, which is, in the oblique case, governed by them'(97). To have an idea of something, according to our normal way of talking, is just to conceive of it. But philosophers have accorded the term a special meaning, according to which 'it does not signify that act of the mind which we call thought or conception, but some object of thought'(98). Ideas, in this sense, are mere 'fictions', founded on a misuse of language. When I think of a past sensation, Reid believes, what I think of is not a presently existent idea, an image or representation of that sensation, but the sensation itself, which no longer exists.

Reid argues that the theory of ideas is simply incapable of explaining or making consistent sense of these basic facts about thought and conception. According to the proponents of this doctrine, Reid says, when I think of a past event, there is always a present idea which is the immediate object of thought. The event itself is merely the mediate object. In other words, when one thinks of something that no longer exists, one does so by means of something which really does. But, as Reid makes clear, to conceive of an object and to conceive of an image of that object are two different operations of the faculty of conception between which we can readily distinguish. Both perception and memory involve the conception of and belief in either the present or past existence of an object(99). Since we can both conceive of and believe in what does not exist, Reid thinks, the theory of ideas yields conclusions which not only lack evidential support but are at odds with what we actually know about thought and conception. Reid believes there is a general problem with explaining conception in terms of representation. *I cannot construe my present idea, whatever its content, as representing the past impression or sensation, without having in the first instance some conception of that impression or sensation, which is what, Reid says, wants explaining. If that idea is to represent to me that original object, I must already have some conception of that object. The operation of representation therefore presupposes conception and so cannot be used to explain it. Our original conceptions of objects cannot be explained in terms of the representative nature of our present ideas. If we are to interpret our ideas as signs or representations we must have in hand some conception of the objects they represent. Perception, according to Reid, is itself concept-dependent in as much as we cannot perceive something without having some notion or conception of it. We cannot be supposed simply to acquire this from the given of sensation. Sensations have no intentional object, they 'can have no existence but when they are felt, from the things suggested by them'(100). There must, therefore, be certain innate principles of the mind, which explain our possession of the conception of an object by what Reid calls 'a natural kind of magic'(101). In perception we have not only 'a notion more or less distinct of the object perceived, but also an irresistible conviction and belief of its existence'(102) which is, furthermore, 'immediate; that is, it is not by a train of reasoning and argumentation that we come to be convinced of the existence of what we perceive; we ask no argument for the existence of the object, but that we perceive it; perception commands our belief upon its own authority, and disdains to rest its authority upon any reasoning whatsoever'(103)*

*Our basic conceptions and beliefs arise irresistibly from these innate principles in response to our experience of the world. The beliefs themselves neither admit of direct proof, nor do they, Reid contends, require it. When I hear a certain sound, Reid writes, 'I conclude immediately, without reasoning, that a coach passes by. There are no premises from which this conclusion is inferred by any rules of logic'(104). Common sense is the faculty of mind which judges of the self-evidence of such beliefs, the principles of which 'irresistibly govern the belief and the conduct of all mankind in the common concerns of life'(105). To reason either for or against the evidence of sense or the evidence of memory 'is absurd. They are first principles; and*

such fall not within the province of reason, but of common sense'(106). The innate principles of our natural constitution give rise to our basic conceptions of and beliefs about the qualities of objects, the workings of our own minds, and the laws of nature. These convictions and conceptions, which include many of our ordinary perceptual and memory beliefs, are self-evident and uninferred. They are evident and, Reid thinks, justified, without any use of or appeal to reason. Our perceptual beliefs arise immediately from the innate first principles of our faculties. These principles give rise both to a conception of the object and to an irresistible conviction as to its existence. The beliefs resulting from these principles are neither the product of reasoning nor can they be justified by an appeal to it. The doubts of the sceptic can therefore make no great impression upon his perceptual beliefs. Reid writes:

The sceptic asks me, *Why do you believe in the existence of the external objects which you perceive?* This belief, sir, is none of my manufacture; it came from the mint of Nature; it bears her image and superscription; and, if it is not right, the fault is not mine: I even took it upon trust, and without suspicion. Reason, says the sceptic, is the only judge of truth, and you ought to throw off every opinion and every belief that is not grounded on reason. Why, sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception? - they came both out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another? (107)

Reid argues that Hume uncritically adopts the false and explanatorily inadequate assumptions of the theory of ideas of Descartes, Malebranche, and Berkeley, and that our original perceptions and common sense perceptual beliefs are to be explained as arising from innate first principles of the mind. There is little evidence of Hume's considered response to Reid's criticisms. Until fairly recently what Hume made of Reid's criticisms was purely a matter for speculation. However, a recently discovered letter of Hume's to Hugh Blair suggests not only Hume's awareness of the problems Reid raises but his own critical response to them(108). It is worth quoting the key passage from the letter at length. It is the only passage in which Hume seeks explicitly to defend his theory against the attacks of Reid. Hume writes:

If I comprehend the Author's Doctrine, which, I own, I can hitherto do but imperfectly, it leads us back to innate Ideas. This I do not advance as an Objection: For nothing ought ever to be supposed finally decided in Philosophy, so as not to admit of a new scrutiny; but only that, I think, the Author affirms I had been hasty, & not supported any Colour of Argument when I affirm, that all our Ideas are copied from Impressions. I have endeavourd to build that Principle on two Arguments. The first is desiring anyone to make a particular Detail of all his Ideas, where he woud always

find that every Idea had a correspondent and preceding Impression. If no Exception can ever be found, the Principle must remain incontestable. The second is, that if you exclude any particular Impression, such as Colours to the blind, Sound to the Deaf, you also exclude the Ideas.(109)

It was noted earlier that one of Hume's chief purposes in formulating the first principle of his theory of ideas was to dispense summarily with the question of innate ideas(110). Hume believed the principle of the derivation of ideas from impressions to be decisive in the matter. If every idea can be shown to be derived, either directly or indirectly, from our impressions of sensation and reflection, then, Hume thinks, the doctrine of innate ideas has been defeated. Hume's point is that all the materials which we make use of in thought and belief must, in one way or another, be derived from perception or sensation. His charge, in the above passage, seems to be that in attempting to do away with the doctrine of ideas, as he understood it, Reid had let innate ideas back into the picture, or, as Hume puts it, led us 'back to innate Ideas'. What are we to make of Hume's criticism? On the face of it, the sense of the passage is unclear, and Hume's aim, at best, confused. Reid's claim that there are innate first principles of the mind seems to be empirical, and based on the data of observation. He does not suggest that there is any direct apprehension of the truth of these principles. I do, however, think that Hume's criticism must be taken seriously. We need to consider what evidence there is for thinking that Reid subscribed to the doctrine of innate ideas.

There is some obscurity in Reid's account of the principles of common sense which we need to dispel at this point. Reid writes of common sense in two different ways which we need to get clear. In the first sense, the principles of common sense are those innate natural principles of mind by which we judge of the self-evidence of our beliefs and which incline us irresistibly to the beliefs we hold. In the second sense, Reid means those judgments themselves, that body of beliefs, which gain the consent of all, and irresistibly govern our conduct in all the common concerns of life. Those conceptions and beliefs which command the common consent of humanity are derived directly from innate first principles. If we take the second sense first, it is easily seen that Hume's charge would be seriously misplaced. Reid's common sense principles are, in this sense, judgements and not a sort of mental object, the clarity and distinctness of which might be introspected upon. Although to judge of first principles 'requires no more than a sound mind free of prejudice, and a distinct conception of the question'(111), it is nevertheless 'contrary to the nature of first principles to admit of direct or apodictical proof'(112). Turning to the first sense in which Reid writes of first principles, we can see that Hume would have as little ground for the sort of charge he wants to level. It seems clear that Hume would not have taken the sort of natural principles of mind Reid talks about to be in any sense necessarily grounded in innate ideas. Hume himself, in a passage quoted approvingly by Reid(113), allows that in many of our ordinary judgments we are 'absolutely and necessarily determined, to live and talk and act like other people in the common affairs of life'(T.269).

Observing the inadequacy of reason to dispel the clouds of scepticism which crowd in upon him when he reflects upon our common perceptual judgments, Hume says that 'nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures him of this philosophical melancholy and delirium'(T.269). Hume, no less than Reid, allows that many of our ordinary judgments are the result of the operation of faculties of mind which are innate.

Is Hume simply wrong to suggest that Reid's thought is based on some version of the theory of innate ideas? A recent paper by John Wright has thrown light on the question(114). Wright makes a plausible suggestion as to the particular passages to which Hume's criticism is directed. Having posed as key the question of how our sensations can give rise to notions or conceptions 'of sensible things which are no ways like them'(115), central to Reid's concern, Wright says, is the thesis that we can have some non-sensory awareness of external objects(116). The feelings of touch, Reid writes in his *Inquiry*, 'pass through the mind instantaneously, and serve only to introduce the notion and belief of external things, which, by our constitution, are connected with them. They are natural signs, and the mind immediately passes to the thing signified, without making the least reflection upon the sign, or observing that there was any such thing.'(117) So 'naturally and necessarily' does sensation convey 'the notion and belief of hardness', Reid writes in an earlier passage, 'that hitherto they have been confounded by the most acute inquirers into the principles of human nature, although they appear, upon accurate reflection, not only to be different things, but as unlike as pain is to the point of a sword'(118). In a similar way, to return to the example of the first passage, our notion of extension is far different from the feelings or sensations which, to use Reid's term, 'suggest' it. 'I have sought', Reid writes, 'to find out how this idea can be got by feeling; but I have sought in vain. Yet it is one of the clearest and most distinct notions we have'(119). We have, he says, 'clear and distinct conceptions of extension, figure, motion, and other attributes of body, which are neither sensations, nor like any sensation'(120). It is to these passages, Wright suggests, that Hume refers when he writes in his letter to Hugh Blair that Reid has affirmed 'that our Idea of Extension is nothing like the Objects of Touch'(121), or, as Reid puts it, the feelings or sensations of touch. It seems plausible to argue, as Wright does(122), that it is to these and other similar passages that Hume refers us when he suggests that Reid has led us back to the doctrine of innate ideas. If this is right, then Hume's point in the above passage is to defend the first principle of his theory of ideas against the obvious threat, which he rightly perceived in Reid, of our being shown to have some idea, some thought or conception, not in some sense derived from precedent impressions of reflection or sensation.

Hume, it must be said, presses his case only tentatively, and I would not seek to make much more of it than he does. Our primary concern here is to ascertain the rightness of Reid's objections to Hume. What is interesting, and for our purposes, more strictly to the point, is what this says of how Reid and Hume viewed the key issues between them. Reid himself writes in the abstract of his *Inquiry* that the task he had set himself was to discover whether all

his 'thoughts and conceptions' were copies of preceding impressions(123). He admits, in the cited passages on extension, to have vainly sought to find out how the idea in question might be got from 'feeling'. In his later *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, as Wright is quick to point out, Reid draws a similar conclusion as to the '*conception or idea*' he has of power. Power, he says, is 'not an object of any of our external senses, nor even an object of consciousness'(124). Yet, if power 'were a thing of which we have no idea, as some philosophers have taken much pains to prove - that is, if power were a word without any meaning - we could neither affirm nor deny anything concerning it with understanding'(125). Since what can be said of power is apt to be both readily understood and assented to, Reid concludes, we must have 'a distinct notion of power', an idea, he suggests, 'relative to its exertions or effects'(126). It follows, Reid says, 'from men's having this opinion, that they have an idea of power. A false opinion about power, no less than a true, implies an idea of power; for how can men have any opinion, true or false, about a thing of which they have no idea?'(127)

It is important to note just where Reid takes the difference to lie between the theory he is defending and that of his opponent, David Hume. It is, Reid writes, 'a capital doctrine in a late celebrated system of human nature, that we have no idea of power, not even in the Deity; that we are not able to discover a single instance of it, either in body or spirit, either in superior or inferior natures; and that we deceive ourselves when we imagine that we are possessed of any idea of this kind'(118). Reid, as I understand him, from this and from other passages, is sympathetic to the first part of Hume's analysis. What is less obvious is the conclusions Reid sees fit to draw from the point. Hume, as we saw, is at pains to deny that we can have any impression of the relation of dependency or necessary connection supposed to lie between causally related objects or events. We never, he writes, 'have any impression, that contains any power or efficacy. We never therefore have any idea of power'(T.161). In a letter to James Gregory, cited by Wright, Reid observes that: 'What D. Hume says of causes, in general, is very just when applied to physical causes, that a constant conjunction with the effect is essential to such causes, and implied in the very conception of them'(129). In a later letter, on the same subject, Reid insists, for philosophical purposes, upon a distinction between cause and causation, terms which he takes to have been much confounded in popular usage(130). Modern philosophers, he writes, 'know that we have no ground to ascribe efficiency to natural causes, or even necessary connection with the effect. But we can still call them causes, including nothing under the name but priority and constant conjunction'(131). To give the name of causation to 'the relation of connected events in physicks' is, Reid says, 'a kind of abuse of the name, because we know that the thing most essential to causation in its proper meaning - to wit, efficiency - is wanting'(132). This does not, however, 'hinder our notion of a physical cause from being distinct and determinate, though, I think, it cannot be said to be of the same genus with an efficient cause or agent'(133).

Reid's conclusions are interesting and instructive not least because he evidently takes them to be of a piece with those of the 'modern philosophers' among whom he would most certainly have had in mind Hume. It will, however, be obvious, from what has been argued for so far in this chapter, that Reid's views are some way from being those of Hume. The interpretation Reid gives and the conclusions he wants to draw reveal both an important source of philosophical misunderstanding and a crucial point at which the philosophical projects of the two philosophers are at odds. Reid's view requires a little unpicking. To have a belief of any sort concerning power or 'efficiency', to either affirm or deny with understanding that which is at issue, Reid assumes, is, of necessity, to make use of an idea or conception of power. To have a given belief implies that one has an idea of a certain sort which is capable of figuring in the belief. Could it be shown that we have no such idea, then it would also have been shown that we can form no intelligible belief concerning it. Reid argues that we can have no grounds for attributing 'efficiency' to physical causes. There is, he says, nothing in nature which corresponds to this supposed idea. Indeed, it is a 'kind of abuse' of the term to apply it to natural connections where it is wanting. Since what can be said of causation is readily comprehensible to us, the idea we have of power must 'very obviously' be the product of '[R]eason alone'(134). The 'absurd' conclusion which he takes Hume to have drawn is that we have and can have no such idea, that is, no idea which properly comprehends the notion of necessity. In Reid's view, Hume not only denies that we have any clear and distinct notion of power or natural necessity, but draws from this the conclusion that our common sense attributions of causal relations are groundless or mistaken. I argued that there were decisive textual grounds for rejecting this view of Hume. Nevertheless, this is the view which Reid sees himself as resisting. What convinces Reid that he has the idea of power is 'that I am conscious that I know what I mean by that word, and, while I have this consciousness, I disdain equally to hear arguments for or against my having such an idea'(135).

It follows from this that Reid's critique of Hume does the philosopher a significant disservice. Hume does not deny that there exist causes in nature or argue that we are mistaken in making the kinds of causal attributions we make. He does not suggest that propositions concerning causal relations can be analysed, without loss of content, into propositions about the regular conjunction of events. Hume's interest, as I have argued, lies in showing how we come to use the language we use, and think in the terms we think in, when we talk and think of causes as we do. To do so he must explain how we come to be committed to a view of the world which is only partly borne out in our experience. Hume consistently argues that any just definition of the causal relation must include some reference to necessity or necessary connection. He writes in the *Enquiry*: '[L]et anyone *define* a cause, without comprehending, as a part of the definition, a *necessary connexion* with its effect; and let him show distinctly the origin of the idea, expressed by the definition; and I shall readily give up the whole controversy. But if the foregoing explication of the matter be received, this must be absolutely impracticable'(E.95-6). This, as we saw, does not make Hume a realist about causal

connections. The ideas which we form of cause and effect are, Hume says, 'so imperfect' that 'it is impossible to give any just definition of cause, except what is drawn from something extraneous and foreign to it'(E.76). He argues simply that we are disposed by our natures to a belief in natural necessity. To prepare the ground for his own explanation of the belief Hume needs only show that we represent to ourselves no extra feature of reality when we talk of causal connections. He does not, as Reid suggests he does, argue that there are no causal connections in nature on the basis of the absence of any representative ideas of such connections. Hume does not reject, or even suggest that any mistake is involved in, the normal attribution of causal relations to conjoined objects or events. He wants to show that a realist ontology is not the only possible explanation for this feature of human belief. To construe Hume either as offering an analysis of our causal claims into ones to do with mere regularity of succession or as rejecting a belief or commitment on the basis of the absence of a properly representative idea is a serious mistake.

We can apply the moral of this story to the account Hume offers of the origin of our belief in continued and distinct existence, and to Reid's criticism of that account. It is in Section II of Part IV, Reid suggests, that Hume carries the subjectivist principles of Berkeley to their 'full length' leaving, at last, 'nothing in nature but impressions and ideas'(136). Reid takes Hume to be rejecting the belief in external existence and drawing instead the sceptical conclusion that there is nothing but perceptions or impressions and ideas. Hume, however, is not concerned to deny that there are such things as real and independent existences, anymore than it was a concern of his to deny that there are causes in nature. Just as we are mistaken when we think that the idea of necessary connection we possess is an idea of whatever quality it is binds together cause and effect, so we are mistaken when we attribute a continued and distinct existence to our perceptions. But Hume does not deny, nor is he concerned to question, that there are such things as necessary connections or external objects in nature. His concern is to show how, faced with a reality in which we find none of the essentially relevant features, the mind still 'spreads itself upon the world' forming commitments and beliefs which it then projects back upon that reality. As to the question of '*Whether there be body or not*', Hume's answer is clear; 'tis in vain to ask,' since this 'is a point which we must take for granted in all our reasonings'(T.187). Nature, Hume says, has 'esteem'd it a matter of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations'(T.187). Hume is about as far as can be from suggesting, as Reid would argue he does, that we 'throw off every opinion and every belief not grounded on reason'(137).

There are really two questions here which we can usefully separate. The first concerns the sorts of sceptical questions Hume raises about our beliefs, and the ways in which he takes them to arise; the second has to do with the normative question of whether or not we ought to accept them. Both are important to an understanding of Hume's philosophy. Hume, writing in the *Enquiry*, draws a distinction between two sorts of scepticism: one '*antecedent* to all study

and philosophy'; the other '*consequent* to science and enquiry'(E.149-50). He rejects the first form of scepticism on the grounds that it 'recommends an universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principles, but also of our very faculties; of whose veracity, they say, we must assure ourselves, by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful'(E.149-50). This 'Cartesian' doubt, were it ever attainable, would prove 'entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject.' There is, however, another species of scepticism '*consequent* to science and enquiry, when men are supposed to have discovered, either the absolute fallaciousness of their mental faculties, or their unfitness to reach any fixed determination in all those curious subjects of speculation, about which they are commonly employed'(E.150). The latter sort of sceptic, while resisting the demands of universal doubt, nevertheless finds doubt to arise as a consequence of his enquiries, of scientific practice, bringing into dispute 'the maxims of common life' as well as 'the most profound principles or conclusions of metaphysics and theology.' Hume's scepticism, as much as Reid's concern with first principles, arises from an attempt to apply the methods of Newtonian science to philosophical subjects(138). His empirical investigations lead him to conclude in the *Abstract* that philosophy 'would render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it'(T.657). It turns out to be in virtue of the 'illusions' of the imagination that we come to have the beliefs we have about causal connection and the external world. The understanding, Hume says, 'when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life'(T.267-8). The philosophical analysis of our ideas, Hume is clear, can lead only to a self-stultifying scepticism. We cannot pretend, by any arguments of philosophy, to establish the veracity of those basic beliefs to which our constitutions irresistibly incline us. But Hume does not suggest we throw off or reject our beliefs on these grounds. These are things which we must 'take for granted in all our reasonings'. He does not, for this reason, deny that there are causes or physical objects. He is more concerned to explain how it is the imagination combines our ideas to form beliefs for which no directly correspondent impressions can be found. To ignore this fact is to ignore, as Reid and many subsequent philosophers have done, the important and interesting work to which Hume sees his own philosophical writing as a contribution. Far from taking the principles of Berkeley to an absurd conclusion, Hume was perhaps the first philosopher to attempt to explain how, from a strictly limited stock of experiences, we get the beliefs and commitments we do. He does not argue that these commitments should be abandoned. His endorsement of them is often explicit. It is, Hume thinks, the imagination which is 'the ultimate judge of all systems of philosophy'(T.225). Hume's scepticism prepares the ground for his chief insight that it is the 'inconstant and fallacious' principle of the imagination which is primarily responsible for belief. It is this principle, he writes, 'which makes us reason from causes and effects; and 'tis the same principle, which convinces us of the continu'd existence of external objects, when absent from the senses'(T.266).

Nature, Hume writes, 'by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel'(T.183). At the beginning of this section, I raised the question of the degree to which Hume thought the philosopher ought to yield to the illusions of the imagination, to beliefs from which, at one level at least, he feels himself alienated. Both Reid and Hume, we saw, allow that many of our judgments are deeply rooted in the 'original constitution of our nature'. Sense experience alone cannot provide us with all the materials we need in order to form a going conception of a world of real and lasting existences ordered by natural laws. It cannot explain our commitment to seeing the world in these terms. Reid poses the question of how our sense experience can give rise to conceptions of 'sensible things which are no ways like them'(139). Ignoring Hume's extended working through of the problem, Reid asserts that our basic conceptions and beliefs turn out to be the result of the operation of certain innate principles of mind. The conceptions and beliefs which arise from these principles are self-evident and uninferred. They neither result from the operation of reason nor can they be legitimated by appeal to it. Just as Newton laid down 'the common principles or axioms, on which the reasonings in natural philosophy are built'(140), Reid took his first principles to be the foundational first premises of knowledge in general. These are principles which, he says, 'though they have not the same kind of evidence that mathematical axioms have; yet have such evidence that every man of common understanding readily assents to them, and finds it absolutely necessary to conduct his actions and opinions by them, in the ordinary affairs of life'(141). Among these principles are the claims that *'Those things really did happen that I distinctly remember'* and that *'Those things really do exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be'*(142). These are judgments to which we cannot withhold our assent, yet which do not depend upon any sort of inference or process of reasoning. Once understood, they cannot be doubted. This is what Reid has in mind when he writes of their self-evidence. Any attempt to justify these first principles by reason is not only unnecessary, Reid thinks, but bound to failure, since the first principles of common sense are also the axiomatic first principles of reason. They must, in other words, be taken for granted in all our thought and enquiry.

Whenever I recall a past event or see an object, this, Reid says, 'commands my belief no less than an axiom'(143). Hume would agree that our ordinary perceptual judgments are both immediate and irresistible. Certain of our beliefs, like the belief in the continued and distinct existence of body, must, Hume says, be taken for granted in all our reasonings. We are transported to the belief by 'a natural instinct or prepossession'(E.151). Hume describes a sort of natural psychological compulsion to believe which effectively submerges the sceptical doubts of the philosopher as soon as he leaves his study. It is, however, obvious to Hume that none of this amounts to a refutation of the sceptic's position. Nothing in the operation of the imagination underwrites its deliverances with a guarantee of truth. We cannot be sure that our thoughts are putting us in touch with the truth about the world. Reid, of course, wants to say

rather more than this. According to Reid, our ordinary perceptual and memory judgments are justified because we are warranted in relying upon our uninferred, self-evident principles. Their evidence is such that we are absolutely determined to conduct our 'actions and opinions by them, in the ordinary affairs of life'. But the irresistibility of these beliefs does not, by itself, show that we are justified in placing in them the confidence we do.

Reid appeals to the claim that it is absurd to trust in certain of our faculties, say, reason or consciousness, while distrusting others, our senses, for example. The sceptic must assume the veracity of one in order to undermine the other. Yet both, Reid says, came 'out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another?'(144) To reason against 'any of these kinds of evidence, is absurd; nay, to reason for them is absurd. They are first principles; and such fall not within the province of reason, but of common sense'(145). It is absurd and self-contradictory for the sceptic to assume one, but not another, since both are as much the result of our natural faculties. His sceptical doubts are belied by his own practice. Though we can offer no reasons for our continued reliance upon those faculties, the burden of proof, Reid says, lies with the sceptic, and the sceptic cannot, without evident absurdity, give support to his own position. Reid, like Hume, does not think we can come up with a conclusive refutation of the sceptic's position. It is enough, he supposes, to have shown that the sceptic can have no good grounds for doubt. Hume accepts that the existence of body is something which we must take for granted in all our reasonings. He is not concerned either to defend or attack the sceptical position. His scepticism is not of the prescriptive sort. The arguments of the sceptic do not convince us, not do they admit of refutation. This is not the issue between Reid and Hume. Hume would perhaps find little to take issue with in any of Reid's first principles. He does not seek to reject or 'throw out' our elementary beliefs on the grounds that they cannot be proved to be true. What is at issue is the role Reid takes these principles to play in legitimating our beliefs. For Hume, the imagination has an important role to play in forming commitments and beliefs about ourselves and the world which are useful, and which we project back upon our experience, but which have no necessary connection with the truth. Many of our elementary concepts and beliefs about things in the world turn out to be the 'fictitious' creations of the imagination. Reid wants to go further than this. Common sense not only produces an irresistible conviction in our basic judgments, but warrants those judgments and our reliance upon them. It is, to put it crudely, a matter of common sense that objects have the qualities we take them to.

Reid takes it for granted 'that the evidence of sense, when the proper circumstances concur, is good evidence, and a just ground for belief'(146). But it is not clear that Reid has earned a right to his conclusion. We may allow, as Hume does, that our ordinary judgments about objects and their qualities, about memory and consciousness, are an irresistible part of our thinking, whether we think as the plain man does or as the philosopher, but this does not entail

that these judgments are true or justified. Every man of 'common understanding', Reid says, readily assents to his principles, and finds himself under a necessity to conduct his actions and opinions in accordance with them in 'the ordinary affairs of life'. Hume again would find little to quarrel about here. I find myself, Hume says, 'absolutely and necessarily determin'd to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life'(T.269). At the same time, Hume writes, upon a little reflection, 'I feel my mind all collected within itself, and am naturally *inclin'd* to carry my view into all those subjects, about which I have met with so many disputes in the course of my reading and conversation. I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me'(T.270-1). The slightest reflection upon these subjects is apt to produce in us an inclination to consider the principles which underlie them. Hume makes clear that the picture of reality produced by those 'causes' in my nature which 'actuate and govern me' in 'the common affairs of life' may very well be an illusory one. Nature has fitted us to form conceptions and beliefs which are likely to prove useful to us in everyday life, but which carry with them no guarantee that they will lead to the discovery of truth. The naturalness or irresistibility of Reid's principles does not by itself explain why we are justified in relying on them, or how that reliance will put us in touch with the truth about the world. It may well be that in the 'ordinary affairs of life' we must and do habitually trust our natural faculties. We have a need to act unreflectively in circumstances where reflection would be inappropriate or irresponsible. Our success in practical matters depends upon our being able to do so. But for the purposes of scientific inquiry, where our intention is to determine the 'laws and forces' by which natural phenomena are 'governed and directed', where, quite often, those laws seem at odds with common sense truisms, then it is appropriate for us to take a more reflective and critical attitude to those phenomena and to our natural ways of taking them. Hume recognises that more must be asked of the premises of scientific inquiry than that they be natural if we are to be justified in uncritically relying upon them in the way in which Reid thinks we are. Hume's response to scepticism is to say that although our fundamental beliefs are largely the result of the natural principles of the imagination, we have no guarantee that its deliverances put us in touch with the truth about reality. Hume's is a scepticism which is, as he puts it, '*consequent* to science and enquiry': it arises from the application of the tools and resources of science to the foundations of that practice. It judges of our faculties' fittedness to 'reach any fixed determination in all the curious subjects of speculation, about which they are commonly employed'(E.150). What he finds at the end of his own enquiries is that it is only because of certain fictions of the imagination that we come to have the picture of the world we do and that we can say little more about them than that they are natural and irresistible.

The vulgar view that our perceptions have a continued and distinct existence is, Hume thinks, unarguably false. The attribution of uninterrupted existences to the momentary and internal impressions of the senses cannot stand up to the most cursory philosophical analysis. Our

experience gives us no basis from which to reason our way to a conception of external objects distinct from the impressions which they cause. We can never hope to infer the existence of anything specifically different to our perceptions. This is the logical upshot of the assumptions of the theory of ideas. Philosophers have so great a propensity to believe their perceptions uninterrupted that they 'arbitrarily invent a new set of perceptions' to which they attribute the qualities of continued and distinct existence. We are led by a 'blind and powerful instinct of nature' to 'suppose the very images, presented by the senses, to be the external objects', and, for the most part, 'never entertain any suspicion, that the one are nothing but representations of the other'(E.151). Philosophy may well show up the falsity of the vulgar belief in body, but it is of little avail in dissuading us of it. The philosophical theory of double existence owes all its plausibility and influence on the imagination to the force of the vulgar belief it means to usurp. These fictions are unwarranted yet play so important a role in human survival that 'upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin'(T.225). What can we look for, Hume asks, 'from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falsehood?'(T.218) How far ought we to yield to the 'illusion of the imagination' which makes us believe in the continued and distinct existence of the objects of our awareness? The same reasonings which, Hume says, must take for granted the vulgar belief in body throw doubt upon the rational credentials of that belief. Yet Hume does not recommend a philosophical suspension of belief or commitment in the light of his sceptical worries. He does not see his own philosophy as leading to a sceptical position on these matters. Hume's main concern is with the origin of our everyday beliefs rather than with their rejection or abandonment. Philosophical reflection on the operation of our faculties nevertheless leads naturally and inevitably to scepticism about them. Hume, by the end of his inquiries, is inclined 'to repose no faith at all' in his senses(T.217). This sceptical doubt, Hume says, is a 'malady, which can never be radically cur'd'(T.218), least of all by more philosophising about it. The obvious question prompted by all of this concerns the attitude we ought to take to our own participation in the philosophical project. What attitude does Hume take to the sceptical arguments of Section II?

Since reason 'is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium'(T.269). Away from his study, the philosopher yields himself up to 'action, and employment, and the occupations of common life', finding his sceptical principles to 'vanish like smoke', leaving 'the most determined sceptic in the same condition as other mortals'(E.159). Despite this fortunate dispensation of nature, 'tis almost impossible for the mind of man to rest, like those of beasts, in that narrow circle of objects, which are the subject of daily conversation and action'(T.271). Nature cannot entirely cure us of our passion for inquiry and speculation; nor are the arguments of the sceptics without their influence. Where the mind 'pursues any end with passion', Hume says, that passion is only partly derived from 'a concern for the end itself'(T.451). Though the end of our action 'may in itself be despis'd, yet in the heat of the action we acquire such an attention to

this end, that we are very uneasy under any disappointments'(T.452). What is 'easy and obvious', Hume says, 'is never valu'd'. What prompts our inquiries is 'a love of truth' and the obligation 'to fix our attention or exert our genius; which of all other exercises of the mind is the most pleasant and agreeable'(T.449). Although this is, Hume finds, the 'principal source' of our satisfaction in inquiry, some further importance or usefulness must be esteemed to attach to our inquiries if we are to be led to pursue them. Were philosophers 'convinc'd, that their discoveries were of no consequence, they wou'd entirely lose all relish for their studies'(T.450). Some other value, Hume suggests, must be seen to accrue from the practice. To understand the value Hume took his enquiries to have, and, indeed, how he saw the nature of useful and important philosophical activity, we need first to gain a grasp of how he saw its limits. There is, Hume writes in the *Enquiry*, 'a more *mitigated* scepticism or *academical* philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism, or *excessive* scepticism, when its undisguised doubts are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection'(E.161). One way in which a 'tincture' of Pyrrhonism might be useful to us is in informing our enquiries with a due sense of caution and modesty both in our doubts and in our convictions. Were the 'dogmatic reasoners' who make up the greater run of men, more sensible of the 'strange infirmities of human understanding, even in its most perfect state,' such a reflection would 'inspire them with more modesty and reserve, and diminish their fond opinion of themselves, and their prejudice against antagonists'(E.161). In assenting to 'every trivial suggestion of the fancy' we allow ourselves to be led 'into such errors, absurdities, and obscurities, that we must at last become asham'd of our credulity'. Nothing, Hume says, 'is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination, and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers'(T.267). We must, however, give our assent to certain of those 'suggestions of the fancy'. Not to do so, Hume writes, is not only to 'cut off entirely all science and philosophy' but to 'expressly contradict yourself; since this maxim must be built on the preceding reasoning, which will be allow'd to be sufficiently refin'd and metaphysical'(T.268). To reject 'all refin'd and elaborate reasoning' on philosophical grounds, Hume makes clear, is manifestly 'absurd': 'If we reject it in favour of these reasonings, we subvert entirely the human understanding'(T.268). We must, Hume writes in '*Of the modern philosophy*', 'distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular'(T.225) The former, Hume says, 'are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin'(T.225).

In so far as we must yield to certain of the principles of the imagination, it is best that we yield to those which are both unavoidable and necessary to the conduct of life. The judgment of the intellect, unaided by any fiction or illusion of the fancy, would leave us without any belief in external existence or causal connection. The understanding, when left to act alone, 'according

to its most general principles, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life'(T.627). This, Hume says, is 'the whimsical condition of mankind, who must act and reason and believe; though they are not able, by their most diligent enquiry, to satisfy themselves concerning the foundation of these operations, or to remove the objections, which may be raised against them'(E.160). Our belief in the continued and distinct existence of body rests upon the irrational illusions of the imagination. The sceptic, as much as the unphilosophical portion of humanity, finds himself under a psychological compulsion to assent to 'the principle concerning body, 'tho' he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity'(T.187). The 'undisguised doubts' of the Pyrrhonian sceptic can, nevertheless, be 'in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection'. In considering the subject, Hume writes, 'we may observe a gradation of three opinions, that rise above each other, according as the persons, who form them, acquire new degrees of reason and knowledge. These opinions are that of the vulgar, that of a false philosophy, and that of the true; where we shall find upon enquiry, that the true philosophy approaches nearer to the sentiments of the vulgar, than to those of a mistaken knowledge'(T.223). The false philosophers allow themselves to be guided 'by every trivial propensity of the imagination' and by this means 'set themselves at ease, and arrive at last, by an illusion, at the same indifference, which people attain by their stupidity, and true philosophers by their moderate scepticism'(T.224). The greater part of mankind are apt to be 'affirmative and dogmatical' in their opinions, and 'throw themselves precipitately into the principles, to which they are inclined'(E.161). A 'small tincture of Pyrrhonism', however, inclines us to 'a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty, which, in all kinds of scrutiny and decision, ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner'(E.162). An awareness of the narrow compass of human understanding leads us to limit our enquiries to such subjects as it is fitted to deal with. The 'just reasoner' brings to bear upon his reflections an acknowledgement of the dependency of his enquiries upon the 'illusions' of the imagination. It is not merely the intellect but the 'mind all collected within itself' which he brings to the subjects of philosophical dispute. He accepts that the faculties which give rise to our basic beliefs and conceptions have no necessary connection to the truth and, as Hume suggests, frequently play us false. Once we realise the dependency of our beliefs upon natural ways of taking our experience which are both irresistible and non-rational, we become less inclined to fanciful hypothesis, and more attentive to those principles of the imagination which we cannot do without. These are principles which, Hume thinks, are open to discovery by the kind of enquiry into the way the mind works which he has engaged in. Philosophy, if it is to retain what value it has, must confine itself to 'common life, and to such subjects as fall under daily practice and experience'(E.162). To bring us to so salutary a determination, Hume writes, 'nothing can be more serviceable, than to be once thoroughly convinced of the force of the Pyrrhonian doubt, and of the impossibility, that anything, but the strong power of natural instinct could free us from it'(E.162).

The true philosopher, while subject to this same natural instinct, no longer supposes the 'very images' of his perception to have a continuous existence independent of him. But he is cautious in his own belief, knowing it to owe what plausibility and influence it has to the same trick of the imagination which gives rise to the vulgar belief. The philosopher shows up the falsity of that belief, yet finds that he too must take it for granted in 'all his reasonings'. His own belief has no 'primary recommendation' either to reason or to the imagination. He only has the belief he has because he originally had a false belief in the independent existence of his *fleeting and distinct 'resembling' impressions*. Nevertheless, the philosophical 'hypothesis' of double existence 'pleases our reason, in allowing, that our dependent perceptions are interrupted and different'. At the same time, it is 'agreeable to the imagination, in attributing a continu'd existence to something else, which we call *objects*'(T.215). The philosophical system is the 'monstrous offspring' of two inimical principles which are yet 'unable mutually to destroy each other'(T.215). The belief in body survives because of an 'illusion' of the imagination, but it survives in a form modified by reason. The philosopher, in so far as he reflects upon the matter, no longer takes his very perceptions or sensation to have a continued and independent existence. The vulgar view fails to make any distinction between sensation and object. The philosophical view, in so much as it might be said to modify it, leaves us on one side of the distinction. This, I think, is Hume's own considered position. It is also the perspective of 'true philosophy'. The philosopher shows that the vulgar belief that 'the very perception or sensible image is the external object' is false, but does not, nor can he, show the truth of his own opinion. Do we, Hume asks, disclaim this principle in order to embrace 'the more rational opinion, that the perceptions are only representations of something external'? In doing so we not only depart from our 'natural propensities and more obvious sentiments' but are unable to satisfy our reason 'which can never find any convincing argument from experience to prove, that the perceptions are connected with any external objects'(E.154).

The theory of double existence is, Hume thinks, the 'more rational' of the options available to us. Another advantage of the philosophical system, according to Hume, one which clearly identifies it with that of the 'true' philosophy, 'is its similarity to the vulgar one; by which means we can humour our reason for a moment, when it becomes troublesome and sollicitous; and yet upon its least negligence or inattention, can easily return to our vulgar and natural notions'(T.216). The true philosophy, we saw Hume remark, 'approaches nearer to the sentiments of the vulgar'. In making the point, Hume is at once distancing his understanding of philosophy from that of the 'false' philosophers, and stressing the intimacy of the relationship between true philosophy and common life. The false philosopher lacks a due humility in his reasonings. In rejecting the vulgar view, he takes it that he has freed himself from the illusions of the imagination. But, as Hume points out, this opinion 'has taken such deep root in the imagination, that 'tis impossible ever to eradicate it'(324). Since sense experience can in no way allow us to reason our way to our conception of the world and the things in it, we have no choice but to trust our reasonings to some or other non-rational principles. Any other

conception of philosophy is liable to lead to absurd conclusions both in philosophy and in common life. Philosophy must take as its starting point those principles which are 'received' both by philosophy and in 'common life'. We can only begin within the framework of common life, hoping to retrospectively develop the cognitive tools with which to correct and modify our pre-theoretical beliefs. When we see 'that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality; which is the reason of the mere vulgar, and what it required no study at first to have discovered for the most particular and most extraordinary phaenomenon'(T.xviii). Once the more fanciful speculations of the false philosophy have been removed, we might hope 'to establish a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hop'd for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination'(T.272). Philosophical decisions turn out to be 'nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected'(E.162). We cannot do without the opinions of the common man but we need not subscribe uncritically to them. We bring to our inquiries a critical self-consciousness, an awareness of their dependency upon the illusions of the imagination, allowing, at the same time, that their 'ultimate cause' will always be 'perfectly inexplicable by human reason,' and that "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'(T.84). The explanation Hume gives of the irresistibility and naturalness of our beliefs undermines their rational credibility. The beliefs in question turn out to be the result of the operations of the imagination, rather than of sense or the understanding. But Hume does not think that in explaining our beliefs in terms of a non-rational faculty of mind he necessarily undermines them. It becomes more obvious, on the account Hume gives, just what role those beliefs have and the form they must take. Hume is far from saying that we must passively accept all that nature leads us to believe. Belief can still be subject to the influence of philosophical reasoning, but only in so far as it is informed by an understanding of its limits and an awareness of its role.

## Chapter Three

### Hume's Scepticism with Regard to the Senses

1. Annette Baier, *op.cit.*, pp.93-97, shows in detail how each of the eight rules Hume sets out in Section XV of Part III are used to 'arrive at, and confirm, his hypothesis concerning what causes our ideas, our inferences, and our degrees of belief and disbelief.' (p.93).
2. Richard H. Popkin, *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1980), p.103, cites John Laird's remark, in his *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature* (London: Methuen and Co., 1932), p.180, that: 'Hume remained a complete Pyrrhonian regarding all *ultimate* principles.' Popkin, more realistically, shows up Hume's resistance to the radically sceptical doctrines of Pyrrhonian philosophy (cf.T.183). I will return to the question of the nature of Hume's critique of Pyrrhonian scepticism in 3.2 and in the conclusion of the work.
3. We saw in 2.2 that, for Hume, we can form at best only a relative idea of necessary connection in nature (see T.67-8/T.218). It is clear from the text that Hume does not believe the distinctions he makes in these passages to form the basis for anything like the sceptical realist position argued for by Wright, *op.cit.*, and Strawson, *op.cit.* Hume raises the question of the distinction between specific and relative ideas only to dismiss out of hand its effectiveness or usefulness in either science or philosophy.
4. Craig, *op.cit.*, pp.100-101, argues that Hume's carelessness with the 'conceptual branch' of his account of necessity reflects the greater draw and importance of 'the epistemological side of Hume's enterprise'. I agree with Craig that Hume's overriding concern, the one which best captures his interests in the *Treatise*, is with the causal explanation of belief. It would, nevertheless, be a mistake to suppose that the theory of ideas was of only marginal importance to Hume. As we will see in the sections under discussion, the theory reasserts itself frequently, and, despite Hume's occasional discomfort with it, there are, to my mind, no strong textual indications of his having abandoned it.
5. See, for example, William Davie, 'Perceptions and Persons' in *Hume Studies* X, 1984; and Donald Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).
6. Robert J. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.64, complains that even the title of Section II is perplexing, on the grounds that 'for the most part, Hume does not put forward skeptical arguments against our perceptual faculties'.
7. See, for example, John Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.133. Passmore writes that '[I]n the *Treatise*, the scepticism which Hume learnt from Bayle simply overlays the positivist-associationist structure of his original argument; in consequence, Hume lapses into inconsistencies of the most startling character'. See also, Anthony Flew, *op.cit.*, p.109.
8. Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.151.

9.I discuss Hume's assessment of these arguments in Section VII of Part IV, and of their relation to his scientific programme, in the conclusion.

### 3.1 The Argument in Detail

10.Important discussions include Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.96-117; John P. Wright, *op.cit.*, pp.38-84; David Pears, *op.cit.*, pp.152-197; Fogelin, *op.cit.*, pp.64-79; and H.H. Price, *Hume's Theory of the External World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

11.T.183. I give a fuller account of Hume's argument in 2.1. For a critical examination of the discussion, see Fogelin, *op.cit.*, pp.13-24. For the purposes of this work, I have preferred merely to give the gist of the argument and of Hume's sceptical solution, rather than go in to the detail of its content.

12.Hume does eventually come to discuss the sceptical arguments in question (T.210-11) but does so, in my opinion, only half-heartedly, and with some lack of originality. I consider these arguments later in the chapter.

13.Pears, *op.cit.*, pp.152-3, compares Hume's attribution of these suppositions to the vulgar with the view 'of what Sartre would call "pre-reflective consciousness"'. According to Pears, '[T]hey simply take what is given as it comes without making any attempt to categorize it'.

14.Price, *op.cit.*, p.18, suggests that independent existences might, quite coincidentally, exist for just as long as we perceive them.

15.Pears, *op.cit.*, p.153.

16.Wright, *op.cit.*, p.42, argues that Hume's doctrine that parts of the body are not directly perceived has been taken over from Malebranche. He also remarks, in accordance with his own interpretive thesis, that Malebranche, like Hume, held a firm belief in the independent existence of the material world. There are strong parallels to be made between Hume's account of ideas and association and Malebranche's account of sensation and imagination. Some of these are made out by Charles McCracken, *op.cit.*, pp.277-283. The most striking concerns the terminology employed by the two philosophers. Hume writes of the 'force and vivacity' of our perceptions, while the other speaks of sensations as '*fortes et vives*', where Hume speaks of the ideas of the imagination being 'faint and languid', Malebranche describes the ideas of the imagination as '*faible et languissantes*', p.280. See Malebranche, *op.cit.*, pp.57-8;261-263. Malebranche writes of our '[S]trong and lively sensations' such as 'pain, tickling sensations, extremes of heat or cold', and contrasts them with other 'weak and languid' sensations which 'can become intermediate, and finally strong and lively'(pp.57-8). He writes in the conclusion to the first three books of the *Search* that when the mind receives ideas mixed with images, it receives only a 'weak and languid sensation'(p.261). There are also a number of striking similarities between Hume's suggestion that we cannot directly perceive parts of the body, and Malebranche's doctrine concerning perception and material body. He presents this most clearly in the sixth elucidation of the *Search*, where he writes that 'our eyes represent colours to us on the surface of bodies and light in the air and in the sun;

our ears make us hear sounds as if spread out through the air and in the resounding bodies; and if we believe what the other senses report, heat will be in fire, sweetness will be in sugar, musk will have an odor, and all the sensible qualities will be in bodies that seem to exude or diffuse them. Yet it is certain...that all these qualities do not exist outside the soul that perceives them - at least it is not evident that they are in the bodies that surround us. Why should we conclude then, merely on the testimony of the senses that deceive us on all sides, that these really are external bodies'(p.569-570). Given that these qualities exist only in the soul that perceives them, it is clearly a mistake to think as do those who 'believe that their body is like the one they sense, i.e., like their mind's immediate object when they consider themselves'(p.570).

17. One again, Hume appears to have in mind a passage from Malebranche's sixth elucidation, *op.cit.*, p.269: 'But since men are more impressionable than reasonable, and since they listen more readily to the testimony of their senses than to that of inner truth, they have always relied on their eyes to assure themselves of the existence of matter without bothering to consult their reason. This is why they are surprised when told that it is difficult to prove the existence of matter. They think that they have but to open their eyes in order to assure themselves that there are bodies, and if there is some reason to suspect an illusion, they think it suffices to approach the bodies and touch them - after which they have difficulty conceiving that one might yet have reasons for doubting their existence.'

18. Pears, *op.cit.*, p.153. The structure of my own interpretation of Hume's argument owes a good deal to that developed by Pears.

19. *Ibid.*, p.154.

20. Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.98.

21. Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp.317-8.

22. *Ibid.*, p.318.

23. Pears, *op.cit.*, p.161.

24. The expression is used by Annette Baier, *op.cit.*, p.111.

25. Pears, *op.cit.*, p.165, writes that, had Hume been a phenomenalist, and had he ascribed the same sort of belief to the vulgar, 'the problem of perceptions would merely have been a special aspect of the problem of causation: the inferences covering the gaps in observation would simply have been counterfactual conditionals'.

26. Pears, *op.cit.*, p.166, describes this as Hume's 'really fundamental mistake: he treats unobserved objects as objects of a determinate problematical kind'.

27. Stroud, *op.cit.*, pp.259-60, suggests that in admitting the lesser role of coherence 'Hume is perhaps half acknowledging that on his account the "hypothesis" of the continued existence of bodies, once we have it, is used to *explain* the "coherence" we find in our experience, but that "coherence" alone would never give rise to that "hypothesis" in the first place, without some additional "principles"'. In order to infer the continued existence of objects from their

coherence 'it would seem that the notion of the continued existence of objects must already make sense to us'.

28. *Ibid.*, p.101.

29. Locke, *op.cit.*, II.XXVII.1, explains that 'when considering any thing as existing at any determin'd time and place, we compare it with it self existing at another time'. When we see any thing 'to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure, (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not another, which at the same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects: And in this consists *Identity*, when the *Ideas* it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were at that moment, wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present'. The identity of a thing consists in its sameness with itself over time.

30. Baier, *op.cit.*, p.113, describes this principle as Hume's 'principle of mental inertia', echoing Stroud's account of it as 'a kind of inertia', *op.cit.*, p.103.

31. See George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* in *The Works of George Berkeley*, Vol.II, Ed. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop (Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1949). Other statements of the argument occur in *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* in *Philosophical Works*, Ed. M.R. Ayers (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1992), pp.77-78. Having argued that 'the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the senses' cannot 'exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them', Berkeley writes that whosoever has a mind to call into question the prevailing opinion of men as to the existence of these objects will 'perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction. For what are the forementioned objects but the things we perceive by sense, and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations; and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any combination of them should exist unperceived?'

32. Hume's argument reflects an important commitment to the separability of our ideas and impressions, the importance of which is especially clear from his discussion of personal identity. I offer a critical account of this discussion in Chapter Four.

33. Hume states his principle as follows: 'We have observ'd, that whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination'(T.18).

34. Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into The Human Mind on The Principles of Common Sense* in *The Works of Thomas Reid*, Ed. William Hamilton, Sixth Edition (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1863), p.304. Reid writes: 'Let us suppose, for a moment, that it is the real table we see: Must not this real table seem to diminish as we remove farther from it? It is demonstrable that it must. How then can this apparent diminution be an argument that it is not the real table?' I discuss Reid's critique of Hume in some depth in 3.2.

35. An important step in Hume's argument is provided in Section II of Part III where Hume sets forth his claim that any reasoning concerning unperceived existences must be based on the relation of cause and effect. The only one of Hume's three natural relations 'that can be trac'd

beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel, is causation'(T.74).

36.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.106, complains that rather than providing a description of the vulgar consciousness, Hume tends to attribute to them both a belief in the continued and distinct existence of what they perceive and the philosophical view that all they perceive are 'internal and perishing existences'. Not only does Hume attribute to them an 'implicit inconsistency', but he leaves 'the origin of the belief in continued and distinct existence unexplained. No account which implies that the vulgar have that belief from the outset can explain how they originally come to have it.'

37.*Ibid.*

38.A similar point is made by Pears, *op.cit.*, p.176. Pears argues that Hume specifies the gaps in our observation 'in the way that we specify them in the ordinary course of our lives' only to make no use of this ordinary way of thinking when he comes to 'explain his inferences to things actually existing in the gaps in his observation'. He reverts, instead, to 'a pre-theoretical consciousness which does not distinguish, and does not even ask if there is any distinction, between sense-impressions and physical objects'. My own account takes seriously a number of Pears' insights about Hume's procedure in this part of his argument.

39.Pears, *op.cit.*, p.181.

## 3.2 Common Sense and True Philosophy

40.I argued in 1.1 that Hume's chief ambition in Book One of the *Treatise* was to ground a 'compleat system of the sciences' on the basis of the reflexive application of causal reasoning, and, in doing so, to prepare the ground for the more robustly Newtonian investigations of Books Two and Three.

41.Hume realises, for example, that it is not enough simply to say that the attribution of perfect identity removes or disguises the interruption in a series of perceptions, a good account must also 'explain the *principium individuationis*, or principle of identity'(T.199-200).

42.L.A. Selby-Bigge observes, in his introduction to 1893 edition of the *Enquiries*, that the 'wholesale omission and insertion' of matter from the *Treatise* 'cannot well be due to philosophical discontent with the positions or arguments, or to a general desire to fill up a gap in the system, but must be ascribed rather to a general desire to make the *Enquiry* readable'(E.xii). He adds, later in the introduction, that '[I]n the *Enquiry* Hume merely confines himself to asserting the opposition between the vulgar belief, based on instinct and natural propensity, in external objects on the one side, and the conclusions of philosophy, that we know nothing but perceptions in the mind, on the other hand'(E.xix-xx). To this, I add only that Hume continues to endorse the sceptical conclusions of the argument of the *Treatise*, although the argument itself is omitted(E.153).

43.Fogelin, *op.cit.*, pp.65-6.

44.See Flew, *op.cit.*, p.109; and Passmore, *op.cit.*, pp.132-151.

45.H.A. Prichard, *Knowledge and Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), p.178. The passage is cited by Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.84, who identifies the view with that expressed by T.H. Green in his introduction to Hume's *Philosophical Works*, Ed. Green and T.H. Grose (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1964). Passmore calls this interpretation of Hume the 'Reid-Green' interpretation.

46.Donald W. Livingston, *op.cit.*, p.9.

47.Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, in The Works of Thomas Reid*, Ed, William Hamilton, Sixth Edition, (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1863), p.96.

48.Hume described the *Enquiry* as his 'compleat Answer to Dr. Reid' in a letter written to William Strahan, on 26 October 1775, *The Letters of David Hume*, Ed. J.Y.T. Greig, Vol.II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p.301. In a letter to Hugh Blair only recently discovered Hume gives a more direct answer to Reid. See P.B. Wood 'David Hume on Thomas Reid's An Inquiry into the Human Mind, On the Principles of Common Sense: A New Letter to Hugh Blair from July 1762' in *Mind*, 1986, pp.411-16.

49.I have in mind Livingston, *op.cit.*, pp.60-90; and William Davie, 'Perceptions and Persons' in *Hume Studies X*, 1984.

50.Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.85.

51.See, for example, Fogelin, *op.cit.*, pp.1-3; and Passmore, *op.cit.*, pp.88-104.

52.George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge in Philosophical Works*, Ed. M.R. Ayers (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1992), p.78.

53.I refer, of course, to the work of Strawson, *op.cit.*; Wright, *op.cit.*; and Craig, *op.cit.* I consider the notion of 'relative ideas' at length in 2.2.

54.In 2.2, I argued that Hume does not, and could not have, understood these passages as providing the basis for the sort of position Wright, *op.cit.*, for example, attributes to him. The definitive treatment of these issues is to be found in Blackburn, *op.cit.*, pp.94-107.

55.Pears, *op.cit.*, p.192.

56.Strawson, *op.cit.*, p.52.

57.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.23.

58.In 1.2, I argued that Hume understood the copy principle to be the outcome of a straightforward inductive inference from the constant conjunction of impressions and ideas and the temporal priority of impressions over ideas. I found that the premises Hume cites only really support his conclusion on the basis of the assumptions that to think, see, smell, taste, and so on, is to have a perception before the mind; and that the perceptions which are before the mind in instances of sense perception are impressions. It is the second of these important assumptions that Reid, *op.cit.*, p.285, has in mind when he writes of his own former commitment to the theory of ideas: 'I once believed this doctrine of ideas so firmly as to embrace the whole of Berkeley's system in consequence of it; till, finding other consequences to follow from it, which gave me more uneasiness than the want of a material world, it came to my mind, more than fifty years ago, to put the question, What evidence have I, for this doctrine, that all the objects of my knowledge are ideas in my own mind.'

59. Strawson, *op.cit.*, p.50.
60. *Ibid.*, pp.50-1.
61. Locke takes the opposite line. He believes that ideas of primary qualities do resemble the qualities of objects and, so, that in forming an idea of external existence we do not form an idea of something which is, in every way, 'specifically different' from perceptions.
62. Berkeley, *op.cit.*, 1992, p.101.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, pp.100-101.
65. Thomas Reid, *op.cit.*, p.96.
66. William Davie, 'Perceptions and Persons' in *Hume Studies* X, 1984, p.130.
67. Donald Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), p.10.
68. *Ibid.*, p.64.
69. *Ibid.*, p.65.
70. *Ibid.*, p.65.
71. *Ibid.*, p.48.
72. *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.
73. *Ibid.*, p.14.
74. *Ibid.*, p.18.
75. *Ibid.*, p.19.
76. *Ibid.*, p.19.
77. Reid, *op.cit.*, p.304.
78. Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.89, writes that there is nothing surprising 'in the fact that Hume, for all his strict scrutiny of assumptions, yet failed sufficiently to examine the theory of ideas' for Hume felt 'that on this point he need expect no serious criticism'. See T.67.
79. Apart from the development of Hume's argument in the section '*Of scepticism with regard to the senses*', I have in mind Hume's attempts to account for the content of our idea of necessity, discussed in 2.2, and his inductive inference to the conclusion that all our ideas are derived from corresponding impressions, discussed in 1.2.
80. Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (London: Penguin, 1990), p.53.
81. Passmore, *op.cit.*, pp.89-90, identifies this version of phenomenalism with Laird's definition, *op.cit.*, p.25: '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'. I have argued against attributing this sort of phenomenalism to Hume.
82. Reid, *op.cit.*, p.96.
83. *Ibid.*, p.106.
84. *Ibid.*, p.304.
85. *Ibid.*, p.140.
86. *Ibid.*

87. *Ibid.*, pp.368-9.
88. *Ibid.*, p.302.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*, p.157.
91. *Ibid.*, p.102.
92. *Ibid.*, p.368.
93. *Ibid.*, p.369.
94. *Ibid.*, p.373.
95. *Ibid.*
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Ibid.*, p.224.
98. *Ibid.*, p.225.
99. *Ibid.*, p.198.
100. *Ibid.*, pp.130-1.
101. *Ibid.*, p.122.
102. *Ibid.*, p.258.
103. *Ibid.*, p.259.
104. *Ibid.*, p.117.
105. *Ibid.*, p.102.
106. *Ibid.*, p.108.
107. *Ibid.*, p.183.
108. P.B. Wood, 'David Hume on Thomas Reid's An Inquiry into the Human Mind, On the Principles of Common Sense: A New Letter to Hugh Blair from July 1762', *Mind*, 1986. pp.411-16.
109. *Ibid.*, p.416.
110. See 1.2 for an extended discussion of the copy principle of Hume's theory of ideas.
111. Reid, *op.cit.*, p.438.
112. *Ibid.*, p.439.
113. *Ibid.*, p.485.
114. John P. Wright, 'Hume vs. Reid on Ideas: The New Hume Letter' in *Mind* 96, 1987, pp.392-398.
115. D.F. Norton, 'Reid's Abstract of the Inquiry into the Human Mind' in *Thomas Reid: Critical Interpretations*, Ed. S.F. Barker and T.L. Beauchamp (Philadelphia, 1976), p.129.
116. Wright, *op.cit.*, pp.393-4.
117. Reid, *op.cit.*, p.124.
118. *Ibid.*, p.122.
119. *Ibid.*, p.124.
120. *Ibid.*, p.132.
121. Wood, *op.cit.*, p.416.
122. Wright, *op.cit.*, p.394.

123.Norton, *op.cit.*, p.128.

124.Reid, *op.cit.*, p.512.

125.*Ibid.*, p.514.

126.*Ibid.*, p.514.

127.*Ibid.*, p.521.

128.*Ibid.*, p.518.

129.*Ibid.*, p.67.

130.*Ibid.*, p.72.

131.*Ibid.*, p.76.

132.*Ibid.*

133.*Ibid.*

134.*Ibid.*, p.521.

135.*Ibid.*, p.518.

136.*Ibid.*, p.102.

137.*Ibid.*, p.183.

138.I showed in 1.1 how differently Hume and Reid viewed Newton's science and the limits he placed upon it. I argued that Hume's reading was truer to Newton's intentions and to his actual working practice than was Reid's.

139.Norton, *op.cit.*, p.129.

140.Reid, *op.cit.*, p.231.

141.*Ibid.*

142.*Ibid.*, pp.444-5.

143.*Ibid.*, p.330.

144.*Ibid.*, p.183.

145.*Ibid.*, p.108.

146.*Ibid.*, p.328.

## Chapter Four

### Hume on Personal Identity

Hume's concerns about identity in the first book of the *Treatise* are not restricted to his explanation of the vulgar belief in the continued and distinct existence of objects. Section VI of Part IV of the first book is given over to the question of our belief in personal identity, the conception we have of ourselves as continuous beings, simple at one time and identical through time. Where Hume's concern in Section II was with the 'simple supposition' of the uninterrupted existence of bodies, in Section VI, he considers the equally problematic supposition of the identity of persons(1). The problem, for philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had important theological dimensions. The chief concern of Locke's theory of personal identity was with the question of the immortality of the human soul(2). Hume's response to these difficulties is complex and, in a number of ways, unsatisfactory. The question of the origin of the idea of personal identity is, for Hume, notoriously vexed, his writing, at times, obscure and inconsistent, and his apparent self-doubts on the matter, perplexing, to say the least. Hume thought his discussion of personal identity to be attended by special difficulties and says as much in the Appendix to the *Treatise*(T.623-6). The secondary literature has typically taken Hume's apparent 'recantation'(3) as the taking-off point for extended and mostly pretty damning criticism. A good deal of this criticism does Hume a significant injustice. Without endorsing Hume's view in its entirety (even Hume felt unable to go so far), I believe it is possible to give a more just and plausibly self-consistent account, which makes sense of Hume's own doubts on the subject. Whether these doubts of Hume's amount to a recantation is a moot point to which I shall return. If we are to unravel these knots, we must, once more, observe a counsel of caution. We can only hope to resolve these problems if we bring to bear on our deliberations an appreciation of how Hume understood them. What this demands, at the very least, is a detailed and attentive reading of the text, and an acknowledgement that Hume has a number of general aims and interests in mind. In beginning Book Three of the *Treatise*, Hume suggests that the 'present system of philosophy' be best seen as acquiring 'new force as it advances'(T.455). It would be a serious mistake to treat Hume's discussion of personal identity as a self-contained argument which can be justly read without reference to other parts of the text. It must be read as a development and application of those resources with which Hume has already armed himself. Only by first grasping what Hume is about in the most general terms can we hope to illuminate the specific, and evidently tortuous, difficulties which stem from his discussion of personal identity. A good account needs not only to give a plausible reading to the self-doubts Hume entertains in the Appendix, but to do so in the broader context of his concern with the nature and origin of our ideas and with the ways in which we combine them in belief.

Hume suggests that we might look elsewhere in the text to illuminate and enrich the matter under discussion. We should take the suggestion seriously. This involves not only taking into account earlier clues to, and anticipations of, the discussion of personal identity(4), but evaluating Hume's argument in the light of his general philosophical intentions, honed and developed throughout the *Treatise*, and, in particular, in Book One. I want to begin by briefly placing what follows in the context of our emerging picture of Hume the philosopher. The discussion of personal identity ought to be seen as one part of Hume's evolving account of how, on the strictly limited basis of our ideas and impressions, we come to form certain commitments and beliefs about ourselves and the world we inhabit. Hume, as we have seen, is much more concerned with the matter-of-fact question of how we do think, than with the normative question of how we ought to think. Book One of the *Treatise* sees Hume apply his theory of the derivation and association of ideas to three main areas of belief: causation, the continuous existence of body, and personal identity. Hume's procedure in explaining the ideas of body and of necessary connection will, by this time, be familiar. Hume first asks what it is we believe when we have the belief which is in question. Having ascertained the nature and content of the belief, Hume looks to explain its origin in ideas and impressions. As we saw, in neither of the above two cases is Hume prepared to entertain the possibility that either sense or reason might give rise to the beliefs under discussion. Instead, it is to the imagination we must look for the source of our ordinary conceptions of things in the world. Hume offers a causal explanation of our 'vulgar' or everyday beliefs which shows them to be what he calls 'fictions' of the imagination. These fictions, though often discoverably false, are nevertheless part of the important scaffolding out of which we construct and organise our thought and experience. Hume finds that we have no adequate idea either of causal power, as it is commonly understood, or of continued and distinct existence. Hume writes of the idea of necessary connection that 'we deceive ourselves, when we imagine we are possest of any idea of this kind, after the manner we commonly understand it'(T.161). It is the tendency of the mind to take itself to have an idea of necessary connection as 'some quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other'(E.63) which Hume believes is mistaken. Employing his principle of the derivation of ideas from impressions, Hume gives a naturalistic explanation of our beliefs intended to explain both why we take ourselves to have such ideas, and how we come to have the ideas we do have. In the case of necessary connection, it is only because we have an idea of necessity, arising from a 'determination of the mind', that we are able to mistake this idea for one which the mind does not possess. For Hume, as we saw, the question is not really about whether or not there exist such things as causal connections or lasting objects; it is about the extent to which we understand these things and about the role the supposed ideas of continued and distinct existence and causation play in a scientific understanding of nature. His real concern, as I read him, is with explaining how, from such unpromising material, we come to see the world and ourselves as we do.

Part IV of Book One of the *Treatise* deals with our beliefs about bodies and selves, and, in particular, our beliefs as to their identity over time. We believe not only in the continuous independent existence of objects, but in a mind which is identical with itself through time. As before, Hume is concerned with the sort of belief we actually have, and with the basis that belief has in ideas. Once again, as we will see, Hume finds our belief to go beyond what either sense or causal inference can strictly warrant. The imagination, Hume finds, makes an 'easy transition' from one state to another, though, as will become clear, his opinion differs as to what facilitates the easy passage in either case. It will be a significant part of my case to suggest that Hume's approach to the question of personal identity should be seen as differing markedly from another, perhaps more typically philosophical, approach. Hume needs to be seen not as offering an analysis of personal identity, of what it means for one person to be differentiated from others and from other things in the world, but as attempting to explain how we come to have the idea we have of ourselves as beings of that sort. The problem of how we identify A as the same person we met with yesterday, though crucial to most philosophical treatments of personal identity, is, at best, peripheral to Hume's.

Our treatment of Hume's discussion of personal identity can usefully be broken up into a number of parts. In the first place, we need to understand just what Hume's theory is trying to achieve. How we view the question will depend, in some part, on the picture we have already gained of Hume's objectives and of the temper of his thought. Less generally, we need to ask of Hume the content of the belief which he attributes to the plain man, carefully distinguishing that belief from the philosophical view of the self which he further rejects. What is it like for us to think of ourselves as persons in this sense? The identity which we ordinarily ascribe 'to the mind of man', Hume finds, 'is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies'(T.259). The account Hume offers, while denying us a certain sort of idea of mind, does not however deny that we have some idea of self. We have what Hume calls 'a true idea' of the mind, which his bundle theory of the self is intended to explain. A proper understanding of Hume on this point should illuminate the difficulties, even inconsistencies, often alleged to obtain between the view of the self given in Book One and that found in Book Two of the *Treatise*. I will go on to suggest that Hume is committed to no real inconsistency. Once an adequate account of Hume's intentions has emerged, we will be in a better position to understand the nature of his self-doubts, and the plausibility of the criticisms which have been informed by readings of it. I want to consider four main strands of criticism, rejecting three, while arguing for the fourth as, most probably, Hume's own. What I hope will emerge from an extended treatment of this final criticism, is a more sympathetic and just view of Hume's own attempts, which, while sensible of his mistakes, nevertheless presents a picture which is true to the text and to Hume's intentions. We need first to look at the substance of Hume's discussion.

## 4.1 Of Personal Identity

Hume begins his discussion of personal identity with an allusion to the view of certain philosophers, among them, most obviously, Descartes and Leibniz, who take us to have an idea of ourselves as a simple substance, a 'perfectly identical' and simple self, of which we are, in some sense, immediately aware<sup>(5)</sup>. According to these philosophers, Hume says, 'we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity'(T.251). On this view, I have a readily inspectable internal impression of myself as the distinct and independent subject of my experiences. I am immediately aware of the simple essence of the immaterial substance to which my perceptions belong. But Hume finds the 'positive assertions' of this philosophy to be 'contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of *self*, after the manner it is here explain'd'(T.251). Accounts such as the one Hume describes fail even to properly characterise the experience to which they look for support. We have no impression of ourselves as the sort of simple substance that could endure without variation over time. Hume's argument is succinct. It must be some one impression, he thinks, that gives rise to every real idea, but 'self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos'd to have a reference'(T.251). If any impression were to give rise to the idea of the self, that impression would need to 'continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner'. But, Hume says, there is no impression which is constant and invariable. We can therefore have no idea of the self, considered as a simple substance, with perfect identity and simplicity. Passions and sensations, Hume writes, 'succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is deriv'd; and consequently there is no such idea'(T.251-2).

These criticisms, with which Hume begins Section VI, need to be understood in the light both of his earlier assaults on the notion of substance, in '*Of the antient philosophy*', and of the preceding section '*Of the Immateriality of the Soul*', in which Hume rehearses the arguments he is to develop in discussion of personal identity. In the latter section, Hume argues that the only way in which an idea could represent a substance would be for that idea to possess all the qualities of a substance. Had we any idea of the substance of our minds, Hume writes, 'we must also have an impression of it; which is very difficult, if not impossible, to be conceiv'd. For how can an impression represent a substance, otherwise than by resembling it? And how can an impression resemble a substance, since, according to this philosophy, it is not a substance, and has none of the peculiar qualities or characteristics of a substance?'(T.232-3) It will not do, Hume observes, simply to define a substance as something 'which may exist by itself' since, all our particular perceptions being distinct and separable by the imagination, they '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 explains a substance'(T.233). The above definition of substance fails because it is unable even to adequately distinguish substances from our fleeting and perishing perceptions. Hume characterises the belief in substance as the belief in the simplicity and identity of an object over time. But when we introspect, we only ever stumble upon some perception or other. We have no 'perfect idea of any thing but of a perception. A substance is entirely different from a perception. We have, therefore, no idea of a substance'(T.234). The doctrine of substance requires that the substance be something other than the perceptions which are said to belong to it. But all I ever observe or, in any sense, experience, is a series of individual and variable perceptions, 'internal and perishing existences'(T.194) in a state of 'perpetual flux and movement'(T.252). I find nothing in my experience which could be justly called invariable or continuous. Hume returns to the point in his section on personal identity. The suggestion on the table is that we have an immediate awareness of the simple essence of an immaterial substance. The idea envisaged by philosophers like Descartes and the Cartesians must be a simple one derived from an impression which remains unchanged through time. We have no direct awareness of ourselves along these lines and, so, can have no idea of self as a simple substance. No single impression could alone give rise to the idea we have of ourselves as continuous beings. An impression of the right sort would have to be one which, *per impossibile*, had the properties of constancy and invariability through time which Hume equates with the possession of a perfect identity.

The 'fictions' of what Hume calls the 'antient philosophy', though 'unreasonable and capricious', have, nevertheless, 'a very intimate connexion with the principles of human nature'(T.219). While these fictions arise very naturally from certain dispositions of mind, the same dispositions from which our vulgar notions of self arise, these separate notions ought not to be confused, nor should we make the mistake of taking the absence of an idea of a certain sort to imply the absence of another or of any idea of self. Hume ought not to be read as denying that we have an idea of self. He certainly does not. At this stage in his discussion, his point is merely to deny us a certain idea of self, which he finds implicit in the treatments of some philosophers. The view he considers he ascribes only to a number of thinkers whose opinion is confounded by the absence of an idea of the relevant sort. The 'propension' we nevertheless all have to suppose ourselves 'invariable and uninterrupted' throughout a lifetime is not synonymous with the propension to take ourselves to have an idea with those properties. We have no self-awareness of the kind envisaged by Descartes and others. For my part, Hume writes,

when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.(T.252)

We have no impression of any kind of perfectly identical and simple substance having those perceptions. There are the perceptions and that is all. There is no known extra in which these perceptions might be said to inhere, nor do we have any need of such a notion to come by the idea in question(6). Nothing in our experience is constant or invariable. Hume's point is a development of his earlier discussion of our ideas of external objects in '*Of the antient philosophy*'. Our ideas of bodies, Hume writes there, 'are nothing but collections form'd by the mind of the ideas of the several distinct sensible qualities, of which objects are compos'd, and which we find to have a constant union with each other'(T.219). Though these qualities are distinct, we nevertheless 'commonly regard the compound, which they form, as ONE thing, and as continuing the SAME under very considerable alterations. The acknowledg'd composition is evidently contrary to this suppos'd *simplicity*, and the variation to the *identity*(T.219). The identity or simplicity of an object is never disclosed in experience. All we ever find are collections of perceptions, never any one thing continuing the same throughout the alterations Hume describes(7). We come to attribute identity to bodies not because we observe some part of them unchanged, but because of some operation of the imagination. It turns out to be the associative principles of resemblance and causation which explain how we come to entertain a belief in their identity over time. The effect of these relations in easing the transition of the mind is such that "tho every one must allow, that in a very few years both vegetables and animals endure a *total* change, yet we still attribute identity to them, while their form, size, and substance are entirely alter'd'(T.257). In the previous chapter, it will be remembered, we found Hume's concerns with the identity of objects to have to do much more with the interruptedness of our perceptions. We wrongly take our perceptions to have an existence uninterrupted by gaps in our observation. The disposition of the mind when considering an uninterrupted sequence is very similar to its disposition when considering an interrupted one. It is, Hume thinks, both easy and natural for us to confuse one with the other, and so take an example of the latter sort of sequence for an instance of the former. Our confidence in the existence of enduring bodies rests, Hume thinks, on the 'illusion' that 'our resembling perceptions are uninterrupted, and still existent, even when they are not present to the senses'(T.217). In this section and in the section concerning personal identity, however, Hume's special concern is overwhelmingly to do with change rather than with interruption. In order for us to be correct in attributing identity to an object, that object or some essential part of it must remain unaltered. Only what is invariable and uninterrupted can, properly speaking, correspond to the idea we have of identity or, more exactly, of perfect identity. But, as Hume makes clear, this is not true of any object. A change in any 'considerable part' of a body, Hume writes in '*Of personal identity*',

destroys its identity; but 'tis remarkable, that where the change is produc'd *gradually* and *insensibly* we are less apt to ascribe to it the same effect. The reason can plainly be no other, than that the mind, in following the

successive changes of the body, feels an easy passage from the surveying its condition in one moment to the viewing of it in another, and at no particular time perceives any interruption in its actions.(T.256)

The 'smooth and easy' passage of the thought from the object as it stood before the change to the object as it stood after it is such that we 'are apt to imagine, that 'tis nothing but a continu'd survey of the same object'(T.256). It is the gradualness and systematicity of the change, and the resemblance between the actions of the imagination by which we consider an identical object and a succession of related ones, which allow the mind to pass so easily to the attribution of perfect identity to related bodies which in fact have none.

We can now bring some of these insights to bear, as Hume does, in considering his explanation of how we come to think of ourselves, or our minds, as simple at one time and identical over time. Only what is invariable and uninterrupted can, according to Hume, satisfy our idea of identity. Despite the constant flux and motion of our perceptions, we nevertheless have a certain 'propension to ascribe an identity to these successive perceptions, and to suppose ourselves possess of an invariable and uninterrupted existence thro' the whole course of our lives'(T.253). The mind, Hume says, 'is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations', yet we have not 'the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd'(T.253). We have, Hume thinks, distinct ideas both of 'an object, which remains invariable and uninterrupted thro' a suppos'd variation of time', which we call identity or sameness, and of 'several different objects existing in succession, and connected together by a close relation', which we term diversity. It is certain, Hume says, that, though these ideas be perfectly distinct, in 'our common way of thinking they are generally confounded with each other'(T.253). Since all we are aware of are perceptions, we can have no simple idea of ourselves as the sort of thing which possesses an unvaried and uninterrupted existence. Our perceptions lack what Hume calls 'perfect identity'(T.254). Nevertheless, we are so constituted that it is natural for us to attribute to our perceptions such an identity, though strictly they have only a fictitious or imperfect identity. That operation of the imagination, Hume says, 'by which we consider the uninterrupted and invariable object, and that by which we reflect on the succession of related objects, are almost the same to the feeling, nor is there much more effort of thought requir'd in the latter case than in the former'(T.254). The closeness of the relation among certain objects facilitates so smooth a passage of thought from one to the other that we are apt to confound the action of the imagination in this case for that felt when apprehending an identical object. This latter resemblance, Hume writes, 'is the cause of the confusion and mistake, and makes us substitute the notion of identity, instead of that of related objects'(T.254). As we will shortly see, a number of 'artifices' lead us to mistakenly take one act of the imagination for another and so induce us to attribute perfect identity when in fact there is none. We fall into the error

'before we are aware; and tho' we incessantly correct ourselves by reflexion, and return to a more accurate method of thinking, yet we cannot long sustain our philosophy, or take off this bias from the imagination'(T.254). It is very natural, as we saw, for us to resort to the fictions of the antient philosophy. We have, according to Hume, a pronounced tendency to attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction by positing the existence of a soul or simple substance which endures notwithstanding the 'flux and movement' of its perceptions. We feign 'some new and unintelligible principle, that connects the objects together, and prevents their interruption or variation. Thus we feign the continu'd existence of the perceptions of our senses, to remove the interruption; and run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation'(T.254). Since it requires of us an idea which we cannot have, the notion of substance is, for Hume, not even intelligible. However, our tendency to confound identity with relation is, he thinks, so great, that 'we are apt to imagine something unknown and mysterious, connecting their parts, beside their relation', though we find nothing invariable or uninterrupted to justify our notion(T.254-5). The belief in a simple self is, Hume is clear, a mistake. We have no simple idea of the self. This, of course, is not to say that we have no idea of the self. We have an idea, but, as we shall shortly see, that idea is a complex one.

The objects which we suppose to continue the same through time are, according to Hume, only such 'as consist of a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity, or causation'(T.255). As such a succession answers only to our notion of diversity,

it can only be by mistake we ascribe to it an identity; and as the relation of parts, which leads us into this mistake, is really nothing but a quality, which produces an association of ideas, and an easy transition of the imagination from one to another, it can only be from the resemblance, which this act of the mind bears to that, by which we contemplate one continu'd object, that the error arises.(T.255)

We have no need of the doctrine of substance to make sense of our disposition to make attributions of identity to variable and interrupted objects. Hume's explanation of how we come to think of ourselves as simple at one time and identical through time runs parallel to his discussion of how we come to think of objects as having an invariable and uninterrupted existence. Hume asks us to suppose a mass of matter, 'of which the parts are contiguous and connected', to be placed before us. Provided the parts continue uninterruptedly and invariably the same, we must attribute a 'perfect identity' to this mass. But suppose 'some very *small* or *inconsiderable* part to be added to the mass, or subtracted from it', even though, strictly speaking, this change absolutely destroys the identity of the whole, we rarely think in such precise terms and 'scruple not to pronounce a mass of matter the same, where we find so trivial an alteration'(T.255-6). The passage of thought between related objects is so smooth and easy that we are apt to consider ourselves to observe one continuous existence. The

disposition of the mind when viewing an identical object is very similar to that of the mind when observing a succession of related objects. In this case it is the smallness of the alteration in proportion to the whole which sets us on to disregard it. It is the 'uninterrupted progress of the thought, which constitutes the imperfect identity'(T.256). But even in the case of more extensive, less gradual, change, the imagination can contrive to 'disguise' it. There is, Hume says,

another artifice, by which we may induce the imagination to advance a step farther; and that is, by producing a reference of the parts to each other, and a combination to some *common end* or purpose. A ship, of which a considerable part has been changed by frequent reparations, is still consider'd as the same; nor does the difference of the materials hinder us from ascribing an identity to it. The common end, in which the parts conspire, is the same under all their variations, and affords an easy transition of the imagination from one situation of the body to another.(T.257)

The common end or purpose with which the parts are connected facilitates the easy passage of the mind from one state to another. It passes from one object to another so smoothly that we are apt to confuse this act of the imagination with that of considering a perfectly identical object. Even in the case of wholesale change, the imagination can work to disguise the variation. We still ascribe identity to related objects even where they endure a total change, as is the case, Hume says, with animals and vegetables. Here, not only do the several parts have a reference to some general purpose, but also some 'mutual dependence on, and connexion with each other'(T.257). The constancy of the 'reciprocal relation of cause and effect'(T.257) between the parts allows us to think that an oak 'that grows from a small plant to a large tree, is still the same oak; tho' there be not one particle of matter, or figure of its parts the same'(T.257). By such artifices we are induced to take one act of the imagination for another and to attribute perfect identity to a succession of objects which have but an imperfect or fictitious identity.

Similar considerations explain how we come to think of the successive perceptions which, Hume says, constitute the mind, as simple at one time and identical through time, though in reality they are neither. It is evident, Hume thinks, that 'the same method of reasoning must be continu'd, which has so successfully explain'd the identity of plants, and animals, and ships, and houses, and of all the compounded and changeable productions either of art or nature'(T.260). The identity which we attribute to the mind of man 'is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies. It cannot, therefore, have a different origin but must proceed from a like operation of the imagination upon like objects'(T.260). Notwithstanding the distinction and separability of our different perceptions,

'we suppose the whole train of perceptions to be united by identity'(T.260). Hume rejects the possibility that this relation of identity be something 'that really binds our several perceptions together'(T.260). The understanding never observes any such connection among its objects. Even the union of cause and effect, when strictly considered, 'resolves itself into a customary association of ideas'(T.260). We ascribe identity to our perceptions not because we observe some real connection among them but because of the effect those perceptions have on the imagination. It evidently follows, Hume writes, 'that identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them'(T.260). The only qualities which can give ideas a union in the imagination are, Hume repeats, the natural relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation. Without these uniting principles each distinct object would appear to have no connection with any other object. The only question which remains for Hume is to ascertain which of these relations produce the 'uninterrupted progress of our thought' when we consider 'the successive existence of a mind or thinking person'(T.260). Since, as Hume flatly insists, contiguity has little influence in the present case, we must confine our attention to resemblance and causation.

The associative principles of resemblance and causation are, for Hume, conjointly sufficient to explain how we come to make the mistake of taking the related but variable and interrupted collection of our perceptions to be at once simple and identical over time. A 'more accurate method of thinking' would, we saw, show up our minds as having no more than a fictitious or imperfect identity, and would command our assent, did our natures not incline us in another direction. Hume asks us to consider resemblance first:

suppose we cou'd see clearly into the breast of another, and observe that succession of perceptions, which constitutes his mind or thinking principle, and suppose that he always preserves the memory of a considerable part of past perceptions; 'tis evident that nothing cou'd more contribute to the bestowing a relation on this succession amidst all its variations. But what is the memory but a faculty, by which we raise up the images of past perceptions? And as an image necessarily resembles its object, must not the frequent placing of these resembling perceptions in the chain of thought, convey the imagination more easily from one link to another, and make the whole seem like the continuance of one object?(T.260-1)

In this particular, Hume continues, 'memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among the perceptions'(T.261). Hume believes he has resolved the problem of whether, as Locke thought, memory produces personal identity, or whether, as some of Locke's opponents suggested, it merely discovers it(8). It turns out that it has a hand in both. While memory

serves to discover the causal relations and resemblances among perceptions, it also plays a part in producing the resemblances. Memory produces images of past perceptions, themselves perceptions, which placed 'in the chain of thought' carry the imagination more readily from link to link. Since these images must necessarily resemble their objects, to remember is to have perceptions which resemble earlier perceptions in the chain. Hence, the memory can be said both to discover and produce the relation of resemblance, contributing in its own right to the passage of the imagination, to 'make the whole seem like the continuance of one object'. The relation of causation allows us to think of past perceptions which are no longer remembered as belonging to the same person. Hume writes:

As to *causation*; we may observe, that the true idea of the human mind, is to consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are link'd together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other. Our impressions give rise to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. One thought chaces another, and draws after it a third, by which it is expell'd in its turn. In this respect, I cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than 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 change of its parts.(T.261)

Whatever changes a person endures, his 'several parts are still connected by the relation of causation'(T.261). Memory alone 'acquaints us with the continuance and extent of this succession of perceptions'(T.261). Without it we should never have any notion of the chain of causes and effects 'which constitute our self or person'(T.262). But once this notion has been acquired, we can 'extend the same chain of causes, and consequently the identity of our persons beyond our memory, and can comprehend times, and circumstances, and actions, which we have entirely forgot, but suppose in general to have existed'(T.262). Memory discovers the relation, but, once discovered, it can take us beyond memory. As a republic may change both its members and its laws and constitution, so a person 'may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity'(T.261). His character may change without his being obliged to think of himself as a different person. Throughout these changes, 'his several parts' are connected in a complex system of causes. As one thought causes another, so a past experience is the cause of a present belief and past perceptions of our memories of them. Memory shows us the relation of cause and effect 'among our different perceptions'(T.262). The thought passes smoothly along the causal chain, making it easy for us to suppose not only that we have enjoyed a 'continu'd view' of one and the same object, but that that object has endured through time, beyond the reach of

memory. The same relations, Hume thinks, also explain our attributions of simplicity to diverse parts bound together by a close relation.

Hume closes his discussion with the following remarks:

The whole of this doctrine leads us to a conclusion, which is of great importance in the present affair, *viz.* that all the nice and subtile questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties. Identity depends upon the relation of ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that transition they occasion. But as the relations, and the easiness of the transition may diminish by insensible degrees, we have no just standard, by which we can decide any dispute concerning the time, when they acquire or lose a title to the name of identity. All the disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union, as we have already observ'd.(T.262)

Earlier in the discussion, Hume is at pains to stress that the dispute concerning identity 'is not merely a dispute of words'(T.255). When we mistakenly attribute identity to variable or interrupted objects, 'our mistake is not confin'd to the expression, but is commonly attended with a fiction, either of something invariable and uninterrupted, or of something mysterious and inexplicable, or at least with a propensity to such fictions'(T.255). Nevertheless, in so far as debate has to do with where identity begins or ends, the dispute is, according to Hume, 'merely verbal'. We have no 'just standard' by which we can decide the dispute. Verbal disputes, Hume writes in his *Dialogues*, concern 'the degrees of any quality or circumstance', and, 'from the very nature of language and of human ideas', involve us in 'perpetual ambiguity', from which we 'can never, by any precaution or any definitions, be able to reach a reasonable certainty or precision'(9). The nature of the dispute of which Hume writes so dismissively here concerns the points at which a collection of related objects or perceptions might be said to either maintain or lose its identity. In such cases our inquiries are subject to an incurable ambiguity(10). It is with such enquiries that Hume means to contrast his own, philosophical interests. The philosophical difficulty, as Hume has it, concerns the fiction that the mind is simple at once time and continuous over time and the 'relation of parts' which gives rise to it. Identity gets ascribed to objects despite their being subject to change. Hume is not concerned with what would count as a case of genuine identity. This is just the sort of dispute Hume dismisses as incurably ambiguous. He does not suggest that we are wrong to attribute identity to the things we do. Where we err is in attributing perfect identity to a succession of related, but separable and variable, objects. There is, as Hume thinks, a fiction involved in these attributions. Since it can only be a mistake to ascribe an identity to what

consists only in a succession of parts, our chief business, as philosophers, must be to prove that those variable and interrupted objects to which we attribute an identity 'are such as consist of a succession of related objects'(T.255). This dispute is evidently more than merely verbal since we can both expose as mistaken the attribution of identity in such cases and explain the mistake in terms of the relatedness of the objects and the associative tendencies of the human mind. As we saw, the close relation found among related objects facilitates the smooth and easy passage of thought from one object to the next and so leads us, mistakenly, to take one action of the imagination for another.

Hume confidently presents the foregoing account not only as settling the substantive issues to do with personal identity but as exposing 'all the nice and subtile questions concerning personal identity' as being merely grammatical. In spite of this, by the time he came to write the Appendix, Hume was less inclined to express satisfaction with his account. Hume rests content with his finding that we have no notion of a substantial self, as distinct from our particular perceptions:

But having thus loosen'd all our particular perceptions, when I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible, that my account is very defective, and that nothing but the seeming evidence of the precedent reasonings cou'd have induc'd me to receive it.(T.635)

No connections among distinct existences are ever discoverable by human understanding. We apprehend only 'a connexion or a determination of the thought to pass from one object to another'. The ideas of past perceptions are 'felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other.' This conclusion, however, Hume thinks, need not surprise us:

Most philosophers seem inclin'd to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception. The present philosophy, therefore, has so far a promising aspect. But 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. In short, there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, *viz. that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences.* Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there wou'd be no difficulty in the case.

For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding. I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflection, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions.(T.635-6)

The account which we saw Hume present with some satisfaction in '*Of personal identity*' is now, to Hume's thinking, inadequate and inconsistent. On a 'more strict review' of the section, Hume writes, 'I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent'(T.633). It is far from clear why, though, as we will now see, critics have consistently found reason enough for dissatisfaction. The puzzle for commentators remains the question of precisely where Hume takes this inconsistency to lie. It seems evident that the two principles Hume 'cannot render consistent' in the above passage are not inconsistent with each other. Presumably, then, Hume considers the principles conjointly inconsistent with some other principle or commitment incurred earlier or elsewhere in the text. The question of what inconsistency Hume thought he had found, should not, of course, distract us from the question of what legitimate sources of dissatisfaction are to be found in his discussion. We need to consider in what respects Hume's account might be said to be internally inconsistent, irrespective of what Hume is likely to have thought about it. To do this, we need to bear in mind the kind of problem Hume takes himself to be wrestling with. What problem is his account intended to solve? Only by seeing the question clearly can we hope to assess Hume's answer and his later doubts as to its adequacy. I want to consider a number of well-known interpretations of Hume's alleged 'recantation'. Many of the concerns expressed here would not have worried Hume, nor, as I will suggest, need they have, given the kind of question Hume wanted to answer. In the account that follows, it will, I hope, become clear just what kind of criticism ought to have worried Hume, as well as the sort of worry which is most likely to be at the root of his own self-doubts.

## **4.2 Hume's 'Recantation' and His Critics**

Most critics agree that the account of personal identity I have just sketched is, in one way or another, deeply flawed. Hume's treatment appears cursory and superficial when compared to the longer and more detailed sections dealing with our ideas of causation and of the continued existence of body. The perfunctory style in which he despatches the topic has made it easy for critics to find flaws and obscurities, failing, very often, to heed Hume's own plea for his work to be read as a whole of mutually-dependent, inter-related parts. Hume begins with an assumption, a 'simple supposition', as he describes it, which we are all, he believes, inclined to make. It is because of this inclination, this fiction which our natures lead us to entertain, that Hume takes his inquiry to be more than merely grammatical. We might, and indeed should,

ask whether this is an assumption we ever really make. Hume can point to the fictions of the 'antient philosophy' which he believes to have an intimate relation to our ordinary ways of taking reality. It is, Hume thinks, perfectly natural for us to invent some constant and invariable substance to explain the variability of our ideas. We incline to do so only to resolve the conflict that arises between the assumption of identity and the real and obvious flux of our perceptions. It is only because we mistakenly take our minds to have a perfect identity and simplicity that the tension can take hold in the first place. The supposition of something uninterrupted and unchanging behind the constant flux of changes we observe resolves the conflict. The substance in which these continually changing qualities inhere remains the same.

Hume's thesis as to the distinctness and variability of our perceptions does not, however, prompt him to abandon talk of an identical self entirely. The complex 'idea of ourselves' which is the outcome of Hume's deliberations in Book One is presented as an unproblematic assumption behind the discussion of the passions found in Book Two. In the Appendix, as we saw, Hume is much more inclined not only to dissatisfaction, but to near despair, at difficulties which he fears too hard for his understanding. Hume was, evidently, deeply troubled by the problems arising from the section on personal identity. Doubtless, there are real flaws, and real obscurities in Hume's thinking. There is, however, remarkably little agreement as to where the main flaws and obscurities of Hume's treatment actually lie. Critics differ, often crucially, as to the nature of the thesis Hume is defending. With many of these critics we may find ourselves in agreement while rejecting outright their criticisms as they apply to Hume. Another path lies open to those more sympathetic to Hume's approach: to deny that the discredited view is one which Hume defended or would be interested in defending. A good interpretation will be one which, while acknowledging the flaws where they occur, attempts to see them from Hume's own perspective and, in doing so, places them within the context of his broader theoretical intentions. It is only the 'precedent reasonings' which induce Hume to receive the present philosophy, though he apparently, upon reflection, finds it far from his taste. To understand Hume's reasons for pleading 'the privilege of a sceptic' we need to appreciate both the sorts of commitments incurred by his broader enterprise, and the kinds of difficulties which are likely to have troubled a philosopher like Hume. Only in this way can we hope to develop and clarify our emerging general picture of his thought, in what is already an over-crowded and troublingly uneven field. I want to begin with what is perhaps the most emphatically damning, and, for reasons which will quickly emerge, least well-founded, allegation of internal inconsistency in Hume's account.

The story Hume offers in Book One of the *Treatise*, is, it is suggested, inconsistent with the view of the self presented in Book Two, and with the philosophical commitments that view demands. At the beginning of his discussion of personal identity, Hume says that we must distinguish 'betwixt personal identity, as it regards our thought or imagination, and as it

regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves'(T.253). When, in Book Two, he comes to discuss identity 'as it regards our passions', Hume writes:

'Tis evident, 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 any thing can in this particular go beyond it. Whatever object, therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity of conception, according to the foregoing principles; and tho' this relation shou'd not be so strong as that of causation, it must still have a considerable influence.(T.317)

A little later in Book Two, Hume remarks that we are 'at all times intimately conscious of ourselves, our sentiments and passions'(T.339). Hume, as we have already seen, consistently denies that we can have any impression which has the qualities of a simple substance, constancy and invariability, and so, that one has, or can have, an impression of self, construed in this 'strict and philosophical' way. It has appeared to some commentators that while, in Book Two, Hume affirms the existence of a mind or self, in Book One, he explicitly denies it. According to Kemp Smith's influential account, in Book One of the *Treatise*, 'the existence of an impression of the self is explicitly denied, while his theory of the "indirect" passions propounded at length in Book II is made to rest on the assumption that we do in fact experience an impression of the self, and that this impression is ever-present to us'(11). Hume claims both that we have an impression of the self and that that impression is intimately present to us. Yet in Book One he appears to deny both these claims. On Kemp Smith's interpretation, it is the reliance of Hume's account of the indirect passions on an awareness of personal identity, which is at the heart of his own doubts concerning the discussion in Book One(12). By the time he came to write the Appendix, it is suggested, Hume realised that the account of the passions he offered in Book Two was predicated upon an awareness of self which the story offered in Book One could not allow for.

To take the latter point first, there are a number of reasons for thinking this an inadequate explanation of Hume's own dissatisfaction. Hume makes it clear in the Appendix that it is from a strict review of the section concerning personal identity that his 'labyrinthine' worries emerge. The account of his misgivings that follows makes no mention of the allegedly different self of the passions, nor indeed of the sections in which we are supposed to find it. The case is made still more difficult for Kemp Smith, when we find Hume, in the Appendix, still inclined to express satisfaction with the parts of his story about which he is meant to have misgivings of the most serious sort. Hume's concern in the opening pages of the section dealing with personal identity, it will be remembered, is with those philosophers who imagine we are 'every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF', and that we are certain 'beyond the

evidence of a demonstration 'both of its identity and its simplicity. We have no idea of self, Hume complains, 'after the manner it is here explain'd'(T.251). Hume repeats the point in the Appendix. We have, he writes, 'no impression of self or substance, as something simple and individual. We have, therefore, no idea of them in that sense'(T.633). We have no notion either of self or substance 'when conceiv'd distinct from particular perceptions'(T.635). The 'thought alone finds personal identity' when it reflects upon the past perceptions which, Hume continues still to insist, 'compose a mind'. Most philosophers, Hume assures us, concur in the view that identity '*arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception'. Hume seems content that this much of his theory, as he originally formulated it, is right, and likely to yield good and useful results. The 'present philosophy', he finds, 'has so far a promising aspect'(T.635).

It is clear, I think, from any fair reading, that the passages thought to be at the core of Hume's worries in Book One have at their heart some thesis more modest than the one Kemp Smith attributes to them. Hume is only committed to the sort of inconsistency described if the thesis offered there denies us any idea or impression of self whatsoever. It does not. It is clearly a part, and a vital one, of Hume's account to say that we neither experience, nor have we any idea, of a self simple at one time and identical over time. But Hume no less requires the existence of an idea of self of another sort. That to which we tend to attribute what Hume calls 'perfect identity' is a mere collection or bundle of variable and interrupted perceptions, which have, in reality, only an imperfect or fictitious identity. Had we no such idea, we would not be inclined to suppose the mind possessed of a perfect identity and simplicity. It is important to Hume to show that the idea of personal identity, as it is commonly understood, be one that, in spite of its illusory nature, is capable of gripping us. Nowhere does Hume suggest we abandon our ordinary talk of an identical self or of identical objects. For other purposes, he is more than prepared to take for granted the fact of personal identity over time. Where he thinks we err is in unreflectively taking the idea we have of an imperfectly identical object to be an idea of perfect identity. The mind, considered as composed purely of a train of perceptions, between which some connection is felt to hold, has, strictly speaking, no perfect identity. Nor do we have any notion of self or substance as distinct from the particular perceptions. This does not mean that we are never right to attribute identity to our minds. There is some sense in which the mind can be said to be identical through time. What Hume does deny is the Cartesian suggestion that we have any idea of a self which is perfectly identical and simple. At no point in the Appendix, nor anywhere else, does Hume suggest that this much of his account enjoys anything less than the promising philosophical prospect of which he writes so approvingly.

The discussion in Book Two is intended not only to endorse but to corroborate the idea of the self propounded in the previous book. Hume's target in the early passages of Book One is those philosophers who take us to have an awareness of self which he finds 'contrary to that

very experience, which is pleaded for them'(T.251). We find the key point of this part of his discussion reiterated in Book Two. 'Ourself', Hume writes, 'independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing'(T.340). But Hume is equally clear that we have an awareness of self of some other sort. We are, he says, 'at all times intimately conscious of ourselves, our sentiments and passions'(T.339). The 'impression of ourselves' is always 'intimately present with us'. The indirect passions require both a cause and an object, in other words, oneself. We must, Hume says in his discussion of pride and humility, 'make a distinction betwixt the cause and the object of these passions; betwixt that idea which excites them, and that to which they direct their view, when excited.' The first idea presented to the mind is that of the 'cause or productive principle', which excites the passion associated with it. That passion, once excited, 'turns our view to another idea, which is that of the self'(T.278). The idea of the self, Hume says, is the object of the passion. We do not, of course, have any idea of self as simple at one time and perfectly identical through time, though it is natural for us to suppose so. We do, however, have an idea of the human mind as a bundle or system of different perceptions, linked together by the relations of resemblance and cause and effect(T.261). The object to which pride and humility refer is self, Hume writes in Book Two, 'or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness'(T.277). It is to this complex idea of ourselves to which Hume unabashedly refers us throughout Book Two. The 'true idea of the human mind' as a system of interrelated perceptions, united together by causation and resemblance, is a view which 'our identity with regard to the passions serves to corroborate' by making 'our distant perceptions influence each other, and by giving us a present concern for our past or future pains or pleasures'(T.261). Our present concerns show us both the influence of past pains and pleasures and the influence of our like expectations for the future. Memory, the 'chief source' of personal identity, acquaints us with 'the continuance and extent of this succession of perceptions'(T.261). Whatever objects may be comprehended by the mind, Hume says in Book Two, 'they are always consider'd with a view to ourselves; otherwise they wou'd never be able either to excite these passions, or produce the smallest encrease or diminution of them'(T.277). In this way, it is not merely an idea, but rather an impression of ourselves that is intimately present to the mind. Any impression could serve in the role, since the idea we have of the self is a general or abstract one which, when annexed to a general term, makes us recall other perceptions associated with the bundle by the relations of resemblance and cause and effect. All our perceptions share this feature of being related in one of these ways to other of our perceptions. The 'connected succession of perceptions, which we call self' is always the object of our passions. Whatever we comprehend, we do so with a view to ourselves. Were this not so, Hume makes clear, no person or object could have any influence upon us(T.280).

The 'true idea' of the self expounded in Book One is corroborated in Book Two in another important way. As the immediate object of the indirect passions, pride and humility, is 'self or that identical person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensation we are intimately conscious;

so the object of love and hatred is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are not conscious'(T.339). Our love and hatred is always directed to some person 'external to us'. The cause of love and hatred, Hume says, 'must be related to a person or thinking being, in order to produce these passions'(T.331). Presumably, one comes to attribute identity to other persons in the same way as one comes to treat any complex object, animate or inanimate, as identical. Once we are aware of others, we become less inclined to view our experience solipsistically and are more inclined to think of ourselves as persons with minds and bodies, related to others in ways which contribute to the way in which we think of ourselves. The passage of the imagination 'is smooth and open from the consideration of any person related to us to that of ourself, of whom we are every moment conscious'(T.340). We come to recognise ourselves not only as beings with concerns for others but as beings for whom others are concerned and for whom those concerns matter. An important part of what it means to be self-conscious is to think of oneself as a potential object of the attention and concern of others, of their contempt or of their esteem and admiration. There are few persons 'that are satisfy'd with their own character, or genius, or fortune, who are not desirous of shewing themselves to the world, and of acquiring the love and approbation of mankind'(T.331-2). Nothing 'more readily produces kindness and affection to any person, than his approbation of our conduct and character: As on the other hand, nothing inspires us with a stronger hatred, than his blame or contempt'(T.346). What is a source of esteem in others is a source of pride in oneself. If love and esteem 'were not produc'd by the same qualities as pride, according as these qualities are related to ourselves or others, this method of proceeding wou'd be very absurd, nor cou'd men expect a correspondence in the sentiments of every other person, with those themselves have entertain'd'(T.332). We see others in relation to the qualities which elicit our esteem or disapprobation, in the same way as we see ourselves in relation to the qualities which produce in us feelings of pride or shame. Our self-understanding, both as persons among others, minds and bodies with a definite lifespan, and as the sorts of persons we take ourselves to be or would wish to be, depends quite largely upon those others who are the objects of our passions. The sentiments of others always play a considerable part in the way in which we think of ourselves. None of this should be read as contradicting the substantive doctrinal claims of Book One. An interesting question, to which we will, however, need to return, lies in the possibility that Hume might have considered some of the data which he makes use of in Book Two as resources useful to the explanation found in Book One. Why he does not, I will suggest, tells us something crucial about the kind of task Hume has set himself.

Hume, tellingly enough, finds it unnecessary either to recant his denial of the existence of a simple self or to review the notion of self propounded in Book One and, as we saw, fully endorsed in Book Two. Hume is not concerned to show that the ascription of identity to any changed or changing thing is wrong. Change is, of course, crucial to his account, but it is the ascription of perfect identity to variable and inconstant objects that he thinks is illusory. This is

as true of the self as it is of a river or a church. If the point fails to stick it is because we fail to take seriously some of the key distinctions Hume insists upon. We can draw an important parallel with Hume's treatment of the idea of necessary connection. Hume dispenses with the idea of necessary connection as philosophers like Malebranche thought of it. The mind, he believes, has no genuine idea of power in nature as anything more than mere regular succession among objects. We nevertheless have an idea of necessary connection drawn from the association of ideas which takes place in a mind when it perceives the regular succession of events. It is this idea which we unreflectively take for an idea of 'real' or 'true' necessity in nature. The 'generality of mankind' continue, mistakenly, to think that 'they perceive the very force or energy of the cause, by which it is connected with its effect, and is for ever infallible in its operation'(E.69). In the same way, while Hume does deny that we have an idea of personal identity which has all the properties we unreflectively take it to have, he does not deny that we have some idea of personal identity. As before, the account he gives is intended to explain both the origin of the idea we have, and our propensity to take it for another, which, he makes clear, we very certainly lack. A failure to appreciate this important parallel stems simply from a failure to take Hume's writing at face value. Hume's initial target is the philosophical doctrine of simple substance which improperly and implausibly characterises the only experience to which it can look for support. The fictions of these philosophers, though unreasonable, have nevertheless an 'intimate connexion with the principles of human nature' which accounts for our mistaken ascriptions of perfect identity. The study of human thought and belief has to be disentangled from the fictions of the 'antient philosophy'. Hume finds that it is natural for us to confound one action of the imagination with another and so to attribute to our perceptions a perfect identity when they have only a fictitious one. It is to our true idea of ourselves as a bundle or heap of related perceptions that we ascribe a perfect identity. Hume is careful to distinguish perfect from imperfect or, as he also terms it, 'fictitious' identity. Since we are aware only of a fleeting and unstable succession of perceptions, we cannot have impressions of anything 'simple and continu'd'(T.252) from which we could derive a genuine idea of self conceived of as distinct from our particular perceptions. Instead we have an idea of imperfect identity which the mind mistakes for an idea which it does not possess. Hume shows that we can have no idea of a simple self. But he does not suggest, nor is it in any way to his purpose to argue, that we are never right to attribute identity to an object, or, indeed, to ourselves.

Hume relies on a number of tendencies and principles of mind to explain how, faced only with the perpetual flux of our perceptions, we get the idea of ourselves as simple at one time and identical through time. The action of these principles explains how we come to regard what turn out to be pure fictions of the imagination as real connections, obtaining between the events and objects of our experience. It seems then natural to ask of Hume just what it is that is led to mistakenly take one action of the imagination for another, that has the beliefs and forms the expectations it has. Hume treats many of our fundamental ideas as fictions, but

surely, it is suggested, it must be something other than a fictitious self which does all of these things. On this reading, what Hume's account crucially lacks, and what he perhaps came to realise it lacked, is a real enduring self, subject to and owner of the experiences and tendencies Hume describes. What is it that has these experiences, is affected by them in certain ways, and comes to entertain certain beliefs as to their nature? The suggestion is that Hume's theory, as presented in Book One, is unable to account for, or leaves no room for, the sort of constant, lasting self, his discussion, at every turn, presupposes. Hume speaks confidently of a mind or self which combines and, frequently, confuses its perceptions, orders them according to laws, and, often mistakenly, ascribes identity to some of them. What can it be that does all these things? A mere bundle of perceptions? How, we might ask, can a bundle do anything? Hume, it would appear, is drawn back to the sort of notion of self as something distinct and apart from our particular perceptions that he rejects at the outset of his discussion. It is this realisation, which, it is suggested, causes Hume to despair of ever reconciling the conflicting parts of his system.

The problem, as Macnabb formulates it, is not that the 'series of conscious states' is 'required to be aware of itself. We are not self-conscious all the time. We are self-conscious at certain times. It is some of the members of the series that must be aware of themselves as members of the series. Just as when a nation is said to be conscious of itself as a nation, it is really the members of the nation, or some of them, who are aware of themselves as members of the nation.' What then is it, MacNabb asks, for 'a perception to be aware of itself as a member of that relational unity of perceptions we call mind? I do not know the answer to this question'(13). Macnabb's complaint is that Hume requires a perception to do what he readily, and plausibly, supposes it cannot, that is, be aware of itself. Hume must, if he is to be consistent, admit of the existence of something other than the perceptions themselves, something which is able to combine, confuse and associate, as well as be aware of, the perceptions.

Is Hume committed to a view like the one Macnabb outlines? I think it is clear that he is not. The suggestion is that Hume's theory is inconsistent with the existence of the propensities and operations of mind he describes. Hume does not suggest that it is anything other than the self which thinks, comprehends, believes, and is aware. He is, rather, asking us to think about what it means to say so. While Hume speaks freely of our individual perceptions influencing and attracting each other, he never, to my knowledge, credits them with thought, understanding or awareness. Hume has said that we have a true idea of the self as a bundle of perceptions. But it is not the bundle or series, as such, which is aware of itself. According to Nelson Pike, Hume could, quite properly, 'translate' the statement 'I am aware of myself as a "bundle"' into another statement making explicit mention of mind: 'An awareness of myself as a series of perceptions is presently occurring in my mind'(14). Hume, as Pike rightly observes, is not offering his theory as an analysis of the meaning of 'I'. To say that I am aware of myself

as a bundle of perceptions is just to say that an idea of self, a 'true' one, by Hume's lights, has occurred in a particular bundle. In Pike's terms, an 'awareness of the series of perceptions' is 'presently occurring within the series of perceptions'. To say that x is aware of y is just to say that y is occurring within a given bundle. To say that x is aware of him or herself as a bundle of perceptions is just to say that just such an idea is occurring in the bundle. A perception cannot be aware of itself. Yet an awareness of a certain perception as related to others in the bundle in one or other of the two ways Hume describes can be a present member of that bundle.

We can generalise the point as Pike goes on to do. There is thought to be a problem in Hume as to what it is that confuses, combines or associates one perception with another. As Passmore puts the point: 'If all that happened is that a series of very similar (or causally linked) perceptions succeed one another, there is no possible way in which this series of itself could generate the fiction of personal identity'(15), or, indeed, perform many of the other complex mental activities Hume describes. According to Hume, I come, mistakenly, to attribute perfect identity to my variable and interrupted perceptions. Passmore thinks that Hume cannot explain how we are able to entertain this 'fiction' without specifying what it is 'which confuses succession and identity'. The idea of a self with associative tendencies and mechanisms presupposes some notion of self beyond what can be specified purely in terms of perceptual occurrences. But I think it is clear that Hume has no need of positing such a self. To say that the mind confounds one perception or idea with another is, in Hume's terms, just to say that one idea causes another in the same bundle. To have a belief in the perfect identity of one's perceptions means just that there occurs in the series a lively idea of a certain sort. Statements containing verbs like 'sees' or 'believes' are all, according to Pike, 'translatable into statements mentioning only the presence of a certain perception...within a certain collection of perceptions'(16). Any statement specifying a mental activity such as thinking or understanding can be replaced without change or loss of sense with a statement specifying the occurrence of certain perceptions within a bundle. The various activities of the mind can be accounted for, on Hume's theory, in terms of the ways and circumstances in which perceptions occur. To say that the mind associates one idea with another is just to say that ideas of a certain sort tend to be followed by ideas of another definite sort. Hume can, and, doubtless, would, explain the other tendencies and dispositions of mind solely in terms of what perceptions occur. Any mental activity or act can be explained in terms of the occurrence of perceptions in the mind. This is just what it is to discover tendencies among mental events and this is all the mind's activity consists in. The lesson of Hume's treatment of causation is that this is all it can be. To speak of the tendencies and principles of mind is to do no more than to specify the ways and circumstances in which certain perceptions occur. Hume can quite consistently speak of the associative mechanisms of the mind without positing the existence of a self which is something more than the bundle of perceptions. Hume does not deny that the mind does the things it does, he simply has a different notion of what it means to say so.

Whatever it was troubling Hume in the Appendix it is unlikely to have been the need to consistently account for the activities of the mind without positing the existence of a genuine and enduring self, combining, associating and, at times, confusing, its perceptions. He should easily have seen that the suggestion poses no real problem for him. Hume is quite able to explain the activities and tendencies of the mind purely in terms of the ways in which perceptions occur. To make a charge of inconsistency in these terms is already to misconstrue Hume's central point. He is attempting to show that a realist ontology is not the only way of accounting for our various cognitive commitments. But Hume may still be vulnerable to another, related, though distinct, complaint. Even supposing Hume's principles of causation and resemblance to be equal to the task of explaining how we come to ascribe identity to a bundle of separate, individual perceptions, it may still seem that Hume has not done enough to explain how our experiential data are presented to us as they are. It may appear that the mechanisms which underlie the tendencies and principles of mind which lead us to ascribe to our successive perceptions a real simplicity and identity are in some crucial sense underexplained. Stroud, while conceding the point that Hume is committed to no real inconsistency in denying the existence of a real rather than a fictitious self, thinks that Hume must say more if he is to specify all that is the case when I believe that *p*. Although I am nothing but a 'personal' or causally-contained bundle of perceptions, Stroud says, 'we cannot say that all that is the case when I believe that *p*, for example, is that the lively idea or belief that *p* occurs in some "personal" bundle of perceptions or other. It must occur in a certain particular bundle, viz. the bundle that I am, in order to constitute *my* believing that *p*, and as long as there are at least two minds or persons in existence, not every 'personal' bundle is what I am'(17). Let us assume for the moment that Hume has shown that all our perceptions can be linked in the mind by either one of the relations of resemblance and causation. It seems that we ought still to be asking for something more than this. This more is whatever it is in virtue of which our perceptions are presented in the way they are, that is, in discrete, causally-contained bundles. Stroud goes on to put the point in this way:

It is...clear that Hume's explanation of the origin of the idea of the self or mind is not necessarily deficient in failing to give an account of how a certain idea arises from certain 'data', but that it leaves completely unintelligible and mysterious the fact that those 'data' are as they are. When we press on to that level of inquiry we find it is simply taken as a given fact about the universe of perceptions that the range of reflective vision of any one of them does not extend to all the rest. And it is only because one's gaze is thus restricted to a certain subset of all the perceptions there are that it is possible for a person to get an idea of himself. (18)

What, Stroud asks, 'accounts for the fact that one cannot survey in the same way all the perceptions there are?'(19) We never learn from Hume how it is the data with which a mind

has to work are restricted to a subset of all perceptions. What explains the presence of perceptions 'in discrete, separate bundles'(20) rather than in one vast, undifferentiated bundle? Hume, Stroud says, 'leaves unanswered the most important question about the self or self-consciousness'(21). Hume 'cannot explain how or why the "data" from which the idea of personal identity is constructed present themselves in the way they do. And if they did not present themselves that way, his explanation would collapse'(22). Stroud's tentative suggestion is that Hume's self-doubts in the Appendix can be traced to his growing awareness of the inadequacy of his theory of ideas to the task of answering this crucial question.

We come to think of ourselves as beings which are 'simple and continu'd'(T.252) only because we have an unphilosophical tendency to mistake our true idea of ourselves as a bundle of related perceptions for an idea of something perfectly identical. We can only acquire the idea if all our perceptions can be seen to be related to others in the same bundle in one of two ways. We see ourselves in such a way only because our experience is restricted in the way Stroud describes, to a particular subset or causally-contained bundle. Were our experience not restricted in this way, we would either find that only a few of those perceptions available to us were related in appropriate ways, or that all those perceptions were in fact related, but in a single, solipsistic mind. In neither case could we come by the idea of ourselves as minds among others. What Hume's theory leaves 'completely unintelligible', according to Stroud, is the fact of the data from which our idea arises being as they are. Stroud's point has some obvious appeal. We do, as a matter of fact, make distinctions among minds. Perceptions do present themselves, as Stroud says, in separate, discrete bundles. The problem of explaining why perceptions come in many different, discrete bundles is one that does appear to arise as a corollary of one of Hume's key theoretical principles, that of the distinctness and separability of each individual perception from every other. Every 'distinct perception, which enters into the composition of the mind, is a distinct existence, and is different, and distinguishable, and separable from every other perception, either contemporary or successive'(T.259). Having thus 'loosen'd all our particular perceptions'(T.635), Hume seems at a loss when it comes to account for what it is 'binds them together'. 'All my hopes vanish', Hume says, 'when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness'(T.636). So, Stroud's view can be seen to make a fairly plausible appeal to the text.

I do, however, have a number of reservations about full-bloodedly attributing Stroud's view to Hume. Hume, we should remember, does not regard it as a defect of his theory of causation that he finds no real connection between causally related events. Hume claims there are no good grounds for asserting necessary connections to hold among our perceptions. His concern seems emphatically to be with what leads us to think of them as connected. Hume may be read, here as elsewhere, as suggesting that we very often have no choice but to rest content with certain brute facts about our experience(23). It is just one such fact about our

experience that perceptions are presented in the way they are. Hume wants to explain how it is, on the basis of the perceptions we have, and the ways in which they appear to us, we come to think of ourselves and our world as we do. Of course, as Stroud points out, were the data from which our idea of the self arises not organised as they are, into discrete bundles, we could never acquire the idea in question in the first place. But it is a matter of fact that they are. The 'ultimate cause' of our perceptions is, Hume admits elsewhere, 'perfectly inexplicable by human reason'. Yet we may continue to 'draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses'(T.84). In an exactly parallel way, Hume need not put off his project of explaining the origin of our idea of self because he cannot explain the apparently perplexing fact that our perceptions come in discrete bundles. What matters in Hume's account is not why our gaze is restricted in the way it is, but that it is. My second reservation rests on the plausibility of explaining Hume's own dissatisfaction in these terms. Hume, writing in the Appendix, is concerned with the consistency of his account. Why should the unavailability of an explanation of another, deeper sort trouble him in the case of personal identity when it did not in the case of causation? Stroud admits that Hume's explanation of the origin of our idea of self is not necessarily deficient because he cannot explain the fact of the 'data' from which that idea arises being as they are. There does not seem to be any inconsistency in Hume holding, as he has done before, that this is just another brute fact of our experience. While the problem Stroud raises is not a trivial one, it does not, on the face of it, represent any very obvious inconsistency in Hume's account.

Hume may well have sensed that the story he was giving depended somehow on some additional fact which he was unable to explain. But even were Hume aware of such a problem it is not clear why he would suppose this a defect of the sort of account he has given, still less how it represents an inconsistency with it. My suggestion was that while Hume's explanation of the origin of our idea of self could only be successful because of the way in which our data come, Hume does not need to explain that fact in order to successfully account for the origin of the idea. I do not, however, consider Stroud's view entirely disarmed. As we will see, he is on the right track in at least one important respect. I want to return to this suggestion but only after considering one further change of tack. Let us look again at the key passages from the Appendix. While we find Hume still inclined to the verdict of 'most philosophers', and Locke in particular, 'that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception...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.'(T.635-6) The passage is clearly equivocal. It is not at all clear from Hume's statement of his problem whether he understands it as having to do with the unity of our perceptions, with what really 'binds them together', as it were, or with the principles which unite them in thought. The distinction is quite crucial.

It might be helpful to consider again what we found to be Hume's larger project. Hume is concerned to explain how, and in virtue of what faculties and principles, we come to view the world and ourselves as we do. He is less concerned with how we ought to think about these things, than with how we do think about them. In this case, Hume wants to explain both how we come by the idea of self we have and how we are led to mistake it for another, and to do so in terms of certain principles and tendencies of mind. We saw that there was, in principle, no real obstacle to Hume's explaining these propensities in his preferred terms. On this view, it would seem likely that Hume's worry in the Appendix would have something to do with the adequacy of the 'connecting principles' of mind he describes, resemblance and causation, to generate the fiction in question, in other words, to unite our perceptions in thought. As Hume says, 'did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there wou'd be no difficulty in the case'(T.636). Were we to apprehend such a connection there would be no question of how we come to think of consciousness as united, since it really would be, and we would observe it to be so. No connections 'among distinct existences are ever discoverable by human understanding. We only *feel* a connexion or determination of the thought, to pass from one to another. It follows, therefore, that the thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other'(T.635). If, on the other hand, what troubles Hume is a lack of resources with which to explain the possibility of our perceptions being related in this way, then it seems he might really feel pushed to renounce one of his two 'inconsistent' principles, '*that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*', together with its partner and corollary, '*that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*'(T.636). It might be to this lack that Hume refers us when he complains that there would be no difficulty in the case did 'our perceptions inhere in something simple and individual'(T.636). Two points seem to count against this view. In the first place, it seems far less in tune with Hume's overwhelming concern with how we come to think of ourselves and our world as we do than does the former view. A satisfactory answer to this question would still leave untouched the strategically crucial question of how we get the idea of ourselves we actually have. In the second place, as we saw, the unavailability of an additional causal fact of this sort seems in no obvious way to issue in an inconsistency, and this clearly poses a difficulty for proponents of the view. The question of what binds together our perceptions *in our thought* seems a more likely and, indeed, more self-consistent source of worry for Hume, and it is to this question which I now turn.

In what ways might Hume have considered his relations of causation and resemblance inadequate to the task of explaining how the fiction of personal identity is generated? I want first to consider another problem suggested by Stroud, though not, I should say, as a likely source of Hume's own misgivings. Although, Stroud says, Hume has established certain causal connections among our perceptions, in particular, that between our impressions and ideas,

the causality holding between impressions and their corresponding ideas is not of the right sort to help Hume solve the problem of how we come to ascribe identity to ourselves. Those causal connections run 'vertically', so to speak, from the impression up to the idea, and then perhaps to other ideas and impressions. What Hume needs is a causal chain that runs 'horizontally', as it were, along the whole series of incoming perceptions that we get from moment to moment.

(24)

Stroud's point is that no such causal chain exists. To put his point in another way, there exist perceptions, present to the mind, yet without any causal relation to the perceptions adjacent to them. These perceptions include impressions of sensation. If for example I am having an impression of the sheet of paper before me, then, shifting my attention, of my computer monitor, or the money tree on the window sill, it is easily seen that one impression is not the cause of the other. Since the content of any impression may similarly be entirely new and unrelatable, the relation of resemblance may not be of any help either. This is how Stroud's demand for a horizontal chain is to be understood. Our impressions lack the regularity they would need in order for us to gain the appropriate causal habits of thought to take them to be connected. Impressions occur irregularly, with no regard or obvious relation to what has gone before.

Since not all our perceptions, and certainly not all the right ones, appear to be causally related, it is suggested, the relation cannot be a necessary condition for membership in a given bundle. Impressions of sensation, Hume says, arise 'in the soul originally, from unknown causes'(T.7). Hume seems explicit in the fact of these impressions not being the cause of one another. Their cause is, he says, 'perfectly inexplicable to human reason'(T.84). But if this is so, how can Hume consistently argue for their being each a part of a single causal chain, running, as Stroud has it, horizontally across all impressions of sensation? Hume's argument is not, however, so easily disposed of. Hume might well respond by saying that nothing he has said does commit him to thinking of impressions in this way. I cannot, Hume says, 'compare the soul more properly to anything than to a republic or commonwealth'(T.261). As the same republic or commonwealth may vary its members, its laws and constitutions, so 'the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation'(T.261). The republic analogy is an apt one. Just as each member of the republic is so not in virtue of a direct relation to her neighbour but because of a complex set of interrelations with various of its other parts, so each member of the bundle might be said to be related just in virtue of being located at some point in a vast and overlapping system of relations. A causal relation extends from any memory of any perception to that originally

occurring perception, whatever it was. Beliefs about our present impressions depend indirectly upon past impressions and ideas. I get my present impression of the view from my window by an act of will of which I have an impression of reflection. We need not think of each succeeding perception as the causally-dependent effect of its predecessor. A citizen of Hume's commonwealth may remain a stranger to his neighbours while enjoying a real and complex set of indirect relations with them in virtue of which they might all be said to be members of the same system or community. Those impressions of sensation which, even given our pre-theoretical tendency to conflate perceptions with objects, exhibit no direct causal relations with any other, can still, we might think, be found a place within the complex system of interrelations, ideas and impressions of reflection, which constitute this republic.

Another line of attack makes more of the sufficiency of the relations of causation and resemblance to do the job of producing the fiction of perfect identity. The idea is that the relations are not by themselves sufficient to the production of an idea as strong as the idea of self we possess. A case of this sort has been persuasively argued for by Don Garrett. The heart of Hume's problem and of his misgivings in the Appendix is, according to Garrett, 'the inability of causation and resemblance sufficiently to bind our perceptions in the way required by our true idea of personal identity'(25). Garrett asks us to suppose a pair of perceptions without spatial location occurring simultaneously in two separate bundles or minds. If these perceptions are qualitatively identical, then the only way in which they can be assigned causal relations in different bundles is in virtue of their spatial location. But, as Hume himself remarks, an 'object may be said to be no where, when its parts are not so situated with respect to each other, as to form any figure or quantity', as is the case with 'all our perceptions and objects, except those of the sight and feeling'(T.235-6). Let us assume the pair of perceptions is of this sort. If two persons simultaneously have qualitatively identical spatially non-locatable perceptions, a passion or 'moral reflection', say, then neither relations of causation nor relations of resemblance can distinguish them. Qualitatively identical perceptions can only be ascribed distinct causal relations in virtue either of their distinct spatial or temporal location. But in this case the pair of perceptions are neither temporally distinct, nor are they in any way spatially locatable. Hume is pressed to accept that 'either both of them will belong to a given bundle of perceptions or neither of them will'(26). In other words, our pair of perceptions cannot be located in different bundles in terms of either relation, and Hume is not prepared 'to accept it as a logical consequence of "the true idea of the mind" that whenever two perceivers have the same experience - whether impression of sensation, passion, or idea - at the same time, they are in fact literally sharing the same perception'(27). Hume's dissatisfaction in the Appendix, according to Garrett, stems particularly from his reluctance to accept that the existence of any one perception can have implications for the non-existence of any simultaneous resembling perceptions.

While Garrett's problem is a real one, with serious implications for an account of the sort Hume is defending, I do not think it is the problem with which Hume was struggling in the Appendix. If it was as obvious to Hume, as it seems, on this account, it must have been, that two minds 'must *somehow* be given either a spatial location *or* some substitute for it'(28) if their perceptions are to be bound together in the distinct way required by our idea of personal identity, then it is surprising that Hume did not make the point himself. The problem for Garrett is not merely that Hume never characterises his problem in terms of other minds, but that Hume never seriously considers the possibility that the perceptions with which he has to work are anything other than his own. If Hume's problem really did stem from the possibility that two perceivers having qualitatively identical simultaneous perceptions are in fact sharing the same experience, then he might fairly be expected to have made his complaint in other, more specific, terms. Hume, it is true, leaves the boundaries between persons indistinct and indefinite. But while nothing he says explicitly disallows the possibility of one perception belonging to more than one bundle, while, indeed, he insists upon the possibility, there is nothing in the text to give us to believe that Hume took it to raise problems for his account of how the 'connecting principles' produce the true idea of personal identity, still less in the very specific way Garrett envisages. Hume simply accepts that the perceptions we have to work with will be our own, and that, whatever the sceptical implications for what lies beyond them, they give us resources enough to generate the idea. If perceptions are distinct existences, Hume writes in the Appendix, 'they form a whole only by being connected together. But no connexions among distinct existences are ever discoverable by human understanding. We only *feel* a connexion or determination of the thought, to pass from one to another'(T.635). Hume's complaint, if I read him aright, is not that the thought is not, alone or with the resources Hume describes, able to 'find' personal identity when reflecting upon the perceptions which constitute a mind, but that the connection is only *felt*. There is no suggestion here that the relations Hume provides might be insufficient to the job at hand. As we saw, Hume's account of how the natural relations of causation and resemblance produce the fiction of personal identity is more resilient than many critics, Stroud among them, have supposed. All the weight here seems shifted to the question of what explains the union of perceptions in one consciousness. Our ideas of past perceptions 'are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other'(T.635). This 'extraordinary' conclusion, Hume says, need not surprise us. Where his hopes 'vanish' is when he comes to explain the principles that unite the successive perceptions in our consciousness. If Hume felt that his connecting principles were themselves conjointly insufficient to the job at hand, then he should surely say so here. He could easily have done so. But he does not. This much of his philosophy, he suggests, enjoys 'so far a promising aspect'. We might, then, expect a significant change of tack when Hume comes to explain those difficulties he finds 'too hard for his understanding'(T.635). And this, I would suggest, is precisely what we do find.

If what I mean to suggest is correct, Hume's worries in the Appendix have to do with some question other than the one which has occupied him throughout the section on personal identity, and which best characterises his general theoretical intentions, that of the production of the idea of personal identity. A line like Garrett's may make some sense of Hume's second admission that were the mind to perceive some real connection among its perceptions there 'wou'd be no difficulty in the case', but it seems less well-equipped to make sense of Hume's first, that the problem would disappear were our perceptions to 'inhere in something simple and individual'. Were the mind to apprehend some real and necessary connection among its perceptions then it would seem to clear up the problem of how we come to think of ourselves as distinct, discrete causal bundles, as Garrett characterises them. But even were our perceptions to inhere in a simple substance, this would still leave untouched Hume's primary concern with the origin of our idea of self. Hume would still be faced with the task of characterising our experience and the specific ways in which we take it in getting this idea. Whatever the problem Hume felt faced with in the Appendix it is likely to be something both more general and more deeply troubling to a philosopher with an agenda like Hume's than the one Garrett describes. Both Stroud and Garrett are on the right lines in making, in their different ways, the focus of the problem the question of the unity of mind or consciousness. It is the connectedness of this 'connected mass' of perceptions from which the idea of personal identity arises that Hume feels himself unable to explain.

The 'principle of union', Hume says earlier in the *Treatise*, 'is regarded as the chief part of the complex idea'(T.16) of substance. The 'particular qualities' forming any substance 'are commonly refer'd to an unknown *something*, in which they are supposed to inhere; or granting this fiction should not take place, are at least supposed to be closely and inseparably connected by the relations of contiguity and causation.' Whatever new 'simple quality' we find connected with the others in one of these two ways 'we immediately comprehend it among them, even tho' it did not enter into the first conception of the substance'(T.16). We do not need our perceptions or objects either to exhibit real connections or to inhere in some simple substance in order to think of them as connected in the relevant causal sense. The indistinct and indefinitely-bounded kind of union Hume finds among the 'particular qualities' of 'substances' is of the same sort memory discovers among the successive perceptions which constitute a mind. Philosophers, Hume writes in the Appendix, 'begin to be reconcil'd to the principle, *that we have no idea of external substances, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities*. This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind, *that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions*'(T.635). Why then, we must ask, is Hume inclined to bemoan the lack of any simple substance or necessary connection among our perceptions, in his discussion of personal identity, yet seems more than content to do without these resources when he discusses causation? The answer I have rejected is that Hume somehow came to think the relations of causation and resemblance insufficient to the task of yielding an idea of self as strong as the one we possess. In the cases both of causation and of

personal identity, Hume has it in mind to explain how, and on the basis of what features of our experience, we come to think of ourselves or of the world in the way we do. My suggestion is that, while, in dealing with causation, Hume is content to explain the origin of the idea in terms of the projective tendencies of mind, and to take for granted the fact that our successive perceptions are presented as they are, in discussing personal identity, Hume came to realise that he had not left himself resources enough to explain or allow for the principles in virtue of which these things are thus and so. He may have felt able to avoid raising the question in the section on personal identity, but by the time he came to write the Appendix, Hume became aware not merely that he had failed to account for the fact of the existence of discrete bundles, for this alone, given the sort of account he was giving, may not have troubled him, but that he seemed to have ruled out the possibility of anything uniting our successive perceptions in the mind or consciousness. Hume's problem is not that we must know how these data are organised before we can acquire the idea which very naturally arises from them. It is rather that the resources to which he has limited himself in the foregoing discussion seem to him to have left him with no means with which to explain how the 'smooth and easy' passage of thought from one perception to another is possible.

Hume, of course, describes his problem in terms of an internal inconsistency of some sort. There are two principles, Hume writes, 'which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*'(T.636). As has been remarked, the 'inconsistent' principles are not inconsistent with each other. Where, I think, Hume found the conflict to lie was between these principles and the only two ways in which he considered the unity of the perceptions in one consciousness could be explained. Did our perceptions 'either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there wou'd be no difficulty in the case'(T.636). Were we able to apprehend some real connection among our perceptions, or were those perceptions to inhere in some simple substance, there would be no problem in explaining what unites our distinct perceptions in the mind. But, Hume, for obvious reasons, can bring himself to accept neither. Each individual perception, Hume tells us, may be termed a 'substance' where a substance is misguidedly understood to be any thing that may exist by itself. These distinct existences must be allowed to be separable, yet, as Hume discovers, they must be connected by some relation, some principle of connection, strong enough to make possible the experienced regularity from which the idea of self arises, if they are to constitute minds, or substances, in Hume's preferred sense. Hume finds himself drawn back to the problem of inhesion and the 'absurdities' he found in 'every system' concerning body. He says as much in the Appendix:

I HAD entertain'd some hopes, that however deficient our theory of the intellectual world might be, it wou'd be free from those contradictions,

and absurdities, which seem to attend every explication, that human reason can give of the material world. But upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*, I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent. (T.633)

Hume suggests a parallel between the inconsistencies he finds threatening the foundations of his own account of personal identity and the conflicts he found earlier to beset the philosophical understanding of the external world. The contradictions and absurdities which attend every explication of the material world concern, Hume believes, the attempt to explain how extended matter can be organised in the way it is. The question Hume has found 'impossible to be answer'd with regard to matter and body' is the question of what is or can possibly be understood by 'substance' and 'inhesion'(T.232). Hume describes the tangle of difficulties which he finds to afflict every 'system concerning external objects' in the earlier section '*Of the antient philosophy*'. When we 'look along the insensible changes of bodies', Hume says there, we suppose them to be of the same substance, but when we consider their 'sensible differences', we are inclined to attribute to each 'a substantial and essential difference'. In order to remove the conflict and satisfy ourselves 'in both these ways of considering our objects, we suppose all bodies to have at once a substance and a substantial form'(T.222). Hume invokes the natural relations of causation and resemblance to explain our belief in the simplicity and identity of material objects. Once more, there is some fiction or 'imaginary principle of union' to be explained. In endeavouring to disguise the conflict Hume describes we run into the contradictions concerning substance and inhesion which Hume had hoped to avoid in his discussion of personal identity. The 'notion of accidents', Hume finds, is 'an unavoidable consequence of this method of thinking with regard to substances and substantial forms; nor can we forbear looking upon colours, sounds, tastes, figures, and other properties of bodies, as existences, which cannot subsist apart, but requires a subject of inhesion to sustain and support them'(T.222). This belief is the unpalatable, though natural, consequence of this kind of philosophy. Since all the particular qualities or accidents of body *are* distinct existences, each 'may be conceiv'd to exist apart, and may exist apart, not only from every other quality, but from that unintelligible chimera of a substance'(T.222). Hume repeats the point in the section on personal identity. All our particular perceptions are 'different, and distinguishable, and separable from each other, and may be separately consider'd, and may exist separately, and have no need of any thing to support their existence'(T.252). Whatever 'confus'd notions' we form of the union between an extended body and its accidents or between an immaterial substance and its perceptions 'tis certain that upon reflection we must observe in this union something altogether unintelligible and contradictory'(T.238). Had we any idea of the 'substance of our minds', Hume reminds us, we would also have an impression of it 'which is very difficult, if not impossible, to be conceiv'd'(T.232-3). Hume makes perfectly clear the parallel he intends between the

difficulties and contradictions which undermine 'every system' concerning material objects and those absurdities which he found to re-emerge, critically and decisively, upon a strict review of his section on personal identity. By invoking the associative principles of causation and resemblance, Hume is quite able to account for our belief in the identity and simplicity of material objects without so much as raising the question of inhesion. But the problems he had hoped also to avoid in tackling the 'infinite obscurities' of the 'intellectual world'(T.232) return when he raises the question of how the features of our experience from which our idea of self arises come to be organised as they are. I do not need the particular qualities of objects to inhere in a material substance of some sort in order to come to think of those objects as simple and identical. Hume explains this belief with reference to certain natural relations of mind. But were there no principles connecting our successive perceptions we could never come to think of ourselves as we do. Hume can explain how we come to think of ourselves as persistent entities, simple at one time and identical through time, and this part of his story seems to satisfy him well enough, but he is not able to explain the unity of consciousness which makes this possible(29). If our successive perceptions are to give us the idea in question, they must be bound together in a single consciousness. Hume's difficulty, as I read him, is that while he comes to acknowledge this fact, he is quite unable to account for it. He has no resources left with which to make sense of the relation between an individual perception and the mind or consciousness to which it belongs. Hume can only think to explain this union amongst perceptions in terms either of inhesion or real connexion, yet finds neither solution compatible with those core principles he is understandably unwilling to do without. He can ultimately do no more than 'plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding'(T.636).

It should be clear that Hume's misgivings about his section on personal identity, aired, for the first and only time, in the Appendix, do not amount to a 'recantation' on his part, nor should he be read as rejecting any major part of the thesis presented there. Hume did not come to reject his story of the origin of our idea of self. As I have tried to suggest throughout, his account is both more defensible and more resilient than has typically been thought. He has good reasons to be satisfied with it. His dissatisfaction stems more from the feeling that his theory needed supplementing somehow, than from any thought that it should be rejected. He continues to hope that others 'perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflexion, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions'(T.636) he found there. Hume's description of the difficulties and 'inconsistencies' which beset philosophical attempts to account for the organisation of matter make clear sense of his use of the terms 'inconsistency' and 'contradiction' in the present case. Hume, as we saw, found it unnecessary to recant either of his rejection of the simple idea of self argued for by the Cartesians, or of the true idea of the self argued for in Book One of the *Treatise*. Hume needs to be seen as offering an explanation of how we come to think ourselves as continuous beings, persisting throughout a lifetime. His concern is emphatically not with the grammatical question of what it means for

one person to be differentiated from another, or for one person to be the same person we met with yesterday. Once we appreciate this point, we can readily understand why Hume does not make use of the resources implicit in the treatment of the self found in Book Two to illuminate or supplement his discussion of personal identity in Book One. In Book Two, Hume describes the self in terms of both 'the qualities of our mind and body'(T.303). It might be suggested that Hume presents himself with an impossible task by attempting to elucidate personal identity in Book One without reference to the body. Hume, we should remember, is attempting to explain how, from a first-personal perspective, we get the idea of ourselves or, since he uses the terms interchangeably, our minds, as one entity, identical through change. The notion that one is identical in virtue of one's association with the same body throughout a lifetime is not one to which Hume could reasonably appeal. The question of the identity of one's body, or of any body, is not one that can be settled without reference to the activities of the mind the identity of which Hume wants to explain. I need to believe I am a self of this sort before I can begin to make sense of the identity of objects in terms of self-attributable activities like remembering. The belief Hume wants to explain is one's belief that one is the sort of being to which such attributions can be sensibly made. This is what Hume understands by 'personal identity, as it regards our thought or imagination'(T.253). Identity 'as it regards our passions or the concern we take in ourselves' confirms or corroborates this view of ourselves, indeed, seems almost to complete it, but it can never be antecedent to it. Where the association of mind and body might have been of use to Hume was in his attempts to explain or understand how it is our 'successive perceptions' can belong to one consciousness. But, as Hume makes clear in the sections preceding that on personal identity, we run into the same set of contradictions whether we take our perceptions to inhere in material or immaterial substance.

# Notes

## Chapter Four

### Hume On Personal Identity

1. I agree with Stroud's observation, *op.cit.*, pp.260-1, that 'Hume intends his explanation of the origin of the idea of identity and of our tendency to regard certain series of perceptions as "a continu'd view of the same object" to carry over from the section "Of Scepticism With Regard to the Senses"'. It is clear that Hume's account of personal identity depends on his account of our idea of identity as an idea of 'the invariableness and uninterruptedness of any object, thro' a suppos'd variation of time'(T.201) in Section II. I discuss the adequacy of Hume's account of the origin of this idea in 3.1. In this chapter, I concentrate on Hume's special account of the origin of the idea of personal identity.

2. Locke, *op.cit.*, II.XXVII, argued that the perceived unity and identity of a person could be accounted for on the level of conscious awareness without prejudging or entailing any answer to the question of what the substance or essence of a thinking thing was. Locke writes that: 'All the great Ends of Morality and Religion are well enough secured, without philosophical Proofs of the Soul's Immateriality'(IV.III.6). He believed that the question of the identity of substance was irrelevant to the question of the continuity of persons. Scepticism concerning the proofs of philosophers is compatible with a continued belief in the immortality of the soul for "Tis past controversy, that we have in us something that thinks, our Very Doubts about what it is, confirm the certainty of its being, though we must content our selves in the ignorance of what kind of being it is: And 'tis in vain to go about to be sceptical in this, as it is unreasonable in most other cases to be positive against the being of any thing, because we cannot comprehend its Nature. For I would fain know what Substance exists that has not something in it, which manifestly baffles our Understandings.'*(ibid)* Butler objected to Locke's account that it undermined belief in the immortality of the soul and struck at the base of Christian morality. See the first appendix to Butler's *The Analogy of Religion in The Works of Bishop Butler*, Ed. W.E. Gladstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897).

3. See David Pears, *op.cit.*, p.120. Pears rightly observes that Hume's attempt to apply his theory of the derivation and association of ideas to the idea of personal identity turns out to be the most problematic of its applications. In 4.2, I dispute Pears' claim that these difficulties led Hume to retract or recant of his theory of personal identity.

4. Apart from Section II of Part IV, I have in mind, in particular, Hume's important discussion concerning the immateriality of the soul which immediately precedes his account of personal identity and which, to a considerable extent, informs it. Hume's section '*Of the Ancient*

*Philosophy*' also includes an interesting anticipation of the argument of Section VI. I discuss this in 4.1.

## 4.1 Of Personal Identity

5.Hume argues, as Locke had, against the suggestion of Descartes, Leibniz, and other Cartesians, that consciousness of oneself consists in an awareness of a simple immaterial substance, which thinks, and which is the owner of its various perceptions. Locke believed that I would be the same person I was in 1969 provided I remembered what that person did, irrespective of the unknown substance or substances in which awareness took place. The question of the identity of substance does not arise. It is important to note that other philosophers contemporary to Hume, like Reid and Butler, continued to believe that we have some awareness of the continuity of a simple self. Joseph Butler, *op.cit.*, p.385, objected to Locke's account that 'the consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity; any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes'. Butler argued that our awareness of the continuity of consciousness was, or amounted to, an awareness of a simple self or substance. The continuity of consciousness appears to us a real numerical identity: identity in the 'strict and philosophical sense' required for the immortality of the soul. Hume may also have had Butler in mind in his rebuke to 'those philosophers'. His response to Butler's suggestion is to show that this consciousness of self is an illusion(T.251-2). There is no simplicity in the mind at any one time, and no identity at different times 'whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity'(T.253). Another philosopher indebted to Locke in this respect is Kant. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Ed. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1963), A363, argued that there is no immaterial simple substance presented in experience which could count as identical in Butler's strict and philosophical sense. The continuity of consciousness could just as well be accounted for in terms of transfers from one thinking substance to another.

6.Hume is also in agreement with Locke on this point. Locke attempted to show that the question of the perceived identity of persons could be settled on the basis of the continuity or sameness of conscious phenomena without entailing any conclusion about the nature of any simple substance underlying them. Sameness of substance does not matter to personal identity. See IV.III.6. There is no doubt that Hume is indebted to Locke on this and, as we have seen, on a number of other points.

7.It is clear from Section II, that Hume takes over Locke's use of the term 'identity' as consisting in a thing's sameness with itself over a period of time(T.200-1). Locke, *op.cit.*, II.XXVII.1, writes that 'when considering any thing as existing at any determin'd time and place, we compare it with it self existing at another time'. 'Person', Locke says, stands for 'a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places'(II.XXVII.9).

8.Locke's theory of personal identity, discussed in the chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity', *op.cit.*, II.XXVII, contends that the perceived identity of a person is a matter of having the 'same consciousness', and this, for Locke, is a matter of memory, rather than a matter of the simplicity of any immaterial substance to which the conscious phenomena belong: 'For the same consciousness being preserv'd, whether in the same or different Substances, the personal Identity is preserv'd'(II.XXVII.13). As far as the consciousness 'which is inseparable from thinking' can be 'extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*; it is the same *self* now it was then; and 'tis by the same *self* with this present one than now reflects on it, that that Action was done.'(II.XXVII.9). Joseph Butler is among those of Locke's opponents who suggest that memory merely 'discovers' personal identity.

9.David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp.128-9.

10.*Ibid.*, p.129.

## 4.2 Hume's 'Recantation' and His Critics

11.Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941), p.v.

12.*Ibid.*, pp.555-58.

13.D.G.C. Macnabb, *David Hume: His Theory of Knowledge and Morality* (London: Hutchinson, 1951), pp.251-52. A similar case is pressed by Wade Robison in 'Hume on Personal Identity' in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol.12, No.2, April, 1974, pp.181-193. Robison does not argue that a perception or bundle of perceptions cannot be aware of itself, but points instead to Hume's frequent appeal to an 'active self' capable of performing various actions, including mistaking one disposition or operation for another. Passmore, *op.cit.*, pp.82-2, puts a variation of the same objection. The fundamental problem, according to Passmore, is 'what it is which confuses succession with identity; and, equally, what it is which comes to recognise that succession *has been* confused with identity'. In the following sections I attempt to show how Hume could have responded to these criticisms.

14.Nelson Pike, 'Hume's Bundle Theory of the Self: A Limited Defence' in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume Four, Number Two, 1967, p.162.

15.Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.82.

16.Pike, *op.cit.*, p.164.

17.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.132.

18.*Ibid.*, p.138.

19.*Ibid.*

20.*Ibid.*, p.140.

21.*Ibid.*, p.136.

22.*Ibid.*, p.137. Stroud goes on to clarify his point by remarking that to say that the existence of subsets of perceptions is, for Hume, 'inexplicable' 'is to say that it is inconsistent with the theory of ideas, which he takes to be the only way to make sense of psychological

phenomena'(p.140). I go on to give reasons for questioning Stroud's assessment of this alleged 'inconsistency'.

23.The point is made by Don Garrett against Stroud in his article 'Hume on Personal Identity' in *The Philosophical Review*, XC, No. 3, July 1981, a revised and somewhat extended version of which appears in his *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p.163-186.

24.Stroud, *op.cit.*, p.126.

25.Garrett, *op.cit.*, p.355.

26.*Ibid.*, p.352.

27.*Ibid.*, p.354.

28.*Ibid.*, p.356.

29.This appears to be Kant's criticism of Hume's theory of personal identity. Kant, *op.cit.*, B132-3, writes that *my* representations 'must conform to the condition under which alone they *can* stand together in one universal self-consciousness, because otherwise they would not all without exception belong to me'. I have argued that the source of Hume's worries about personal identity was his awareness that his theory required some supplement of this sort, accounting for the unity of consciousness, but that he had left himself no scope in which to give it.

## Conclusion

The difficulty of reconciling Hume's use and endorsement of sceptical arguments concerning the operations of the understanding with his constructive philosophical programme is perhaps the chief interpretive puzzle of Hume's philosophy. Passmore characterises Hume's scepticism as an approving response to the Pyrrhonian philosophy described by Bayle as '[A]n attempt to run down all science and to reject not only the testimony of Sense, but that of Reason too'(1). In Passmore's view, the scepticism comes eventually to overwhelm Hume's naturalistic programme, 'threatening the security of the social sciences, undermining common sense as well as metaphysics, opening the gates so wide to arbitrariness that the metaphysician could ride in as freely as the scientist'(2). There appears to the reader to be a *prima facie* lack of consistency between Hume's sceptical conclusions and his ambitions to found a science of man. Hume seems to concede as much when he writes that in attempting to trace up the human understanding to its first principles 'we find it to lead us into such sentiments, as seem to turn to ridicule all our past pains and industry, and to discourage us from future enquiries'(T.266). By the end of Section II of Part IV, Hume is prepared to endorse a number of obviously Pyrrhonian sentiments, complaining that the sceptical doubt he has introduced 'both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cur'd, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chace it away'(T.218). He admits that he is unable to conceive 'how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system'(T.217). These sentiments mark a significant reversal of mood. Hume no longer seems prepared to take for granted in his reasonings the common sense belief in the continued and distinct existence of body for, he says, '[W]hat can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falsehood? And how can we justify to ourselves any belief we repose in them?'(T.218) He nevertheless indicates his intention of proceeding upon the basis of the supposition of the existence of both an external and an internal world. It is far from clear from this whether, or to what extent, Hume endorses the conclusions of these Pyrrhonian arguments. In this final chapter, I consider Hume's own assessment of the sceptical arguments of Part IV, and the role they play in his constructive programme.

The same doubts Hume aired at the end of Section II recur in the final section of Part IV, the conclusion to the first book of the *Treatise*, and the same endorsement of Pyrrhonian arguments can be found in the *Enquiry*(E.153-4). In the *Abstract* to the *Treatise*, Hume describes the philosophy contained in the book as 'very sceptical'(T.657). By the beginning of Section VII, Hume confesses himself reduced 'almost to despair' at the 'wretched condition, weakness, and disorder' to which his Pyrrhonian arguments have exposed the faculties and operations of the understanding which he must employ in his enquiries(T.264). The force of the Pyrrhonian doubt raises serious questions about the viability of Hume's philosophical

enterprise and, in particular, of his attempts to correct and improve causal reasoning by turning it on itself. Hume nevertheless continues to endorse the activity of philosophy, as he understands it, and to prefer philosophy to the excesses of the superstitious and the metaphysicians (T.271). The difficulty for interpreters is to explain why, having called into question a number of fundamental areas of commitment in human cognitive life, Hume not only fails to reject the problematic ways in which we speak and think about these areas, but continues to write as though he too meant to endorse them. By the end of Section VII, Hume has recovered his appetite for philosophy. This is partly because, as he argues, philosophy is natural and pleasurable for its own sake. But, as we will see, he has a more important reason in mind.

In Chapter Two, I characterised the upshot of Hume's extended application of causal reasoning to itself as, in the main, constructive. For the purposes of Part III of Book One, Hume is prepared to endorse those of our central habits of mind which can bear up under their own standards of evaluation. Hume acknowledges that a defence of reasoning must ultimately involve reasoning and that any adequate rule must be capable of bearing its own survey (T.620). The investigations of Part III lead Hume to formulate and endorse a set of normative rules by which to judge of causes and effects. These rules, the rules of inductive argument, represent a number of important habits of mind which Hume understands to be capable of surviving their own reflexive scrutiny<sup>(3)</sup>. They are the product of causal reasoning and are supported by that reasoning. This is the most obviously constructive of Hume's reflexive applications of probable argument. It is important to note that Hume's intentions in Part III are largely nonsceptical. He sees the self-application of causal reasoning as a means of improving and correcting our unreflective judgments about causes and effects. There are strong textual grounds for resisting the positivist or Humean readings of the key sections of Part III. Hume's 'sceptical attack on induction'<sup>(4)</sup> in Section VI in fact contains not a single reference to scepticism of any sort. The interpretation I recommend avoids attributing to Hume any substantive sceptical thesis about induction. As I understand it, the argument is an attempt to show that it is the imagination and not the argument-forming faculty of reason that is causally responsible for our adoption of induction. It does not raise the normative question of the justifiability of induction or draw the contentious conclusion that the reasonableness of induction depends upon its justification by argument. Hume is nevertheless aware of the normative question and he raises it, in a different context, in Section VII.

Only in Sections IV and VII of Part IV does Hume express the sort of sceptical sentiments about causal reasoning that commentators have wanted to attribute to him at the end of Section VI of Part III. In the conclusion to Book One, Hume restates an argument first sketched in Section IV '*Of the modern philosophy*'. He comments that he has found there to be 'a direct and total opposition betwixt...those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body' (T.231).

Causal reasoning, when prosecuted justly, leads us to the conclusion that secondary qualities are mind-dependent effects without any independent existence, and that conclusion, Hume argues, also undermines belief in primary qualities(T.231). Hume offers a probable argument for the conclusion that secondary qualities are not independent qualities of objects but internal existences. He then uses a Berkeleyan argument to show that we can conceive bodies to have primary qualities only if we can conceive them to have some secondary qualities(T.227-9). We can form no adequate idea of body without them. The upshot of this, according to Hume, is the denial of existence to matter. When we reason from cause and effect, he writes, we are led to 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'(T.231). After the exclusion of colours, sounds, heat and cold, 'there remains nothing, which can afford us a just and consistent idea of body'(T.229). Instead of explaining the operations of external objects upon the senses 'we utterly annihilate all these objects'(T.228). Hume does not, however, suggest that we abandon or reject our commitment to this set of beliefs. He finds these operations to be 'equally natural and necessary in the human mind' with those of causal reasoning, although 'in some circumstances they are directly contrary'(T.266). Rather than argue for the rejection of either one, or both, of these commitments, Hume instead points to a general diminution of confidence in the faculties and operations of the understanding, and in causal inference, in particular. The 'total opposition' of these operations in the circumstances Hume describes calls into question the epistemic value of inductive argument. Hume writes that the '*intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another'(T.268-9). The 'principles of custom and reasoning' which are 'the foundation of all our thoughts and actions'(T.225) appear to contradict and subvert one another, leaving the philosopher with little choice 'but betwixt a false reason and none at all'(T.267). Instead of explaining the operations of external objects, the modern philosophy leads to 'the most extravagant scepticism concerning them'(T.228).

The memory, senses and the understanding are 'all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas' and it is this principle which 'when implicitly follow'd (as it must be) in all its variations' makes us reason from causes to effects and convinces us of the continued existence of external objects(T.266). The same principle dictates that it is impossible to reason justly from causes and effects and at the same time to believe that objects have a continued and distinct existence. We are confronted with a choice between these two equally fundamental but perfectly incompatible operations of mind. If we follow the philosopher in preferring neither of them, but successively assenting to both, then 'with what confidence can we afterwards usurp that glorious title, when we thus knowingly embrace a manifest contradiction?'(T.266) Hume had earlier commented that his purpose in presenting the

arguments of 'that fantastic sect' of Pyrrhonian sceptics had been to convince the reader of the truth of his hypothesis *'that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom'*(T.183) but the inconsistent dictates of this principle now make our reliance upon it seem philosophically unsupportable. To assent successively to both would disqualify us from any claim upon the title of philosopher, but to assent to neither would mean the ruin of human nature(T.225). Hume restates one of the key conclusions of Part III. The tie which connects cause and effect, Hume observes, has been found to lie in nothing but 'that determination of the mind, which is acquired by custom, and causes us to make a transition from an object to its usual attendant, and from the impression of one to the lively idea of the other'(T.267). But such a discovery not only cuts us off from any hope of attaining satisfaction in our search for 'the causes of every phaenomenon', but 'even prevents our very wishes; since it appears, that when we say we desire to know the ultimate and operating principle, as something, which resides in the external object, we either contradict ourselves, or talk without a meaning'(T.267).

The supposition of some 'ultimate principle' binding together cause and effect in such a way so that one follows as an infallible consequence of the other rests on 'an illusion of the imagination'. These illusions are among the 'numberless infirmities' which are common to human nature. The question arises of 'how far we ought to yield to these illusions'(T.267). If we assent to all the trivial suggestions of the fancy we run into absurdity and obscurity such that 'we must at last become ashamed of our credulity', but if, on the other hand, we take a decision to reject them all, and adhere only to 'the general and more establish'd properties of the imagination' we find this resolution too is attended 'with the most fatal consequences'(T.267). The understanding 'when it acts alone, entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life'(T.267-8). Philosophy, when guided only by the principles of reason or the understanding, entirely undermines itself. The 'general and more establish'd' principles of the imagination are those used in demonstration and probable argument. When the understanding acts in accordance with its own most general principles, as it does in demonstrative reasoning, it not only reduces all knowledge to probability, but it weakens the evidence of any particular judgment 'till at last there remains nothing of the original probability' and belief and evidence are totally extinguished(T.182-3). In any calculation there is a probability of error, and with every estimation of the probability of that error, a new probability that we have erred, and a further probability of error in our new estimation, weakening the evidence for the first judgment until, at last, there remains nothing of the original evidence. Hume's argument has two steps. The first, which shows how the probability of error reduces knowledge to probability, applies only to demonstration. The second, which shows how any estimation of probability reduces to nothing, applies to any probable argument. The reflexive application of causal reasoning, for all the promise of Part III, leads, in Part IV, to the subversion of common sense belief and the 'utter annihilation' of external objects(T.228). Causal inference subverts belief and is itself

subverted by its direct opposition to other natural and necessary operations of the understanding. Should we then 'establish it for a general maxim, that no refin'd or elaborate reasoning is ever to be received?'(T.268) If we do, we 'cut off entirely all science and philosophy'. Not only this, but we expressly contradict ourselves, since 'this maxim must be built on the preceding reasoning, which will be allowed to be sufficiently refin'd and metaphysical'(T.268). What party, Hume asks, 'shall we choose among these difficulties? If we embrace this principle, and condemn all refin'd reasoning, we run into the most manifest absurdities. If we reject it in favour of these reasonings, we subvert entirely the human understanding.'(T.268) If we choose the former, we choose a 'false reason'; if we choose the latter we subvert all reasoning and must make do with 'no reason at all'.

Since the difficulty is seldom thought of, or if it is, it is soon forgotten, these 'refin'd reflections', Hume says, can have little influence upon us. The doubts which reduce the philosopher to 'the most deplorable condition imaginable, environ'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty' are soon left behind in the study for '[M]ost fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium'(T.269). When, after some avocation and lively impression of the senses, the philosopher returns to his speculations, he finds them 'cold, strain'd, and ridiculous' and, in his splenetic humour, is ready to throw his books and papers into the fire(T.269). The philosopher finds himself 'absolutely and necessarily determin'd to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life'(T.269). In his blind submission to the senses and to the understanding he best shows his 'sceptical disposition and principles'(T.269). Hume is not, however, prepared to let matters rest here. Any resolution on behalf of the philosopher to rest content with 'this indolent belief in the general maxims of the world' would all but extinguish any hope of supplying any rules or habits of mind which are endorsable. Hume complains that it is a 'manifest contradiction' that refined reflections have little influence upon us, while we cannot 'establish it for a rule, that they ought not to have any influence'(T.268). The philosopher continues to look for endorsable rules and to be troubled by the contradictions that threaten them. Those who arrive by reasoning at the resolution that refined reasoning ought not to have any influence on us, 'expressly contradict' themselves by building their conclusion upon reasons as 'refined and metaphysical' as those they reject. Those who unreflectingly adopt the general maxims of the world 'manifestly' contradict themselves, for in doing so they commit themselves to a norm-like habit of mind which they cannot establish as a rule. Hume appears to have thought that human beings tend naturally to some norm-like form of commitment in their thought and behaviour. Commitments of this sort are inevitable for creatures like us so that any attempt to do without them by committing unthinkingly to natural impulse will involve what Hume calls a 'manifest contradiction'. Any attempt to evade the illusions of the metaphysicians by adopting the common maxims of everyday life leads back into contradiction. This is not a state of affairs with which the philosopher can rest content. He is

looking for a set of commitments to which he can give his assent in good faith and without self-contradiction.

The 'philosophical melancholy and delirium' which results from refined reflection upon the operations and faculties of the understanding gives way to a resolution 'never more to renounce the pleasures of life for the sake of reasoning and philosophy'(T.269). But this mood or 'bent of mind' cannot last. The sentiments of 'spleen and indolence' which characterise the philosopher's submission to his senses and understanding are soon supplanted by a return of his natural appetite for knowledge and his natural propensity for seeking endorsable rules or habits of mind:

I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundation of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me. I am uneasy to think I approve of one object, and disapprove another; call one thing beautiful, and another deform'd; decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, without knowing upon what principles I proceed. I am concern'd for the good condition of the learned world, which lies under such a deplorable ignorance in all these particulars.(T.270-1)

The philosopher begins, once again, to feel a curiosity and ambition of 'contributing to the instruction of mankind'(T.271). He feels naturally motivated to return to the books and papers of his study and to acquire a name by his inventions and discoveries. These sentiments 'spring up naturally in my present disposition; and shou'd I endeavour to banish them, by attaching myself to any other business or diversion, I *feel* I shou'd be a loser in point of pleasure; and this is the origin of my philosophy'(T.271).

It is almost impossible 'for the mind of man to rest, like those of beasts, in that narrow circle of objects, which are the subject of daily conversation and action'(T.271). We are naturally motivated by 'the love of truth' to 'fix our attention or exert our genius; which of all other exercises of the mind is the most pleasant and agreeable'(T.448-9). We do so only partly from a concern with the end itself, but were philosophers 'convinc'd, that their discoveries were of no consequence, they would entirely lose all relish for their studies'(T.450). To avoid the excesses of superstition and to give our enterprise some hope of succeeding we ought 'to deliberate concerning the choice of our guide, and ought to prefer that which is safest and most agreeable'. In this respect, Hume says, 'I make bold to recommend philosophy, and shall not scruple to give it the preference to superstition of every kind or denomination'(T.271). While superstition is more readily latched onto by popular opinion, philosophy 'can present us only with mild and moderate sentiments' and is unlikely to disturb us in the conduct of our

lives(T.271-2). Generally speaking, the errors of religious superstition 'are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous'(T.272).

Nature can dispel the clouds of doubt which afflict the sceptical philosopher, but only once he has arrived at the '*intense* view' of the 'manifold contradictions in human reason' and is ready to reject all belief and reasoning. Nature provides distraction and a relaxation of 'this bent of mind'. But the mood of spleen and indolence itself proves unstable and is overtaken by a return of the philosopher's appetite and ambition for learning and discovery. The natural course of our sentiments brings about a return to reasoning and philosophy. We cannot forbear a curiosity to be acquainted with the causes of the 'several passions and inclinations' which actuate and govern human nature. But the renewal of philosophical curiosity does not mark a return to the arrogant self-sufficiency of the solitary thinker or to the self-stultifying Pyrrhonian reflections which left the philosophical thinker 'in the most deplorable condition imaginable'. Reason, which 'first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority'(T.186), gives way to the 'serious good-humour'd disposition' of 'my mind all collected within itself'(T.270). The philosopher who has endured the despair of Pyrrhonian doubt and the spleen and indolence of his nature recognises where his natural sentiments have led him and resolves that '[W]here reason is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. Where it does not, it can never have any title to operate upon us'(T.270). This new resolution is the result not of prescriptive, authoritative reason, but of a natural inclination to reasoning and philosophy, and a recognition that the best means of satisfying that inclination is by adopting the safest and most agreeable guide to our deliberations. By attending to our natural inclination to these sorts of operations we stand a better chance of satisfying our philosophical curiosity than by adhering only to the 'general and more establish'd properties of the imagination' or by embracing the principle that no elaborate or refined reasoning be received. The philosopher, in this new stage, does not endorse the rejection of all refined and elaborate reasoning, but insists that '[I]n all the incidents of life we ought to preserve our scepticism'(T.270). It ought only to be 'upon sceptical principles, and from an inclination, which we feel to the employing ourselves after that manner' that we indulge a belief that fire warms or water refreshes. The scepticism Hume recommends is not the Pyrrhonian scepticism of much of Part IV but 'a more *mitigated* scepticism or *academical* philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism, or *excessive* scepticism, when its undisguised doubts are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection'(E.161).

The mitigated form of scepticism Hume advocates is the result of the combined and conflicting influences of Pyrrhonian scepticism and natural human instinct. Philosophy, Hume says, 'would render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it'(T.657). Hume does not believe the Pyrrhonian arguments can be refuted. But this does not lead him to

endorse their conclusions. He recommends the rejection of those principles of the imagination which are 'changeable, weak and irregular' in favour of those which are 'permanent, irresistible, and universal' such as the customary transition of cause and effect and the belief in the continued and distinct existence of body. These principles, Hume writes, 'are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin'(T.225). His response to the contradiction between these two principles is not to reject or abandon either one, or both, of them, but to urge the endorsement of both, on the grounds of our natural propensity to make use of them. But the true philosopher or sceptic, having made the journey through despair and indolent belief, to an eventual reconciliation with reason and philosophy, recognises his reliance on these propensities for what it is. As a result, he is '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'(T.273). His philosophy takes on a share of the 'gross earthy mixture' of common life(T.272), and he brings to his researches a due caution and 'deference to the public'(T.274). Hume acknowledges that this mitigated version of scepticism cannot be justified by argument. No one who does not already have the propensity to reason causally will recognise an argument for its adoption. It must, nevertheless, be a token of a rule's adequacy that it be capable of enduring its own reflexive scrutiny. The greater self-consciousness of the 'true philosopher' makes him more confident in the endorsement and adoption of rules which can bear their own survey. An awareness of the 'strange infirmities of human understanding' also inspires him with a modesty and reserve in the judgment of his own opinions(E.161) and a resistance to the errors and absurdities of false philosophy(T.267). Once we have set aside the 'chimerical systems' of the metaphysicians, and weighed our doubts as carefully as our convictions, we might still hope 'to establish a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hop'd for) might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination'(T.272).

The true philosopher, while recognising that he cannot pretend 'by any arguments of philosophy' to maintain the veracity of these principles or habits of mind(T.187), nevertheless continues to methodize and correct the 'reflections of common life'(E.162). Philosophy, under Hume's reforms, confines itself to common life 'and to such subjects as fall under daily practice and experience'(E.162). It is the spectre of Pyrrhonian doubt that brings the philosopher to this salutary determination. We cannot give a satisfactory reason why we believe 'after a thousand experiments, that a stone will fall, or fire burn' or 'ever satisfy ourselves concerning any determination, which we may form, with regard to the origin of worlds, and the situation of nature, from, and to eternity'(E.162). Any hypothesis pretending 'to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature', or of matter, ought to be rejected 'as presumptuous and chimerical'(T.xvii). The chief concern of Hume's discussion of necessary connection was to undermine the idea that we have or could have any conception of what it would be for one object or event to be causally dependent on another in such a way that one

is rendered an infallible consequence of the other. Not only are the 'ultimate springs and principles' shut up from human curiosity, but it is 'entirely incomprehensible' to us how one object operates on another(E.33). The most perfect natural philosophy 'only staves off our ignorance a little longer'(E.31). Hume presents a number of naturalistic explanations of belief which explain both how we come to have the ideas we have, and how we come to mistake those ideas for those which we do not. Hume has been thought of as an entirely unmitigated sceptic with regard to several of these areas of commitment. I have attempted to show how mistaken this view of Hume is. For Hume, the question is not really about whether or not there are such things as causal connections, or lasting selves or bodies, it is about the way in which we understand these things, and the role our understanding of them can play in a scientific understanding of the world or ourselves. Hume's main interest lies in showing how, on the strictly limited basis of our impressions and ideas, we come to talk and think about the world and ourselves as we do.

Hume's sceptical arguments and conclusions emerge as part of a naturalistic programme of causally explaining our fundamental areas of commitment and belief. He never suggests that we reject or abandon the problematic ways in which we speak and think about these areas. He does not think that by explaining the authority of our beliefs in terms of a number of natural propensities he undermines them. Reasoning shows us that we stand a better chance of success in our enquiries if we attend to these propensities than by following either of the two other principles he considers. Our natural propensity to reason and believe as we do will lead us, Hume thinks, to conclude that by following these natural propensities we will be most likely to satisfy our philosophical curiosity. It would be a mistake to see Hume as joining or wholeheartedly endorsing the conclusions of 'that fantastic sect' of 'excessive' or Pyrrhonian sceptics. He is quite some way, about as far as can be, from throwing off every belief not grounded in reason(5). The sceptical arguments of Part IV are presented as part of a causal explanation of the sort of mitigated or true scepticism Hume ultimately recommends. Hume is preparing the ground for his explanation of 'the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me' and of 'the principles of moral good and evil' in Books Two and Three of the *Treatise*. In doing so, Hume hopes to 'contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculations of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctly those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction'(T.273).

To follow Hume in his 'future speculations', the reader must compose his temper 'from that spleen, and invigorate it from that indolence' which sometimes prevails upon it. If his mood inclines him still to indolence and impatience 'let him follow his inclination, and wait the returns of application and good humour' for, as Hume has shown, '[T]he conduct of a man, who studies philosophy in this careless manner, 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'(T.273). If scepticism convinces us of the many infirmities of human reason it ought to lead us to be as cautious in our doubts as in our convictions. The true sceptic brings a degree of doubt, caution and modesty to 'all kinds of scrutiny and decision'(T.162). If we are philosophers 'it ought only to be upon sceptical principles, and from an inclination which we feel to the employing ourselves after that manner'(T.270). Reason, when it acts alone, leaves 'not the lowest degree of evidence' in any belief, either in philosophy or in common life. Only once we have been fully convinced of the force of Pyrrhonian arguments concerning the faculties and operations of the understanding, and of the infirmity of reason itself, are we ready to renew our commitment to our central habits and operations of mind. It is with a notion of 'the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding'(T.657) that we put out to sea 'in the same leaky weather-beaten vessel' as before, conscious of our past errors and perplexities, but with renewed purpose and resolution(T.263-4). Hume continued to endorse the pursuit of philosophy, and to do so, because, and not in spite, of his commitment to scepticism. It is upon these principles that Hume proposed 'a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security'(T.xvi).

## Notes

1. Pierre Bayle, *Dictionary*, art. Arcesilas (Note G), cited by John Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.132.
2. Passmore, *op.cit.*, p.151.
3. Annette Baier, *op.cit.*, pp.93-97, shows that Hume observes each of the eight rules in the sections leading up to his endorsement of the rules in Section XV.
4. Robert J. Fogelin, *op.cit.*, p.38.
5. See Thomas Reid, *op.cit.*, p.183.

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