HUME'S 'PSYCHOLOGY' OF ACTION

by

John Joseph Bricke

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F O R E W A R D

In this study I am principally concerned with Hume's discussion of a number of related topics in the philosophy of mind, including emotions, desires, volitions, and actions. I am particularly concerned to elucidate Hume's views on the nature of motivational explanations of human actions, and I have discussed at length the question of whether, or in what sense, according to Hume, we may speak of free actions. I also consider, in some detail, Hume's account of the laws of association and of mental dispositions.

To prosecute this study successfully I have found it necessary to consider several methodological questions. In the first chapter I attempt to clarify the character of the inquiry in which Hume believes himself to be engaged. Having concluded that Hume looks upon the main part of his inquiry as one which we would today describe as scientific, I discuss, in the second chapter, Hume's theory of scientific explanation.

All references within parentheses in the text are to the Selby-Bigge editions of _A Treatise of Human Nature_ and _Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals_. I have used the following abbreviations: (a) T, 67: _A Treatise of Human Nature_, p. 67; (b) EHU,55: _Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding_, p. 55; (c) EPM, 200: _Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals_, p. 200. All other references are placed in footnotes.

In the Bibliography I have mentioned those books or articles which, as I am conscious, have influenced my interpretation of Hume, or my discussion of the philosophical issues raised, or both.

CHAPTER I

ANALYSIS

1. The Science of Human Nature

One of the principal difficulties in understanding Hume's *Treatise* is that of knowing both what Hume is trying to do and what he is actually doing. Put very roughly, the difficulty is one of determining whether Hume is doing philosophy or science. Is what Hume has to say in the *Treatise* to be read as a contribution to metaphysics, philosophical logic, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mathematics, philosophical psychology, ethical theory, and so on, or as a contribution to some branch of the social sciences, such as psychology or sociology? This question is a vexing one, and is complicated by the fact that neither Hume nor any of his contemporaries seem to have been alive to the importance of making these distinctions. I shall make a start at answering this question by considering what Hume has to say about the "science of human nature" in which he claims to be engaged.

Hume uses the expression "science of human nature" in at least two senses. On the one hand, the expression designates a group of inquiries whose object, generally, is human behavior. Thus, in the "Advertisement to Books I and II" he mentions the examination of the human understanding, the passions, morals, politics, and criticism as the subjects which will comprise his *Treatise of Human Nature*. (T, xii) Later he refers to the "four sciences of *Logic*, *Morals*, *Criticism*, and *Politics*", and states that in them "is comprehended almost every thing, which it can in any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind". (T, xix-xx)

A discrepancy between the two lists should be noticed: the first mentions the examination of the understanding and the passions; in place of this the second mentions logic. This suggests that perhaps Hume's "logic" comprises both these studies. Though this is a peculiar reading of "logic", it is lent some support by Hume's remark that these two studies "make a compleat chain of reasoning by themselves". (T, xii) Hume adduces this fact as justification for publishing Books I and II of the Treatise as an independent piece of work. I shall offer another reason for taking this view of Hume's "logic" after I have considered what he says about the dependence of various sciences on the science of human nature.

At other places Hume seems to use "the science of human nature" as synonymous with "logic". He says that "Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of man". (T, xix) In saying this he is not making the unlikely claim that the study of mathematics, for example, depends on the study of politics. Rather, he clearly intends to assert the dependence of the three sciences mentioned on the study of logic (and thus on only one of the sciences of human nature). These three sciences are said to depend on the science of man because "they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties". (T, xix) But, as Hume points out, "the sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas". (T, xix) This makes it reasonably plain that mathematics, natural philosophy, and natural religion are not alleged to depend on the science of human nature, in the above sense of logic, morals, politics, and criticism, but on the science of

human nature in the restricted sense of logic.

Admitting this use of "the science of human nature" also makes it possible to interpret Hume's reference to "a dependence on the knowledge of man" of "the other sciences, whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate /than is that of mathematics, etc./". (T, xix) Some distinction is implied here between "the knowledge of human nature" and other sciences which have a close or intimate connection with human nature. This is plausibly interpreted as a distinction between logic, on the one hand, and morals, politics, and criticism, on the other. This is to say that some of the "sciences of human nature" (in the broad sense of that expression) have a dependence on the "science of human nature" (in the sense of logic).

The reason which Hume gives for the dependence of all the sciences, including the sciences of politics, morals, and criticism, on logic, does not, however, seem consonant with my earlier suggestion that Hume's logic includes a study of the passions as well as of the understanding. There is no particular reason to think that a study of the passions will contribute to an understanding of the "powers and faculties" of men that is requisite for conducting the other sciences. It does not seem likely that Hume is thinking of the study of the passions when he says that mathematics, natural philosophy, and natural religion would be improved and changed "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, xix) Thus it seems that we must distinguish a broad and a restricted use of the term "logic". In its broad use, the term stands for the study of the understanding

and the passions; in its restricted use it refers to only the first of these studies.

These inconsistencies in Hume's use of the expressions "science of human nature" and "logic" are connected, I would submit, with certain ambiguities in Hume's account of the way in which other sciences depend on the science of human nature or on logic. Hume distinguishes, though not very clearly, two rather different sorts of dependence. The first sort of dependence is that in which any science depends on that other science which deals with "the extent and force of human understanding", and "the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings". (T, xix) This is the sort of dependence Hume most often stresses. Moreover, it would seem that when a science is said to be dependent in this sense it is said to depend on logic, in the restricted sense of that term. All the sciences are dependent in this sense, because human beings are "the beings, that reason". (T, xix)

The other sort of dependence is that which obtains between some science and the science of human nature by virtue of the fact that the dependent science is a science about human beings. Such sciences are said to be dependent on the science of human nature because human beings are the "objects, concerning which we reason". (T, xix) Those sciences which depend on the science of human nature in this sense include the sciences of natural religion, morals, politics, criticism, and perhaps others as well. Two things may be noted about this dependence. When these sciences are said to depend on the science of human nature, the expression "science of human nature" must be being used in the restricted sense, as not referring to more than a study of the under-

standing and the passions. Otherwise, Hume would be saying that politics depends on politics, and so on. Moreover, it is likely that Hume here intends to suggest that such sciences as morals and politics depend on an understanding of the basic elements of human psychology, which basic elements are discovered in the science of logic, taken to include the study of understanding and the passions. This is certainly suggested by Hume's insistence that the studies of the understanding and the passions "make a compleat chain of reasoning by themselves". (T, xii) It is also supported by the fact that Hume's actual discussions of morals, politics, and criticism do depend on his prior discussions of the understanding and the passions. It is these two latter studies which provide Hume with the psychological theory which underpins his theories of morals, politics, and criticism. In short, all the sciences depend on the sort of inquiry Hume conducts in Book I of the Treatise; some of the sciences, namely, those concerned with human behavior, depend on the inquiries conducted in Book II as well as Book I of the Treatise.

To understand Hume's enterprise it is not, however, sufficient merely to know what sciences are alleged to be dependent on what other sciences. We must also know how the alleged dependence is to be characterized. As is only to be expected, Hume is not very clear about the nature of the dependence. I shall restrict myself to drawing attention to some of the ways in which Hume seems to envisage it. One of the sorts of dependence Hume seems to be thinking of is the dependence of the lower-level laws in a scientific explanatory system on higher-level laws in that system. Read in this way, Hume is suggesting

that the laws which govern human thinking and human emotional life are the most general laws in terms of which the laws which operate in the realms of morals, politics, and criticism are to be understood. Morals, politics, and criticism would thus be relatively specialized sciences of human nature when compared with the empirical study of the understanding and the passions. It is in this way that some of the sciences of human nature are dependent on others.

The dependence of <u>all</u> the sciences on the science of human nature must be read in a different way. Hume seems to suggest that since all the sciences, whether their subject matter be human behavior or the movements of the planets, are forms of inquiry, concerned with coming to know something, their procedures for coming to know should be studied in their own right. This study of cognitive activity of any sort is the proper province of logic, in the restricted sense. Regrettably, however, Hume tends to think of his logic as itself a scientific inquiry, roughly equivalent to what we would today call the psychology of thinking. That is, he looks upon his logic as an inquiry into what takes place in our minds when we make inductive or deductive inferences, when we make judgments, when we come to have beliefs, when we form ideas of this or that. Hume apparently thinks that a study of the psychology of thinking is necessary for the successful prosecution of any other scientific inquiry, whether that be mathematics, natural philosophy, or the study of political systems.

This way of presenting Hume's views on the dependence of all the sciences on the science of logic, though faithful to much that he says, is, however, seriously misleading. Though it fits reasonably well his account of belief, it fails to do full justice to his remarks on the difference between matters

of fact and the relations of ideas, or the relations between impressions and ideas, and other central elements in his philosophical system. Clearly Hume was intending to give what we would today call a psychological account of thinking; but he was also trying to do other things as well. Though Hume's conceptual scheme was not such as to enable him to make the distinction, he was in fact discussing topics both in psychology and in philosophy, especially the philosophy of knowledge. Though Hume certainly did not make this distinction, we must make it, if we are to understand what Hume was actually about. He is not simply saying that all the sciences depend on a scientific investigation of the laws which govern our thinking. He is rather, at least at times, asserting that any science is in some way dependent on a philosophical inquiry into such topics as the nature of knowledge, of truth, of induction and deduction, and others as well. This in part is to say that all the sciences are somehow dependent on a philosophical investigation of such things as the concepts and the forms of inference used in those sciences. Science, that is, depends on the philosophy of science.

There are, then, at least three ways in which Hume talks of the dependence of one science on another. Specialized sciences depend on more general sciences in the sense that the laws of the former are lower-level laws in the explanatory system of laws of which the laws of the latter are the more general laws. All sciences are alleged to depend on a scientific inquiry into the (psychological) laws of human thinking. All sciences are alleged to depend on the study of "logic", in the sense that an adequate philosophy of science is of use to the conduct of a scientific inquiry. Somehow or other, the philosophy of, say, the

social sciences is supposed to facilitate the doing of psychology, sociology, politics, and the other social sciences. Presumably it does this by elucidating the character of the laws of these sciences, the forms of the arguments proper to them, and the fundamental concepts of which they make use.

It is important to realize that Hume is thinking of these various sorts of dependence between one science and another if one is to correctly interpret what he thinks himself to be doing. He is, after all, in Books I and II of the Treatise, engaged in doing that logic or science of human nature on which all the other sciences are said to depend. Presumably, then, he is doing each of the essential things to which we have referred. Presumably he is stating the general laws of human psychology, paying particular attention to the laws of human thinking, and presenting a philosophy of science. In fact, as we shall see in the course of this dissertation, Hume is doing all of these things. I would particularly stress that he is doing the first. According to Passmore, one can think of Book I of the Treatise, without anachronism, as "Hume's methodology of the social sciences".[1] This remark, though illuminating, is misleading in at least one important respect. Hume is not only offering a methodology of the social sciences; he is also doing social science (at least if the social sciences include psychology). That is to say, Hume is not only giving a philosophical account of the empirical science(s) of human conduct; he also considers himself to be making such an inquiry.

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[1] John Passmore, Hume's Intentions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 6.

There is, in fact, a serious ambiguity in Hume's project. He is apparently trying to use a method of empirical inquiry (psychology) in order to give a philosophical account of such empirical inquiries. He does not clearly see that the services which he hopes to provide by his science of human nature cannot be provided by using psychology. Hume fails, in fact, to see the difference between the second and the third sorts of dependence described above. He does not, as Passmore suggests, try to reduce logic to psychology;[1] it is more accurate to say that he failed to notice that there is a difference. It is this which frequently entangles Hume in confusion. It is precisely because Hume is providing a methodology of the social sciences, and engaging in at least one of them (psychology of an introspective, armchair variety), and failing to see the difference, that he can be so unclear about the precise sort of dependence which the other sciences have on the science of human nature.

Hume's science of human nature, is, then, a composite with both philosophical and scientific elements, and Hume fails to see the difference between the two. (This, of course, does not mean that he denies the differences between them.) At times, in fact, Hume speaks in terms that are appropriate only if his investigation is a scientific one. This is particularly, though not exclusively, true of his account of the passions in Book II. Recognizing this fact, it is essential, if we are not to misinterpret Hume, to have a quite precise understanding of the scientific project in which he believes himself to be engaged. To this end, I have devoted the remainder of this chapter, as well

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[1]". . ./H/e /i.e. Hume/ is bound to argue that logical relationships are reducible to psychological connexions . . .". Passmore, p. 12.

as the next, to a discussion of what may be called methodological questions. In this chapter I shall consider some of Hume's objectives in the *Treatise*, as well as the techniques he uses to secure these objectives. This requires a discussion of his views on language as well as of the crucial distinction between matters of fact and relations of ideas. In the next chapter I shall consider three topics in his philosophy of science: the nature of scientific explanation; the character of scientific laws; and the notion of probability.

2. Confusion and Clarification

An important part of Hume's programme in the *Treatise* is the clarification of the concepts with which we describe, explain and evaluate human conduct, concepts such as those of causation, emotion, motivation, freedom and responsibility. Hume suggests that the analysis of these concepts is a necessary or at least useful preliminary to the scientific study of human conduct. It is Hume's conviction that the failure to make such a conceptual inquiry seriously hampers the attempt to construct an adequate and coherent body of scientific knowledge about human behavior. Unless people are sufficiently clear about what causes, and emotions, and motives, and freedom, and responsibility, are unless they are clear what is meant by the words, which refer to them, they are apt to fall into more or less serious confusions. Such a conceptual inquiry is one of the ways in which Hume's "science of human nature" serves as a prolegomenon to the social sciences.

The fact that concepts such as these require clarification does not imply that they are, in their ordinary use, confused. It is obvious that men are often able to talk sense about their own conduct and that of others. Talking of pride and humility, Hume claims that "as these words, *pride* and *humility*,

are of general use, and the impressions they represent the most common of any, every one, of himself, will be able to form a just idea of them, without any danger of mistake". (T,277) Being able to use a word does not, however, show that we can say what it means. Nor does an ability to use an expression in ordinary circumstances show that one can use it without mistake in novel, and especially theoretical contexts. Since saying what a word means is a relatively unusual occupation, it is quite possible that someone who knows how to use a word may get confused when he begins to talk about its meaning. Since it is most often philosophers who ask questions about the meanings of words, it is most often philosophers who get into these confusions. The confusions are sometimes compounded when, originating with philosophers (or ordinary people in their philosophical moments), they are imported into ordinary speech and common practice. A good example is the concept of freedom. This is an ordinary, not a technical concept; men use it in their day-to-day activities. The practice of imposing legal sanctions involves questions of freedom. Men are very much concerned with the preservation and the enhancement of their freedom. And yet philosophers continue to debate about whether men are or are not free. This is a good sign, Hume suggests, of a conceptual confusion. "From this circumstance alone," he remarks, "that a controversy has been long kept on foot, and remains still undecided, we may presume that there is some ambiguity in the expression, and that the disputants affix different ideas to the terms employed in the controversy". (EHU, 80) The proper way of dealing with such a problem as that of freedom is not, then, to take sides and continue the argument, but to dispel the confusion by considering

how the concept of freedom is used by non-philosophers, or even how it could be used. Now to the extent that a scientific study of human conduct depends on having a clear understanding of the concepts we ordinarily use about human conduct, and to the extent that its progress can be hampered by conceptual confusions of the kind described, philosophical analysis is useful and sometimes even necessary to science.

In what does such conceptual confusion consist? Hume nowhere gives a sustained account of conceptual confusion, but his views can be gathered from remarks made at several places in the *Treatise*. At one point he suggests that many of the errors of metaphysicians result from the fact that "'tis usual for men to use words for ideas, and to talk instead of thinking in their reasonings". (T, 61-62) It is possible, that is, for men to operate with words without those words being attached, as it were, to any definite concept. This is a matter of merely going through various verbal manoeuvres without actually thinking, and perhaps without knowing that one is not actually thinking. When such camouflaged prattling takes the place of thought, serious confusions arise. A case in point is the philosophical discussion of causality. Philosophers have talked of things being "endow'd with a power or force, proportion'd to their effect[s]". (T, 162) They have talked, too, of a "necessary connexion betwixt objects", this necessary connection depending "upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endow'd". (T, 162) "In all these expressions," Hume asserts, "so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas". (T, 162) In a similar vein, "when. . . we make the terms of power

and efficacy signify something, of which we have a clear idea, and which is incompatible with those objects, to which we apply it, obscurity and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy". (T, 168) Very roughly, then, conceptual confusion arises from the misapplication of perfectly good words. These words have a correct use, and it is this fact which gives them a semblance of meaning when they are used by philosophers. But too often philosophers fail to pay attention to the conditions which justify their use in ordinary situations. Once this happens, the danger of confusion is present. This is not to say that a word cannot be used in a non-ordinary way. But if this is the case, then one is no longer concerned with the analysis of the word as ordinarily used. More importantly, however, it is necessary that the new use be a justified one, which is to say that there must be some experiential or observable circumstances whose occurrence will justify the use of the word. It is this condition which is apparently not satisfied by the philosophers whom Hume has in mind.

For further light on what it is to be confused about the meaning of a word we may turn to Hume's account of what it is to _know_ the meaning of a word. We can begin by considering his account of what it is to know the meaning of a general term. According to Hume, knowing the meaning of a general term is a matter of having acquired a rather complex habit or ability, the ability to use the word correctly, according to the conventions which govern its use, in a variety of situations, and for a variety of purposes. To know the meaning of "red" is to be able to do such things as: think of various instances of red objects; classify objects as "red" or "not red" when required to do so; avoid

making nonsensical statements involving the use of "red"; correct others when they make such statements; teach the use of "red" to other people. Consider some of the things he says in the <u>Treatise</u> discussion of abstract ideas. To know the meaning of a general term is to be ready or able to think of an appropriate instance of the concept in question, "as we may be prompted by a present design or necessity". (T, 20) To know the meaning of "triangle" is to be able, should I or someone else say "<u>that the three angles of a triangle are equal to each other</u>", to think of triangles such as scalene and isosceles triangles, of which this proposition is not true, and thus "perceive the falsehood of this proposition", though it be true of some triangles. (T, 21) To know the meaning of the words is "to keep the mind in readiness to observe, that no conclusions be form'd contrary to any ideas /i.e. particular instances/, which are usually compriz'd under them". (T, 21-22) To know the meaning of a word is to be able to "avoid talking nonsense" when using the word, and to "perceive any repugnance among the ideas" corresponding to the words which make up a sentence. (T, 23) "Thus if instead of saying, <u>that in war the weaker have always recourse to negotiation</u>, we shou'd say, <u>that they have always recourse to conquest</u>, the custom which we have acquir'd of attributing certain relations to ideas, still follows the words, and makes us immediately perceive the absurdity of that proposition". (T, 23) What I would emphasize here is the fact that Hume cashes the notion of knowing the meaning of a general term in terms of an ability to operate correctly with that term in a variety of situations. He also has a psychological theory about the way in which one manages to use a word correctly, but there is no need to consider

that here.

By implication we can see what it is to be confused about the meaning of a word. To be confused is to use a word in a situation in which the word cannot appropriately be used. There are, obviously, certain standards for the use of the word; the word only applies in a restricted range of situations, and to use the word outside that range, even in a situation that bears some resemblance to an appropriate situation, is to be confused. (At least, that is, if one fails to recognize that one is disregarding accepted usage and creating a neologism). Conversely, a person is confused if he refuses to use a term in one situation, while permitting its use in another situation that is, in all relevant respects, the same as the first. A person is confused, also, if he permits or makes assertions which contradict the implications of a proposition which he accepts. These are some, at least, of the sorts of confusion which it is part of Hume's objective in the _Treatise_ to eliminate by his analysis of some of the concepts necessary for the social sciences. Hume gives examples of each of these kinds of confusion when he discusses the question of free will and the difference between reason and the passions.

How are we to remedy such confusions? How are we to make clear the meanings of words? The nub of Hume's answer lies in his recommendation of the "experimental method". To make clear the meaning of a word is ultimately, and in large part, a matter of drawing a person's attention to the observable circumstances which govern the use of that word. Remedying confusion is just one aspect (though a fairly sophisticated one) of teaching a word's meaning. And we teach the meaning of a word by indicating or describing situations in which it is correctly used. Though not unequivocally, Hume seems to be thinking

along these lines when he says in the Treatise: "To give a child an idea of scarlet or orange, of sweet or bitter, I present the objects, or in other words, convey to him these impressions". (T, 5) To teach a child the use of the word "orange" I show him several orange objects. If he is confused about the meaning of "orange", if, for example, he calls both red and orange things "orange", I try to sort out the confusion by showing him several red objects, emphasizing that these are called "red", as well as several orange objects, emphasizing that these are to be called "orange", thus trying to get him to notice the difference between the two cases. In this procedure I am simply trying to focus the listener's attention on that state of affairs the obtaining of which justifies the use of the word whose meaning is to be determined.

I would suggest that Hume thinks of clarifying the meaning of at least a good many words along lines very similar to those of the color-model. The fact that a concept whose meaning is to be made clear is a complex concept does not basically alter the procedure to be followed. If I am trying to clarify the meaning of the word for a complex concept, I may have to draw attention to a number of conditions which together justify the use of the word. But in the end this is but a more complicated version of the procedure described in the case of color-words. Take the case of the meaning of "cause". At least on one interpretation of Hume's account of causation, to clarify the meaning of "cause" for someone would require drawing his attention to recurrent event-sequences, to temporal and perhaps spatial proximities between the events, to feelings of expectation that he experiences when one member of the event-sequence occurs, and so on. It is the satisfaction of these, and perhaps other

conditions, which justifies one in using "cause", and thus the meaning of the term must be elucidated by reference to these conditions. The same is true of such other concepts as those designated by the expression "pride" or "moral evaluation". To elucidate these expressions I must draw my listener's attention to thosepeculiar feelings which justify the use of either according to Hume's theory. This, in turn, may require drawing his attention to a number of other circumstances. But mention to these psychological concepts raises special problems which must be deferred until later.[1]

It is a corollary of this view about the way in which to clarify the meanings of words that if there are no experiences or observable situations which justify the use of the word, then the alleged word has no meaning. Thus, in discovering what experiences or observable situations justify, by convention, the use of a particular word, I discover <u>that</u> the word has meaning. If I discover that there are no experiences or observable situations which would justify a word's use, I discover that the word has no meaning. Looking to experience is both a test for the meaningfulness of a word, and a way of discovering its meaning.

Both aspects of this general approach are apparent in Hume's discussion of the meaning of such words as "libery" and "free". Hume points out some, at least, of the criteria which are in fact used to determine whether or not a man has liberty or is free. In doing this he both shows that the words have meaning, and goes some way toward clarifying their meaning. But Hume also considers the criteria for the proper use of these words which are suggested by the libertarian theory of human conduct. On that theory, according to Hume, the only elements of a man's conduct that are free actions of his are elements of his conduct which originate with the man himself in some peculiar and special sense. But, so Hume argues, no account can be given of any conditions the

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[1]See Chapter IV, Section 2.

satisfaction of which would show that a man's behavior originated with him in this special sense, or did not originate with him. The fact that a man's behavior originated or did not originate with him in this special sense is compatible with the obtaining of any observable or experiential conditions. But if this is so, then the alleged concept of a man's behavior originating with himself, as well as the concept of a free action which it is intended to elucidate, is a meaningless concept.[1] Generalizing from this example, we may say that part of the job of conceptual clarification is that of showing that a word could not mean what some philosophers have claimed it means. This is done by showing that the philosopher can provide no criteria for his use of the word.

Hume argues for this view about the conditions for meaningfulness, and about the manner in which to discover and clarify the meanings of words, in arguing for his principle of the priority of impressions over ideas. He states this principle when he says: "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) This is, at least in part, to say that all concepts are derived from experience. Hume's formulation of his principle is, however, unfortunate. If, as I have assumed, this principle has a bearing on the question of the meaningfulness of words, it may perhaps be tempting to construe it as offering an account of the meanings of words. That is,

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[1]For a more extensive discussion of Hume's argument, see Chapter V, Section 2.

since the "ideas" are said to "exactly represent" the "impressions" to which they correspond, words may be thought to represent the conditions whose occurrence justifies their use. Using this model, words would, one and all, be thought to refer to the conditions which justify their use; they would be names for these conditions. As I shall argue in the next section of this chapter, however, it does not seem to be Hume's view that all words refer to the conditions which justify their use and thus give them meaning. Hume does not, at least as a general theory, have a referential theory of meaning. If this is so, then in asserting that a word is meaningful only if there are observable or experiential conditions justifying its use, Hume is not necessarily asserting that these conditions are named or referred to by the word in question. It is still an open question whether the conditions which justify the use of a word justify in one or a variety of ways.

3. Some Remarks About Language

In the previous section I suggested that one of Hume's objectives, in his "science of human nature", was to clarify the meanings of some of the words we use to describe, explain, and evaluate human conduct. Hume's "science of human nature" was prompted, at least in part, by the fact that other philosophers, in analyzing our psychological concepts, had become involved in what Hume took to be conceptual confusions. Hume's "science of human nature" had, then, the

therapeutic task of remedying some of these confusions. Since I am contending that Hume was in some sense interested in the meanings of words, I must now consider what he actually has to say about language.

I must begin by entering a disclaimer. Though Hume was interested in language in the sense of wanting to eliminate the confusions that surround some of the words we use, he nowhere attempts to state a general philosophical theory of language. If this is the point he intends to make, Flew is quite correct when he says: "Unlike such of his classical predecessors as Plato or Hobbes or Locke or Berkeley, Hume seems himself to have had little interest in or respect for any questions which he thought of as semantic".[1] Nevertheless, Hume cannot help making, in passing, remarks which reveal some of his assumptions about the way language works. If this is so, and if these remarks may serve to throw light on the character of Hume's inquiry, then there is point in drawing attention to them. One must avoid two equally untenable extremes: assuming that Hume has a fully-formed theory of language; and overlooking occasional remarks on language that may prove useful for interpreting his philosophy. I shall proceed to investigate what Hume has to say about words and about sentences. I am particularly concerned to discover whether Hume thinks that words and sentences refer to the experiences or observable

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[1] Antony Flew, Hume's Philosophy of Belief (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 37.

situations which justify their use. The answer to this question will assist us in determining whether Hume intends to give an account of the meaning of words and sentences, or whether even the clarificatory part of his programme must be interpreted in another way.

On a number of occasions Hume speaks of words as names which refer to objects, or activities, or qualities, and so on. He speaks, for example, of "the name, which distinguishes the mode". (T, 17) At another place he says: "The idea of a substance as well as that of a mode, is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned to them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection". (T, 16) Later he suggests: "When we have found a resemblance among several objects, that often occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them". (T, 20) At another point he claims that "common language . . . has generally call'd by the same term all such /operations of the mind/ as nearly resemble each other". (T, 105) Such remarks certainly indicate that Hume thought of at least some words on a naming model. They are, however, too sketchy. They do not support a claim that Hume thought of all words as names. Would he, for example, have wanted to say that the words for logical constants are names? There is no particular reason to think so. Would he say that verbs have a referring function? It is difficult to give an unequivocal answer. But, as we shall see later in this section, he does seem to think that at least one verb, "promise" in the first-person use, does something other than refer to a state of affairs. Nevertheless Hume does seem to have been impressed by a similarity between the use of names (proper names)

and other grammatically substantival words. It is interesting that the examples he gives of names are words for modes, substances, objects, and activities. When he talks of names he seems to be thinking of such words as "dancing", "apple", "thinking", "anger", and so on. It is words such as these which give some plausibility to a referential theory of the meaning of words.

Antony Flew suggests that, on Hume's theory, "the meanings of words are ideas, ideas . . . being identified with mental images".[1] If words are construed as names, then, presumably, they are the names of ideas. This seems a highly unlikely view to attribute to Hume, but there is textual support for it. Hume does frequently talk of a connection between words and ideas; "The idea of a substance . . . is nothing but a collection of simple ideas,... /that/ have a particular name assigned them". (T, 16) He speaks, too, of a "term which . . . has a relation to many other particular ideas", and says that "we form the idea of individuals, whenever we use any general term". (T, 22) Moreover, there are places in which Hume connects the notions of idea and meaning. In the first Enquiry he says: "When we have often employed any term, though without a distinct meaning, we are apt to imagine it has a determinate idea annexed to it". (EHU 21-22) In the same place he refers to the "suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea". (EHU, 22)

Despite the apparent support which can be derived from the text, however, Flew's interpretation must surely be incorrect. Consider the sentence

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[1] Flew, p. 22.

"This apple is rotten", used in a normal context. If the word "apple", as used in this sentence, is a name, does it stand only for an "idea" of an apple, and not for the apple I see? Perhaps Flew is thinking of Hume's theory of perception, taken to imply that what I see is not a public object, but something that no longer exists when I shut my eyes. But if Flew is thinking of Hume's perception theory, he would surely have to agree that the word "apple" in the above sentence stands for an "impression", not an "idea". In Hume's technical vocabulary, "idea" stands in contrast to "impression". Thus, to say that a word stands for an idea implies that it does not stand for an impression. This would mean that "apple" refers to the apples I remember or imagine, but not to the ones I am now looking at or eating. There is no real reason to think that Hume wanted to endorse this view.

Flew's interpretation runs counter, as well, to what Hume clearly intends when he says: "When we have found a resemblance among several _objects_, that often occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them". (T, 20. Italics mine.) Or consider what he says about the word "belief" in the first _Enquiry_: "Belief is the true and proper name of this feeling; and no one is ever at a loss to know the meaning of that term; because every man is every moment conscious of the sentiment represented by it". (EHU, 48-49) Clearly enough, "belief" can represent the belief I now experience, as well as that which I remember. It is the name, if it is a name, of impressions as well as of ideas. Perhaps Hume would want to say that a general term like "belief" can only function as a name because it can stand for imagined or remembered experiences, as well as actual ones. But this is very different from restricting the class of things named by a word to "ideas".

To the extent that Hume thought of words as names which have meaning by referring to the states of affairs which justify their use, it is tempting to think that he also considered sentences to have meaning by somehow referring to the states of affairs which justify their use. Sentences as well as words have meaning, and if words, or at least the only words Hume explicitly talks about, have meaning by referring, then perhaps sentences also have meaning by referring. "The cat is on the mat" has meaning by referring to, or perhaps describing, a certain situation. This sentence says _that_ the cat is on the mat, and is justified by the fact that the cat _is_ on the mat.

A general objection to the claim that Hume holds, as a general theory, that sentences have meaning by referring to the states of affairs which justify their use, is the fact that Hume simply does not have a general theory of language. Just as in the case of words, there is thus no justification for extrapolating a general theory from the little evidence we have for Hume's views about language. More importantly, however, there are occasions on which Hume apparently invokes other models for understanding the meaning of sentences. In the case of evaluative language, he tends to talk of what may be called emotive meaning. In the case of promises he seems to think that the normal use of "I promise" is a performative one. I shall consider both these cases in some detail.

The general thesis that Hume thinks of sentences as descriptions has a particular form. It is sometimes said that those sentences whose use is justified, according to Hume's account at any rate, by the occurrence of a given psychological state, refer to that state, or say that that state obtains. For example, it is sometimes said that Hume believes that a sentence such as "Smith is a wicked man" says something about the speaker, _viz._ that he has a certain feeling upon the contemplation of Smith's conduct or character. If

this interpretation is correct, it provides further support for the view that Hume thinks of the meaning of sentences on a referring-model. I shall begin by arguing that this is not Hume's view of the function of evaluative language. At least in this case Hume is not guilty of what Austin has called the "descriptive fallacy".[1]

Geoffrey Hunter gives an account of Hume's theory of moral judgement such that Hume obviously commits the descriptive fallacy.[2] Hunter quotes two passages in which Hume seems to do this. In the Treatise Hume says: "When you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it". (T, 469) Similarly, in the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals he says:

> The hypothesis which we embrace is plain. It maintains that morality is determined by sentiment. It defines virtue to be whatever mental action or quality gives to a spectator the pleasing sentiment of approbation; and vice the contrary. (EPM, 289)

Starting from these two passages, Hunter argues that, for Hume, moral judgements are statements of psychological fact. He claims that "it is a central part of Hume's moral theory that moral judgements are statements of fact . . ., namely statements to the effect that there is a causal relation between the speaker's contemplation of some actual or imagined state of affairs and his

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[1] J.L. Austin, "Performative Utterances," Philosophical Papers, ed. J. O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 221.

[2] Geoffrey Hunter, "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought'," Philosophy, XXXVII (1962), pp. 148-152.

feeling certain 'peculiar' . . . 'feelings' or 'sentiments'".[1] He claims that "what Hume is saying here [i.e. in the first passage quoted above] is that 'This action is vicious' just means 'Contemplation of this action causes a feeling or sentiment of blame in me'".[2] Later he says that on Hume's view "a moral judgment states that there is a causal relation between the contemplation by the speaker of some actual or imagined state of affairs and a certain sort of feeling or sentiment that he has when he does the contemplating".[3]

Hunter's interpretation of these passages depends on the assumption that in them Hume intended to endorse a view about the character of evaluative utterances. That is, he assumes that Hume intends to provide an analysis of the meaning of utterances of the form "X is virtuous (good)" or "X is vicious (bad)". It seems clear, however, that to interpret Hume in this way is seriously to misconstrue the character of his enquiry into moral evaluations.

As P.S. Árdal has convincingly argued,[4] Hume does not intend, at least in his Treatise account of moral evaluation, to give an account of moral language. His objective is rather to give an account of the nature of evaluations, and of the conditions which give rise to them. His interests are psychological, not linguistic. He is attempting to describe the state of mind of a person making an evaluation, and to state those psychological laws

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[1] Hunter, Philosophy, XXXVII (1962), p. 149.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Hunter, Philosophy, XXXVII (1962), p. 151.

[4] P.S. Árdal, Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), pp. 190-212.

which govern the occurrence of this state of mind. It is within this context that one must interpret the two passages quoted by Hunter. Is Hume, in these two passages, endorsing a thesis about language, or is he simply summarizing, albeit in a misleading way, the results of his previous discussion of whether moral distinctions derive from reason or from sentiment? If he is stating a linguistic thesis it appears out of the blue, as it were; it has no obvious connection with anything that has gone before. If he is not intending to state a linguistic thesis, then perhaps he is just using a striking formulation to drive home the point for which he has been arguing throughout Part I of Book III: that moral evaluations are matters of feeling. The latter seems to me the more convincing way to describe what Hume is doing.

It should be noted that the view of evaluative language which Hunter attributes to Hume is a very odd one indeed. On this view, when a person makes use of a sentence such as "Smith is a wicked man" he is in fact doing no more than making a psychological report about his own feelings. This sentence is allegedly equivalent to "When I think of Smith's character I have a peculiar feeling which is called moral disapproval". Such an interpretation of the meaning of evaluative utterances has no _prima facie_ plausibility at all. One wants to insist that when one makes an evaluation, whatever one is doing, one is not talking about what is going on in one's mind. But, as Árdal has emphasized, if one is to attribute a clearly and seriously questionable view to a perceptive thinker, one must at least be able to give some account of the considerations which would have led him to adopt that view. In the present case, where the apparently linguistic remark has been preceded by no explicit discussion of language, the reasons would presumably have to be of a more

general sort. Perhaps the need of consistency within his philosophical system would have required Hume to adopt this peculiar theory of evaluative language. The trouble is, however, that no account has been given of these requirements. Nor does it seem at all likely that there are any such requirements within Hume's system. It would seem, then, that we must read the quoted passages in some other way. If Hume is adopting any linguistic thesis at all it is that evaluative utterances, unlike statements of fact or of logical relation, are not properly characterized as true or false. But this surely would fit ill with Hunter's interpretation.

But what of my suggestion, in the previous section, that Hume is at least partly interested in the clarification of the concepts with which we describe, explain, and evaluate human conduct? Does he not think that, in his account of moral evaluation, he has clarified the concepts of evaluation, approval, disapproval, and so on? I would submit that Hume does think he has clarified these concepts, but that he has not done so by providing an analysis of the meaning of the linguistic expressions with which we express our evaluations. Rather, he has given an account of the conditions which justify us in using these expressions. In Hume's view, a moral evaluation is a peculiar feeling which occurs when certain conditions, e.g. the adoption of an unbiased viewpoint, have been satisfied. It is only when one has this feeling that one is, in fact, evaluating in a moral way. Thus, it is only when one has this feeling upon the contemplation of Smith's behavior or his character that one is justified in saying "Smith is a wicked man". But to say that one is only justified in saying "Smith is a wicked man" when one has this feeling, is not the same as saying that what one *means*, when one says "Smith is a

wicked man", is that one has this feeling.

I am not saying that Hume intended to give an account of the conditions which justify the use of an expression rather than of the meaning of that expression. To say this would seem to imply that Hume was aware of the difference, and chose to do the one and not the other. I agree with Árdal when he says that it is not "too fanciful to suggest that Hume may have written in such a way as not to distinguish clearly between the analysis of the meaning of an expression, and a description of the conditions which justify its use".[1] What I am saying is simply that the points Hume makes in the course of his discussion of evaluation have a bearing on the one question, but not necessarily on the other.

The fact that Hume did not see clearly the distinction between these two questions is evident in something he says in the course of his discussion of causation in the first Enquiry. There he offers the following "definition" of a cause:

> *An object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second.* Or in other words *where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed.* (EHU, 76)

The crucial thing to note is the actual lack of equivalence between the first and second italicized passages, despite Hume's suggestion that they are equivalent. It should further be noted that the first italicized passage may be taken as an account (an inadequate account) of the conditions which justify one in saying that one event is the cause of another, whereas the second italicized passage can be taken as a (partial) account of the meaning

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[1] Árdal, p. 203.

of a causal statement. This certainly suggests that Hume was not clearly aware of the distinction that I am here making between the meaning of an expression, and the conditions which justify its use.

If my discussion of Hume's account of moral evaluation is correct, we have found at least part of the anwer to the question with which we started. That is, it does not seem that Hume believes that all sentences have meaning by referring to or describing the conditions which justify their use. In at least the case of moral judgments, when one uses an evaluative utterance, one is justified in doing so by the fact that one has the appropriate feeling, but that one has this feeling is not reported by the utterance. Thus it would appear the Hume is not assuming, uncritically, a referential theory of the meaning of sentences.

To say that Hume is not trying to provide an analysis of the meaning of evaluative language, and that Hunter incorrectly ascribes to Hume the view that moral judgments are statements about the feelings of the speaker, is not, however, to say that one cannot conjecture about the theory of evaluative language to which Hume would have been sympathetic had he raised the issue. As Árdal suggests, there are three reasons for thinking that Hume would have been sympathetic to an anlysis of moral language similar to recent emotivist theories. For one thing, an emotivist theory seems most consonant with Hume's account of evaluations as forms of emotion. For another, Hume does seem aware of the emotive force of language, and of the fact that language can be used to create feelings of approval and disapproval in others and thus influence their conduct. He refers, for example, to the fact that politicians, in their "talk of honourable or dishonourable, praiseworthy or blameable," may "assist

nature in the producing of those sentiments, which she suggests to us, and may even on some occasions, produce alone an approbation or esteem for any particular action". (T, 500) Finally, the possibility of an emotivist theory of evaluative language was not unknown in the eighteenth century. Thomas Reid, for example, criticized Hume "for maintaining the, to Reid, erroneous view that approvals and disapprovals are feelings not judgments, and the correlative view that evaluative verbal expressions are not to be assessed in terms of truth or falsity".[1] It is interesting to note as Árdal points out, that Reid also criticizes Hume for taking the quite different view of moral language suggested by Hunter, thus revealing that the linguistic question was probably not a live one. But it is at least clear that to suggest that Hume might have adopted an emotivist theory of moral language is not to be guilty of an anachronism. To suggest that Hume would have been sympathetic to an emotive theory of moral language is not, however, to say that this was Hume's theory. It is much closer to the truth to say that he had no explicit theory of evaluative language at all, but that of the usual linguistic theories emotivism would be the most consonant with Hume's views on the nature of evaluation.

Independent support for the view that Hume is, at least in some cases, not offering an analysis of the meaning of linguistic expressions, but rather an account of the conditions which justify their use, can be derived from his account of causal necessity. As is well known, Hume offers an account of the necessary connection between a cause and its effect according to which the

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[1] Árdal, p. 209.

idea of necessary connection has its origin in a feeling which I come to have when I have had the experience of the constant conjunction of two events, C and E, the feeling of being determined or forced to expect E when I have encountered an instance of C, and vice versa. In Hume's words:

> . . . After a frequent repetition [of two spatially and temporally contiguous events], I find, that upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is 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. 'Tis this impression, then, or determination, which affords me the idea of necessity. (T, 156)

But if this feeling is the source of the idea of necessity, then perhaps Hume would want to say that one is justified in asserting that two objects are necessarily connected only if one has this feeling when one encounters an instance of one of the two objects.

The question then arises about the analysis of the meaning of the proposition: C causes E. Is this a statement about C and E, or is it a statement about the speaker's feelings? Suppose one were to adopt Hunter's interpretation of Hume's theory of moral language as an account of his theory of the language of causal necessity. Just as the sentence "Smith is a wicked man" is construed as a statement about the speaker's feelings, so also, one might expect, the sentence "C causes E" is a statement about the speaker's feelings. Hume's account of the justification of either sentence is, in important respects, similar. "Smith is a wicked man" is justified if the speaker has a special sort of feeling upon the contemplation of Smith's actions or character. "C causes E" is justified if the speaker experiences the peculiar feeling of a determination to think of E when he encounters an instance of C, and vice versa. That is, each sentence is justified if the speaker has certain

feelings. But if this is so, then one would expect either sentence to have meaning in the same way. If "Smith is a wicked man" has meaning by referring to the feelings of the speaker, then "C causes E" should have meaning by referring to the feelings of the speaker.

There is, however, no reason at all to think that Hume intended to provide an analysis of the meaning of sentences involving the concept of causal necessity that would make them equivalent to reports about the mental life of the speaker. For one thing, he gives no explicit account of the language of causal necessity. For another, the analysis suggested is a most implausible one. It just does not seem to be the case that if I were to say "Fire causes heat" I would be talking about my thoughts, feelings, or compulsions, and not about fires and heat. Nor is there any reason to believe that anything in Hume's general philosophical position requires him to adopt this peculiar view about the language of causes. The ascription of this view to Hume would therefore seem wholly gratuitous.

There is a further and apparently conclusive objection to attributing this view of causal language to Hume. If the view were Hume's, he would presumably be saying that the sentence "Fires cause heat" is equivalent in meaning to some such sentence as "The thought of fire determines (causes) me to think of heat". But Hume could not allow this equivalence since he quite unequivocally asserts that the causal connection between any two objects, say fire and heat, is distinct from the causal connection between the thoughts of those objects. As he writes in the _Treatise_:

> When any object is presented to us, it immediately conveys to the mind a lively idea of that object, which is usually found to attend it; and this determination of the mind forms the necessary connexion of these subjects. But when we *change the point of view*, from the objects to the perceptions; *in that case* the impression is to be considered as the cause, and the lively idea as the effect; and their necessary connexion is that *new determination*, which we feel to pass from the idea of the one to that of the other. The uniting principle among our internal perceptions is as unintelligible as that among external objects, and is not known to us any other way than by experience. (T, 169. Italics mine.)

The point of this passage is to counter the objection that Hume's account of causal necessity involves him in an infinite regress. That is, it is objected that if C's being a cause of E is a matter of one's thought of C causing one's thought of E, one must proceed to elucidate this latter causal connection in terms of a causal connection between the thought of the thought of C and the thought of the thought of E, and so on. Hume counters this objection by saying that the feeling of determination, and thus the causal connection, is in each of the cases mentioned distinct. I can think that C is the cause of E without thinking that my thought of C is the cause of my thought of E. But if this is so, then it hardly makes sense to say that "C causes E" means the same as "The thought of C causes the thought of E". A different causal connection is reported by each of these sentences.

These remarks suggest an analysis of the language of causal connections to which Hume might be expected to have been sympathetic. In saying that fire causes heat I am saying or asserting something; *viz*; that fire and heat are constantly conjoined. I am not, however, saying that I have a feeling of determination to think of heat when I see fires, and so on. The way this feeling is involved in the utterance "Fire causes heat" is this: that utterance

expresses the feeling of determination which I have. We "draw the idea of it /i.e. of necessary connection between objects/ from what we feel internally in contemplating them /i.e. the objects/". (T, 169) But in saying that two objects are necessarily connected we do not say that we have this feeling; we rather express this feeling linguistically. As Macnabb says, interpreting Hume:

> It is a true proposition that flame is necessarily connected with heat. But this proposition does not mean that the impression of flame is necessarily connected with the idea of heat. It simply expresses the feeling of customary transition from the impression to the idea, and asserts the constant conjunction of flame and heat.[1]

If this gloss on Hume's account of causal necessity is correct, one has both independent support for the account of Hume's theory of moral evaluation offered earlier, and further grounds for rejecting the thesis that Hume operates with a referential theory of the meaning of sentences. If the upshot of Hume's view about causation is that one is justified in saying "Fire causes heat" only if one has a feeling of determination to think of heat when one sees fire, and yet this sentence does not say that one has this feeling, then the relation between the feeling and the sentence cannot be construed as a relation between referring expression and state of affairs referred to. Thus, there must be more than one kind of relation which can hold between a linguistic expression and the conditions which justify its use. But this is not to say that Hume has a formal theory about the meaning of the language of causes. In suggesting that Hume would be sympathetic to the application of an emotivist analysis to

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[1] D.G.C. Macnabb, David Hume: His Theory of Knowledge and Morality (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 114.

causal statments, I am only pointing out a view about language that appears consonant with Hume's theory of causal necessity. As Hume presents his theory, there is some reason to take it as an account of the conditions which justify causal statements. There is much less reason to read it as an analysis of the meaning of these statements.

We may now turn to Hume's discussion of promises, a discussion which shows quite conclusively, I would submit, that Hume does not think that all sentences have meaning by referring to or by describing the conditions which determine whether they have been properly used. A sentence of the form "I promise to ø" does not, according to Hume, say anything about the world. More particularly, such a sentence does not say anything about the mind of the speaker. Such sentences have a performative, not a descriptive job to do. Nevertheless, there are, as for any sentences which have a meaning, conditions which must be satisfied if the sentences by which we make promises are to be justified.

"Promises," Hume says, "are human inventions, founded on the necessities and interests of society". (T, 519) The institution of promising is one which has its point in making possible an "interested" commerce between men. (T, 521-22) In order to make such interested commerce possible, "there is a <u>certain</u> <u>form</u> <u>of</u> <u>words</u> <u>invented</u> . . . , by which we bind ourselves to the performance of any action". (T, 522) "This form of words constitutes what we call a <u>promise</u>". (T, 522) Hume refers to this "form of words" when he says that there are "certain <u>symbols</u> or <u>signs</u> instituted, by which we . . . give each other security of our conduct in any particular incident". (T, 522) By virtue of this institution, then, when we utter a certain form of words,

in conditions which need to be further specified, we bring about certain effects, such as binding ourselves to do what we promised, and giving others security that we will do it.

Promising is not merely a matter of resolving to do what we promise to do: "Were there no more than a resolution in the case, promises wou'd only declare our former motives, and wou'd not create any new motive or obligation". (T, 522) Nevertheless, there is a connection between resolving to do something and promising to do it: "A resolution is the natural act of the mind, which promises express". (T, 522) What must be accounted for, however, is the "new motive or obligation". (T, 522) This is supplied by the use of the conventional formula for making a promise; for example, by saying "I promise to ø". "When a man says he promises any thing, he in effect expresses a resolution of performing it; and along with that, by making use of this form of words, subjects himself to the penalty of never being trusted again in case of failure". (T, 522) Throughout the discussion emphasis is placed on the conventional promising formula: "The will alone is never suppos'd to cause the obligation, but must be express'd by words or signs, in order to impose a tye upon any man". (T, 523)

Though it is normally the case that when one promises to do something one is also resolved to do it, one can make a promise without being resolved to keep it, or even when one is resolved not to keep it: "Nor will a man be less bound by his word, tho' he secretly give a different direction to his intention, and with-hold himself both from a resolution, and from willing an obligation". (T, 523) This is so because the expression of the promise is usually "the principal part of the promise". Other conditions may, however, have a bearing on whether a person who says "I promise to ø" has in

fact made a promise. A person "who shou'd make use of any expression /of promising/, of which he knows not the meaning, and which he uses without any intention of binding himself, wou'd not certainly be bound by it". (T, 523) Moreover, a person who uttered a promise-making expression, knowing its meaning, but who uttered it "in jest only, and with such signs as shew evidently he has no serious intention of binding himself, . . . wou'd not lie under any obligation of performance". (T, 523-524)

Hume's discussion of promises, and particularly the question of whether conditions other than those mentioned above have a bearing on whether a person who says "I promise to ø" has made a promise, is too long to be treated in detail. What has been said so far is quite sufficient for our present purposes. It should be noticed, first, that Hume's discussion of promises is an admirable piece of conceptual analysis. This supports my earlier contention that Hume was, at least in part, interested in the clarification of concepts. In fact, Hume begins his discussion by warning against the absurdities men can fall into on the question of promises because their "ideas are . . . confounded with prejudice and the fallacious use of language". (T, 517) Moreover, the manner in which Hume conducts his analysis of the concept of promising is instructive. The principal question to which he apparently addresses himself is: What conditions must be satisfied if the expression "I promise to ø" is to have meaning, and is to do the job it is supposed to do? That is to say, under what conditions does the utterance of the sentence "I promise to ø" constitute a promise? Somewhat differently, under what conditions would it be correct to say that so-and-so had promised to ø? This is at least interestingly similar to the questions which, as I suggested, Hume seems to be trying to answer in his accounts of moral evaluation

and of causal necessity: Under what conditions is it proper to say "X is virtuous (vicious)"? Under what conditions is it proper to say "C causes E"?

Of equal importance is the precise account which Hume gives of the linguistic expressions by the use of which we make promises. Clearly enough, his point is that such utterances have a performative function. That is, in uttering a sentence such as "I promise to ø" the speaker does not report or describe any state of affairs. Rather, he brings about some state of affairs by uttering these words. By saying "I promise to ø" a person gives an assurance that he will ø, and thus creates an obligation that he ø. By uttering these words in the appropriate circumstances he does more than express a resolution to ø; he binds himself to ø. It is this state of being bound to ø or obligated to ø which is created by the speaker's words. In this, the use of "I promise to ø" is similar to the use of "I name this ship 'Intrepid'", spoken by the appropriate person in the appropriate circumstances. The person who christens a ship does not say anything about the ship; he gives it a name. Before he speaks the ship has no name; after he has spoken the ship has been named. Similarly in the case of promising. When a person says "I promise to ø" he does not make a report about his feelings, or about the way the world is. Nor does he make a prediction. He is, quite simply, creating an assurance that he will ø, and thus binding himself to do so. It is interesting to note the analogy that Hume himself sees between the language of promises and the language of certain religious practices, such as "<u>transubstantiation</u>, or <u>holy orders</u>". (T, 524) In the case of these religious practices it is alleged that "a certain form of words, along with a certain

intention, changes entirely the nature of an external object, and even of a human creature". (T, 524. Italics mine.)

In noticing this feature of "I promise to ø" Hume moves very far from a simply referential theory of the meaning of sentences. In realizing this Hume at least implicitly suggests that the meaning of a sentence is to be discovered by discovering how it is used, and under what conditions. This is a major contribution, though perhaps an unintended one, to the theory of meaning.

I shall end this account of Hume's presumptive views on language by stating the conclusions which, it would seem, may be drawn. (1) Hume does not provide, at least in the Treatise, a general and explicit theory of language. (2) He is more plausibly interpreted as offering an account of the conditions which justify the use of an expression than an analysis of the meanings of expressions. (3) Hume tends to think of words as names, but too much weight must not be given to this fact. (4) Hume does not think that all sentences refer to or describe the states of affairs which justify their use. In the case of moral evaluations there is reason to think he would endorse an emotivist theory. In the case of promises he clearly looks upon promising language as performative. With respect to the language of causes, where Hume may, to some extent, make use of a referential theory of meaning, it is reasonable to surmise that he would also admit some sort of adapted emotivist analysis. (5) Granted the points made in (4) it would seem that Hume would allow a variety of kinds of relation, and not just one, between a linguistic expression and the conditions which justify its use.

4. The Sources of Information

In this section I wish to consider the sources of information which Hume uses in his science of human nature, and to make a few comments on his characteristic methods. Hume uses three different sources of information: the language people use; his own private experience; and people's conduct in various circumstances. It is important, if one is to read the *Treatise* correctly, that one be aware of the manner in which and the extent to which Hume uses each of these sources of information, as well as the relative importance he attaches to each. I begin by considering the way in which Hume deals with the facts of linguistic usage.

Hume sometimes uses language as a starting point for discussion. That is, he occasionally begins by pointing out that a certain word is used in a certain context, or how it is used. Usually the language from which Hume begins is the language of other philosophers. In some cases, however, it is the language of ordinary discourse. He observes, for example, that philosophers and non-philosophers sometimes speak of "the combat of passion and reason" (T, 413), and this leads to a discussion of motives. He notes the fact that philosophers, in their theoretical discussions of ethics, frequently move, without explaining or justifying their move, from the use of "is" to the use of "ought". As he says in the *Treatise*:

> In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought* or an *ought not*. (T, 469)

He suggests that attention to the differences between "is" and "ought" is necessary, or at least useful, for understanding moral evaluation. "For as this <u>ought</u>, or <u>ought not</u>, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it [i.e. the new relation or affirmation] shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it". (T, 469) Hume points, too, to the fact that philosophers have often opposed the two words "libery" and "necessity", and have gone on to defend the ascription of one or the other to human conduct. (T, 399 ff.) They have sometimes, as well, distinguished a "liberty of <u>spontaneity</u>" and a "liberty of <u>indifference</u>", and considered the distinction to be philosophically relevant. (T, 407) A consideration of these contrasts assists Hume in his discussion of human freedom. The case is similar when philosophers suggest there is an important distinction marked by the use in English of "natural abilities" and "moral virtues" (T, 606), or between "virtue" and "vice" on the one hand, and "talents" and "defects" on the other. (EPM, 312) In each of these cases, the facts of linguistic usage, either ordinary or philosophical, provide an <u>occasion</u> for the discussion of an important philosophical problem.

At times, too, Hume uses the facts of (ordinary) linguistic usage as a critical weapon against the claims of philosophers. He defends, for example, a three-fold distinction of the "degrees of evidence" into "<u>that from knowledge, from proofs, and from probabilities</u>", against a similar two-fold distinction into "knowledge and probability". (T, 124) This latter division, though used by other philosophers and by Hume as well, is inferior to the former because

the former, for one thing, "preserve/s/ the common signification of words". (T, 124) When talking of the distinction between "the liberty of <u>spontaneity</u>, as it is call'd in the schools, and the liberty of <u>indifference</u>; betwixt that which is oppos'd to violence, and that which means a negation of necessity and causes," he describes the first as "the most common sense of the word" and goes on to defend the propriety of this sense. (T, 407) Similarly, he supports his rejection of the alleged importance of the distinction between virtues and talents by pointing out that the moral language of the ancients does not bear this out, nor is it borne out by the practice of men "in common life and conversation". (T, 609)

There is a great difference, however, between sometimes beginning a discussion by observing some general facts about the way language is used, or making occasional use of ordinary language as a critical weapon against philosophical theories, and making a careful, detailed analysis of the ordinary use of words and sentences. Thus, in pointing out that Hume sometimes draws attention to the way words are used, I am not suggesting, what is obviously false, that Hume is doing linguistic analysis in the style of some contemporary ordinary-language philosophers.

Though Hume occasionally admits the demands of ordinary language, he is often quite ready to suggest revisions of ordinary usage, either explicitly or implicitly. The clearest case of an explicit attempted revision is his suggestion that the word "self-love" is inappropriate on two counts: the feeling referred to differs widely from the feeling referred to by "love"; and, in contrast to "love", "self-love" refers to a feeling whose object is the self, not someone else. (T, 329) Less explicitly, Hume is practising linguistic revision when he distinguishes "knowledge" from "probability" (or even

from "proof" and "probability"), or when he says that "we speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and reason". (T, 415) It is interesting to note that Hume replaces the original division of kinds of evidence into "knowledge" and "probability" with the more adequate division into "knowledge", "proof" and "probability", so as to "preserve the common signification of words," and yet fails to note that his use of the word "knowledge" is equally at variance with ordinary usage. With respect to "reason" and "passion", it is clear that Hume wants both to restrict the ordinary usage of "reason" and its linguistic dependents (e.g. "reasonable", "rational"), and extend the use of "passion".[1] The point of these revisions is obvious. If adopted they would reduce or eliminate the possibility of overlooking the crucial differences between necessary and contingent propositions, as well as a most significant feature of human actions. The difficulty with them is that they tend to blur other important distinctions.

Closely connected with Hume's occasional willingness to revise ordinary language is his frequent indifference to the way words are ordinarily used. This indifference is most apparent in the course of Hume's discussion of the indirect passions in Book II of the Treatise. There Hume uses a highly artificial scheme, the four main points of which are called "pride", "humility", "love", and "hatred". Though Hume sometimes uses each of these terms in a way consonant with ordinary usage, he as often uses them as technical words designating a great many different though related passions. When he talks of "love", "hatred", "pride", or "humility" he is sometimes talking of the emotions usually designated by these terms, and sometimes about such other things as esteem, malice, contempt, benevolence, vanity, or shame. In some instances, of course, he pays

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[1]For a discussion of Hume's use of "passion" see Chapter IV, Section 2. For the contrast between reason and passion see Chapter V, Section 1.

attention to the differences between the very different passions he calls by the same name. But when his interest is directed to the associationist explanation of the passions, these differences frequently go unnoticed. To this extent Hume's scientific interests conflict with his desire for clarity.

It would seem, then, that Hume does have some interest, albeit a minimal one, in the facts of ordinary or other linguistic usage. He has some interest, as well, in suggesting revisions in ordinary usage so as to eliminate the possibility of conceptual confusion. It may, however, seem peculiar to stress these points. Is it not obvious that Hume has no really serious interest in questions of language? According to Antony Flew:

> Unlike such of his classical predecessors as Plato or Hobbes or Locke or Berkeley, Hume seems himself to have had little interest in or respect for any questions which he thought of as semantic. Thus in this <u>Inquiry</u> he contemptuously presents the upshot of his 'reconciling project with regard to the question of liberty and necessity' as a demonstration 'that the whole dispute. . . has been hitherto merely verbal'.[1]

Now if Flew's point here is that Hume is not concerned to offer a general philosophical theory of language, I would quite agree. But <u>this</u> point does not seem to be supported by the comments quoted from the <u>Enquiry</u>. At best these comments might show that Hume had little respect for problems of language connected with the free-will controversy. Perhaps, however, they do not even have this implication. The same is true of Hume's oft-quoted remarks distinguishing the philosopher from the grammarian. (EPM, 312) It is not at all clear that the point of Hume's distinction between the two, and his disparagement of grammarians,

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[1]Flew, p. 37. Quoted remarks are from EHU, 95.

is to express a lack of respect for the project of stating a general theory of language. Nor, I would submit, do these remarks even show that Hume had no interest in consulting the facts of linguistic usage in order to settle a point of philosophical interest. If my interpretation of both these passages can be supported, it would mean that commentators can not use either passage to assert, unequivocally, that Hume had an anti-linguistic bias. Hume does not often raise questions of language, but this need not stem from the belief that such questions can have no interest for philosophy.

It is true that Hume does speak of the free-will controversy as a merely verbal dispute. But what does this mean? To understand what Hume intends by this remark we must notice the way in which he conducts his own discussion of the question of human freedom. Hume wants to say that one has just as good grounds for saying that all human actions are causally determined as one has for saying that all physical events are causally determined. He wants also to draw some line between those elements of his behaviour for which a man is responsible, and those for which he is not responsible. Determinists, claiming that all human actions are causally determined, had alleged that a man cannot legitimately be held responsible for his conduct. Libertarians, being convinced that men are sometimes legitimately held responsible, argued that for this to be so it must be the case that some elements of human behavior are undetermined. The way past this impasse, Hume insists, is to see that the impasse is simply the result of a conceptual confusion. Both determinist and libertarian assume that "free" and "causally determined" are incompatible predicates when applied to the same human action. This, Hume argues, is not the case. To say that an action is free is to say that the person acting has

"a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will". (EHU, 95) Thus, to say that an action is free is to say that the agent was not constrained to act as he did. This is quite different from saying that the action has no cause; in fact it implies that the action does have a cause, namely the agent. To say that an action is not causally determined, on the other hand, is to say that it is a chance event, one that cannot be explained. But there is no reason why one should think that only inexplicable actions are actions for which a man can be held responsible. Thus there is no reason to think that the thesis of determinism is incompatible with human freedom. In fact, according to Hume, there is reason to think that unless determinism is true no sense can be made of holding a man responsible for his conduct.

The problem, on Hume's account, is that both the determinist and the libertarian have failed to consider two things. First of all, they have failed to consider with sufficient care the criteria which support the assertion that an event is, or that all events are, causally determined, or that an action is free. Thus, they have failed to realize what it is they are saying when they say that an action is free or determined. Secondly, they have failed to realize that the alternative criteria for the proper use of "free" and "determined" which they apparently assume could be used are not criteria at all. That is to say, the determinist thinks there are criteria for saying that an action is determined which are sufficient to rule out the possibility that the action is free. Similarly, the libertarian assumes that he has criteria for the assertion that an action is free which imply that the action is undetermined. But, Hume insists, no account can be given of these criteria. What the libertarian apparently, in his confusion, thinks would justify the ascription of freedom to a human action is not a condition whose obtaining or non-obtaining

could ever be known by anyone, including the agent himself. But this is to say that the libertarian in fact has no criterion for his ascription of freedom to human action, and thus has no concept of freedom other than the usual concept. And <u>this</u> concept is not inconsistent with determinism.[1]

If anything, I would submit, Hume's discussion of the free-will controversy shows that he was greatly interested in semantic questions. He is in fact concerned with determining the conditions which justify the use of the predicates "free" and "determined". He is concerned both to state what those justifying conditions are, and to show that alternative suggestions cannot do the job required. In dismissing the free-will controversy as a "merely verbal dispute" he is not, then, displaying his contempt for semantic questions. He is rather denigrating those philosophers who had permitted themselves to get engaged in a controversy which depended on the fact that all the protagonists be confused. The controversy between libertarian and determinist is a "merely verbal dispute"; i.e. it is a dispute resting on a conceptual confusion. If only the controversialists were aware of the meaning of the terms over whose application they are quarreling, they would agree that some human actions are free, and might perhaps agree that all events are caused. But Hume's discussion of the free-will controversy is not, as he would insist, open to the same sort of objection. <u>His</u> discussion has an important point: to eliminate confusion. To do this, Hume points out what he takes to be the ordinary criteria for the use of the words "free" and "determined", and displays the incoherence of the positions defended

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[1]For a more adequate account of Hume's discussion of the free-will controversy see Chapter V.

by both libertarian and determinist. There is no reason to think that because he sees no point in participating in a conceptual confusion, Hume sees no point in talking about language.

The case is somewhat different when one turns to consider what Hume has to say about the distinction between virtues and talents. His remarks in this connection seem, if anything, much more pointedly anti-linguistic than those about the problem of free-will. He says, for example: "Nothing is more usual than for philosophers to encroach upon the province of the grammarians; and to engage in disputes of words, while they imagine they are handling controversies of the deepest importance and concern". (EPM, 312) He says, too, that the question whether moral virtues can be clearly distinguished from natural abilities, "being merely verbal, cannot possibly be of any importance". (EPM, 314) Similarly, it is "of greater consequence to attend to things than to verbal appellations". (EPM, 322) In the Treatise Hume contrasts the philosopher and the grammarian in the following illuminating way:

> There is a sentiment of esteem and approbation, which may be excited, in some degree, by any faculty of the mind, in its perfect state and condition; and to account for this sentiment is the business of Philosophers. It belongs to Grammarians to examine what qualities are entitled to the denomination of virtue; nor will they find, upon trial, that this is so easy a task, as at first sight they may be apt to imagine. (T, 610)

I would suggest, however, that these remarks should be read not so much as denying the value of considering the conditions which justify the use of a word, but as expressing Hume's view of what is central to a philosophical inquiry. A philosopher's principal objective is to state the empirical laws which govern the course of events. A philosopher of human nature is specifically concerned with the laws which govern human conduct. Understanding the philosopher's task in this way, it is clear that a purely conceptual inquiry can have

only a derivative value, in so far as it facilitates the discovery of such empirical laws by eliminating some obstacles in the way of their discovery. To the extent, then, that a simple consideration of the conditions which justify the use of a word does not provide any information in the way that an empirical law does, questions of language are philosophically of only secondary importance.

But what, it may be asked, of the supposed fact that Hume does admit the usefulness of conceptual clarification? Isn't he implicitly denying this, or disregarding this, when he dismisses "disputes of words" into the province of "grammarians"? I do not think that this is so. In the case under discussion Hume is not asserting a general thesis that questions of language have no philosophical relevance. Rather, he is saying that in the specific case of virtues and talents little will be gained by paying attention to the language men use. (EPM, 313-314) As he quite aptly points out, none of the criteria which are offered with the intention of delimiting the scope of the supposedly mutually exclusive terms "virtue" and "talent" serve unambiguously to distinguish the one from the other. There simply is no clear line of demarcation between the two concepts.

Now none of this entails that Hume is uninterested in semantic questions, at least in the sense that talking about language has an important place in a philosophical inquiry. In fact, if the sections on virtues and talents are read carefully, one finds good grounds for suggesting that the situation must be otherwise. Three features of Hume's discussion are particularly instructive. First, for Hume to have been able to make the claim that none of the suggested criteria for distinguishing virtues and talents are sufficient to sustain a distinction, he must have at least considered the usual criteria for

the use of the words, and thus engaged in some kind of linguistic inquiry. Secondly, Hume actually suggests that the distinction should not be made, or not given any importance, both because it found no place in the moral language and practice of the ancients (EPM, 318-321), and because it is not borne out by the practice of men "in common life and conversation". (T, 609)

A third feature of Hume's discussion is perhaps the most significant. According to Hume, one of the difficulties which embarrass modern ethical theories is the tendency of theorists to assimilate the notions of ethics to those of theology, or of civil law. This, he urges, has had the effect of distorting the ordinary language of morals, and the theoretical language in which ethical theories are couched. As a result of the interference of theology, "reasoning, and even language, have been warped from their natural course, and distinctions have been endeavoured to be established where the difference of the objects was, in a manner, imperceptible". (EPM, 322) This explains how the notion of voluntariness has come to be so important for ethical theory. "Philosophers, or rather divines under that disguise, treating all morals as on a like footing with civil laws, guarded by the sanctions of reward and punishment, were necessarily led to render this circumstance, of voluntary or involuntary, the foundation of their whole theory". (EPM, 322) Hume is concerned, then, with what he considers a confusing, unwarranted theoretical assimilation of the concepts of ethics to theological and legal concepts. Surely, if this assimilation is unjust and/or confusing, a first step toward eliminating it is to point out, as Hume himself sometimes does, that the implications such an assimilation would lead one to expect are simply not drawn in ordinary talk about moral matters. If the language of morals is distorted by confusing it

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with the language of the law courts or the language of theology, then surely one can begin by distinguishing the one usage from the others. Possibly Hume would want to say that the confusing assimilations have run so far that ordinary language is itself distorted by the lawyer's and theologian's distinctions. Thus little may be gained by an appeal to ordinary language. But it is one thing to say that Hume had reservations about the utility of pursuing an analysis of ordinary language, at least in the present case, and a very different thing to say that he was uninterested in ordinary language. After all, one of the chief causes of philosophical perplexity is, on his account, the fact that people have started talking with terms borrowed, unreflectively, from philosophical and theological theories. Hume is, then, interested in semantic questions, at least in the sense that he wants to rid the language we ordinarily use of many of the confusions in which it comes frequently to be involved, some of which stem from incorporating the suspect distinctions of philosophical and theological theories into common parlance.

It is time to sum up what has been said about the use Hume makes of the facts of language in the course of his science of human nature. It appears false to say that Hume has "little interest in or respect for semantic questions", at least if this means anything more than that Hume did not try to provide a general theory of language. Generally, he is interested in dispelling the confusions which, as he thinks, surround the use of many words in ordinary speech, and in displaying the absurdities which follow from some of the things philosophers say. At times he takes the facts of linguistic usage as the starting point for a philosophical inquiry, and at times he uses arguments based on ordinary language as a critical weapon against a philosophical theory. Sometimes he thinks it important to revise the ordinary use of a word,

especially when it is colored by philosophical theory, so as to avoid confusion. It is just as false, however, to say that the problems of his science of human nature always, or even a good deal of the time, presented themselves to Hume in a semantic guise. Hume thought of himself as engaged in the project of explaining human conduct in terms of psychological laws. His project was, at least in intention, one which we would today call scientific. Seeing Hume's science of human nature in this light enables us to see why he could only have allotted an ancillary role to his essays in conceptual analysis. And this goes a long way toward explaining his rather half-hearted interest in specifically linguistic questions.

If Hume's working procedure is only occasionally one of attending to the way people speak, how does he normally go about the business of his science of human nature? Quite clearly, Hume's standard procedure is to reflect on his own private experiences. Hume gives a hint of the nature of this procedure when, in the first section of the _Enquiry_, he talks of its difficulties.

> It is remarkable concerning the operations of the mind, that, though most intimately present to us, yet, whenever they become the object of reflexion, they seem involved in obscurity; nor can the eye readily find those lines and boundaries, which discriminate and distinguish them. The objects are too fine to remain long in the same aspect or situation; and must be apprehended in an instant, by a superior penetration, derived from nature, and improved by habit and reflexion. (EHU, 13)

The objects of his attention, when he is engaged in his science of human nature, are those "operations of the mind" which are "intimately present" to him. If he is concerned to talk about memory, or thinking, or imagining, or believing, or deciding, or choosing, or being angry, or any other "operation of the mind", he must turn his attention inward, and observe himself thinking, remembering, being angry, and so on. Hume seems to assume, without question, that the

principal source of his information must be his own thoughts, feelings, and other mental experiences. He assumes that one must turn one's attention to such mental events if one is to be clear about the meaning of the terms which designate mental states or activities.[1] His quite explicit objective is to explain the occurrence of these phenomena. And, in a restriction of his objectives which I shall have occasion to discuss later, he sets out to explain these phenomena only in so far as they can be explained by the occurrence of other similar mental phenomena.[2] He does not think that this is the only sort of explanation possible of such phenomena, but it is the only sort of explanation which he considers appropriate to his own science of human nature, or mental science. He sets out, that is, to explain one mental phenomenon, say the feeling of pride to which only he has direct access, by the occurrence of some other mental phenomenon or phenomena, such as a belief or an evaluation to which, again, only he has direct access.

If the results of such an inquiry are to be of general interest it must, of course, be assumed that each man's mind is, at least to some degree, similar to each other man's mind. Hume makes this assumption explicit when he says: "The minds of all men are similar in their feelings and operations, nor can any one be actuated by any affection, of which all others are not, in some degree susceptible". (T, 575-576) This assumption underlies, of course, his doctrine of sympathy. Whether Hume tries to justify this assumption, or whether it could be justified, is not something that need concern us here. But it should be noted that what Hume takes to be the standard procedure and the proper objective of his science of human nature depends on the truth of

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[1]See Chapter IV, Section 3.

[2]See Chapter III, Section 1.

the assumption. A consequence of this view is that the truth of a scientific theory in the science of human nature, at least if it be a general theory applicable to more than the one person who expresses it, depends on a procedure of private verification on the part of the mental scientist's readers. That is to say, each of the readers is expected to look into his own mind to see whether what the philosopher (or scientist) says is true of his mind is true of the reader's mind as well. It is at least possible, on such a view, for the philosopher's claims, even if they be true of his own inner experience, to be false of everyone else's.

At one point in the Treatise Hume remarks that "the perceptions of the mind are perfectly known". (T, 366) Perhaps what he really wants to say is that they are, in principle, knowable. What he cannot want to say is that it is always immediately obvious what one's state of mind is, for he puts a good deal of stress on the difficulties which beset the scientist of human nature when he sets out to reflect on his own inner experiences and to state the laws governing their occurrence. In the passage quoted above, in which Hume describes his introspective procedure, he refers to some of these difficulties. When the scientist tries to reflect on the operations of his mind they seem "involved in obscurity". (EHU, 13) It is difficult to "discriminate and distinguish" one mental operation from another. (EHU, 13) These operations of the mind must be "apprehended in an instant", because they are "too fine to remain long in the same aspect or situation". (EHU, 13) To be able to do his job properly the scientist of human nature must have a "superior penetration, derived from nature, and improved by habit and reflexion". (EHU,13) Hume refers to the obscurity and complexity which beset the scientist of human nature in an instruc-

tive passage in the Treatise as well. After recounting the difficulties of pursuing an inquiry in natural science Hume asks:

> If this be the case even in natural philosophy, how much more in moral, where there is a much greater complication of circumstances, and where those views and sentiments, which are essential to any action of the mind, are so implict and obscure, that they often escape our strictest attention, and are not only unaccountable in their causes, but even unknown in their existence? (T, 175)

Besides the fact of the greater obscurity and complexity of the objects of its investigation, in comparison to those of natural science, Hume's mental science labors as well under a burden that is not shared by natural science. The very attempt to observe one's inner experiences may well distort the situation that one wishes to describe and explain.

> Moral philosophy has, indeed, 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. When I am at a loss to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation, I need only 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 phaenomenon. (T, xxii-xxiii)

That is to say, the fact that the self-observing scientist is observing what is going on in his own mind may, at least in some cases, make it impossible for him to secure an unambiguous specimen of the mental operation to which he wishes to attend. Perhaps he wants to observe his mind when he is in a state of angry rage. But if he is successful in turning his attention to his own state of mind, the effect will be that the feelings of rage have been dissipated. Perhaps he wants to observe his reaction when someone insults him, so he brings about a situation in which he is insulted. But the very fact of

having brought about the situation himself, with the intention of observing his response, makes it impossible, at least in many cases, to secure the response wanted. In this way the difficulties of securing proper experimental conditions are much greater in mental than in natural science.

To remedy this situation, Hume suggests that we must "glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures". (T, xxiii) That is, he invokes the third of the three sources of information for his science of human nature: human behavior in various circumstances. It is not, however, immediately clear how this reference to human conduct, and the circumstances in which it occurs, is supposed to remedy the defects of the mental scientist's introspective method. It does not seem to be the case that a study of the public phenomena of men's behavior and its circumstances is intended to provide a substitute or alternative subject matter for the science of human nature. There is no reason to think that, because it is alleged to be difficult, Hume gives up his project of stating the laws which correlate the occurrence of one kind of mental phenomenon with another, for another project in which one publicly observable kind of phenomenon is explained by reference to another. Rather, a consideration of these public phenomena is alleged to assist the mental scientist in the prosecution of his original project, by enabling him to overcome or circumvent the peculiar difficulties which he encounters when he tries the direct introspective method.

I would suggest that Hume is working with the following sort of model. When a person is placed in certain publicly observable circumstances certain

non-public mental events take place. Perhaps a whole series of mental events take place, some causing others. These mental events, in turn, give rise to certain forms of publicly observable behavior. It is possible to establish laws correlating these circumstances with this behavior _via_ reference to the internal, mental events. That is, one may establish a law correlating facts about a person's situation (e.g. the fact that someone acts kindly toward him) with facts about his conduct (e.g. the fact that he acts kindly in return) _via_ facts about his purely mental life (e.g. he feels pleasure as a result of that person's actions, thus feels love for that person, thus feels benevolence for that person, thus decides to do something which he believes will result in pleasure for that person, and so on). On this model, a man's mind is the point of interaction between his circumstances and his behavior, and there are empirical laws correlating mental events with both circumstances and conduct.

If we read Hume's suggestion that we "glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life" within this very rough framework, we can understand somewhat, I think, the way in which his knowledge of publically observable states of affairs is supposed to assist the mental scientist. Attention to the circumstances men find themselves in, and the way they behave in those circumstances, has the auxiliary role of facilitating the mental scientist's observation of what goes on in his own mind. Because he can somehow use what he knows about the way men act in the circumstances in which they act, he can overcome the perplexities he experiences when he simply introspects. The relatively easily accessible public knowledge he has at his disposal enables him to find his way more easily

through the complex and obscure regions of his own mind. This is not to say that Hume, in his science of human nature thinks there is nothing of genuine and intrinsic interest to be gained from the observation of human behavior. He is surely, at times, interested in publicly observable phenomena for their own sake, as in the study of economics. It is simply to say that within the narrow confines of the science of human nature as presented in the Treatise, where the science of human nature is a mental science in a peculiar sense, the study of human behavior can only have the auxiliary role of facilitating the study of the laws of internal mental phenomena. Information about publicly observable circumstances and conduct is, in the end, only grist for the introspectionist's mill.

Of the three sources of information mentioned at the start of this section, linguistic usage, private experience, and public conduct and circumstances, it is clearly private experience which Hume considers of greatest importance. The other two have only a secondary role to play. Hume considers linguistic usage only sporadically. And when he does so, it is usually in cases where he is concerned to eliminate a conceptual confusion which stands in the way of the scientific study of human nature. When his attention is directed to the scientific explanation of mental phenomena he pays practically no attention at all to what people say. The subsidiary role which Hume allots to the study of such public matters as the circumstances and conduct of men is somewhat more surprising. Nevertheless, it does seem that the principal objects of Hume's attention are the private phenomena which he takes thoughts, recollections, feelings, desires, and choices to be. And his principal objective, especially in Books I and II of the Treatise,

is to state the laws which govern their occurrence. Ideally, then, the scientist of human nature should fix his attention on the things that go on in his own mind. It is only the difficulties of this procedure which lead him to look elsewhere for his information.

5. Relations of Ideas

One feature of Hume's philosophy which has far-reaching consequences for manytopics that I shall treat in the course of this dissertation, and which it is convenient to consider at this point, is his distinction between matters of fact and relations of ideas. In this section I shall try to elucidate Hume's account of this distinction, at least so far as is necessary for my purposes in this dissertation. I shall also draw attention to the bearing which this distinction has on our understanding of the logical character of Hume's science of human nature.

Though the distinction is an important one for Hume, it is not very clearly drawn. This is particularly true of the account of the distinction offered in the _Treatise_. In the _Treatise_ (p. 69) Hume divides the seven philosophical relations into two classes. The first class comprises the relations of resemblance, proportion in quantity or number, degrees in any quality, and contrariety. The second class comprises the relations of identity, time and place, and causation. Several criteria are offered for distinguishing the two classes. Relations of the first class "depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together"; such a relation "is invariable, as long as our idea remains the same". (T, 69) Relations of the second class "may be chang'd without any change in the ideas". (T, 69) Again,

relations of the first class are those "of which we receive information from . . . abstract reasoning or reflexion"; of relations of the second class "we receive information from experience". (T, 69) Relations of the first sort are expressed by "propositions, that are prov'd by intuition or demonstration". (T, 95) In their case, "the person who assents to a proposition 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) With propositions expressing relations of the second sort, "this absolute necessity cannot take place, and the imagination is free to conceive both sides of the question". (T, 95) The reason given for this difference is interesting: "Whatever is absurd is unintelligible; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive anything contrary to a demonstration". (T, 95) Further, when the understanding "judges from demonstration [i.e. considers relations of the first sort] . . . it regards the abstract relations of ideas"; when it "judges . . . from probability [i.e. considers relations of the second sort] . . . it regards . . . those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information". (T, 413) Truth, similarly, is of two kinds; it consists "either in the discovery of the proportion of ideas, consider'd as such, or in the conformity of our ideas of objects to their real existence". (T, 448) On the basis of this distinction of the two kinds of relations one can distinguish two "operations of human understanding": "the comparing of ideas" and "the inferring of matter of fact". (T, 463)

Despite the many interesting contrasts drawn in the Treatise account of the distinction, however, many ambiguities remain. It is sufficiently clear

that one fundamental distinction which Hume is making is that between necessary and contingent propositions. Some propositions are such that, if they are true they are necessarily true, and if they are false they are necessarily false; others are such that if they are true it is possible that they be false, and if they are false it is possible that they be true. It is not, however, clear that Hume intends to draw a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. In fact it appears quite difficult to claim that all the propositions which would, according to Hume, express relations of ideas are analytic ones. Consider some of his examples of relations of ideas. The judgment we make, when we decide that one object is hotter than another is apparently, for Hume, a judgment about a relation of ideas. (T, 70) Similarly, the judgment one might make that, of three colored patches, two are more resembling than the third, is a judgment based on a relation of ideas. (cf. T, 70) But it is at least not obvious how the statements made in these judgments are analytic statements.[1] Doubtless Hume would say that all analytic statements express relations of ideas, not matters of fact. But there is certainly some reason to think that the class of propositions asserting relations of ideas is larger than the class of analytic statements.[2]

The difficulty in determining whether Hume intends a distinction corresponding to that between analytic and synthetic statements is connected with difficulties in interpreting the various criteria which Hume offers for making

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[1] This is not to say that it is obvious how such statements could be necessary statements.

[2] For support of this interpretation see Arthur Pap, Semantics and Necessary Truth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), pp. 69-86. The first half of my present section has been much influenced by Pap's account of Hume's distinction.

his crucial distinction. Hume's account of these criteria is, in fact, far from satisfactory. At times the distinction between the two sorts of proposition depends on whether or not the person who assents to the proposition is constrained, in some very strong sense, to assent to it. At other times, the distinction depends on whether the state of affairs described by the negation of the proposition in question can or cannot be imagined or conceived. The distinction also, at times, depends on whether the proposition is proved by experience, or by either intuition or demonstration. But Hume nowhere tries to show that these different criteria in fact support the same distinction, or, if they do, how they are related one to another. Aside from these difficulties Hume also tends, in the _Treatise_, to blur the differences between three separate distinctions: the distinction between necessary and contingent propositions; the distinction between deductive and inductive arguments; and that between deductive arguments whose premises are necessarily true, and deductive arguments whose premises are, if true, only contingently so.

The issue is somewhat more clearly defined in the first _Enquiry_. It is there that Hume introduces the terms "_Relations of Ideas_" and "_Matters of Fact_". (EHU, 25) These are the two kinds of "objects of human reason or enquiry". (EHU, 25) Relations of ideas are the object of "the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain". (EHU, 25) Hume offers two mathematical examples of propositions which assert relations of ideas. The proposition expressed by "The square of the hypothenuse is equal to the square of the two sides" is one which "expresses a relation between these

figures". (EHU, 25) That expressed by "Three times five is equal to the half of thirty" is one which "expresses a relation between these numbers". (EHU, 25) Such "intuitively or demonstratively certain" propositions are "discoverable by the mere operation of thought". (EHU, 25) Further, they have no "dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would for ever retain their certainty and evidence". (EHU, 25)

Hume states his two principal criteria for distinguishing relations of ideas from matters of fact much more explicitly in the Enquiry than in the Treatise. "The contrary of every matter of fact", he says, "is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctuess, as if ever so conformable to reality". (EHU, 25) Presumably the "contrary" of a proposition asserting a relation of ideas is impossible: that is cannot be conceived, and implies a contradiction. One can "demonstrate the falsehood" of the contradictory of true propositions asserting relations of ideas. This is not so in the case of propositions asserting matters of fact. Were the contrary of a true proposition asserting a matter of fact "demonstratively false, it would imply a contradiction, and could never be distinctly conceived by the mind". (EHU, 26)

I am not suggesting that the Enquiry account of the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact supersedes that of the Treatise, especially if one's interest in this distinction stems from its utility in interpreting other parts of the Treatise. In fact, several elements in the Treatise account fail to appear in the much briefer discussion in the Enquiry.

In the Treatise Hume begins by distinguishing two classes of relations; in the Enquiry he tends rather to stress the fact that he is talking about two different kinds of proposition. This perhaps explains the absence of some of the more puzzling examples of relations of ideas offered in the Treatise, such as those concerning color perception and temperature discrimination. Nevertheless, though the best source of information for the interpretation of the Treatise is the Treatise itself, the Enquiry account can be of some assistance. It is helpful particularly in this respect, that two of the criteria which Hume offers for distinguishing matters of fact and relations of ideas in the Treatise are more explicitly stated in the Enquiry.

By putting the two accounts together one can derive the following outline of an important part, at least, of what Hume has to say about relations of ideas and matters of fact. A proposition p is, if true, necessarily true, and thus a proposition asserting a relation of ideas, if -p is impossible. To say that -p is impossible is to say either: (a) -p is inconceivable; or (b) -p can be shown to be self-contradictory; or (c) both. A proposition p is, if true, only contingently true, and thus a proposition asserting a matter of fact, if -p is possible. To say that -p is possible is to say either: (a) -p is conceivable; or (b) -p can not be shown to be self-contradictory; or (c) both. In both cases "conceivable" tends to be taken as synonymous with "imaginable". On the basis of these criteria, it is alleged that "Three times five is equal to the half of thirty" expresses a necessarily true proposition, asserting a relation of ideas; whereas "The sun will rise tomorrow" expresses a contingent proposition, asserting a matter of fact. Many difficulties may be raised about both the interpretation and the adequacy of these criteria, but to consider them here would take us too far

afield. What has been said so far should be sufficient to enable us to understand what Hume intends to say when, for example, he says that it is a contingent matter that an emotion such as pride occurs only in circumstances where a person receives an independent pleasure upon the contemplation of some action that has been performed, or some quality that is possessed by someone whom he believes bears a special relation to himself. In saying this Hume is saying: (a) that it is conceivable that a person be proud in circumstances where neither of these two conditions is satisfied; or (b) that the assertion that a person is proud without either of these conditions being satisfied can not be shown to be self-contradictory; or (c) both. There is no necessary connection, that is, between being proud and these conditions being satisfied. One discovers the connection between being proud and the satisfaction of these conditions not by the "mere operation of thought", but by consulting experience. The situation which does obtain could be otherwise.

I mentioned earlier that there are good reasons, in interpreting the _Treatise_, for denying the contention that Hume's distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact is intended as a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. The case is somewhat altered in the _Enquiry_. In at least one instance, the reason which Hume offers in explanation of the fact that a proposition is necessarily true is the fact that its terms have a certain meaning. "But to convince us of this proposition, _that where there is no property, there can be no injustice_, it is only necessary to define the terms, and explain injustice to be a violation of property". (EHU, 163) This is apparently true of other propositions as well, since, for some other

propositions at least, the only reason why their truth is not immediately obvious is the fact of "the undeterminate meaning of words, which is corrected by juster definitions". (EHU, 163) This, of course, is not surprising. Since Hume distinguishes simple and complex ideas, the analysis of a complex idea would consist in analytic statements. But even in the *Enquiry* Hume does not make very explicit his belief, if it is his belief, that all necessarily true propositions are analytic ones. For the most part, Hume just doesn't raise the question.

Having considered the character of Hume's distinction of relations of ideas and matters of fact, we may now notice one way in which this distinction has a bearing on the interpretation of Hume's science of human nature. In the famous peroration of the first *Enquiry*, Hume divides the objects of human reason into two classes: those sciences which involve "*abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number*", and those involving "*experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence*". (EHU, 165) The first sciences are composed of propositions asserting relations of ideas, and the second of propositions concerning matters of fact. This, is not, of course, to say that all propositions asserting relations of ideas are mathematical ones. As we have just seen, Hume does recognize non-mathematical, non-contingent propositions. But these propositions are dismissed as trivial. The only really worthwhile propositions are mathematical ones, or those which state matters of fact. The question then arises: Does Hume think his science of human nature consists only of empirical propositions, or does it require necessary propositions as well? And if it requires necessary propositions, are these mathematical or trivial, or is this dichotomy too rigid? The fact

of the matter seems to be that Hume is just not clear on this point. Many things he says seem to imply that his science of human nature is a purely empirical study. Nevertheless, at least in a number of interesting cases, Hume, does, quite consciously, make assertions which are alleged to be necessarily true, but which are neither mathematical nor trivial. Having seen, in the first section of this chapter, that Hume does not see any distinction between a philosophical and a scientific enquiry, this need not surprise us.

In at least one case Hume quite unequivocally makes an assertion that is neither a mathematical assertion, nor a trivial one, but which he describes as being necessarily true. In Book I, Part II of the *Treatise*, Hume discusses the question whether space and time are infinitely divisible, and concludes that it is "impossible" that they be infinitely divisible. (T, 31) His arguments for this conclusion need not detain us; it is sufficient for our present purpose to notice a comment which Hume makes on the conclusion to the argument.

> I doubt not but it will readily be allow'd by the most obstinate defender of the doctrine of infinite divisibility, that these arguments are difficulties, and that 'tis impossible to give any answer to them which will be perfectly clear and satisfactory. But here we may observe, that nothing can be more absurd, than this custom of calling a *difficulty* what pretends to be a *demonstration*, and endeavouring by that means to elude its force and evidence. 'Tis not in demonstrations as in probabilities, that difficulties can take place, and one argument counter-ballance another, and diminish its authority. A demonstration, if just, admits of no opposite difficulty; and if not just, 'tis a mere sophism, and consequently can never be a difficulty. 'Tis either irresistible, or has no manner of force. To talk of objections and replies, and ballancing of arguments in such a question as this, is to confess, either that human reason is nothing but a play of words, or that the person himself, who talks so, has not a capacity equal to such subjects. Demonstrations may be difficult to be comprehended, because of the abstractedness of the subject; but can never have any such difficulties as will weaken their authority, when once they are comprehended. (T, 31-32)

In Hume's terminology, to say that a proposition has been demonstrated is to say that it is necessarily true; that its negation is inconceivable and can be shown to be self-contradictory. That is, Hume at least claims that the proposition expressed by "Space and time are not infinitely divisible" is a necessarily true proposition. But this proposition is not a mathematical one. Nor is it a trivial one: Hume spends a great deal of time arguing for its truth. Nor is Hume's comment a mere passing remark or slip of the pen: Hume belabors his point. Thus we may conclude to the falsity of the assertion that all the statements in Hume's science of human nature are intended to be statements asserting matters of fact, and thus to be only contingently true.

A somewhat more interesting case is the way Hume deals with the proposition expressed by "Where there is no property, there can be no injustice". In the Enquiry, though this proposition is admitted to be necessarily true, it is dismissed as trivial. "This proposition," Hume says, "is indeed, nothing but a more imperfect definition". (EHU, 163) To know its truth it is "only necessary to define the terms". (EHU, 163) In this respect it is just like "all those pretended syllogistical reasonings, which may be found to abound in every other branch of learning, except the sciences of quantity and number". (EHU, 163) Such trivial though necessary truths should not be considered among the "proper objects of knowledge and demonstration". (EHU, 163) "The only objects of the abstract science or of demonstration," Hume is emphatic, "are quantity or number"; "all attempts to extend this more perfect species of knowledge beyond these bounds are mere sophistry and illusion". (EHU, 163)

Despite the aspersions cast on propositions like that expressed by "Where there is no property, there can be no injustice", however, Hume at times appears to think that such propositions can have important jobs to do. In Book III of the Treatise, when Hume is discussing property and justice, conceptual connections of the sort expressed in the quoted proposition are taken to be quite significant. Hume insists that such conceptual connections must be noted if one is to avoid confusion about the nature of property, rights, and obligation. He talks of a convention being entered into by men to respect the possessions of others. He then suggests that when "this convention . . . is enter'd into, and every one has acquir'd a stability in his possessions, there immediately arises the ideas of justice and injustice; as also those of property, right, and obligation. The latter are altogether unintelligible without first understanding the former". (T, 490-491) This, he suggests, is an important point to notice when one is theorizing about the nature of rights, property, etc. "Those . . . who make use of the words property, or right, or obligation, before they have explain'd the origin of justice, or even make use of them in that explication, are guilty of a very gross fallacy, and can never reason upon any solid foundation". (T, 491) It would seem, then, that Hume is interested in the elucidation of the relations between these several concepts, and that, in the course of this elucidation, he would want to say that such-and-such relations are necessary, or that such-and-such propositions expressing these relations are necessarily true. This would at least compromise his suggestion that the science of human nature has no use for necessarily true propositions asserting relations of ideas.

On some occasions, then, Hume does make use, in his science of human nature, of statements that he thinks of as necessarily true, and perhaps as analytic. In a good many other places, as well, he makes claims which he takes to be only contingently true, but which seem in fact to be analytically true. The clearest instances of this occur in the course of his discussion of the passions. One is thus faced with a very puzzling question. Why did Hume apparently want to say that the science of human nature does not require or make use of necessarily true propositions, and why does he so often mistake the logical status of the assertions he makes? One would have expected a bit more clarity on the part of a philosopher who so strongly emphasized the difference between necessary and contingent truths.

Two reasons for Hume's reluctance to admit propositions asserting relations of ideas into his science of human nature suggest themselves. As is clear from a careful reading of the closing paragraphs of the Enquiry, one point that Hume wants to insist on is that no matters of fact can be demonstrated. Having talked of the sciences of "quantity and number", Hume says: "All other enquiries of men regard only matter of fact and existence; and these are evidently incapable of demonstration". (EHU, 163-164) But if a non-mathematical science purports to make claims about the way the world is, these claims can not be necessary truths. They are truths which are discovered by experience, or which are not known at all. There is no sense, then, to be made of the suggestion that one construct a physical science or a science of man in which a matter of fact is derived from a relation of ideas. Since any proposition asserting a matter of fact could logically be false, the truth of such a proposition can only be learned by experience. In so far

then, as Hume was engaged in a polemic against theorists who, so Hume thought, assumed that such a deduction of matters of fact from relations of ideas was possible, it is understandable that he would put great emphasis on his belief that a science must be empirical. But this does not, of course, imply that no propositions asserting relations of ideas could have a place in Hume's inquiry. As I suggested earlier, one of Hume's objectives was to eliminate conceptual confusions. Surely in so far as this is one of his objectives he can allow a legitimate use of analytic statements within his science of human nature. In fact, as I have pointed out, he does make use of such statements.

Perhaps, however, Hume would want to insist that even for the purposes of conceptual clarification there is not a great deal to be gained by making analytic statements. This may be a useful preliminary to such a conceptual clarification, but is hardly enough. In the case of justice and property, for example, it may well be analytic that where there is no property there can be no injustice. But simply becoming explicitly aware of this truth does not take one very far in understanding why there is such a conceptual connection. The really interesting questions lie in the attempt to explain, by reference to known human needs and motives, how we could come to have the institutions and practices that we do have, and how one institution or practice depends on or presupposes another. Only when this inquiry has taken place, has one provided a genuine elucidation of the concepts in question.

A second consideration that may explain Hume's apparent neglect of the role of analytic statements in his science of human nature is his tendency to demand that statements be genuinely informative, or that they contribute

toward the securing of information. Though admitting the possibility of non-mathematical, non-contingent propositions, Hume would perhaps insist that such propositions do not pass the test for a worthwhile proposition: that it contribute, directly or indirectly, to the store of information that we have about the world or about ourselves. In not being informative, such propositions are contrasted, to their own disadvantage, with any empirical proposition, and especially with the propositions of a scientific explanatory system, such as that of Newton's mechanics. In not contributing indirectly to the increase of information they are contrasted, again to their disadvantage, with the propositions of mathematics. The propositions of mathematics, though non-informative, have at least this to commend them: they are an essential part of scientific inquiry, at least of the Newtonian sort. One is reminded here of Hume's remarks about "mixed mathematics" in the Enquiry, where he draws attention to the fact that geometry can be "taken into the assistance of natural philosophy", or "assists us in the application" of the laws of natural science. (EHU, 31) The trouble with non-mathematical, non-contingent propositions is that they cannot perform even this function. Once again, however, to say that such propositions do not have an informative function does not imply that they have no function at all. In his polemics Hume fails to make this distinction.

To conclude this section, and this chapter, I would just stress the fact that Hume is far from clear about the nature of the inquiry in which he is engaged in the Treatise, and especially about the nature of the propositions which comprise that science, as it is presented in the Treatise. By all counts, the Treatise should only consist of empirical statements.

Quite obviously it does not. It is Hume's failure to realize that all of his objectives could not be achieved by the use of empirical propositions alone that occasionally throws his inquiry into confusion. And his failure to get quite clear about the nature of his crucial distinction of relations of ideas and matters of fact explains, at least in part, his sometimes complete misconstruction of what he is doing.

CHAPTER II

EXPLANATION

In the previous chapter, while stressing the variety of the investigations which comprise Hume's science of human nature, and especially the place Hume give s to conceptual inquiry, I have maintained that Hume's objectives were principally such as would today be described as scientific. That is, Hume believes himself to be engaged in a project of discovering those empirical laws which govern the occurrence of such mental phenomena as thoughts, beliefs, recollections, feelings, desires, and choices, and thus the character of human conduct. It is time now to consider Hume's views on the nature of such an apparently scientific project. In this chapter I shall discuss Hume's general theory of explanation, introducing no restrictions concerning the class or classes of phenomena to be explained. The chapter has three sections dealing, respectively, with the nature of explanation, causal laws, and probability. The discussion of these topics will provide much of the necessary background for my later accounts of Hume's theory of the passions, of motives, and human freedom.

1. The Nature of Explanation

For Hume, to explain an event is to subsume that event under a law which may be said to govern its occurrence. To take a simple example, one explains the fact that a piece of gold has dissolved by pointing out that it has been placed in a solution of _aqua regia_, and by invoking the law that gold dissolves in _aqua regia_. Similarly, one explains the fact that one feels warm by pointing to the burning coals in the fireplace, and invoking the law that fire produces heat. In each case one makes use of a law stating a connection between two classes of events, and

a proposition stating the occurrence of an instance of one of the two classes of events, in order to explain the occurrence of an instance of the other of the two classes of events. In invoking the law, one shows that the event to be explained is just what one would have expected, were one aware of the law, and aware that an instance of one of the classes of events correlated by the law had occurred. An event is explicable in so far as its occurrence is governed by a law, or rather in so far as the law which governs its occurrence can be stated. To say that an event is inexplicable is to say that no law is known which governs its occurrence.

This account of the explanation of events is present in both the Treatise and the first Enquiry. In the Treatise Hume points out that to explain an event is to provide the law which governs its occurrence when he suggests that "to explain that act of the mind, which we call belief" is to "give an account of the principles, from which it is deriv'd".(T,178) Later, talking of pride, he refers to "the principles, from which they [i.e. the "effects"] arise".(T,282) It is such principles which are used "in order to explain every different operation".(T,282) One objective of the scientist is to "adapt" a "phaenomenon" to a "principle".(T,282) This was part of Newton's project, when he "determined the laws and forces, by which the revolutions of the planets are governed and directed".(EHU,14)

It is not, however, sufficient, at least for a scientific enterprise of explanation, that one be able to subsume a great many events or classes of events under the particular laws which govern their occurrence. This might only supply a multiplicity of more or less ad hoc explanatory principles. The purposes of science require that one systematize this wealth of particular laws by displaying their deductive connections with other, more general laws. That is, one must construct an explanatory system of laws in which some laws ("lower-level laws") are derivable from others ("higher-level laws"). In such an explanatory system, the lower level laws are adaptations of or instantiations of the higher-level laws of the system. The higher-

level laws are more general, and thus more simple, than those laws which can be derived from them. Taking an example from the Treatise, the fifth law of association, which states that one complex mental state gives rise to another complex mental state if there is a double relation of impressions and ideas between the two, is of a higher-level than the law which states that the complex mental state comprising the feeling of pride and the thought of oneself is caused by a prior complex mental state comprising an experience of pleasure and the thought of some action performed or some quality possessed by someone believed to bear a special relationship to oneself. This latter law, governing the occurrence of pride, is an instantiation of the more general law of the double relation of impressions and ideas.

Hume stresses both the systematic objectives of a scientific inquiry, and the contrast, in terms of generality and simplicity, between the higher- and lower-level laws in an explanatory system, in both the Treatise and the first Enquiry. As he points out in the Enquiry: "It is probable, that one operation and principle of the mind depends on another; which, again, may be resolved into one more general and universal".(EHU,14-15) Later he says: "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".(EHU,30) Because such higher-level laws are general and simple, they are fewer in number than the less general, less simple lower-level laws which fall under them. "We find in the course of nature, 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) The case of the development of physical science illustrates the importance which must be attributed to the process of subsuming particular laws under more general, simpler laws:

> The ancients, tho' sensible of that maxim, <u>that nature does nothing in vain</u>, contriv'd such intricate systems of the heavens, as seem'd inconsistent with true philosophy, and gave place at last to something more simple and natural. To invent 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. (T, 282)

For Hume, then, the explanation of an event is fundamentally a matter of being able to show that it is the sort of thing that normally occurs in such-and-such circumstances. One's ability to explain events depends, in large part, on one's experience of the constant sequences of events. In a similar fashion, the explanation of a lower-level explanatory law is a matter of displaying the fact that the correlation of events governed by the law is a particular instance of a more general kind of correlation. Moreover, in so far as one displays the deductive connection between the particular law which explains an event and the higher-level laws from which it is derived one renders the event to be explained more intelligible. Negatively, this is to say that explanation is not a matter of understanding, simply from a consideration of the nature of things, and without some experience of the way they react in given circumstances, how they will behave in those circumstances. Some philosophers had suggested that we may come to know how a given type of object must behave simply by reflecting on the known properties of that object. They thought that we may "discover the dependence of ... one [object] upon the other" by a "penetration into their essences". (T, 86) They talked as though one could know that oil and water do not mix by simply thinking of the nature of both, but without ever having observed them together. One who has the necessary "insight into the internal structure or operating principle of objects" (T, 169) would understand why it must be the case that they behave in the way they do. Thus, to explain why a certain kind of object O reacts in a certain way R when in circumstances C one must elucidate those

elements of the nature of O which determine it to react in that way. In understanding O's nature in the requisite sense, one comes to discover the necessary truth of certain propositions describing O's reactions in circumstances C. One understands that O could not have reacted in any other way in C because it has such and such a nature. All of this is alleged to be possible without having ever observed O, or some object relevantly similar to O, in circumstances C. The "Cartesians", Hume remarks, thought that one could make claims about the possible behavior of material objects by virtue of just such an understanding of the nature of matter:

> ...the Cartesians in particular, having establish'd it as a principle, that we are perfectly acquainted with the essence of matter, have very naturally inferr'd, that it is endow'd with no efficacy, and that 'tis impossible for it of itself to communicate motion, or produce any of those effects, which we ascribe to it. As the essence of matter consists in extension, and as extension implies not actual motion, but only mobility; they conclude, that the energy, which produces the motion, cannot lie in the extension.(T,159)

The belief in such *a priori* explanations, Hume insists, rests on a confusion. There are, of course, some kinds of propositions which are necessarily true. But these propositions are not of the right sort to do the explanatory job that these philosophers require. Only those propositions are necessarily true which depend, for their truth, solely on our ideas. The propositions of mathematics provide the chief instances of this sort of proposition. But these propositions purchase their necessary truth at the cost of having nothing to say about "matter of fact and existence".(EHU,163-164) And it is just this latter property, that of being about a matter of fact or existence, that a proposition must have if it is to be capable of explaining events in the world. When philosophers suggest that one can explain events by invoking necessarily true propositions about the nature of objects, they fail to see that the only sort of proposition that could be necessarily true could not explain the occurrence of any event because it is not itself factual. Only

empirical propositions will do, but empirical propositions are all only contingently true, if they are true.

Thus the explanation of any event can only be a matter of showing that that event was only to be expected, given the facts of the situation in which the event takes place. And one only knows what to expect in a situation if one has witnessed a sufficiently similar situation before. One cannot explain an event by means of one's knowledge of the natures of things if this means either: (a) a knowledge, independent of experience, of a matter of fact; (b) a knowledge, expressible in a necessarily true proposition, of a matter of fact; or (c) both. There are no _a priori_ explanations of the way things happen. All explanatory laws are, if true, only contingently so.

To say that science requires hierarchical sets of explanatory laws in which some laws (lower-level laws) are derivable from others (higher-level laws) in no way compromises this thesis about the contingent character of explanatory laws. The deducibility of one proposition from another does not depend on the non-contingent character of either. Hume seems not always to have been alive to this fact, and at times talks in a way which appears to rule out the possibility of deducing one factual proposition from another. As I have mentioned in another place,[1] Hume sometimes does not keep sufficiently separated the distinctions between necessary and contingent propositions, between deductive and inductive arguments, and between deductive arguments with necessarily true premises, and deductive arguments with contingent premises. But nothing that he says in fact calls into question the possibility of deducing one proposition, whether necessary or contingent, from another. What Hume does argue is that no new contingent truth may be discovered by deduction. But this certainly is compatible with the belief that one contingent proposition may be deductively connected with another. It is just this point which Hume is, perhaps not with full awareness, insisting on, when he talks of "reduc[ing]

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[1]See page 63.

the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity, and... resolv/ing/ the many particular effects into a few general causes".(EHU,30) The relation of the more general principles of a science to its less general ones, provided they are not independent, can only be a deductive one. But this involves no demonstrations of matters of fact.

I shall conclude this section by summing-up the main points of Hume's theory of explanation that have been noted thus far. One explains an event by invoking the law which governs the occurrence of that event, and by referring to the occurrence of the other events whose occurrence is lawfully correlated with the event to be explained. It is possible to construct complex systems of explanatory laws in which laws of varying degrees of generality and simplicity are deductively related. The construction of such structured systems of explanatory laws is a prime task of scientific inquiry. Though the laws in such a system are deductively related one to another, they are, all of them, only contingently true, if they are true. No matter of fact can be explained by the use of a necessarily true proposition.

2. Causal Laws

Besides insisting that the generalizations in a scientific explanatory system are contingent propositions, Hume also claims that they are causal propositions. It is not, however, immediately clear how this claim should be interpreted. Does it, for example, imply that Hume believes there are no non-causal explanatory generalizations? In this section I shall try to elucidate what Hume means by this claim, and shall begin by showing that he does make the claim.

Hume's belief that all explanatory generalizations are causal propositions is apparent from some introductory remarks he makes when beginning his discussion of inductive inference in the Treatise. Having distinguished propositions asserting

relations of ideas from propositions asserting matters of fact, Hume divides the class of factual propositions into propositions about relations of identity, spatial and temporal relations, and causal relations. He then argues (a) that "all kinds of reasoning consist in nothing but a comparison, and a discovery of those relations, either constant or inconstant, which two or more objects bear to each other" (T,73); and (b) that reasoning is further restricted to cases in which the mind goes "beyond what is immediately present to the senses, either to discover the real existence or the relations of objects".(T,73) Of the three factual relations, "'tis only causation, 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,73-74) Of the three factual relations which could conceivably be asserted by a general proposition in explanation of the occurrence of some event, only that of causation is appropriate. The other two relations can only be made use of in reasoning "so far as they either affect or are affected by it [i.e. causation]". (T,74) Later Hume makes the same point again: "The only connexion or relation of objects, which can lead us beyond the immediate impressions of our memory and sense, is that of cause and effect; and that because 'tis the only one, on which we can found a just inference from one to another".(T,89) If we may assume that explanation and prediction are cognitive processes with the same logical structure, it would seem that, on Hume's view, explanatory generalizations are causal ones.

Turning to Hume's account of the concept of causation, we may center our attention on three points: the alleged spatial contiguity of a cause and its effect; the temporal priority of a cause to its effect; and the notion of causal necessity.

Hume often speaks as though spatial contiguity of cause and effect is essential to the relation of causation. In the first Treatise "definition" of causation he remarks that if an object is a cause it must be "contiguous to another".(T,170) In listing the rules for judging of causes and effects he also says, quite explicitly,

that "the cause and effect must be contiguous in space ".(T,173) He says, too:

> "... whatever objects are consider'd as causes or effects, are contiguous; and ... nothing can operate in a time or place, which is ever so little remov'd from those of its existence. Tho' distant objects may sometimes seem productive of each other, they are commonly found upon examination to be link'd by a chain of causes, which are contiguous among themselves, and to the distant objects; and when in any particular instance we cannot discover this connexion, we still presume it to exist. We may therefore consider the relation of CONTIGUITY as essential to that of causation".(T,75)

Significantly, however, he adds after this last passage: "At least [we] may suppose it such, according to the general opinion, till we can find a more proper occasion to clear up this matter, by examining what objects are or are not susceptible of juxtaposition and conjunction".(T,75)

Despite these apparently unequivocal claims, however, Hume later admits the possibility that a cause and its effect may not be spatially contiguous. In the section "Of the immateriality of the soul" he argues for the view "that an object may exist, and yet be no where".(T,235) In the course of this argument he asserts that "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; nor the whole with respect to other bodies so as to answer to our notions of contiguity or distance".(T,235-236) This, he says,

> ...is evidently the case with all our perceptions and objects, except those of the sight and feeling. A moral reflection cannot be plac'd on the right or on the left hand of a passion, nor can a smell or sound be either of a circular or square figure. These objects and perceptions, so far from requiring any particular place, are absolutely incompatible with it, and even the imagination cannot attribute it to them.(T,236)

Whatever the merits of this particular argument, we may notice that Hume denies the propriety of applying spatial predicates to some "objects and perceptions", and goes on to say that the relation of causation may exist "betwixt the extended object and the quality, which exists without any particular place".(T,237) Nor is this an

isolated remark. As we shall have ample opportunity to notice through the rest of this study of his philosophy of action, Hume continually both describes mental events as non-spatial events, and considers them as causes and effects of spatial and non-spatial effects and causes. Clearly then, spatial contiguity is not, for Hume, essential to causation. If an event is not spatial it can not be spatially contiguous to anything. Significantly, in his Enquiry definitions of causation he makes no reference to spatial contiguity of cause and effect. "We may define a cause to be an object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second". (EHU,76) At the very most Hume can only be asserting that for one spatial object or event to be the cause or effect of another spatial object or event, the two must be spatially contiguous. But even this, he makes clear, is an empirical question. There is no logical absurdity in the notion of action at a distance.

Similar reservations must be made (though admittedly the case is not so straightforward) about the claim that a cause must be temporally prior to its effect. Hume certainly claims that a cause must precede its effect, as in the first Treatise definition of causation where a cause is an "object precedent ... to another" (T,170), or when he says that "the cause must be prior to the effect".(T,173) In another place he states: "The second relation I shall observe as essential to causes and effects.../is/ that of PRIORITY of time in the cause before the effect".(T,75-76) He admits, after making this assertion, that the temporal priority of a cause may be a matter of controversy, but offers one argument as proof that a cause cannot be cotemporal with its effect. And in the Enquiry he still retains temporal priority of cause to effect as an essential ingredient of causation.

Nevertheless, in at least one place in the Treatise Hume seems to allow that a cause and its effect may be cotemporal. In talking of the "many other relations" that may obtain between an "extended object" and "another, that exists without any place or extension" he says:

> Thus the taste and smell of any fruit are inseparable from its other qualities of colour and tangibility; and _whichever of them be the cause or effect_, 'tis certain they are always co-existent. Nor are they only co-existent in general, but also _co-temporary_ in their appearance in the mind; and 'tis upon the application of the extended body to our senses we perceive its particular taste and smell. (T,237. Italics mine.)

One may question, of course, the propriety of calling the color of an apple the cause of its taste, or vice versa. But what is interesting to notice is that Hume admits that a cause and its effect may be cotemporal. If the case he gives of such cotemporality is not one we would normally call a case of cause and effect, this can only enhance its interest for the problem of determining what Hume means when he refers to explanatory generalizations as causal ones. Hume is here, in effect, saying that an explanatory generalization need not imply that one of the kinds of events which it refers to is temporally prior to the other. If this is so, there is reason to think that Hume's talk of causal explanations may not be as restrictive as it sounds.

A point of the greatest interest for determining Hume's meaning when he talks as though all explanations are causal explanations is his insistence that the notion of necessity is an essential element of the notion of causation. "_Necessary connexion_", he points out, "...makes /an/ essential...part of it /i.e. the notion of causation/".(T,87) Later he writes: "According to my definitions, necessity makes an essential part of causation".(T,407) If one says "A causes B"[1] one of the things one wants to say is that if an A occurs a B _must_ also occur. In his discussion of causation, Hume spends a great deal of time providing an account of this necessity.

One of the things on which Hume is quite clear is that the notion of necessity present in talk of causes and effects is not the same as that present in talk of necessarily true propositions. That is to say, no causal statement is a necessary

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[1] Throughout this section I shall use the formula "A causes B" to stand for a general causal statement as "_Aqua regia_ dissolves gold" or "Fire produces heat". I shall also assume the following simplifications: (a) A is the sole cause of B; (b) B is always caused.

statement; the denial of any causal statement whatever is not self-contradictory. Thus Hume is faced with the problem of explaining causal necessity in a way that does not turn it into the logical necessity of propositions asserting relations of ideas. A proposition of the form "A causes B", though it involves the concept of necessity in some way, is a contingent proposition.

As is well known, Hume claims that the source of this idea of causal necessity, the impression from which it is derived, is a certain feeling one has when, having experienced the constant conjunction of members of two classes of events, A and B, and having encountered an A, one expects to encounter a B. As he says in the *Enquiry*:

> In all single instances of the operation of bodies or minds, there is nothing that produces any impression, nor consequently can suggest any idea of power or necessary connexion. But when many uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event; we then begin to entertain the notion of cause and connexion. 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.(EHU,78)

The impression which quarantees that the term "necessity", in the sense of "causal necessity", has meaning, is this feeling. This discovery suits Hume's objectives in two ways. For one thing, it enables him to give an account of causal necessity that does not involve the concept of necessary truth, and thus a denial of the contingency of all causal statements. For another, it is consonant with, in fact an instance of, the association of ideas which is one of the principal parts of his science of human nature.

The fact that this account of causal necessity is consonant with Hume's associationist explanation of mental phenomena is an important point to notice. As Flew has observed, this explains why Hume should light on the alleged impression of mental determination, not some other impression such as the feeling of effort when one tries to move some object, to explain the notion of causal necessity.[1] But it

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[1] Flew, p. 118. At many points in the present section I am indebted to Flew's account of causal necessity in his *Hume's Philosophy of Belief*, pp. 117-139.

is clear that this account of necessity will not do the job it is required to do, for it can not explain the concept of causation. In saying that the members of two classes of events are causally related we are saying that <u>they</u>, i.e. the events, are necessarily connected. We are not saying that we have a certain feeling of determination to think of a member of one of these classes when we encounter an instance of the other.[1] The problem then is one of analyzing what it is that we say when we assert a causal connection, and talk of the feelings we may have when we experience a constant conjunction of events does not contribute in any very obvious way to this analysis.

It is tempting to suggest that Hume was himself aware of the inadequacy of his official account of causal necessity when, both in the <u>Treatise</u> and the <u>Enquiry</u>, he framed his "definitions" of causation. Hume offers two definitions in each case. In the <u>Treatise</u> the two are distinguished in so far as the first provides a definition of causation as a philosophical relation, and the second a definition of causation as a natural relation.[2] In the <u>Enquiry</u> these terms are dropped, though the two definitions offered correspond to those in the <u>Treatise</u>. Let us consider the first of each set of definitions; that is, the definitions of causation as a philosophical relation. In the <u>Treatise</u> Hume says: "We may define a CAUSE to be 'An 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'".(T,170) In the <u>Enquiry</u> the corresponding definition runs: "We may define a cause to be <u>an object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second</u>".(EHU,76)

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[1]See pages, 33-34.

[2]When Hume talks of the causal relation of A's and B's as a "philosophical relation" he is referring to those observable facts about A's and B's which lead one to say that they are causally related. By "natural relation" he means a relation between mental phenomena, e.g. the thought of an A and the thought of a B.

Curiously enough, in neither definition does Hume mention the notion of necessity. He mentions spatial contiguity (at least in the *Treatise*), temporal priority of the cause, and constant conjunction, but says nothing of the necessary connection which as he elsewhere claims in the *Treatise*, makes an "essential part of causation".(T,407) He finds himself able to introduce mention of the impression from which he claims the idea of necessity is derived only when he offers his definitions of causation as a natural relation. But even if it is arguable that Hume's definitions of causation as a philosophical relation are intended as an analysis of the meaning of causal statements, there is no reason to think that when he talks of causation as a natural relation he intends to provide an analysis of the meaning of such statements. Thus, neither in the *Treatise* nor the *Enquiry* does Hume introduce the concept of necessity at that point at which he might, with some plausibility, be interpreted as offering an account of the meaning of causal language. Though Hume believes himself to have shown the origin of the idea of causal necessity, he has not shown how this illuminates the meaning of what we say when we utter a proposition of the form "A causes B".

At one point, however, Hume makes a remark which does illuminate the sense of necessity present when we utter a causal statement. In the first of the two *Enquiry* definitions Hume makes an interesting emendation. Having said that a cause is "*an object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second*", he continues: "Or in other words, *where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed*".(EHU,76)

It may be argued against Hume that the second italicized passage in this definition is not equivalent to the first italicized passage because an unrestricted universal statement of the form "All A's are followed by B's", which corresponds to the first, does not entail a subjunctive conditional of the form "If an A were not to occur, a B would not occur", which corresponds to the second. That is to say, some unrestricted universal statements are only accidental statements, stating correlations that *just happen* to occur. Given such an accidental universal statement, we may not legitimately infer the subjunctive

conditional "If an A were not to occur, a B would not occur". Other unrestricted universal statements, sometimes called "nomologicals", state correlations that, in some sense, must be the case. From these universal statements we are entitled to infer the appropriate subjunctive conditional.

This distinction between nomological and accidental universal statements on the basis of the entailment or non-entailment of subjunctive conditionals is, of course, a matter of controversy among contemporary philosophers. Some, such as K.R. Popper, argue that all unrestricted universal statements entail subjunctive conditionals, and thus we must look elsewhere if we are to elucidate the notion of a natural law. As he says: "There is no need to operate with subjunctive conditionals, since a universalized subjunctive conditional is equivalent to an ordinary universal statement".[1] Other philosophers, such as William Kneale, insist that one must distinguish universal material implications which are and those which are not laws. The difference, he suggests, is that there is a "possibility of deriving contrary-to-fact conditionals from statements of natural law".[2] Laws of nature, he says, "are not merely universal material implications".[3] Though the matter must be admitted to be a controversial one, Flew, in defending the distinction between nomological and accidental universal statements, does offer an example which seems to require that the distinction be made. Having said that "subjunctive conditionals cannot validly be deduced from statements of mere conjunction" he describes the following case:

> Suppose two mechanically ideal clocks placed side by side. Clock one is a split second fast on clock two. Every state of clock one will be followed by a similar state of clock two. So every specifiable state of clock one will be constantly conjoined with and succeeded by a parallel state of clock two. It is surely immediately obvious that it would be impossible to deduce that if some particular state of clock one had not occurred the customarily conjoined state of clock two would not have occurred.[4]

This example would seem, as Flew claims, to bring out that "subjunctive conditionals

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[1] K.R. Popper, "A Note on Natural Laws and So-Called 'Contrary-To-Fact Conditionals'", Mind, LVIII (1949), p.66.

[2] William Kneale, "Natural Laws and Contrary-To-Fact Conditionals", Analysis, X (1950), p.121.

[3] Kneale, p.125.

[4] Flew, p.131.

cannot be deduced from assertions only of constant conjunctions".[1]

Perhaps, however, Hume is only speaking loosely, and does not intend to say that the two italicized passages in his definition are equivalent. He himself elsewhere recognizes that no statement of constant conjunction entails a causal, and thus necessary, connection. This is one of the main points of his Treatise section entitled "Of the inference from the impression to the idea". In that section, having hit upon the notion of constant conjunction as an important element in the analysis of causation, Hume could still say:

> We may now see the advantage of quitting the direct survey of this relation [i.e. causation], in order to discover the nature of that necessary connexion, which makes so essential a part of it. There are hopes, that by this means we may at last arrive at our propos'd end; tho' to tell the truth, this new-discover'd relation of a constant conjunction seems to advance us very little in our way.(T,87-88)

In fact, it is just because the constant conjunction of two kinds of events does not entail their causal connection that Hume has room for the account of causal necessity which he gives. His psychological theorizing has a point because constant conjunction and temporal succession are not sufficient to account for causal necessity.

Prescinding from the question whether Hume thought that "All A's are followed by B's" is equivalent to "If an A were not to occur, a B would not occur", however, it is important to see that Hume is in fact putting his finger, whether justifiably or not, on the crux of the problem of causal necessity. Though the statement "All A's are followed by B's" does not entail "If an A were not to occur, a B would not occur", the statement "A causes B" does.[2] That is to say, causal statements do, and statements of mere constant conjunction do not, entail a corresponding subjunctive conditional.[3] This is the chief difference between the two. And it is this logical difference which explains the notion of necessity involved in causal statements, and not in statements

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[1] Flew, p.131.

[2] Recall the simplifying assumptions stated earlier, p. 85.

[3] I am here taking universal causal statements as instances of nomological universals. Later in this section I shall consider whether Hume would construe all nomologicals as universal causal statements.

of mere constant conjunctions. When we say that there is a causal and thus a necessary connection between A and B we are in part saying: If A, then B; and if not A, then not B. The necessity is of this sort: If an A occurs, we can infer that a B will occur, and if an A does not occur, we can infer that a B will not occur. The necessity, that is, is connected with the notion of inference, and is thus a form of logical necessity. It is not a form of logical necessity in the sense that a statement of the form "A causes B" is necessarily true; such a statement is contingent. Rather, it is a form of logical necessity in the sense that if the causal statement is true, and if we know the occurrence of one of the causally related events, we are *entitled to infer* that the other will occur. From the statement "All A's are followed by B's", interpreted as an accidental universal statement, together with the knowledge that an A has occurred, we are not entitled to infer that a B will occur. Thus, as Flew has remarked, Hume was on the right track when he looked for the source of the idea of causal necessity in situations where one infers to the occurrence of a B, given the occurrence of an A. In Hume's words: "Perhaps 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) In Flew's words: "He [i.e. Hume] always appreciated, even though he found no adequate formulation for, the point that the relevant kind of necessity was in some fashion very intimately connected with inference".[1]

If we read Hume's account of causal necessity in this way we can see more clearly the connection between the constant conjunction of members of two classes of events and the claim that members of the one class are causes or effects of members of the other. The fact that the members of two classes of events, A and B, are constantly conjoined does not entail the truth of the statement that A causes B. Such a constant conjunction of A's and B's is, however, evidence for the claim that A's and B's are causally related. And if one finds that A's and B's are not always conjoined, one has falsified

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[1] Flew, p.118.

the claim that A causes B. Moreover, if the statement "A causes B" entails the subjunctive conditional "If an A, then a B; and if not an A, then not a B" one is entitled to infer that any A one comes across will be conjoined with a B, and vice versa, and any A that one might have come across would have been conjoined with a B, and vice versa. That is to say, in talking of constant conjunction, Hume is providing a (partial) account of the conditions which justify the use of causal language, rather than an analysis of the meaning of such language.[1]

I began this discussion by asking what was involved in Hume's apparent belief that all empirical explanations are causal explanations. We may now see that to say that an explanatory generalization is a causal generalization implies at least, for Hume, that the generalization has a certain element of necessity about it. On what may with some propriety be called Hume's "official" theory of causation, this amounts only to saying that one would experience a certain feeling of determination in connection with the observed constant conjunction of members of two classes of events. Reading Hume more liberally, however, and following up some of the suggestions present in his account of causation, we may construe this causal necessity in a different way. To say that an explanatory generalization is a causal one is in part to say that it is a lawlike generalization in this sense, that it entails an appropriate subjunctive conditional. A statement of the form "A causes B" entails a statement of the form "If an A were not to occur, a B would not occur". Assuming that explanation and prediction have the same logical structure, one would explain the occurrence of a B by referring to the prior occurrence of an A, and by invoking the inference-licensing lawlike generalization " A causes B". One can explain a B by referring to an A precisely because the generalization correlating the occurrence of A's and B's is a lawlike one. The generalizations in Hume's scientific explanatory system are, then, in so far as they are said to be causal generalizations, said to be lawlike generalizations. They are, in fact, contingent laws.

It is not, however, sufficient just to say that lawlike generalizations differ from

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[1]See Chapter I, Section 3.

non-lawlike or accidental generalizations in that the former do and the latter do not entail appropriate subjunctive conditionals. We are still left with the question of how one determines what generalizations do and what do not entail the subjunctive conditional. Put somewhat differently: granted that if a generalization is a lawlike one it entails an appropriate subjunctive conditional, how does one know that a given generalization <u>is</u> lawlike?

Hume's account of inductive inference contains two suggestions that are pertinent to the solution of this problem. He points out, first of all, that propositions asserting a causal connection between the members of two classes of events can be tested to determine whether the regular conjunctions of events on which the propositions depend are causal or merely accidental conjunctions. That is, one can inaugurate tests which enable one to distinguish the "essential" from the "superfluous" circumstances in some allegedly causal situation.(T,148) To distinguish essential from superfluous circumstances, or the "efficacious causes" from the "accidental circumstances"(T,149), we may make use of "general rules...form'd on the nature of our understanding, and on our experience of its operations in the judgments we form concerning objects".(T,149) It is by these general rules that we "ought to regulate our judgment concerning causes and effects".(T,149) Some of these general rules are discussed in the section entitled "Rules by which to judge of causes and effects", where it is made clear that their purpose is to enable one to determine when objects "really are", as we may think they are, "causes or effects to each other".(T,173)

There is no need to consider each of Hume's eight rules in detail. It is sufficient for our present purposes to look briefly at the fifth, sixth and seventh rules. The fifth rule states that "where several different objects produce the same effect, it must be by means of some quality, which we discover to be common amongst them".(T,174) The sixth states that the "difference in the effects of two resembling objects must proceed from that particular in which they differ".(T,174) The seventh states that "when any object encreases or diminishes with the encrease or diminution of its cause 'tis

to be regarded as a compounded effect, deriv'd from the union of the several different effects, which arise from the several different parts of the cause".(T,174)

These three rules bear obvious, though schematic, resemblances to Mill's inductive methods of, respectively, agreement, difference, and concomitant variation. It should be clear, however, that Hume's very brief account of these rules is hardly sufficient for his stated purpose of enabling the investigator to determine when objects "really are" causes or effects of one another. Each is stated so schematically as to be no more than suggestive of actual scientific methods. No very clear distinction is made between scientific techniques for discovering causal connections and methods for testing alleged causal connections. No clear distinction is made between the necessary and the sufficient conditions for an effect, a distinction which is essential for properly interpreting each of the methods. Nor is any recognition taken of the fact that the use of the methods in any particular case depends on certain assumptions being made; e.g. the assumption that the necessary and sufficient conditions for an effect are among those antecedents of the effect which have been observed.[1]

What principally concerns us here, however, is not the adequacy of Hume's formulation and account of these rules, but the fact that in formulating them he reveals at least some awareness that alleged or suspected causal connections are open to testing. That is to say, he is aware that one's belief that members of A and B are causally connected does not depend simply on one's passive observation that members of each have been conjoined in the past. As we have seen already, such a constant conjunction is not sufficient to justify the assertion of a causal connection. But to the extent that an alleged causal connection can survive the demands of the tests Hume mentions it is confirmed as a causal connection. Regrettably, Hume does not notice the differences between the confirmation and the disconfirmation of an hypothesis, and thus gives no very satisfactory account of what can be proved, and what disproved by such tests.

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[1]Cf. Arthur Pap, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963), pp. 152-154.

But he is aware that one's causal claims do not depend solely on the regular conjunctions of events that one happens, passively, to notice. As Flew has pointed out,[1] to say that a conjunction of events is a causal one is in part to say that it is one on which we can rely. More generally, to say that a connection between events is a lawlike one (whether or not the connection is a causal one) is in part to say that it is one on which we can rely. And we determine whether a connection is reliable, or whether the empirical proposition which asserts it is a law, by subjecting it to an appropriate series of tests. Roughly speaking, to the degree that an alleged law survives our tests, to the degree that it is confirmed by our tests, or survives attempts at disconfirmation, to that extent it is to be considered a law. This is one way in which we distinguish accidental from lawlike generalizations, statements of mere constant conjunction from statements of causal or other lawful connections.

A second suggestion concerning the manner of distinguishing lawlike and accidental generalizations is contained in Hume's remarks, discussed earlier, concerning the nature of a scientific system of explanatory laws. Starting from these remarks, we may say that an empirical generalization is a lawlike generalization to the extent that it has a place in such a scientific system of laws. That is to say, to the extent that an empirical generalization is either a lower-level law deducible from a higher-level law in such a system of laws, or a higher-level law from which lower-level laws are deducible, to that extent it is confirmed as an empirical law. More accurately, an alleged lower-level empirical law L is confirmed as an empirical law to the extent (a) that it is deducible from a higher-level law H and (b) that H is confirmable by observations that do not directly confirm L. An alleged higher-level law H is confirmable as a law to the extent that lower-level laws deducible from it are directly confirmable. As Arthur Pap says, elucidating the notion of a law of nature: "A universal statement is lawlike to the degree that it is indirectly confirmed by instances that directly confirm more general hypotheses from which it

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[1]Flew, pp. 138-139.

follows or less general statements that follow from it".[1] This is not to say that alleged laws are not directly confirmable, but only that they are also indirectly confirmable. The degree of a law's confirmation is increased by the degree of confirmation of the whole system of laws of which it is a part.

I am not suggesting that Hume explicitly adopted this device for distinguishing accidental and lawlike empirical generalizations. Surely he did not. I am rather suggesting that this way of handling the problem of lawlike empirical generalizations is one that is quite consonant with his theory of scientific explanation, and is, at least in broadest outline, suggested by that theory. "To invent without scruple," Hume says, "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".(T,282) If the fact that one's principles cannot be systematized into a structure of laws shows they are not "just", it is plausible to suggest that the fact that they can be so systematized tends to confirm them.

We have, then, two complementary ways of determining whether an empirical generalization is an accidental or a lawlike generalization. We may subject the alleged law to an appropriate series of tests, such as those mentioned in the section on "Rules for judging of causes and effects". To the extent that the alleged law survives disconfirmation it has the status of a law. This does not, of course, convert the confirmed law into a necessary truth; it is always, in principle, open to falsification. Secondly, we may consider whether the alleged law has a place in a system of laws, and what place it has. To the extent that the alleged law is indirectly confirmable in this way it has the status of a law.

We may now return to a question raised but left unanswered at the start of this

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[1] Pap, Introduction, p. 302.

section. In saying that all explanatory generalizations are causal statements, does Hume intend to deny the possibility of non-causal empirical laws, or must his reference to causation be read in some other way? I shall begin by considering a sample of empirical laws mentioned in the Treatise and the first Enquiry.

Among the laws mentioned in the Treatise are the following: the law stating that wines from the Champagne region of France have such and such a character (T,401); the law stating that two flat pieces of marble, if placed together in such and such a way, will cohere together (T,401-02); the law stating that the climate of a place determines the ripening process of fruits produced in that place (T,402); the law according to which striking the neck with a sharpened axe with a certain force severs the head from the trunk (T,406); the laws stating that lead is more fusible than silver and that gold is heavier than mercury (T,95); the law that motion in one body causes motion in another upon impulse (T,76-77); the law of gravitational attraction (T,12-13); the laws according to which particular fruits have particular tastes (T,237); the geometrical laws concerning light (T,58).

In the first Enquiry Hume says: "Elasticity, gravity, cohesion of parts, communication of motion by impulse; these are probably the ultimate causes and principles we shall ever discover in nature".(EHU,30) He refers also to "a law of motion, discovered by experience, that the moment or force of any body in motion is in the compound ratio or proportion of its solid contents and its velocity".(EHU,31) In the Enquiry he refers also to the following empirical laws: "crystal is the effect of heat, and ice of cold" (EHU,32); "a body at rest or in motion continues for ever in its present state, till put from it by some new cause"(EHU,73N); "a body impelled takes as much motion from the impelling body as it acquires itself".(EHU,73N)

We can refrain here from commenting on the great variations in generality and degree of precision of the mentioned laws. The relevant point to notice is that in so far as Hume considers these to be instances of empirical laws which provide the basis for factual inference, whether explanatory or predictive, he would describe them as causal

laws. Clearly, however, many of them would not, in contemporary usage, be called causal laws. The law of gravitational attraction, for example, or the geometrical laws concerning light, or many of the laws of chemistry are not causal laws. They do not state that a given physical state or event causes another state or event. Rather, they provide formulae for determining one physical state, or the occurrence of one physical event, given knowledge of the requisite facts about another event or state. These laws provide equations whereby, given the values of some of the variables, the values of other variables can be determined. Thus if one knows the appropriate laws, and the values of a sufficient number of variables, one can determine the position of a planet at some future time (or at some past time), or the length of the shadows thrown by a given opaque body. But it would surely be inappropriate to talk of a body's position at time t causing its position at time t_1 (just as it would be inappropriate to talk of the mathematical formulae causing its position at t). It is true that the position of a body at t determines its position at t_1 in the sense that, given the appropriate laws, and the values of the appropriate variables, one can determine the value of other variables. But this does not mean that the states of affairs, whose values are those of the given set of variables, cause the state of affairs whose value is that of the determined variable. Rather one should say that the value of one variable in the equation is a function of the values of the other variables. It is in this sense that the values of the one variable are determined by the values of the others. With such laws as these, the language of determination is appropriate, but not the language of causation. As Russell claims in the case of the law of gravitation in particular, and the science of physics generally, "there is nothing that could be properly called 'cause' and nothing that could be properly called 'effect' in such a system".[1]

To talk of such explanatory laws as causal laws is, then, mistaken. And, as we

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[1] Bertrand Russell, "On the Notion of Cause", Mysticism and Logic (London: Unwin Books, 1963), p. 141.

have seen, Hume does talk as though all explanatory laws are causal ones. Too much weight should not, however, be placed on this fact. It is probably true that Hume thought, uncritically, that the class of causal laws is coextensive with that of empirical laws. But from this it does not follow that Hume would have denied the distinction which must be made between causal and non-causal laws of nature. Surely it is more plausible to suggest that he simply failed to see the difference.

This failure to distinguish the two is quite understandable in the context of Hume's philosophizing. For one thing, Hume fails, in his discussion of inductive inference, to take into account the differences between the common-sense and the scientific levels of prediction and explanation. Hume talks as though what one could say in explanation of the souring of a glass of milk on the superficial level of observation differs in no important respect from what could be said, using the laws of mathematical physics, in explanation of the position at t of a particular planet. On the everyday level, one is quite content with rough explanations in terms of observable event sequences. Thus, one is content with the statement "The milk was left to stand in the warm sun for several hours" in explanation of the fact that it soured. But scientific explanation, especially in the physical sciences, is a matter of much greater precision, and, more importantly, is a matter of expressing empirical regularities in mathematical terms. Once the mathematicization of explanations is taken seriously, of course, it is an easier matter to distinguish the notions of causal connection and functional dependence. Now it is clear that Hume did recognize, to some extent, the mathematical character of explanation in physics. In his account of "mixed mathematics" in the first Enquiry he notes that "every part of mixed mathematics proceeds upon the supposition that certain laws are established by nature in her operations; and abstract reasonings are employed, either to assist experience in the discovery of these laws, or to determine their influence in particular instances, where it depends upon any precise degree of distance and quantity".(EHU,31) He then goes on to mention the Newtonian law of motion which I quoted earlier. Nevertheless,

in not placing any very great emphasis on this fact about the character of scientific explanation, Hume condemned himself to working with an over-simplified model of explanation, the everyday one.

This in itself is not, however, sufficient to account for Hume's apparent belief that all empirical laws are causal laws, since it would not explain why he would construe the observational laws stating that particular fruits have particular tastes as causal laws. (cf. T,237) To account for this peculiar doctrine one must notice Hume's failure to recognize that the concept of causation is a <u>practical</u> concept. That is to say, the concept of a cause is one which finds its first application in situations in which agents do things such as light fires, break windows, and turn on lights.[1] This suggestion that the assertion of a causal connection in a situation wherein no sense could be made of an agent's <u>doing</u> anything should at least sound odd. Thus it is that Hume's law which states that the motion of one billiard ball causes motion in another billiard ball upon impulse is easily intelligible as a causal law: We know how to produce motion in the second by producing motion in the first. Thus it is, too, that no sense can be made of Hume's apparent suggestion that the "laws" according to which certain fruits have certain tastes are causal laws: there is no way in which, by changing the color of oranges, say, or their shape or size, we can produce a change in their taste. What is somewhat surprising is that Hume should have failed to notice the practical character of causation, despite his own methodological principle of discovering the meaning of a term by looking to the kinds of situation in which the term is used. However this is to be accounted for, it remains apparent that Hume does fail to notice the differences between discovering non-causal empirical laws, and discovering how to shatter a pane of glass.

Despite these failings, however, the main points of Hume's discussion of explanatory laws have as much application to the case of non causal laws as they do to that of causal laws. An

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[1] Cf. Douglas Gasking, "Causation and Recipes", <u>Mind</u>, LXIV (1955), pp. 479-487.

explanatory law, whether causal or non-causal, has the two properties which Hume is particularly concerned to emphasize. That is, any such law is both contingent and lawlike. Adopting a liberal reading of Hume's theory of necessary connection, any explanatory law, whether causal or non-causal, entails a subjunctive conditional, and is lawlike to the extent that it is directly confirmable by the failure of appropriate attempts at disconfirmation, or indirectly confirmable _via_ its deductive connections with other laws in a scientific system of explanatory laws. The deficiencies in Hume's account of the concept of causation, and his uncritical assumption that all empirical explanations are causal, do nothing to detract from the value of these central points in his theory of explanation.

3. Probability

An important element of Hume's theory of explanation is his account of those scientific laws which are statistical rather than universal. In this section I shall consider, fairly briefly, what Hume has to say about such laws. As a preliminary, however, it will be necessary to disentangle the various senses in which Hume uses the terms "probable" or "probability". I shall also point out, at the end of this section, Hume's view that a determinist thesis is not called into question by the fact that, in some cases, a scientist must make do with statistical rather than universal laws.

It is possible to distinguish at least three senses of "probability" in the _Treatise_. For purposes of clarity of exposition I shall call these "logical probability", "probability of events", and "probability of statements". It will become apparent that Hume does not always clearly distinguish the two latter senses.

To say that a proposition is a logically probable proposition is to say two things: (a) the proposition is true; (b) the truth of the proposition cannot be demonstrated.[1] That is to say, any true proposition whose contradictory is not self-contradictory is only probable, in this sense of probability. Hume introduces the notion of logical probability when he

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[1] By including condition (a) in my elucidation of the notion of logical probability I am implying that the distinction between "knowledge" and "probability" is not identical with that between necessity and contingency. A statement is a necessary one if it is the sort of statement that if true, is demonstrable, and if false, is self-contradictory. But to say that a statement is an instance of knowledge, in Hume's use of "knowledge", is to say both that it is a necessary statement and that it is true. One cannot _know_ that p unless p is true. Thus, in contrasting "probability" with "knowledge" Hume should be taken to imply that a probable statement is a true one. Hume is not, however, very clear on this point.

contrasts probability with knowledge. He says, for example, that "those philosophers, who have divided human reason into knowledge and probability, and have defin'd the first to be that evidence, which arises from the comparison of ideas, are oblig'd to comprehend all our arguments from causes or effects under the general term of probability", and that "in the precedent part of this discourse, I have follow'd this method of expression". (T,124) (Presumably Hume here refers to such things as the title of Part III of Book I: "Of knowledge and probability".) Later in the Treatise he shows quite clearly that the distinction he makes between knowledge and probability is the same as that between propositions asserting relations of ideas and those asserting matters of fact: "The understanding exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information". (T, 413) Using "probable" in this sense, it is only probable that all men now living will die, or that the sun will rise tomorrow. In this sense of "probability", a proposition cannot be more or less probable. If it is true it is probable or non-probable. If it is true and non-probable it is necessarily true.

Perhaps Hume chose to draw the contrast between necessarily true and contingently true propositions as one between knowledge and probability in order to secure the maximum emphasis for a logical distinction which he felt to be a crucially important one. There was, however, historical precedent for so doing. As he himself points out, the distinction was made in these terms by Locke: "Mr. Locke divides all arguments into demonstrative or probable". (EHU, 56n) Nevertheless, Hume does recognize that this use of "probable" is a technical, even misleading one, and outrages common speech. "One wou'd

appear ridiculous, who wou'd say, that 'tis only probable the sun will rise to-morrow, or that all men must dye; tho' 'tis plain we have no further assurance of these facts, than what experience affords us." (T, 124) "For this reason", he says, "'twould perhaps be more convenient, in order at once to preserve the common signification of words, and mark the several degrees of evidence, to distinguish human reason into three kinds, viz. <u>that from knowledge, from proofs, and from probabilities</u>". (T, 124)

The second sense in which Hume uses "probability" is the sense in which one may ask the probability that a given event will occur. I shall call this the "probability of events". One may ask, for example, the probability that any man whatever will die, or the probability that a particular man will contract lung cancer, or the probability that another man will roll a three on a single roll of an unbiased die whose sides are numbered from one to six. Given the law that all men must die, the probability that any given man will die is 1. Given the law that 80% of those who smoke over a certain number of cigarettes per day, for a certain minimum period of time, will contract lung cancer, the probability that Jones, who satisfies all these conditions, will contract cancer of the lungs is 4/5. Given that a certain die is unbiased and has sides numbered from one to six, the probability that a three will be rolled in a single roll is 1/6.

What I have said so far is not, however, sufficient to delimit those cases to which Hume refers in using "probability" in this second sense, for it does not permit Hume to distinguish "proofs" from "probabilities" as he does. In using "probability" in the sense of "probability of events", but in contrast to "proofs", Hume is in fact ruling out the first sort of case mentioned above as a case of the probability of events. In Hume's usage one cannot speak of the

probability of an event if the probability of that event's occurrence is 1. By "proofs" Hume means "those arguments, which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty". (T, 124) By "probability", in contrast, he means "that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty". (T, 124) Hume makes the same distinction between "proofs" and "probabilities" later in the Treatise when he says: "When the conjunction of any two objects is frequent, without being entirely constant, the mind is determin'd to pass from one to the other; but not with so entire a habit, as when the union is uninterrupted, and all the instances we have ever met with are uniform and of a piece". (T, 132-133) The distinction is made more clearly when he contrasts "that judgment, which is deriv'd from a constant and uniform connexion of causes and effects" with "that which depends upon an interrupted and uncertain". (T, 154) The contrast Hume has in mind is this. Given a law of the form "All A's are B's" and the occurrence of an A, a B must occur. But given a law of the form "Eighty per-cent of A's are B's and the occurrence of an A, it is not the case that a B must occur. The probability of a B's occurrence is less than 1. The first case is a case of "proofs"; the second is a case of "probabilities". Thus Hume uses "probability", in the sense of the probability of events, in such a way that one may only speak of the probability that an event will occur if the probability of that event's occurrence is less than 1. If the probability of an event's occurrence is 1 one must speak of proof, not probability. In distinguishing "proofs" from "probabilities" Hume is in fact distinguishing universal or non-statistical from statistical empirical laws.

The third sense of "probability" current in the Treatise is that which I have called the "probability of statements". In this sense of "probability" it is proper to inquire into the probability or likelihood that a given state-

ment is true. Restricting ourselves to statements of empirical laws, this is a question of the degree to which a given law has been confirmed. In this sense of "probability" one may ask how probable it is that the laws expressed by "51% of children born are boys" or "All ravens are black" are true laws. The difference between the present and the immediately preceding sense of probability can be put in this way. The probability of an event is a function of the law which governs the occurrence of the event. Assuming that the law "51% of children born are boys" is justified, the probability that a new-born child will be male is 51/100. The probability of a statement is a function of the standard procedures for confirming or disconfirming that statement. If the statement the probability of which is to be determined is allegedly an empirical law, factors such as those considered in the previous section (viz. attempts to disconfirm the law, or to confirm the law indirectly by directly confirming other laws with which it has deductive connections) will determine its probability. R.B. Braithwaite, in distinguishing what I have called the "probability of events" and the "probability of statements", reserves the term "probability" for the former, and calls the latter "reasonableness".[1] Braithwaite also provides an example which brings out this distinction quite clearly: "That the probability of a radium atom disintegrating within 1700 years is $\frac{1}{2}$ is a hypothesis within the body of physics; since it is reasonable to believe this hypothesis at the present time, the hypothesis itself may be said to be probable in the second sense of probability".[2]

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[1] R.B. Braithwaite, Scientific Explanation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 120.

[2] Braithwaite, p. 119.

Hume comes nearest to making explicit use of the concept of the probability of statements in that section of the Treatise entitled "Of scepticism with regard to reason". "In every judgment", he says, "which we can form concerning probability, as well as concerning knowledge, we ought always to correct the first judgment, deriv'd from the nature of the object, by another judgment, deriv'd from the nature of the understanding". (T, 181-182) Further, he talks of a "new species of probability to correct and regulate the first, and fix its just standard and proportion", and goes on to say: "As demonstration is subject to the controul of probability, so is probability liable to a new correction by a reflex act of the mind, wherein the nature of our understanding, and our reasoning from the first probability become our objects". (T, 182)

Without following Hume to the sceptical conclusions which he draws in this section of the Treatise, we may stress the way in which Hume uses "probability" in these passages. For one thing, Hume is conscious that he is talking here of a "new species of probability". For another, he characterises the difference between this "new species of probability" and the older species (the probability of events) in a way that suggests a difference of order between the two. This "new species of probability" has "the nature of our understanding, and our reasoning" for its "objects"; presumably the older species has a different object. This new probability is "deriv'd from the nature of the understanding"; the other probability is "deriv'd from the nature of the object". It is, moreover, the function of this new species of probability to "correct and regulate", to "controul" judgments involving probability of the older variety. In short, to talk of probability in this new sense is to talk of the probability that some proposition, whether it be a proposition involving knowledge, proof, or probability, is true.

The account which Hume gives in the section "Of scepticism with regard to reason" of the ways in which we determine the truth-probability of a proposition is both sketchy and one-sided. He in fact restricts his attention there to what may be called the subjective criteria for determining the truth-probability of a proposition. That is to say, he there talks only of the ways in which we determine the likelihood that a given person will be correct in asserting a given proposition. Thus, he points out that it is more likely that a person of "solid sense and long experience" would be correct in his assertions, than one who is "foolish and ignorant". (T, 182) He points out, too, that even a man of "solid sense and long experience ... must be conscious of many errors in the past", and thus that even such qualities are no guarantee that what he says will be true. Considerations such as these are, however, of only minor interest when one is trying to determine the probability or likelihood that a given proposition is true, especially when the proposition in question is an alleged empirical law, whether universal or statistical. When we wish to determine the probability of an alleged scientific law we are concerned not with the credentials of the person who utters the law, but with the degree to which the alleged law has been confirmed. For an account of Hume's views on questions of this sort we must read not the section entitled "Of scepticism with regard to reason" but such sections as those entitled "Rules by which to judge of causes and effects" or "Of unphilosophical probability". But we have already considered Hume's views on these questions when we considered the ways in which, according to Hume, we confirm the laws in a scientific system of laws.[1]

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that Hume consistently maintained the distinction between the probability of events and the probability of state-

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[1]Chapter II, Section 2.

ments. The opposite seems rather to be the case. Consider his suggested revision of Locke's division of arguments into demonstrations and probabilities. In the first Enquiry Hume suggests that if we are to "conform our language more to common use, we ought to divide arguments into demonstrations, proofs, and probabilities". (EHU, 56n) He then goes on to say that by "proofs" he means "such arguments from experience as leave no room for doubt or opposition". (EHU, 56n) In the Treatise the differences are drawn in the same way:

> By knowledge, I mean the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas. By proofs, those arguments, which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty. By probability, that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty. (T, 124)

In both these passages Hume seems not to notice that there are two quite distinct sources of a possible doubt or uncertainty about some future event. On the one hand, our past experience may have revealed only a statistical regularity between the occurrence of an A and the occurrence of a B. Thus, we cannot be certain that any given occurrence of an A will be conjoined with an occurrence of a B. It can only be more or less probable that, given an A, a B will occur. On the other hand, we may never have encountered an occurrence of an A that was not conjoined with an occurrence of a B. We might thus be lead to expect that any new occurrence of an A will be conjoined with the occurrence of a B. But, as much of our experience has convinced us, it is often not the case that a past experience of the constant conjunction of members of two classes of events is sufficient to enable us to predict that any occurrence of an A will be conjoined with that of a B. Only when A's and B's are lawfully correlated can we predict with certainty that a B will occur if an A has occurred. It is only to the extent that "All A's are B's" has been confirmed as a law that we can predict that, given an A, a B will occur. That is to say, our uncertainty about the occurrence of a B, given the occurrence

of an A, may have two different origins. The uncertainty of a B's occurrence may be due to: (a) the fact that the law governing the conjunction of A's and B's is a statistical one, or (b) the fact that the law governing the conjunction of A's and B's, though stated in the universal form "All A's are B's", is not sufficiently confirmed. It is this distinction which Hume tends to neglect when he presents a straightforward contrast between proofs and probabilities in terms of the difference between a uniform and non-uniform regularity as stated in the empirical law which governs the prediction. One can only contrast proofs and probabilities as Hume does if one assumes that in each case the law which licenses the prediction is equally and adequately justified. In the passages quoted above, Hume does not make this assumption explicit.

Returning to the probability of events, we may notice that Hume distinguishes two kinds, the probability of chances and the probability of causes. The distinction corresponds to that often made between _a priori_ and _a posteriori_ probability. Hume's example of the probability of chances is the determination of the probability that a given side of an unbiased die will appear uppermost when thrown; his example of the probability of causes is the determination of the probability that a ship will return safely to port. The difference between the two can be best seen by contrasting the way in which the probability of an event is determined in each case. In the case of the die, one considers certain _present_ features of the die: it has six sides, they are numbered from one to six. On this information, one determines the probability of a three appearing uppermost when the die is tossed as 1/6. That is, one divides the number of favorable chances by the number of possible chances. In the probability of causes, one consults _past_ experience to determine the relative frequency with which members of a class of objects K have had the property P, and thus the probability that a particular member of K will have P. One discovers, in Hume's example, that 19 of 20 ships return safely to port; on this information

one judges that the probability of a given ship's returning to port is 19/20.

With respect to Hume's discussion of the probability of chances, the only point we need notice is his insistence that the *a priori* determination of probability depends on the assumption that certain conditions obtain which are normally taken for granted, and thus not mentioned in our determination of probabilities. These conditions may be conveniently summarized by saying that they limit the number and kinds of states of affairs that can or will be considered possible. Thus, in calculating the probability of a three on a single toss of a die with six sides numbered one to six, one assumes that the die is unbiased, and one rules out the possibilities that the die, when thrown, will disappear, or develop several extra sides, or come to rest on one of its edges, and so on. We allow only six events to be possible: the appearing uppermost of one or another of the six different sides of the die. Unless we make these assumptions, we cannot derive a probability fraction of 1/6 because we have no way of ascertaining the denominator of such a fraction. This appears to be Hume's meaning when he says, of the probability of chances:

> Where nothing limits the chances, every notion, that the most extravagant fancy can form, is upon a footing of equality; nor can there be any circumstance to give one the advantage over the other. Thus, unless we allow, that there are some causes to make the dice fall, and preserve their form in their fall, and lie upon some one of their sides, we can form no calculation concerning the laws of hazard. (T, 126)

The calculation of chances presupposes the assignment of limits to the possible outcome of a toss of the die. The particular limits set are, of course, a function of both the properties of the die and the relevant laws of nature.

Hume's discussion of the probability of chances has, according to Hume himself, "no other purpose, than to assist us in explaining the probability

of causes". (T. 130). It is this latter "species of probability", he says, that "we must chiefly examine". (T. 130) Despite his insistence on its importance, however, Hume's account of the probability of causes is, as MacNabb has claimed, seriously inadequate.[1] Consider the description Hume offers of the procedures whereby we derive statistical laws from experience, and thus determine the probability of a given event's occurrence.[2] In ascertaining a statistical law, Hume says, "we commonly take knowingly into consideration the contrariety of past events; we compare the different sides of the contrariety, and carefully weight the experiments, which we have on each side". (T. 133) He further says that "that effect, which has been the most common, we always esteem the most likely". (T. 133) He further claims that "the only circumstance, which can give any event, that is contingent, a superiority over another, is a superior number of chances". (T. 136) Moreover, "when we transfer the past to the future, the known to the unknown, every past experiment has the same weight, and ... 'tis only a superior number of them, which can throw the ballance on any side". (T. 136) Consider, too, his account of determining the probability that a ship will return safely to port. The only factor indicated as being relevant is the numerical relation between those ships which have, and those which have not returned safely. (T. 134)

It is obvious, however, that the probability of a particular ship returning to port may be affected by such things as the condition of the ship, the time of year at which it sails, the length of its journey, its destination, its

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[1] D.G.C. MacNabb, <u>David Hume: His Theory of Knowledge and Morality</u> (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 89.

[2] In using "statistical" here I do not intend to suggest that Hume considers only those statements to be probability statements which contain some numerical statement of probability. In many cases Hume seems to be thinking only of cases in which we would say "Most (the largest proportion, very few) A's are B's".

cargo, and so forth. Before one would place any credence in the assertion that 95% of ships that leave port return safely, or the assertion that the odds are 19 to 1 that this particular ship will return safely, one would want to be assured that such factors as I have mentioned have been taken into consideration, both in the derivation of the statistical law and the prediction of the particular event. As MacNabb points out:

> Experience of cyclical, progressive and irregular fluctuations in the frequency of many conjunctions quickly leads us to distrust it [i.e. the simple counting-procedure described by Hume]. What we look for in statistical evidence is either a proportion which is approximately constant in any random selection of cases, or, failing that, a description of the fluctuations either in terms of periodic cycles or of special factors on which they depend.[1]

In fairness to Hume, however, it should perhaps be assumed that he intended his later account of the rules for judging of causes and effects and his comments on general rules in his discussion of unphilosophical probability, to cover the confirmation of statistical as well as non-statistical laws. His account of statistical probability need not, then, in fact be as over-simplified as it at first appears. Since I have already discussed Hume's view in these matters at some length, I shall not delay over them at this point.

The point I would stress, however, is the importance which Hume attaches to his discussion of the probability of causes, or *a posteriori* probability. We have already seen that he considers his discussion of the probability of chances to be only a prolegomenon to his account of the probability of causes. The reason for this insistence is plain: the probability of causes does, the

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[1]MacNabb, pp. 89-90.

probability of chances does not, have a significant role to play in scientific inquiries of the sort Hume is interested to make. And it is quite clear that Hume believes that statistical empirical laws are an essential element of any scientific account of the physical world, and especially of human conduct. The scientist, Hume seems to assume throughout the Treatise, aspires towards the discovery of universal laws. In some cases, he suggests, it is possible to achieve such laws. In many cases, however, and especially when the subject is human conduct, such laws are not, in fact, within our grasp. The causal laws which do (as he assumes) always operate are simply too complex to be discovered.

Hume stresses this difficulty at many places in the Treatise. In concluding his discussion of the rules for determining causal relations, for example, he says:

> There is no phaenomenon in nature, but what is compounded and modify'd by so many different circumstances, that in order to arrive at the decisive point, we must carefully separate whatever is superfluous, and enquire by new experiments, if every particular circumstance of the first experiment was essential to it. These new experiments are liable to a discussion of the same kind; so that the utmost constancy is requir'd to make us persevere in our enquiry, and the utmost sagacity to choose the right way among so many that present themselves. If this be the case even in natural philosophy, how much more in moral, where there is a much greater complication of circumstances, and where those views and sentiments, which are essential to any action of the mind, are so implicit and obscure, that they often escape our strictest attention and are not only unaccountable in their causes, but even unknown in their existence? (T. 175)

He points up the same difficulty when, in criticising philosophers and scientists who oversimplify the laws governing human behavior, he claims that:

> The common error of metaphysicans has lain in ascribing the direction of the will entirely to one of these principles, and supposing the other to have no influence. Men often act knowingly against their interest: For which reason the view of the greatest possible good does not always influence them. Men often counter-act a violent passion in prosecution of their interests and designs: 'Tis not therefore the present uneasiness alone, which determines them. In general, we may observe, that both these principles operate on the will; and where they are contrary, that either of them prevails, according to the general character or present disposition of the person. What we call strength of mind, implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent; tho' we may easily observe, there is no man so constantly possess'd of this virtue, as never on any occasion to yield to the sollicitations of passion and desire. From these variations of temper proceeds the great difficulty of deciding concerning the actions and resolutions of men, where there is any contrariety of motives and passions. (T. 418)

The same difficulty is referred to when he says:

> Upon the whole .../ the/ struggle of passion and reason, as it is call'd, diversifies human life, and makes men so different not only from each other, but also from themselves in different times. Philosophy can only account for a few of the greater and more sensible events of this war; but must leave all the smaller and more delicate revolutions, as dependent on principles too fine and minute to her comprehension. (T. 438)

These difficulties underlie Hume's stress on the difference between "proofs" and "probabilities", which, as we have seen, is mainly the difference between universal and statistical laws. They lead him to stress the necessity of making use of statistical laws if any scientific explanation at all is to be provided for many of the things we observe. This, in turn, leads to the necessity of displaying the logic of such laws: how they are discovered, how they licence predictions, how they explain. This Hume considers one of the main tasks of the Treatise. It is not, however, just the case that Hume emphasises the importance of statistical laws, and attempts to provide an account of them. Quite often in the course of the Treatise Hume gives ample notice

that the supposedly scientific laws which he is himself trying to establish are themselves to be construed as statistical, not universal causal laws. He frequently <u>offers</u> explanations which he takes to be statistical and not universal.

The emphasis on statistical laws, it should be noted, does not in Hume's view run counter to his well-known advocacy of the principle of universal determinism. Hume several times makes quite explicit (a) that the use of statistical rather than strictly universal laws is demanded by the limits of our knowledge, which limits are imposed by the vast complexity of the causal conditions which determine the occurrence of events; and (b) that scientific activity nevertheless proceeds on the assumption (the truth of which is not analytic) that all events are causally determined. He emphasises that the uncertainty which is presupposed by our dependence on probability laws, is an uncertainty in our knowledge, not in things themselves. "Chance", he says, "is nothing real in itself, and, properly speaking, is merely the negation of a cause". (T. 125) It is only "the vulgar", not "philosophers", who give up the principle of universal determinism in the face of the irregularities of events:

> The vulgar, who take things according to the first appearance, attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes, as makes them often fail of their usual influence, tho' they meet with no obstacle nor impediment in their operation. But philosophers observing, that almost in every part of nature there is contain'd a vast variety of springs and principles, which are hid, by reason of their minuteness or remoteness, find that 'tis at least possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes. This possibility is converted into certainty by farther observation, when they remark, that upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a

> contrariety of causes, and proceeds from their mutual hindrance and opposition. A peasant can give no better reason for the stopping of any clock or watch than to say, that commonly it does not go right; But an artizan easily perceives, that the same force in the spring or pendulum has always the same influence on the wheels; but fails of its usual effect, perhaps by reason of a grain of dust, which puts a stop to the whole movement. From the observation of several parallel instances, philosophers form a maxim, that the connexion betwixt all causes and effects is equally necessary, and that its seeming uncertainty in some instances proceeds from the secret operation of contrary causes. (T. 132)

The same is true of our judgments about human behavior: if we "see a person free from these [i.e. strong] motives, we suppose a possibility either of his acting or forbearing; and tho' in general we may conclude him to be determin'd by motives and causes, yet this removes not the uncertainty of our judgments concerning these causes". (T. 313) Hume makes the same point when, in his discussion of the problem of free-will, he points to the similarities in our attitude toward human behavior and to the occurrence of physical events. He suggests that:

> In judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects. When any phenomena are constantly and invariably conjoin'd together, they acquire such a connexion in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation. But below this there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind ballances the contrary experiments, and deducting the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance or evidence, which remains. Even when these contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of causes and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant and certain. (T. 403-04)

It is Hume's view, then, that the claim that all events are caused is logically independent of the claim that, in many causes, one can discover only statistical laws governing the occurrence of events. We shall have occasion later to see the importance of this view in Hume's discussion of the problem of freedom.

CHAPTER III

THE EXPLANATION OF MENTAL EVENTS

1. The Laws of Association

In the present section I will discuss in some detail Hume's theory of associations. Given the objectives of this thesis, a discussion of Hume's associationism is important for three reasons. First, his theory of associations is Hume's most sustained attempt at a systematic, scientific explanation of events. Thus the present discussion should throw some light on Hume's theory of scientific explanation, discussed in the previous chapter. Secondly, since the theory of associations is a specifically psychological theory, an account of it should contribute to an understanding of Hume's projected "science of human nature", a project which I discussed in Chapter I. Thirdly, as shall become clear in this section and the following chapters, a knowledge of the details of Hume's theory of associations is essential if one is to understand his theories of the passions and of motivation. In the course of this section I shall be primarily concerned to elucidate Hume's theory, rather than to criticize it.

Since the discussion in this section is a complex one it is well to begin by stating what questions I shall be considering. I shall point out, first, that Hume considers the laws of association to be a contribution to mental science, and what the subject matter of his mental science is. I shall then provide an account of each of the laws of association, making use of a distinction between a mental act and its object. Since an understanding of the fifth law of association is particularly important for an understanding of Hume's theories of the passions and motivation I shall emphasize this law, and try to elucidate the character of the causal connection which it is alleged to assert. Having considered three interpretations of the fifth law of association, I shall move on

to a discussion of the way in which the laws of association are alleged to explain events, placing particular emphasis on Hume's notion of the "appropriateness" of certain causal connections. I shall then consider the question whether the associations of impressions and ideas are supposed to depend on an awareness of the associating relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation. Following this, I shall discuss Hume's views on the adequacy of his associationist theory for a science of mental phenomena. Lastly, I shall consider two problems relating to the language with which Hume formulates his theory.

It is quite clear that Hume looks upon his elaboration of the laws of association as a project which we, today, would call a scientific project. Hume is quite concerned to stress the similarities between his own project, concerned with human nature, and the project of Newton, concerned with physical events. An implicit reference is made to Newton in Hume's talk of "introduc[ing] the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects". (T,xi) More explicitly, Hume several times draws analogies between his own principles of association, and the Newtonian concept of attraction or gravitation. Concluding his first account of the principles of association Hume says: "Here 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) Elsewhere he speaks of "an attraction or association among impressions, as well as among ideas" (T,283), and claims that "nature has bestow'd a kind of attraction on certain impressions and ideas, by which one of them, upon its appearance, naturally introduces its correlative". (T,289) Hume draws the analogy between mental and physical science equally explicitly in the first _Enquiry_, though perhaps with a diminished confidence that he had already made the main discoveries in the science of mind:

> Astronomers had long contented themselves with proving, from the phenomena, the true motions, order, and magnitude of the heavenly bodies: Till a philosopher, at

> last, arose, who seems, from the happiest reasoning, to have also determined the laws and forces, by which the revolutions of the planets are governed and directed. The like has been performed with regard to other parts of nature. And there is no reason to despair of equal success in our enquiries concerning the mental powers and economy, if prosecuted with equal capacity and caution. It is probable, that one operation and principle of the mind depends on another; which, again, may be resolved into one more general and universal. (EHU,14-15)

This analogy with Newtonian science is made quite clearly in the Dissertation on the Passions, where Hume says: "It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy".[1]

In the light of what we have seen in the previous chapter, this description of the laws of association as scientific laws has at least two particularly interesting implications: the laws of association have the peculiar necessity proper to laws, and they are only contingently true. The contingency of these laws will have important consequences for Hume's theory of the passions.

The laws of association are psychological laws, and are alleged to provide the fundamentals of a systematic scientific account of man's cognitive and emotional life. They have, however, a very specific and peculiar range of application. That is, they correlate the occurrence of one conscious mental state or event with another; thus, they do not refer either to physiological conditions or overt behavior. Nor do they apply to all classes of conscious mental states or events. Some mental phenomena, including all "impressions of sensation" and all bodily pleasures and pains, are not susceptible of a scientific account in terms of the laws of associations. If any account is to be given of such mental

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[1] The Philosophical Works of David Hume, ed. T.H. Green and T.H. Grose (London, 1874), IV, p.166.

phenomena, it must be in terms of physical, not mental causes, in terms of laws correlating physical events with mental events, not laws correlating mental events. As Hume remarks in the Treatise:

> 'Tis certain, that the mind, in its perceptions, must begin somewhere; and that since the impressions precede their correspondent ideas, there must be some impressions, which without any introduction make their appearance in the soul. As these depend on natural and physical causes, the examination of them wou'd lead me too far from my present subject, into the sciences of anatomy and natural philosophy. (T,275-76)

This is to say that, so far as Hume's science of mind is concerned, no empirical laws will be stated to account for present perceptions ("impressions of sensation") of colors, tastes, sounds, and other immediately observable qualities of physical things. This is a matter of decision on Hume's part. If a law is to be a law in his science of mind, it is a necessary condition that the if-clause of the law make reference only to mental, and not to physical events. The physical conditions which are assumed to cause any present perceptions are physical conditions, and for this reason are ruled-out as possible antecedents in any empirical law governing mental phenomena. The same is true of bodily sensations of pleasure and pain which do not have causes within consciousness.

> Bodily pains and pleasures are the source of many passions, both when felt and consider'd by the mind; but arise originally in the soul, or in the body, whichever you please to call it, without any preceding thought or perception. A fit of gout produces a long train of passions, as grief, hope, fear; but it is not deriv'd immediately from any affection or idea. (T,276)[1]

In doing mental science Hume is less stringent in his requirements about the kinds of conditions which may be referred to in the then-clause of his scientific laws. As we shall see in Chapter V, he has a good bit to say about the correlation of mental states with overt, physical behaviour. Surely this is because

[1] For further discussion of these points see Chapter IV, Section 1.

his science of human nature is concerned, at least in part, with explaining how men come to do the things they do. Nevertheless, it is quite clear throughout the Treatise that Hume's principal object of investigation is the laws correlating one kind of conscious mental phenomenon with another. And chief among these laws are the laws of association.

Hume states five laws of association. Since I shall be referring to them throughout the present section, it is important to identify them explicitly at this point. The first three laws are laws governing the association of ideas, and may be formulated as follows:

(1) One idea gives rise to another idea if the two ideas are related by resemblance.

(2) One idea gives rise to another idea if the two ideas are related by spatial or temporal contiguity.

(3) One idea gives rise to another idea if the two ideas are related by causation.

The fourth law governs the association of impressions, and may be formulated in this way:

(4) One impression gives rise to another impression if the two impressions are related by resemblance.

The fifth law, which Kemp Smith calls "the principle of concurrent direction",[1] governs the double association of impressions and ideas, and may be formulated:

(5) One impression and one idea give rise to another impression and another idea if the impressions are related by resemblance and the ideas are related by resemblance, spatial or temporal contiguity, or causation.

A first point to be noticed about the five laws of association is that each is a law correlating the occurrence of members of various classes of mental states. These mental states may be roughly classified as cognitive mental states and emotional mental states. The first three laws, those governing

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[1] Norman Kemp Smith, The Philosophy of David Hume (London: Macmillan, 1941), p.184.

the association of ideas, correlate the occurrence of members of classes of <u>cognitive</u> mental states. The fourth law, concerned with the association of impressions, correlates the occurrence of <u>emotional</u> mental states. The fifth law, concerned with the concurrent direction of associated ideas and impressions, correlates the occurrence of complex mental states, each complex state being in some sense a compound of a <u>cognitive</u> and an <u>emotional</u> mental state. Thus, where Hume talks of an association of ideas, I shall talk of an association of cognitive mental states; where he talks of an association of impressions, I shall talk of an association of emotional mental states.

This terminological change will eliminate two minor sources of confusion. First, it will eliminate confusions engendered by Hume's occasionally talking of an association of ideas obtaining between an idea and an <u>impression</u>. Consider the ambiguities engendered in this way by Hume's claim: "When the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or <u>impression</u> 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 <u>ideas</u> of these objects, and unite them in the imagination". (T,92.Italics mine.) The sort of case Hume has in mind is one in which, seeing a fire burning, I expect that, were I to draw closer to it, I should feel its warmth. The first "idea" here is my present <u>perception</u> of the fire; the second "idea" is my thought of its warmth. In such a case, Hume's talk of the "association of ideas" is simply short-hand for an"association of cognitive mental states", which may obtain whether the mental states be "ideas" (in Hume's sense) or "impressions".[1] Passmore seems to miss this point when he says, in elucidation of Hume's distinction between natural and philosophical relations, that "Hume's distinction between these two sorts of relation

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[1]It should be noted that Hume does not allow for an "association of ideas" between two (cognitive) "impressions", or from an "idea" to a (cognitive) "impression".

is identical with William James's distinction between connexions thought of ... and connexions between thoughts".[1] He goes on to say that "the relations between our thoughts (associative relations) bring our ideas before our mind in such a way that we can think of these and other relations between them".[2] That we must not restrict the "association of ideas" to an association of thoughts (in the sense of "ideas") is, however, abundantly clear from the passage quoted earlier. It is clear as well from Hume's frequent insistence on the need of a present impression for causal inference, as when he says: "When we pass from the impression of one [object] to the idea or belief of another, we are not determin'd by reason, but by custom or a principle of association". (T,97. Italics mine.)

My terminological change will help obviate a second confusion perhaps engendered by the use of the word "impression" in the expression "the association of impressions". As Kemp-Smith has pointed out, when Hume talks of the "association of impressions" he is talking exclusively of the passions.[3] Thus the word "impression", which normally in the Treatise has a much wider extension, can only be misleading. Both confusions are avoided by the use of the expressions "cognitive mental states" and "emotional mental states", with the emphasis on "cognitive" and "emotional". By using the phrase "mental state" I wish to emphasize that the laws of association are psychological laws.

A point to be stressed is that, on Hume's account, each of the five laws of association is a causal law. Hume's terminology is perhaps misleading. Consider the first three laws of association. Hume is certainly saying that the various relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation obtain between the associated ideas. This is the respect in which the first three laws of association differ from one another. But each association of ideas is alike in this,

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[1] Passmore, p.114.

[2] Passmore, p.114. Italics mine.

[3] Kemp Smith, p.184.

that the associated ideas are causally related to one another. Thus, one cognitive state of mind is causally related to another cognitive state which, in some sense, resembles the first. Likewise, a particular cognitive state is causally related to another which, in some sense, is also related by spatial or temporal contiguity to the first. The fact that one here is talking of the relation of spatial contiguity between two cognitive states of mind should be sufficient to put one on one's guard. But the peculiarities of Hume's view can be brought out even more forcefully by an insistence that, when Hume talks of the association of ideas by virtue of causation, two quite distinct causal relations are in question. On the one hand, two such cognitive states are causally related in a sense identical with the sense in which two resembling cognitive states are causally related: the sense in which all laws of association are causal laws. On the other hand, two such cognitive states are causally related in a sense in which two cognitive states associated by resemblance are not causally related: the sense in which two cognitive states may be related by resemblance or contiguity or causation, and not necessarily by causation. This is the sense in which not all laws of association depend on the concept of causation.

Similar considerations arise with respect to the fourth and fifth laws of association. The law correlating resembling impressions or resembling emotional states, is a causal law, as are all the laws of association, but it does not require the concept of causation in the second of the two senses described above: it rather makes use of the concept of resemblance. The law concerning the concurrent direction of associated impressions and ideas is, in this matter, just a more complicated extension of the first four laws. Depending on one's interpretation of this law, it asserts the obtaining of either one or two causal connections in the first of the two senses described above.[1] Either a single

[1] The matter is more complicated than this. See my discussion of the fifth law of association on pp. 138-146.

causal connection is alleged to obtain between one complex mental state comprising a cognitive and an emotional mental state, or a two-fold causal connection is alleged, one between the emotional states in each of the successive complex states of mind, and the other between the cognitive states in each of the more complex mental states. Besides this single or two-fold causal connection, however, another quite different sort of causal connection may obtain. That is, the cognitive components of the complex mental states in question (but not the emotional components) may be related by causation, though they need not be: they might instead be related by resemblance or contiguity, and not by causation. Let us distinguish the relations of $causation_1$ and $causation_2$. The relation of $causation_1$ obtains between any cognitive or emotional mental states which are said to be associated; that of $causation_2$ obtains only between _some cognitive_ mental states, those, namely, which are said to be associated by causation.

To elucidate this contrast, which is, I would insist, essential for interpreting Hume's associationism correctly, we may make use of a distinction which Hume sometimes makes in the _Treatise_ between a mental act and the object of that mental act, at least in the case of what I have called cognitive mental states. Thus, we may distinguish between thinking and that of which one thinks, believing and that which one believes, remembering and what one remembers, imagining and what is imagined, and so on. It may be argued that such a distinction fits ill with Hume's early account of his doctrine of impressions and ideas. I would not wish to deny this. It is quite clear, however, that Hume does, in several places, both require the distinction and actually make it.

At one point Hume finds himself required to give an account of having an idea of an idea, as, for example, when we remember having had a certain thought at some time in the past. There he says:

> In thinking of our past thoughts we not only delineate out the objects, of which we were thinking, but also conceive the action of the mind in the meditation, that certain _je-ne-scai-quoi_, of which 'tis impossible to give any definition or description, but which everyone sufficiently understands. (T,106)

It is this distinction between "the action of the mind" in thinking, and "the objects, of which we were thinking" to which I would call attention. A similar distinction is suggested when Hume gives an account of our commonsense belief that some of the things we perceive continue to exist even when we are not perceiving them. In explanation of this he says: "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". (T,204) He elucidates this remark in a footnote where he says:

> We may observe, that there are two relations, and both of them resemblances, which contribute to our mistaking the succession of our interrupted perceptions for an identical object. The first is, the resemblance of the perceptions: The second is the resemblance, which the act of the mind in surveying a succession of resembling objects bears to that in surveying an identical object. (T,205n)

The same distinction seems also to be at work in many remarks made in the course of his account of association. At one point Hume remarks:

> 'Tis likewise evident, that as the senses, in changing their objects, are necessitated to change them regularly, and take them as they lie _contiguous_ to each other, the imagination must by long custom acquire the same method of thinking, and run along the parts of space and time in conceiving its objects. (T,11)

In talking of resemblance as a "fertile source of error" in our thinking, Hume makes the requisite distinction in most explicit terms:

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

> the actions of the mind in forming any two ideas are the same or resembling, we are very apt to confound these ideas, and take the one for the other. (T,61)

Making use of this distinction between a mental act and its object, we can state Hume's theory of the association of ideas in the following way: in some circumstances, one cognitive state will give rise to another cognitive state, when the object of the first is related by resemblance, spatial or temporal contiguity, or causation to the second. The association of ideas does not depend on relations of resemblance or contiguity, or causation$_2$ obtaining between one cognitive state, qua mental act, and another cognitive state, qua mental act. For one thing, no sense could be made of an alleged association of ideas here, since the two cognitive states are themselves present experiences, and would thus more suitably come under the heading of "impressions". Nor could one speak of an "association of impressions", since that phrase is reserved for an association of passions, or of bodily pleasures or pains and passions.[1]

Let us consider some examples. Consider two cognitive states, one being the recollection of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, and the other the recollection of the Doge's Palace, also in Venice. Qua mental acts, the two states are similar in that each is a recollection. They differ, however, in their objects.

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[1] This interpretation is, of course, inconsistent with much of what Hume says about impressions and ideas, and especially his theory of belief. According to that theory, the "vivacity" of one cognitive state is "transferred" to a second cognitive state, of which the first is a part cause. This case is particularly interesting because Hume does not want to construe belief in terms of "some impression or feeling, distinguishable from the conception". (T,625) "Belief", he says, "only modifies the idea or conception; and renders it different to the feeling, without producing any distinct impression". (T,627) What is not clear in this claim, however, is whether the terms "idea" and "conception" are equivalent. For further discussion of the distinction between mental acts and their objects in the Treatise see my Chapter IV, Section 1, and my account of the objects of the passions in Chapter IV, Section 2.

But there is also a sense in which their objects are related. As Hume would put it, the objects are contiguous to one another, in fact spatially contiguous to one another. Now in fact only the cathedral and the palace can be spatially contiguous to one another; two recollections, as recollections, can not be spatially related. But one can have the recollection of spatially related objects, or two distinct recollections, one of one object, and the other of another object, where the objects which one recollects are spatially related. This is the case of which Hume is thinking. At one time, t, I recall St. Mark's Cathedral; at another time, t_1, I recall the Doge's Palace; assuming certain other conditions to be satisfied, we might say that recalling St. Mark's caused me to recall the Doge's Palace. The recollection of the first object causes me to recollect the second, spatially contiguous object. It is in this sense, and only this sense, that the law of the association of ideas by spatial contiguity is used. The two recollections are not spatially contiguous; indeed, as Hume remarks, "thought ... and extension are qualities wholly incompatible, and never can incorporate together into one subject". (T,234-235) A distinction is thus necessary between thinking, considered as psychological state, and the object of thought, which may be a physical object. In the following paragraphs, I shall argue that the same distinction must be made in interpreting other instances of the first three laws of association, governing the association of ideas, and to some extent in interpreting the fifth law of association, governing the double relation of impressions and ideas.

Let us now consider the relation of temporal contiguity between associated ideas. Here, as in the case of causation to be considered later, confusion is quite easy. If, as seems obvious, Hume is asserting a causal connection between cognitive states whose objects are temporally contiguous, he is also asserting, given his own general theory of causation, that the two cognitive states are

themselves, _qua_ psychological states, temporally contiguous. If they were not so, they would not be taken to be causally related. But every cognitive state is temporally contiguous to whatever other cognitive state succeeds it. Thus, no specific causal explanation could be given by reference to relations of temporal contiguity, if the temporal contiguity in question were simply that of two successive psychological states. Clearly, Hume is thinking of the causal relation (and thus the relation of temporal succession) between two cognitive states whose objects are temporally related. For example, if, in a day-trip from Edinburgh, I spend a pleasant half-hour at Ninewells and, a bit later, enjoy a walk along the quay at Eyemouth, the later recollection of the one incident may lead me to recall the other. On Hume's theory, the first cognitive state (recollection of time spent at Ninewells) causes the second (recollection of time spent at Eyemouth), and two temporal relations are involved. The first recollection is temporally prior and contiguous to the second; the situations recollected (the "objects" of recollection) are or were temporally contiguous. In a sense that we shall have to consider later, the fact that the two incidents were temporally contiguous _explains_ the fact that the recollection of the one causes the recollection of the other.

Similar interpretative moves must be made in talking of the association of ideas by resemblance. When he invokes the notion of a resemblance between two ideas, Hume is not thinking of a resemblance between two cognitive states _qua_ mental acts, whether the act in question be that of remembering, perceiving, imagining, thinking, or whatever. Rather, it should by now be obvious that Hume is thinking of a resemblance between the "objects" of successive cognitive states, which resemblance explains the occurrence of the second, given the occurrence of the first. Thus, seeing or thinking of the Swiss Alps might, in Hume's view, cause me to think of the Rocky Mountains.

The crucial case is that of the association of ideas by causation. As I mentioned earlier, to understand Hume's view it is necessary to distinguish two causal relations, that between the successive cognitive states qua psychological states ($causation_1$) and that between the objects of the successive cognitive states ($causation_2$). My perception of a roaring fire might cause me ($causation_1$) to think of the warmth emanating from the fire, and the (partial) reason for this is the fact that the fire is the cause ($causation_2$) of warmth. It is the causal connection between fires and warmth which explains the causal connection between the thought of the fire and the thought of its warmth.

It would be well at this point to sum up the remarks made thus far about the association of ideas. To do this we may make use of the concepts of $causation_1$ and $causation_2$, $resemblance_1$ and $resemblance_2$, temporal $contiguity_1$ and temporal $contiguity_2$, and spatial contiguity (with no need for a distinction of kinds). On Hume's account of the matter, one can discover $causal_1$ laws correlating cognitive mental states. Cognitive mental states thus $causally_1$ related are also $temporally_1$ contiguous. Qua psychological state all cognitive states are $resembling_1$. $Causal_1$ laws correlating cognitive mental states can be discovered between the following classes of cognitive mental states: those whose objects are $causally_2$ related; those whose objects are $temporally_2$ or spatially related; those whose objects are $resembling_2$. It is illuminating to notice that no distinction of sense is required in the case of spatial contiguity since, in Hume's theory of mind, no sense can be made of a spatial relationship between thoughts qua psychological states; the only spatial relationship of which we can speak is that between the objects of thoughts, recollections, perceptions, and other cognitive states.

Very interesting variations from this general account of associations arise when one moves to the fourth law of association, that correlating resembling emotional states. Before considering these variations, however,

some important similarities must be noted. First, the law of the association of resembling impressions, or resembling emotional states, is a causal one. Second, the events correlated by the law are conscious mental events or states. The fourth law of association is not concerned with physical or physiological causes, or physical or physiological effects. Now for the variations.

As we shall see at some length in the next chapter, Hume has a most peculiar doctrine concerning the passions. Passions are, in themselves, simple impressions. At least many of the passions have objects, in somewhat the same sense in which cognitive states have objects, but the object of a passion is only contingently, and not logically related to the passion.[1] A passion is likewise logically independent of its causes. Thus, any passion logically could exist given causes quite different from those which now cause it or given no cause at all, or with a different or no object. For example, a man logically could be proud of what he took to be the valueless behavior of someone wholly unrelated to himself, and his pride could be "directed" (in Hume's sense) to that other, unrelated person.

Thus it is not open to Hume to construe the associative links which explain the causal connection between one emotional state and another in terms of relations between the objects of the emotional states (though these will, in fact, have objects, at least in many cases). If he is to assert empirical laws correlating the occurrence of passions, _qua_ passions, he must talk only of the correlation of simple impressions. This, ultimately, is what explains the "remarkable difference" which Hume notes between the association of ideas and the association of impressions, _viz._ "that ideas are associated by resemblance, contiguity, and causation; and impressions only by resemblance". (T,283)

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[1] See Chapter IV, Section 2. It is impossible to say whether Hume thought the connection between a _cognitive_ state and its object is a logical or a contingent one. As we have seen, Hume does not consistently make a distinction between a cognitive state and its object. And, when he does make the distinction, he does not indicate how the relation between the two is to be construed.

Passions, qua passions, are simple states, and thus one cannot distinguish a twofold set of relations between one passion and another. Using my earlier terminology, there is no use, in talking of the passions, of the concepts of $causation_2$, $resemblance_2$, or $temporal_2$ contiguity. (Nor is there any use for the concept of spatial contiguity, since passions are not spatially related: "Can any one conceive a passion of a yard in length, a foot in breadth, and an inch in thickness?" T,234)

Passions can, of course, be $temporally_1$ contiguous; they must be if they are to be taken as causally related. They are also $causally_1$ related: the point of the discussion is to discover what causal laws in fact obtain between distinct passions. But neither of these relations can account for what particular passions are temporally contiguous to, or causally related to, other passions. To account for these particular connections, Hume invokes the notion of resemblance (in the sense of $resemblance_1$) between some passions, and not between others. There is thus a much more remarkable difference between the association of ideas and that of impressions than Hume would care to draw attention to. Cognitive states are associated by virtue of the relations of contiguity, causation and resemblance which obtain between the "objects" of the cognitive states; they are not associated by the resemblance which may obtain between one cognitive state, qua psychological state, and another. In contrast, emotional states are not associated by relations between their "objects" (indeed, in the fourth law of association, the "objects" of the passions, which are only contingently related to them, are not even mentioned), but by the resemblance of the passions qua psychological states. There are thus two important differences, and not just one, between the association of ideas and the association of impressions.

Obviously Hume must be thinking of rather specific kinds of resemblance determining the change from one passion to another. The resemblance between two passions simply in so far as they are passions, and thus different from cognitive

states of mind will not do. This might explain why one passion gives rise to another passion, and not to a cognitive state of mind, but not why one passion or kind of passion would be caused, and not another. A *fortiori*, other possible resemblances, as, for example, the resemblance between a passion and a cognitive mental state, precisely as mental rather than physical states, is insufficient for Hume's purposes. Nor, in connection with the fourth law of association, can Hume very easily make use of similarities between passions in so far as they are direct or indirect. Nor does he suggest that the resemblance in question is that between two calm, or two violent passions. The resemblance which Hume does point to is that of pleasantness or unpleasantness of sensation. Consider the examples he gives to illustrate the fourth law of association.

> Grief and disappointment give rise to anger, anger to envy, envy to malice, and malice to grief again, till the whole circle be compleated. In like manner our temper, when elevated with joy, naturally throws itself into love, generosity, pity, courage, pride, and the other resembling affections. (T,283)

As we shall see later, Hume does not, in fact, think that all the passions in the first list are similar in the unpleasantness of their sensation, or that those of the second list are all pleasant. If this were the sole associative link, malice should come in the second list, and pity in the first, a consequence that is, on the face of it, implausible. Thus Hume is led to talk of a resemblance of direction rather than of sensation. Nevertheless, at this early stage in his account, Hume would certainly tend to construe the requisite resemblance in terms of the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the sensation of the passion.

But even if we accept Hume's examples as instances of causal sequences governed by the law of resembling impressions, how is he, among other things, to account for the fact that anger, for example, gives rise to envy, and not envy to anger? That is to say, how is he to explain the precise order the

passions do, on his account, follow? Clearly the fourth law of association gives him no assistance on this matter. This weakness in the fourth law, I would suggest, makes it essential for Hume to state his fifth law, that correlating an association of impressions with an association of ideas. The association of ideas which is part of this law enables Hume to get past some of his difficulties by adding a certain specificity to the passion which will arise from a present passion.

Hume, in his formal account of the fifth law, describes it in the following terms:

> 'Tis observable of these two kinds of association [viz. the association of ideas and the association of impressions], that they very much assist and forward each other, and that the transition is more easily made where they both concur in the same object. Thus a man, who, by any injury from another, is very much discompos'd and ruffled in his temper, is apt to find a hundred subjects of discontent, impatience, fear, and other uneasy passions; especially if he can discover these subjects in or near the person, who was the cause of his first passion. Those principles, which forward the transition of ideas, here concur with those, which operate on the passions; and both uniting in one action, bestow on the mind a double impulse. The new passion, therefore, must arise with so much greater violence, and the transition to it must be render'd so much more easy and natural. (T,283-284)

There are many ambiguities in this account which require elucidation. Hume's theory is, in fact, much less clearly stated than most commentators have noticed.

The basic situation Hume seems to be thinking of is this. At some time, _t_, a person is in a particular emotional state, let us say hatred. Now, though hatred is, for Hume, a simple impression, logically unrelated to anything else, it is a matter of fact that it is always "directed" to some person other than one's self. That is to say, the simple impression of hatred always in fact occurs in conjunction with a cognitive state describable in some such terms as "the thought of _x_", where _x_ is some person other than one's self. It

is also a matter of fact that all cases of hatred are caused by a complex mental state comprising both an emotional[1] and a cognitive element. The emotional element is a particular unpleasant sensation; the cognitive element is the awareness of that action, say, which causes the unpleasant sensation, and the awareness of it as being the action of some person, _x_. A first instance of the concurrent association of impressions and ideas can now be described in this way. Given the first complex mental state comprising an unpleasant sensation, and the awareness of the action which causes the unpleasantness, and the awareness of this action as originating with some person, _x_, a second logically distinct, complex mental state occurs. This second state comprises that distinct unpleasant sensation which is hatred, and the logically distinct thought of that person, _x_, who is said to be the "object" of the hatred. With the occurrence of the feeling of hatred, the "view" of the angry person is "directed" to the "object" of his anger, _viz_. the person _x_.

In the case as described, where are we to locate the association of impressions and the association of ideas which together in some way make up the "double relation of impressions and ideas"? Clearly enough, the association of impressions is to be located in the relation of resemblance which obtains between the unpleasant sensation in the first complex mental state, and the unpleasant feeling (the feeling of hatred) in the second complex mental state. Similarly, the association of ideas is to be specified by reference to the relation of resemblance (or even "identity", as Hume uses that term in his discussion of indirect passions) between the person, _x_, who was the object of the first cognitive state, and whose action caused the original unpleasant sensation, and the same person, considered as the object of the feeling of hatred.

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[1] My use of the term "emotional" here is somewhat inaccurate, since the causal element in a causally related series of impressions might be a physical pleasure or pain, and these are not, for Hume, emotions or passions. See Chapter IV, Section 1.

It is possible, too, that another complex mental state arise from the second state just described. That is, given the occurrence of the feeling of hatred directed towards x, it may happen that the person who hates x will experience a "correspondent desire of ... the misery of the person, who is the object" of the hatred. (T,368) The complex structure of this new state of mind (which Hume calls "anger") will, in important respects, be similar to that of the prior state of hatred: it will comprise an emotional and a cognitive element. Moreover, there will be a "double relation of impressions and ideas" between it and the prior hatred: a resemblance of impression between the feeling of anger and the desire, and a resemblance of idea (an "identity") between the "objects" of the two emotional states.[1]

Having reached this point of analysis the difficulties in interpreting the fifth law of association become most pronounced. A first difficulty concerns the question: Is there only one causal connection in question here, or are two distinct causal connections being described? This is to say, is Hume asserting (a) that one of the complex mental states described causes the occurrence of another complex mental state; or is he asserting (b) that one component (the emotional component) of the first complex mental state causes the occurrence of one component (the emotional component) of the second complex mental state, and the other component of the first state (the cognitive component) causes the other component (the cognitive component) of the second state? (I should make it clear that the two different interpretations of the causal relationship asserted by the fifth law of association which I am considering here are both concerned with causation in the causation_1 sense described earlier. I am not at this point concerned with the contrast between causation_1 and causation_2.)

[1]At least two assumptions are being made here: that a desire is a simple impression, and that it has an object. These points will be discussed in Section 2 of the next chapter.

This question is difficult to answer. Many considerations favor the double-causation interpretation. For one thing, if the situation described involves both a relation of impressions and a relation of ideas, and if both there relations are, in Hume's general theory, causal relations, it would seem that the case in question involves two distinct causal relations. That is, if the concept of an association of impressions (or an association of ideas) is initially elucidated independently in terms of a causal connection, one must assume that, nothing to the contrary being stated, when the concept is used in a later, more complex situation, it is still being used with reference to specific causal relations. This double-causation view is supported, as well, by the language Hume uses in introducing the fifth law of association, where he says: "these two kinds of association ... very much assist and forward each other, and ... the transition is more easily made where they both concur in the same object". (T,283-284)

This view receives some support as well from Hume's "experiments" to confirm his associationist system concerning the passions of love and hatred. (T,332-347) In the third "experiment" (T,334-35) he seems to consider the association of impressions as an independently operating causal connection. In the third experiment a person is supposed, in company with another, to encounter an object that is pleasing, but that bears no special relation to himself or his companion. Thus, it could not be the source of the relation of ideas requisite for either pride or love. Nevertheless, it can give rise to other pleasant emotional states, though not, apparently, to those unique pleasant states which are pride or love. "To consider the matter first a priori", Hume says "... we may conclude, that the object will have a small, but an uncertain connexion with these passions [i.e. love or pride]". (T,334) Nevertheless,

> if we consider ... that this transition from the sensation to the affection is not forwarded by any principle, that produces a transition of ideas; but,

> on the contrary, that tho' the one impression be easily transfus'd into the other, yet the change of objects is suppos'd contrary to all the principles, that cause a transition of that kind; we may from thence infer, that nothing will ever be a steady or durable cause of any passion, that is connected with the passion merely by a relation of impressions. (T,335)

More cautiously, then, Hume concludes that:

> An object, which produces pleasure or uneasiness, but has no manner of connexion either with our-selves or others, may give such a turn to the dis-position, as that it may naturally fall into pride or love, humility or hatred, and search for other objects, upon which, by a double relation, it can found these affections; but that an object, which has only one of these relations, tho' the most advantageous one, can never give rise to any constant and established passion. (T,335)

Hume's remarks would seem, then, to support the conclusion that the association of impressions and the association of ideas, which together constitute the "double relation of impressions and ideas", are, each of them, independent causal connections, though, by occurring in conjunction, they assist one another.

That Hume fails to give any serious consideration to this question, is, however, clear from remarks he makes in the course of his second "experiment". (T,334) In this "experiment" the reader is invited to imagine a situation in which, together with another person, he encounters some indifferent object that has some special connection either with himself, or with that other per-son. In Hume's words: "Suppose, I regard a stone or any common object, that belongs either to me or my companion, and by that means acquires a relation of ideas to the object of the passions". (T,334) The case described is intended to be one in which all the pre-requisites for an association of ideas are present. This being so, one would expect Hume to say, as he did in the third experiment, that the first cognitive state had some, even uncertain connection with a later cognitive state. He might of course not want to say that the causal sequence

would in fact take place. But he should at least have said that a particular causal law had a possible appropriateness here.

Instead, Hume is content to point out that "*a priori*, no emotion of any kind can reasonably be expected". (T,334) Concerning a possible effect, by association of ideas, of the cognitive state described, Hume says only: "Besides, that a relation of ideas operates secretly and calmly on the mind, it bestows an equal impulse towards the opposite passions of pride and humility, love and hatred, according as the object belongs to ourselves or others; which opposition of the passions must destroy both, and leave the mind perfectly free from any affection or emotion". (T,334) Though Hume is perhaps assuming that an association of ideas would occur in such a case, he certainly does not say this: instead he talks of the possible causal connections between the cognitive state described and a later complex mental state comprising an emotional and a cognitive element. His remarks, then, would clearly not lend support to the view that a double association of impressions and ideas comprises two independent causal connections, one of impressions and one of ideas. Whatever is concluded in the case of the passions, this position is not clearly adopted with respect to ideas.

Perhaps, however, this account of the association of ideas which constitutes an element in the double relation of impressions and ideas is unfair to Hume. As I shall have occasion later to point out, in his account of the association of ideas involved in the first three laws of association Hume is asserting that the occurrence of the first of the two associated ideas is not, of itself, sufficient to explain the occurrence of the second. One must also talk at least of a conditioning acquired by experience whereby associative links have been set up between the two ideas, and perhaps also of a present need or requirement. In the absence of these supplementary conditions, no transition of ideas

is to be expected. Perhaps in the case of the fifth law of association similar considerations apply as well. Perhaps, that is, Hume intends to say that the transition from one idea to another in a case of a double relation of impressions and ideas requires the satisfaction of a special supplementary condition, _viz._ the natural tendency to transition of a passion connected with the original idea. Some grounds for interpreting Hume in this way are provided by his remarks that "these two kinds of association ... very much assist and forward each other, and ... the transition is more easily made where they both concur in the same object" or that the "principles, which forward the transition of ideas, here concur with those, which operate on the passions; and both uniting in one action, bestow on the mind a double impulse". (T,283-284) That is to say, Hume may not intend to assert the view that the occurrence of an idea is sufficient, of itself, to give rise to another idea related to the first by the relation of resemblance, or contiguity, or causation. In the sort of case under discussion, Hume might simply intend to assert that the occurrence of one idea has a tendency to be followed by the occurrence of another, related idea, but that this tendency is only realized with the satisfaction of other conditions.

At this point, however, it is well to notice a certain peculiarity involved in Hume's principle of the concurrent direction of impressions and ideas. In most instances of this principle cited by Hume, the relation alleged to associate ideas in question is one of identity, i.e. the cognitive element in the first complex mental state is describable as, say, "the thought of Smith", and the cognitive element in the second complex mental state is likewise described as "the thought of Smith". The object of both thoughts is the same person. In the case of the double relations between the causes of hatred and hatred, for example, it is suggested that one "idea", the thought of Smith, causes another, logically independent "idea", the thought of Smith. Now there seems to be no

objection to talking of two distinct thoughts of the same object. Nevertheless, in some cases, as in the one described, it seems implausible in the extreme to suggest that if Jones experiences at one time, _t_, both pain resulting from some action of Smith's, and hatred for Smith, he has two distinct thoughts of Smith. But if the association of ideas is a causal connection between two cognitive states, this would follow. It is interesting that "identity" becomes an associating relation only in terms of the fifth associationist law governing the double relation of impressions and ideas, and is not used in the case of the first three laws which govern only the assocation of ideas, and make no mention of impressions.

There is some reason, however, to think that the attempt to construe the association of ideas in a double relation of impressions and ideas as a specific causal relation between two cognitive states is misguided. Several commentators have, in fact, apparently not understood the association of ideas in this way, at least in the case of the double relation of impressions and ideas. Without apparently considering the view of association of ideas I have described, Kemp-Smith describes what he calls the "four-stage, complex mechanisms which condition the experiencing of pride and humility" in the following way:

> Besides thus insisting on the complex constitution of the 'cause', Hume also dwells upon the four-stage sequence whereby (1) starting from the idea of this complex 'subject', into which the idea of the self enters as a component, the mind is carried (2) in and through a separate 'sensation of pleasure or pain' and (3) through the consequent passion of pride or humility, (4) back to the idea of the self.[1]

Kemp Smith goes on to say:

> The four stages, he [Hume] insists, are distinct and separate - the sensation of pleasure for instance is,

[1]Kemp Smith, pp. 181-182.

> he maintains, distinct from the passion of pride, just as truly as the passion, in itself simple, is distinct both from its exciting 'subject' and from its 'object'. And it is because he regards these stages as distinct that he is committed to the task of explaining why the steps thus follow in sequence, and how in so doing they combine to support and reinforce one another.[1]

On this view of the matter, an original cognitive state gives rise to an emotional state, which, in turn, causes a second emotional state, which, finally, causes a second cognitive state.

A similar view is adopted by Dr. Árdal, who gives the following account of "the way in which pride or humility arises":

> If thinking of x pleases me, and x is related to me, then the pleasure gives rise to pride, which is related to pleasure by similarity. Pride in turn is naturally such as to make one think of oneself. We thus have a double association, between oneself and the object related to oneself and pleasure and pride, which is itself a pleasant passion. This double association is conceived as a mechanism by which the passion is produced.[2]

What I would especially call attention to in this account is the suggestion that the immediate cause of the second thought of oneself is not the first, similar thought, but the simple impression of pride. The first thought is the cause of the second only in the sense that it contributes to the occurrence of pride, which in turn causes the second thought of oneself.

There is certainly strong textual support for this account. Identifying the object of pride and humility as the self, Hume says: "Here the view always fixes when we are actuated by either of these passions". (T,277) Similarly he says: "Here at last the view always rests, when we are actuated by either of these passions". (T,286) Kemp Smith, commenting on the "naively realistic ... manner" in which Hume, "using physiological analogies", discusses the indirect passions, quotes the following passage:

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[1] Kemp Smith, pp. 182.

[2] Ardal, p. 26. Only "naturally" is italicized in original.

> That we may comprehend this better, we must suppose, that nature has given to the organs of the human mind, a certain disposition fitted to produce a peculiar impression or emotion, which we call <u>pride</u>: To this emotion she has assign'd a certain idea, <u>viz.</u> that of <u>self</u>, which <u>it never fails to produce</u>. This contrivance of nature is easily conceiv'd. We have many instances of such a situation of affairs. The nerves of the nose and palate are so dispos'd, as in certain circumstances to convey such peculiar sensations to the mind: The sensations of lust and hunger always produce in us the ideas of those peculiar objects, which are suitable to each appetite. These two circumstances are united in pride. The organs are so dispos'd as to produce the passion; and <u>the passion, after its production, naturally produces a certain idea</u>. All this needs no proof. 'Tis evident we never shou'd be possest of that passion, were there not a disposition of the mind proper for it; and 'tis as evident, that the passion always <u>turns our view to ourselves</u>, and <u>makes us think</u> of our own qualities and circumstances. (T, 287. Only "pride", "viz.", and "self" are italicized in original.)

In remarks such as these Hume seems unambiguously to endorse the view that the cause of the idea of self which in part constitutes the second state of mind is the passion of pride, not the earlier view of the self.

But if we take this to be Hume's considered view, a peculiar consequence follows for his general theory of associations: the three kinds of association of ideas which are governed by the first three laws of association of ideas turn out to be quite different, in a crucial respect, from the association of ideas involved in the fifth law. In the first three laws, an immediate causal connection is asserted between two cognitive states when the "objects" of the cognitive states are related by resemblance, contiguity, or causation. Thus, for example, the thought of a fire is the immediate cause of the thought of its warmth, assuming the satisfaction of certain other conditions. But on the present interpretation of the fifth law of association (that governing the double relation of impressions and ideas) this notion of an <u>immediate</u> causal connection breaks down. The <u>immediate</u> cause of my thought of myself, which is an element of my complex mental state when I am proud, is not a prior <u>thought</u> of myself but my <u>feeling</u> of pride. In the fifth law of association, therefore,

the principle of the association of ideas has a very different job to do than it has in any of the first three laws. One is in fact left to wonder what work is being done by the association of ideas according to the fifth law.

If one thus separates the notion of the association of ideas from the notion of a causal law, one is left simply with the claim that the cognitive element of one complex mental state bears, with respect to its object, a relation of resemblance, contiguity, or causation to the cognitive element of an earlier complex mental state. But the one cognitive state is not the direct cause of the other, as would be the case in terms of the first three laws of the association of ideas. Somehow this simple obtaining of a relation between the two cognitive states explains the occurrence of the latter, given the former, though they are not directly causally related.

I have tried to show that Hume interprets his own fifth law of association in at least three different ways: (1) as a law that is in fact a shorthand formulation of two distinct laws, one correlating the occurrence of resembling emotional states, and one correlating the occurrence of cognitive states whose objects are related by resemblance, spatial or temporal contiguity, or causation; (2) as a single law asserting a single causal connection between a compound cause (comprising an emotional and a cognitive element) and a compound effect (also comprising an emotional and a cognitive element); (3) as a law correlating a temporal series of four distinct mental states, the first and last members of the series being cognitive mental states. These three interpretations are, it seems to me, mutually incompatible. The only conclusion we can draw is that Hume has simply not worked out with any precision the exact nature of this allegedly causal law which is certainly intended as the central element in his projected scientific explanation of the occurrence of the passions.

We may now move on to a question which is, I take it, one of the most

interesting questions concerning the laws of association, viz. the question of the way in which they are alleged to explain the events they are called upon to explain.

If my account of Hume's general theory of scientific explanation is correct, it may be presumed to apply as well to the allegedly scientific laws of association. From this it would follow that, in explaining the occurrence of a particular mental state by reference to one of the laws of association, one does no more than show that the occurrence of that mental state is what one would have expected, had one known the law of association in question. One simply shows that it is governed by an empirical law, and what that law is. The desire for explanation arises from a state of puzzlement, and, according to Hume's theory, this puzzlement is dispelled (and can only be dispelled) by showing that the puzzling occurrence is lawfully correlated with some other event or set of events. There are, of course, different levels of explanation, depending on the complexity of one's explanatory system. To the extent that one can unify a large number of lower-level laws under more simple, higher-level laws, one increases the intelligibility of the events correlated by the lower-level laws. But on any level of this explanatory system of laws, even the highest level, the laws are only contingently true. Their truth is a mere brute matter of fact. They simply express how the world happens to be, and very different laws could operate in the world.

Hume's way of making this claim is his insistence that the truth of no empirical law can be discovered by a "penetration of the essences" of the objects or states of affairs correlated by that law. In his most remarkable formulation of this claim Hume asserts that "a priori, any thing may produce any thing, and that we shall never discover a reason, why any object may or may not be the cause of any other, however great, or however little the resemblance may be betwixt them". (T,247) Most emphatically Hume asserts that

the possible resemblances between two states of affairs correlated by an empirical law in no way compromises the contingency of the law. As he says in the Treatise:

> Some philosophers have imagin'd that there is an apparent cause for the communication of motion, and that a reasonable man might immediately infer the motion of one body from the impulse of another, without having recourse to any past observation. That this opinion is false will admit of an easy proof. For if such an inference may be drawn merely from the ideas of body, of motion, and of impulse, it must amount to a demonstration, and must imply the absolute impossibility of any contrary supposition. Every effect, then, beside the communication of motion, implies a formal contradiction: and 'tis impossible not only that it can exist, but also that it can be conceiv'd. But we may soon satisfy ourselves of the contrary, by forming a clear and consistent idea of one body's moving upon another, and of its rest immediately upon the contact; or of its returning back in the same line, in which it came; or of its annihilation; or circular or elliptical motion: and in short, of an infinite number of other changes, which we may suppose it to undergo. (T,111)

Nor does the fact that the laws of association are psychological laws in any way prejudice their contingent character: "The uniting principle among our internal perceptions is as unintelligible as that among external objects, and is not known to us any other way than by experience". (T,169)

Nevertheless, Hume does seem to think that some empirical laws have a characteristic whereby they explain events more fully than by simply correlating them with other events. This is particularly, but not exclusively, true of the psychological laws of association. In the case of the laws of association, the fact that the relations of contiguity, causation, or resemblance obtain between the causally related ideas, and the fact that the causally related impressions are resembling, somehow renders the causal connection more intelligible by showing it to be a natural one.

Hume invokes this concept of more natural causal connections when, in announcing the fourth law of association, he remarks: "And to what can it

[i.e. the mind] so naturally change as to affections or emotions, which are suitable to the temper, and agree with that set of passions, which then prevail?" (T,283. Italics mine.) He both admits the function of resemblance in enhancing the intelligibility of causal connections, and tries to explain this phenomenon, when he says at the end of the long passage on the communication of motion quoted above:

> These suppositions are all consistent and natural; and the reason, why we imagine the communication of motion to be more consistent and natural not only than those suppositions, but also than any other natural effect, is founded on the relation of resemblance betwixt the cause and effect, which is here united to experience, and binds the objects in the closest and most intimate manner to each other, so as to make us imagine them to be absolutely inseparable. Resemblance, then, has the same or parallel influence with experience. (T, 111-112)

Because some relation other than causation also obtains between two causally related states of affairs, the connection between the two states of affairs is made to seem more natural. Thus, the law of the association of impressions, for example, does not explain the occurrence of a pleasant passion only by displaying the correlation which exists between pleasant passions. It also displays the similarity between the passion to be explained and some other passion. In this way it seems to confer an increased intelligibility on the situation in question.

I am suggesting that Hume is admitting, at least at times, and perhaps reluctantly, a principle of "appropriateness" in the context of empirical explanations: some causes are appropriate causes of their effects. A separate pleasure is an appropriate cause of such pleasant passions as love or pride or joy or hope or desire precisely because it is pleasant. The thought of one object is appropriately the cause of the thought of a resembling object precisely because the objects are resembling. The same holds for the other principles of association. It is this appropriateness of the causal laws which

obtain in the science of mind which gives them a greater intelligibility than that possessed by most of the laws of physical science. This notion of appropriateness will be important when we come to discuss Hume's theories of the passions and motives.

We may now turn to an element in Hume's theory of associations which we have noted already, but which is sufficiently important to merit a more detailed consideration. This is the fact that neither the association of ideas, nor that of impressions, is supposed to depend for its operation on a recognition of the relations obtaining between the ideas or the impressions. The relations by which ideas or impressions are associated are natural relations, not philosophical ones, and thus function independently of our thinking about them. In the case of ideas, the laws of association explain thinking - this is the whole point of the theory - rather than presupposing thinking for their own occurrence. Hume makes this point quite explicitly, at least for the case of the association of ideas by causation, when he says:

> Thus tho' causation be a _philosophical_ relation, as implying contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction, yet 'tis only so far as it is a _natural_ relation; and produces an union among our ideas, that we are able to reason upon it, or draw any inference from it. (T,94)

The view that the association of ideas is not dependent on a reflective awareness of the associating relations is implied, as well, in Hume's statement:

> We have already taken notice of certain relations, which make us pass from one object to another, _even tho' there be no reason_ to determine us to that transition; and this we may establish for a general rule, that wherever the mind constantly and uniformly makes a transition without any reason, it is influenc'd by these relations. (T,92. Italics mine.)

In a similar vein he says:

> 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. Italics mine.)

The same point is insisted on when Hume remarks that "the understanding or imagination can draw inferences from past experience, without reflecting on it". (T,104)

But if the association of ideas operates in terms of natural, not philosophical relations, that is, without requiring a consciousness of the relation in question, the question immediately arises: must any other conditions be satisfied before the various laws of association can be said to operate? That is to say, are the laws of association sufficient, on their own terms, to explain the occurrence which they are alleged to explain. To answer this question, one must start by distinguishing the association of impressions from the association of ideas. The association of impressions is supposed to be a natural phenomenon, in the sense that no prior experience of the conjunction of resembling passions is required before the association of impressions may operate. In the case of the association of ideas, the person must have had a prior experience of the causal connection between the two states of affairs, or of their resemblance, or spatial or temporal contiguity, before an association of ideas may operate. This is not the case with the association of impressions. Thus, in the case of pride, given the occurrence of a separate pleasure caused by some valuable object or action known to bear a special relation to myself, pride occurs. This is a purely natural phenomenon, for Hume, and one need not assume that any special conditioning has taken place.

In the case of the association of ideas, such prior conditioning or experience is presupposed. In the association of ideas by the relation of causation, it is particularly obvious that, for the principle of association to work, one must have had a prior experience of the conjunction of the two objects or events which are the "objects" of the cognitive state in question. This is one of the principal points Hume makes in his lengthy discussion of causation.

As he says in his section "Of the probability of causes": "The habit, which produces the association, arises from the frequent conjunction of objects". (T,130. Italics mine.) Without a prior experience of the objects in question, there would be no habit established. And without this habit, there would be no association of ideas by causation.

Similar considerations apply with respect to the association of ideas by resemblance or contiguity. Before the thought of one object can give rise to the thought of another object related to the first by resemblance or contiguity, one must first have had experience of the resembling or contiguous objects. It is only by experience that one can learn of the resemblances between objects, or of their spatial or temporal relationships. (This need not imply that, in one's prior experience of the objects, one noted their resemblances, or their spatial or temporal relationships.) All of this is simply a consequence of Hume's general thesis that all contingent connections between the objects of thought can only be known by experience. In some perhaps ill-defined sense, then, the laws of association of ideas cannot operate independently of a prior experience of the relations of causation, resemblance, or contiguity obtaining between those objects, the thoughts of which are to be causally connected by the principles of association.

Because of the peculiarities of Hume's account of the association of ideas which is part of the fifth law of association, it is impossible to say what Hume would say, in the present connection, about that law. I will thus turn to a somewhat different point about the adequacy of Hume's laws of association. Is it Hume's view that the five laws of association can, between them, explain the occurrence of all mental events? Clearly not. As Hume points out in his very first account of the theory of association:

> As all simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and be united again in any form it pleases, nothing would be more unaccountable than the operations of that faculty,

> were it not guided by <u>some</u> universal principles, which render it, <u>in some measure</u>, uniform with itself in all times and places. (T,10. Italics mine.)

And he goes on to say:

> This uniting principle among ideas is not to be consider'd as an inseparable connexion; for that has already been excluded from the imagination: nor yet are we to conclude, that without it the mind cannot join two ideas; for nothing is more free than that faculty: but we are only to regard it as a gentle force, which commonly prevails, and is the cause why, among other things, languages so nearly correspond to each other; nature in a manner pointing out to every one those simple ideas, which are most proper to be united into a complex one. (T,10-11)

It is clear, then, that Hume does not intend his laws of the association of ideas to be adequate for a scientific account of all cognitive mental states. He cannot, then, be offering his theory of associations as a complete scientific system in the science of mind.

This is obvious, as well, from the many non-associative laws which Hume formulates in the course of the <u>Treatise</u>. Among these laws is that stating "that the imagination, when set into any train of thinking, is apt to continue, even when its object fails it, and like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse". (T,198) Another law is stated in the following way:

> Nothing 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 from within; from the opposition of external objects, or from the combat of internal principles. On the contrary, whatever strikes in with the natural propensities, and either externally forwards their satisfaction, or internally concurs with their movements, is sure to give a sensible pleasure. (T,205-06)

In consequence of this law, when the mind's "uneasiness arises from the opposition of two contrary principles, it must look for relief by sacrificing the one to the other". (T,206)

Other laws are stated as emendations of the general scheme of associative

laws as first formulated. Among these are the laws described as "limitations of this system" of pride and humility (T,290-294), and the law that "the fancy finds the same facility in passing from the lesser to the greater, as from remote to contiguous". (T,343) Another such law is that which states:

> Two different degrees of the same passion are surely related together; but if the smaller be first present, it has little or no tendency to introduce the greater: and that because the addition of the great to the little, produces a more sensible alteration on the temper, than the addition of the little to the great. (T,345)

It should be quite clear, then, that Hume's theory of associations, and especially his first, schematic formulation of that theory, is not intended to be able to explain all mental phenomena, or even just all those mental phenomena which are not, from the point of view of an individual's consciousness, "original" (as are, for example, the impressions of sensation).

In commenting on the limits of Hume's associationism, Passmore remarks:

> Thus there is a genuine problem, and one which Hume does nothing whatever to solve, why association sometimes operates and sometimes fails to operate. Furthermore, sometimes contiguity operates, at other times resemblance; and one resembling idea, of the many possible resemblances, exerts the predominant influence - these are facts which Hume leaves unexplained, and which must be explained, if associationism is to be a science of mind.[1]

Passmore goes on to say that "Hobbes had already offered such an explanation: 'the discourse of the mind is nothing but seeking'; what we think of next will be associated with what we are now thinking of, but precisely what it is will depend upon the direction of our interests".[2]

This is, I would submit, unfair to Hume. It is true that he does not make any very explicit attempt to deal with the sorts of questions which Passmore raises against his theory. Nevertheless, just as in Hobbes, the concepts necessary for the solution of the difficulty are present. We need only look to Hume's account of abstract ideas. Given Hume's account, the following difficulty might arise: hearing the expression "geometrical figure" I might imagine an isosceles

[1]Passmore, p.108.
[2]Passmore, p. 108.

triangle, and this imagined isosceles triangle might lead me in turn to imagine an eight-sided polygon. But suppose, on hearing the expression "triangle" I imagine first an isosceles triangle, and then a scalene triangle, and so on. What is it that explains the fact that, in the first case, my imagined isosceles triangle was followed by an imagined hectagon, while in the second case, the isosceles triangle was followed by a scalene triangle? Hume's answer is obvious enough. For one thing, the initial stimulus ("geometrical figure", "triangle") to the whole train of cognitive experiences is, in each case, different. But also, the train of thoughts is determined by considerations similar to that mentioned by Hobbes. The process of using general terms is very much determined by "the purposes of life" (T,20); the hearing of a word, besides causing us to imagine a particular member of the class of objects designated by the word, puts us in a state of "readiness to survey any of them, as we may be *prompted by a present design or necessity*". (T,20. Italics mine.) "The word raises up an individual idea, along with a certain custom; and that custom produces any other individual one, *for which we may have occasion*". (T,20-21. Italics mine.) It would seem, then, that though Hume does not make very extensive use of such concepts as need, purpose, and design to explain particular occurrences of the association of ideas or impressions, he had the concepts ready at hand.

Leaving the question of the adequacy of Hume's theory of associations for a science of mind, we must notice two problems which stem from the language Hume uses to formulate his theory. Despite his insistence that the associating relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation are natural, not philosophical relations, Hume's language sometimes suggests that the reverse is true. He speaks, for example, of "the qualities, *from which* this association arises, and *by which* the mind is after this manner convey'd from one idea to another". (T,11. Italics mine.) Similarly he says that "tis impossible the same simple ideas should fall regularly into complex ones ... without *some bond* of union

among them, some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another". (T,10. Italics mine.) At another point he talks of "certain relations, which make us pass from one object to another". (T,92)

What is puzzling is the apparent suggestion that it is the relation of, say, resemblance between two ideas which makes the second appear, given the occurrence of the first. Or perhaps more accurately expressed, the puzzlement arises when one tries to understand the apparent suggestion that one idea causes another idea because the first and second ideas are related by, say, resemblance. Either formulation seems to imply a contradictory claim that the second of the two ideas (the alleged effect) both exists and does not exist at some particular time, *t*. For one cannot say both that A and B are related, and that B does not yet exist. Nevertheless, Hume seems to want to say this, when he says, in effect, that at some time, *t*, a person is in a particular mental state, that this state causes the occurrence, at a later time, t_1, of another mental state, and that the later state occurs because it is related to the earlier state.

I would suggest, however, that such remarks by Hume are for the most part just shorthand, albeit misleading, ways of making the following, less exceptionable claims: (1) that the objects of different cognitive states may bear various relations to one another, such as the relation of causation between a fire and warmth; (2) that two cognitive states, because they must be described by reference to their objects, may properly be said to have related objects; (3) that empirical laws can be formulated correlating such distinct cognitive states. Nothing requires Hume to say or imply that a present cognitive state, and a future cognitive state, are now resembling. The movement from one cognitive state to another does not, in Hume's theory, depend on the contradictory demand for an already existing relation between the two. Rather, it depends on the prior experience of the appropriate relations between two objects, and thus a specific sort of conditioning of the subject, together with the occurrence of

the thought of one of the two related objects. The relation between A and B which is alleged to explain the thought of B, given the thought of A, is the already experienced relation of A and B. Hume's language may be misleading, but he is not, in fact, contradicting himself.

Another problem with Hume's _expression_ of his theory of association, and one which may be handled more briefly, is his apparently anthropomorphic use of the term "force". Thus, at one point he refers to the association of ideas as a "gentle force, which commonly prevails". (T,10) It is clear, however that Hume's apparent anthropomorphism stems not from an unacknowledged departure from his theory of causation, but from a lack of precision in language. Consider what he says in the first _Enquiry_ about some of the concepts of Newtonian mechanics:

> I need not examine at length the _vis inertiae_ 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 inertiae_, 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. (EHU,73n)

Surely, then, to talk of the "force" of association which connects A and B is simply to say that an empirical law correlates the occurrence of events like A with events like B.

2. Mental Dispositions

Dispositional properties play a very large role in Hume's "science of human nature" in the _Treatise_. No adequate study of Hume's views on mental science, in particular, can fail to consider his theory of dispositions. In the account which follows I shall be especially concerned with the question whether Hume's theory is a reductive one. In this context I shall take a

reductive theory to be a theory which in some sense identifies dispositions with introspectible or publicly observable responses made in appropriate test conditions. The word "introspectible" in this description is an important one. Usually a reductive theory is also a behaviorist one, but it would seem that these are logically independent. Hume's theory of mental dispositions is certainly not a behaviorist one: he does not identify mental dispositions with behavioral responses to appropriate stimuli. As we have seen many times, the principal subject matter of his mental science is what goes on in a man's mind when he thinks, believes, remembers, imagines, feels angry, experiences pain, and so on. Thus, if Hume's theory of mental dispositions is reductive it is so only in the admittedly unusual sense that mental dispositions are identified with the occurrence of private, mental events, as well as overt behavioral responses, given appropriate stimuli.

The question whether Hume's theory of mental dispositions is a reductive one in the sense described is a most vexing one. It is notorious that Hume, at some places in the _Treatise_, dismisses the concepts of faculties and occult qualities out of hand. The concept of powers seems to get equally short shrift when Hume says, for example, that "the distinction, which we sometimes make betwixt a _power_ and the exercise of it, is ... without foundation" (T,171) or is "entirely frivolous".(T,311) Despite these remarks, however, Hume very often makes use of dispositional concepts in ways which are not translatable into talk of either introspectible mental events or overt behavioral responses and appropriate stimuli. I shall argue that though Hume intends to give a reductive account of mental dispositions, he is unable to do so consistently, _given the materials with which he chooses to work_. My argument has the following steps: (1) I shall give an account of several reasonably central passages in the _Treatise_ where Hume makes use of dispositional concepts and yet is unable

to provide a reductive analysis of them. This will provide the occasion for giving a positive account of some aspects of Hume's theory of mental dispositions. (2) I shall discuss those passages in the *Treatise* in which Hume endorses a reductivist theory. This will enable me to complete my positive account of Hume's theory. (3) I shall suggest an explanation of the fact that Hume, while advocating a reductivist theory, found it impossible to deploy such a theory consistently. This will lead me to discuss the problematic concept of non-introspectible mental states, and to offer an alternative which Hume does not seem to have considered.

There are many places throughout the *Treatise* where Hume both makes use of dispositional concepts, and gives some account of how these concepts are to be understood. In his discussions of learning and knowing the meaning of general terms, of the association of ideas, and of the concepts of property and wealth, of freedom and determinism, of natural virtues and natural abilities, Hume uses the dispositional concepts of power, capacity, ability, habit, virtue and character.[1] It should be noticed that each of these discussions centers on a topic of great theoretical importance for Hume's theory of mind and ethical theory. One can not, therefore, assume that remarks about dispositions made in the course of these discussions can be dismissed as careless slips by a notoriously careless writer. I shall begin with Hume's psychological account of learning and knowing the meaning of a general term.

According to Hume learning the meaning of a general term is a matter of noticing a point of resemblance between one object, or quality, or event and another, and between each of these and another, and so on. At the same time one is led to attach the same word to each of the objects in question in virtue of that characteristic which it has in common with the others. For example,

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[1] I would stress that I am using "dispositional concept" as a generic term designating both what are usually called dispositions as well as what are, in in contrast to dispositions, called capacities. I shall not be particularly concerned with the differences between dispositions, in the restricted sense, and capacities.

one is lead to notice a point of resemblance between G.P.O. vans, pillar boxes, and some pomegranates, and to use the word "red" of each object. At some point one becomes able to do a variety of things, including deciding whether a given object is red or not, thinking of examples of red objects, correcting someone who uses the word "red" of things that are not red, etc. This is, in part at any rate, what having learned the word "red" will amount to.

Now the interesting thing about Hume's account for our present purposes is this. He quite clearly talks as though, in having learned the use of the word "red", something has happened to the learner, he has undergone some change, and the result of this change is a continuing or enduring state which makes it possible for him to do various things which anyone who knows the meaning of "red" can do. The learner has acquired some new intrinsic property as the result of his conditioning, and this new intrinsic property is one of the causal conditions which must be satisfied if, for example, he is to recall red objects, imagine red objects, or point to red objects, when requested to do so. To give a full account of the learning process, or of exercising one's knowledge, one must make mention of this intrinsic property acquired by the learner.

Perhaps it seems strange to talk of Hume making use of a concept of intrinsic properties. In fact the terms he actually uses are "custom", "habit", and "power". But let us look at the way he himself expresses this view. He says, for example, that the "application of ideas beyond their nature proceeds from our collecting all their possible degrees of quantity and quality in such an imperfect manner as may serve the purposes of life". (T,20) "After we have acquired a custom of this kind [i.e. of applying the same term to each of several resembling objects] ... the hearing of that name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it". (T,20) But what is this "imperfect manner" in which the ideas of various red objects are "collected", and what is it to "revive" the idea of one of them? Hume goes some way toward answering these

questions when he says, of the ideas of individual instances of any kind of object: "They are not really and in fact present to the mind, but only in power; nor do we draw them all out distinctly in the imagination, but keep ourselves in a readiness to survey any of them, as we may be prompted by a present design or necessity". (T,20) That is to say, the mind is not at all times conscious of each of the objects to which it would apply the term "red", but nevertheless, when the occasion demands it, it can recall or imagine an appropriate red object. Whatever the peculiarities of this view, Hume is certainly suggesting that ideas may in some sense continue to exist, without being thought.

But Hume is not just saying that the ideas of individual objects must be able to exist without being thought. He also claims that some sort of custom continues to exist, even when not operative. The hearing of the word "red" not only causes one who has learned its meaning (though not, of course, one who has not learned its meaning) to think of a red object; it also puts him in readiness, as it were, to think of any other red object which the occasion may demand. In Hume's words, the "word raises up an individual idea, along with a certain custom; and that <u>custom produces</u> any other individual one, for which we may have occasion". (T,20-21. Italics mine.) Similarly he says: "After the mind has produc'd an individual idea, upon which we reason, the attendant <u>custom, reviv'd</u> by the general or abstract term, readily <u>suggests</u> any other individual, if by chance we form any reasoning, that agrees not with it". (T,21. Italics mine.) These customs, then, have at least two very interesting properties. First, just like the ideas of individual red objects, they are capable of existing not "really", or "in fact", but only "in power". They are "revived" by the occurrence of suitable stimuli. Given the occurrence of such stimuli, they are moved from a state of inactivity to one of readiness, and ultimately to one of activity. Their second property is that, when activated, they function as causal conditions, "producing" individual ideas as the occasion requires.

Most surprisingly, perhaps, Hume calls these customs "faculties". In explaining the fact that a person may not be fully competent in the use of a word he says: "If the mind suggests not always these ideas upon occasion, it proceeds from some imperfection in its faculties". (T,21) "On other occasions", however, "the custom is more entire". (T,21) These customs are also referred to as "habits". In Hume's words, general terms "excite their particular habits, and thereby keep the mind in a readiness to observe, that no conclusion be form'd contrary to any ideas, which are usually compriz'd under them". (T,21-22) Those particular red objects which we are not thinking of at a given moment, but which we would think of, should the situation require it, "are only represented by means of that habit, by which we recall them, whenever any present occasion requires it". (T,22) This habit is similar to other habits "which may be reviv'd by one single word; as when a person, who has by rote any periods of discourse, or any number of verses, will be put in remembrance of the whole, which he is at a loss to recollect, by that single word or expression, with which they begin". (T,23) Very significantly, however, Hume finds himself somewhat puzzled by the nature of these customs, powers, habits, or perfections of faculties which help explain our use of general terms. He expresses this puzzlement when he refers to "those very ideas, that are thus collected by a kind of *magical faculty* in the soul". (T,24. Italics mine.)[1]

The points in Hume's discussion which it seems to me important to notice are the following: (1) at least some mental powers or capacities are enduring states of the person to whom the capacity or ability is ascribed; (2) at least some such abilities or capacities come into existence as the result of experience

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[1]For an interesting discussion of Hume's use of dispositional concepts in his account of abstract ideas see David Weismann, *Dispositional Properties* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), pp.17-82.

or training; (3) one can speak of the existence of these mental abilities or capacities without implying that the person to whom they are ascribed is conscious of them in the way in which, say, he is aware of what his thoughts are at a particular moment; (4) these states or capacities are causal conditions of mental events which occur in a person's mind, and consequently causal conditions of his overt behavior.

The most important point is perhaps the last: that capacities or abilities are causal conditions. Why should Hume say this, and what does his saying it amount to? The most plausible reason for Hume's saying it is that his principle of determinism, as well as his belief that all events are in fact explainable, require him to do so. According to the principle of determinism, for every event that occurs, there is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which determine it to occur. It follows from Hume's belief that all events are in fact explainable that for every event it is in principle possible both to give the law which governs and thus makes it possible to explain its occurrence, as well as to locate that logically independent event or set of events which, given the law, explains the event to be explained.

To fully explain the fact that a person uses the word "red" correctly on a particular occasion, one must state both that set of conditions which are necessary and sufficient for the occurrence of the correct use of the word, and that empirical law which correlates these conditions with the event to be explained. One of the conditions which, on Hume's account, would have to be mentioned is that continuing condition which, together with at least the appropriate stimuli, explains his present correct use of the word. One may symbolize the explanatory law in this way:

$$(x)[(D_x \cdot O_x) \rightarrow R_x]$$

In this formula "D" stands for an intrinsic property of an object, "O" the stimuli or test conditions (the operations on the object), and "R" the object's

response, whether internal or external. The arrow represents a causal implication.[1]

Now it might be argued against Hume that even if this formula requires the inclusion of the intrinsic dispositional property D, it does not follow that D must be an enduring property, present even when the object in question is not being operated upon. It could, instead, be a sometime property, present when the operations O are being performed, and absent at other times. To this suggestion Hume could rejoin by pointing out that one is then faced with the problem of explaining D's occurrence when it does occur, and by invoking the principle of parsimony.

In some cases the D in the formula might stand for a known kind-property, such as sugar. Thus, in the law governing the solubility of sugar, D stands for sugar. But this will not do for the sort of laws Hume has in mind, e.g. a law correlating a particular intrinsic property, as yet not independently identifiable, with a particular operation and response. In fact, it is the upshot of Hume's discussion of abstract ideas that even in cases where we can not independently identify some intrinsic property in the responding object, _we must assume_ it to be present. Thus, a place must be made for it in any explanatory law.

It might be further argued against Hume that an adequate explanatory law might be constructed by including references to some known, though not sufficiently explanatory kind-property, and to the conditioning or training undergone by the object. A law governing the ability to use a particular word might then be formulated as follows:

$$(x)\,[(K_x \cdot T_x \cdot O_x) \rightarrow R_x]$$

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[1] The formula, as stated, does not contain the requisite time variables.

where "K" represents a kind-property such as being a man, and "T" the training process undergone. This formula would eliminate reference to a dispositional property. But this clearly would not work, since two persons might receive the same training, and be subjected to the same stimuli, and one use "red" correctly, and the other not. One's law must be able to account for this difference. Reference to T, or the training process, may be necessary for explaining a particular correct use of "red" but it is not sufficient. And we certainly seem to think that the precise way in which it would help explain a correct use of "red" is by explaining how the person came to have the ability he is exercising in using the word correctly. The same conclusion would seem to result, as well, from any attempt to make an allegedly explanatory law sufficiently explanatory, without invoking a notion of enduring dispositional properties, by including in the law references to the previous normally observable history of the person.

Hume elaborates this theory of dispositional properties in his discussion of "natural abilities" at the very end of the Treatise. There he describes abilities as "qualities" or as "mental qualities". He says, for example, that "natural abilities" and "moral virtues" are "both of them equally mental qualities". (T,606) He refers as well, to "the sentiment of approbation, which those qualities [i.e. natural abilities] produce". (T,607) He later gives a list of "many other qualities of the mind," including the qualities of "industry, perseverance, patience, activity, vigilance, application, constancy, ... temperance, frugality, oeconomy, resolution, ... wisdom, good-sense, ... wit, eloquence, (and) ... good humour". (T,610-611) These qualities are, explicitly, "qualities) of the mind". (T,614)

Besides being "mental qualities", and in this being like "moral virtues", "natural abilities" are in some sense modifications of mental faculties. "There is", Hume states, "a sentiment of esteem and approbation, which may be excited, in some degree, by any faculty of the mind, in its perfect state and

condition". (T,610) This remark clearly suggests a conception of enduring mental conditions which may be more or less perfectly developed.

But most importantly, Hume is most explicit in distinguishing between such natural abilities and the actions of which they are in some way the cause. He says, first, that he has "shewn that it [i.e. free will] has no place with regard to the actions, no more than the qualities of men". (T,609) Perhaps ambiguously, he refers to "the general survey or view of any action or quality of the mind". (T,614) But most unequivocally he states that "tho' natural abilities and moral qualities be in the main on the same footing, there is, however, this difference betwixt them, that the former are almost invariable by any art or industry; while the latter, or at least the actions that proceed from them, may be chang'd by the motives of rewards and punishment, praise and blame". (T,609. Italics mine.) Passages such as these, I would suggest, are simply inconsistent with any attempt to reduce a dispositional property to any set of behavioral or internal responses to appropriate stimuli.

Further confirmation that the view of dispositional properties outlined thus far is attributable to Hume can be derived from that section of the Treatise entitled "Of the origin of the natural virtues and vices". In this section Hume is particularly concerned with the concept of character, and is especially clear about the claim that a person's character is a causal condition influencing his behavior. He is also quite clear that a person's character is not reducible to even those of his actions which we would say are characteristic of him.

> If any action be either virtuous or vicious, 'tis only as a sign of some quality or character. It must depend upon durable principles of the mind, which extend over the whole conduct, and enter into the personal character. Actions themselves, not proceeding from any constant principle, have no influence on love or hatred, pride or humility; and consequently are never consider'd in morality. (T,575)

He remarks further:

> We are never to consider any single action in our enquiries concerning the origin of morals; but only the quality or character from which the action proceeded. These alone are durable enough to affect our sentiments concerning the person. Actions are, indeed, better indications of a character than words, or even wishes and sentiments; but 'tis only so far as they are such indications, that they are attended with love or hatred, praise or blame". (T,575)

Of characters it is proper to say that they have a tendency to foster the good or increase the evil of others or of the person whose character it is. "The reflecting on the tendency of characters and mental qualities," Hume says, "is sufficient to give us the sentiments of approbation and blame". (T,577) And, as he says later: "Moral distinctions arise, in a great measure, from the tendency of qualities and characters to the interests of society". (T,579) Similarly, "'tis ... from the influence of characters and qualities, upon those who have an intercourse with any person, that we blame or praise him". (T,582)

Most importantly, however, Hume asserts that a person's character is both a causal condition which determines, in part, what he feels, does, and says, and a causal condition that can exist without having its appropriate effect. This surely is conclusive grounds for saying that Hume makes a distinction between a dispositional property and its exercise. Consider Hume's own words, when he is handling an objection that may be raised to his doctrine of sympathy as first formulated.

> Where a person is posses'd of a character, that in its natural tendency is beneficial to society, we esteem him virtuous, and are delighted with the view of his character *even tho' particular accidents prevent its operation,* and incapacitate him from being serviceable to his friends and country. Virtue in rags is still virtue; and the love, which it procures, attends a man into a dungeon or desart, where the *virtue can no longer be exerted in action*, and is lost to all the world. (T,584. Italics mine.)

"Where it [i.e. virtue] fails of its end," Hume says, "'tis only an imperfect means". (T,584) Generalizing he says:

> Where any object, in all its parts, is fitted to attain any agreeable end, it naturally gives us pleasure, and is esteem'd beautiful, even tho' some external circumstances be wanting to render it altogether effectual. 'Tis sufficient if everything be compleat in the object itself. (T,584)

The case is similar to that of "a man, whose limbs and shape promise strength and activity", and who is thus "esteem'd handsome, tho' condemn'd to perpetual imprisonment". (T,585)

Even more explicitly Hume claims:

> Where a character is, in every respect, fitted to be beneficial to society, the imagination passes easily from the *cause* to the *effect*, without considering that there are *still some circumstances wanting to render the cause a compleat one* .... We know, that an alteration of fortune may render the benevolent disposition *entirely impotent*; and therefore we separate, as much as possible, the fortune from the disposition. (T,585. Italics mine.)

"'Tis a similar case, where any real quality is, by accidental circumstances, render'd impotent, and is depriv'd of its natural influence on society". (T,586) A similar distinction between a capacity and its exercise is drawn when Hume claims, of "indolence", that it "is not suppos'd to deprive one of his parts and capacity, but only suspends their exercise". (T,587)

At the risk of tedium, we may notice that some of the same points are made, and at times even more clearly, in the main *Treatise* discussion of free-will. There Hume makes the following claim, in criticism of the libertarian thesis:

> Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and disposition of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The action itself may be blameable; it may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not responsible for it; and as it proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable and constant, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it, 'tis impossible he can, upon its account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. According to the hypothesis of liberty, therefore, a man is as pure and untainted, after having committed the most horrid crimes, as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character

> any way concern'd in his actions; since they are not deriv'd from it, and the wickedness of the one can never be us'd as a proof of the depravity of the other. (T,411)

In a similar vein Hume asserts that "a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and dispositions". (T,408-9)

On the basis, then, of what Hume says in talking of abstract ideas, natural abilities, natural virtues and character traits, we can derive the following incomplete account of Hume's theory of mental dispositional properties. Mental dispositions are more or less enduring intrinsic properties of a subject. By virtue of having some dispositional property, the subject is enabled to respond in a particular way to particular stimuli or test conditions. The dispositional property is, then, best described as a relatively long-term causal condition which, if accompanied by appropriate other causal conditions, will bring about some effect. A mental dispositional property is neither a conscious mental event or state nor a bit of publicly observable behavior: such things are rather its effects. It is properly said to continue to exist, even when it is not being exercised or having its proper effect. It is quite distinct from, in fact logically independent of, its effects. The class of mental dispositional properties includes at least the following sub-classes: abilities, capacities, powers, habits, virtues, and traits of character.

Despite the evidence adduced so far in support of the thesis that Hume offers an account of mental dispositions that are not cashable into conscious mental states or behavioral responses to appropriate stimuli, however, there are quite good grounds for arguing the contrary view. As we have seen already, Hume does state that the distinction between a power and its exercise is

"frivolous" and "without foundation". He also pointedly attacks the concepts of faculty, and occult quality, claiming that each is an "illusion". (T,224) Talking of both these concepts, he says:

> For it being usual, after the frequent use of terms, which are really significant and intelligible, to omit the idea, which we wou'd express by them, and to preserve only the custom, by which we recal the idea at pleasure; so it naturally happens, that after the frequent use of terms, which are wholly insignificant and unintelligible, we fancy them to be on the same footing with the precedent, and to have a secret meaning, which we might discover by reflection. The resemblance of their appearance deceives the mind, as is usual, and makes us imagine a thorough resemblance and conformity. By this means these 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)

Taken together, these remarks appear to constitute a direct attack on the theory of dispositional properties which I have been attributing to Hume. My present task is, then, to inquire whether they are, in fact, inconsistent with the theory as presented thus far. I shall begin with Hume's comments on the notion of a faculty or an occult quality.

The main point of Hume's comment is, I would submit, plain enough. He is rejecting the claim that an action or event can be explained by reference to faculties or occult qualities. He derides the philosophical maneuver by which someone claims "an end of all disputes and enquiry upon the matter" by saying, simply, "that any phaenomenon, which puzzles them, arises from a faculty or an occult quality". (T,224) In other words, vacuous explanations are no explanations at all. No explanation is given of opium's effects by referring to its dormitive power. Nevertheless, the vacuous explanation of opium's effects by reference to its dormitive power must be distinguished from the claim that opium's effects are explainable, though the explanation may not in fact be known,

and that the explanation will be, in part, in terms of some continuing properties which opium has. In saying that opium has a dormitive power one does not, in fact, explain its effects. This is the burden of Hume's derision of the concepts of faculty and occult quality. But it is not inconsistent with this to claim that opium's effects will be explainable in terms of some perhaps unknown properties of opium. One could make this latter claim by insisting that opium has a dormitive power. In saying this one is not, however, explaining its effects, but saying that its effects are, in principle, explainable by reference to some intrinsic properties of opium. One is not <u>giving</u> an explanation; rather one is, in a way, <u>promising</u> an explanation.

Hume is quite correct, then, in asserting that explanation in terms of faculties and occult qualities are pseudo-explanations, because nothing is in fact explained in this way. But from this it does not follow that the concept of a faculty or occult quality has no legitimate use. It may be used to mark a place, as it were, for an as yet unidentified quality, the existence of which must be assumed if one is to explain a given event. I am not, however, suggesting that, in the passage quoted, Hume intended to permit this revised use of the concepts of faculties or occult qualities. Surely he did not. But in conjunction with reading this passage, one must notice the very many occasions on which Hume does himself make a legitimate, non-explanatory use of the concepts of faculty and occult quality. In his use of these concepts he is in effect taking a line somewhat like this. The principle of universal causation is an important element in our conceptual scheme. In most, if not all cases, we expect that even if no explanation of a given event is immediately forthcoming, even if no cause for its occurrence can be identified, it is in principle possible to explain the event, in principle possible to identify its cause. The use of such words as "ability" or "habit" or "capacity" or "power"

or even the dreaded "faculty" or "occult quality" is an expression of our conviction that this is so. Moreover, in saying that X has the power to Ø, one thing we are also expressing is our conviction that X has some (perhaps at present unknown) intrinsic property in virtue of which it responds in a certain way to certain stimuli. The mistake comes when one believes that in thus referring to a power one has finished the job of explaining. In fact, one has just begun. But if this is so, it is plausible to suggest that while Hume was rejecting one use of the concept of faculty, he was quite legitimately making use of another.

Let us turn to Hume's much more extensive remarks on the concept of power. To understand these remarks correctly, it is extremely important to consider the contexts in which they are made. Consider Hume's claim that "the distinction, which we often make betwixt _power_ and the exercise of it, is ... without foundation". (T,171) This remark is made in the course of Hume's discussion of the idea of a necessary connection between events. It must, then, be understood in the light of such other remarks as: "I have just now examin'd one of the most sublime questions in philosophy, _viz. that concerning the power and efficacy of causes_" (T,156); or "I begin with observing that the terms of _efficacy_, _agency_, _power_, _force_, _energy_, _necessity_, _connexion_, and _productive quality_, are all nearly synonimous". (T,157) The concept of power which Hume is chiefly interested in rejecting is one in accordance with which it is possible, by "penetrating the essence" of some object or event, to "see" its power to bring about some other object or event. It is a concept of power connected with the notions of necessary, quasi-logical connections between objects and events, necessary connections which can be discovered by coming to understand the essences or natures of things. The connotations which the term "power" has for Hume in this context are well brought out in his statement that "if we go any farther, and ascribe a _power_ or _necessary connexion_ to these objects; this is what we

can never _observe_ _in_ _them_, but must draw the idea of it from what we feel internally in contemplating them". (T,168-169. Italics mine) Thus, in rejecting the concept of power, at least at this point in the _Treatise_, what Hume is principally concerned to deny is the obtaining of quasi-logical connections between objects and events. He need not be rejecting a concept of powers according to which the connection between a thing's powers and the way it responds to stimuli is a _contingent_ one. That Hume would allow _this_ construction to be placed on what he says is clear from what he says elsewhere in the same section of the _Treatise_:

> I am, indeed, ready to allow, that there may be several qualities both in material and immaterial objects, with which we are utterly acquainted; and if we please to call these _power_ _or_ _efficacy_, 'twill be of little consequence to the world. But when, instead of meaning these unknown qualities, we make the terms of power and efficacy signify something, of which we have a clear idea, and which is incompatible with those objects, to which we apply it, obscurity and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy. (T,168)

Though this interpretation takes some of the sting out of Hume's remarks on the concept of power, however, it is still not clear why he should say that the distinction between a power and its exercise is without foundation. For further light on this problem we must turn to Hume's very important discussions of wealth in Book II. Considering this discussion will also provide the occasion for completing my positive account of Hume's theory of dispositions.

Hume's theory of dispositions as presented in this section contains the following elements: (1) there is no distinction to be made between the concept of a power, and the concept of the exercise of that power; (2) the concept of a power is linked with the concepts of possibility and probability; (3) by means of this conceptual link, the concept of power is connected with the concept of past experience. I shall begin by trying to elucidate the second and third points.

Hume claims that "the only known difference" between two cases, in one of which we say that X can not Ø, and in the other of which we say that X can Ø, is that "in the former case we conclude from past experience, that the person never will perform that action, and in the latter, that he possibly or probably will perform it". (T,312) Later he says that "power has always a reference to its exercise, either actual or probable, and that we consider a person as endow'd with any ability when we find from past experience, that 'tis probable, or at least possible he may exert it". (T,313) In a similar vein he says that "power consists in the possibility or probability of any action, as discover'd by experience and the practice of the world". (T,313)

A first thing to be noticed here is Hume's suggestion that propositions ascribing dispositions are to be cashed in terms of what will happen, or, more precisely, in terms of what possibly will happen, or probably will happen. They do not, that is to say, have to do only with the present; they direct one's attention to the future. In a modish phrase, they are inference-tickets, licensing us to expect certain things to happen, or at least not to be surprised when they happen.

Another point to be noticed is that such propositions derive this future-directed character from the way they are connected with our past experience. We conclude what possibly or probably will happen, by consulting what has happened before. An event can only be said to be empirically (as opposed to logically) possible, in a minimal sense of that expression, in two cases: if an event of that kind has happened before; or if it bears some analogy to another kind of event, some instance of which has occurred before. Thus, to say that X can Ø, is to say at least that it is possible that X will Ø, and it is legitimate to assert this possibility only if X has Ø-ed in the past, or some object analogous to X has Ø-ed in the past. To say that Smith can play

the "Moonlight Sonata" is at least to say that it is possible that he will play the "Moonlight Sonata". And the latter claim is justified in either of two cases: (a) Smith has played the "Moonlight Sonata" before; or (b) Smith is in some relevant respects similar to someone who has played the "Moonlight Sonata" before, e.g. he can play pieces for which a score is provided, and in this respect is similar to Jones who has played the "Moonlight Sonata" in such circumstances in the past.

This example should make it clear that there are some nuances of the notion of "can" which cannot be elucidated simply by reference to the notion of possibility. There are, one might say, degrees of empirical possibility. It should also be clear, however, that to say that X can ∅ is <u>at</u> <u>least</u> to say that it is possible that X will ∅. But what of the notion of probability? In what sense can the assertion "X can ∅" be construed as saying that it is <u>probable</u> that X will ∅?

Though there are difficulties in the way of interpreting Hume correctly at this point, what he intends to say is reasonably clear. If we say that Smith can play the "Moonlight Sonata" we are saying that, if certain conditions are fulfilled, it is probable that Smith will play the "Moonlight Sonata", or, perhaps more accurately, it is probable that Smith will <u>succeed</u> in playing the "Moonlight Sonata". There is, of course, nothing inconsistent in saying both that Smith <u>can</u> play the "Moonlight Sonata", and that it is <u>highly</u> <u>unlikely</u> that he ever will play it. He may, for example, have become so thoroughly bored with this particular piece that he has resolved never to play it again. In such a case, the probability that he will ever play it is very low indeed, but we would still be entitled to say that he <u>can</u> play it. The concept of probability has, it seems to me, a much more central role to play in the elucidation of dispositional properties other than those of capacity. In such cases as "He is a chain-smoker" or "He likes golf", we seem to make much more explicit

use of this concept. If someone likes to play golf, the chances are that he will play golf on numerous occasions. If a man is a chain-smoker, it is highly probable that he will have a cigarette at some point during the day. It would seem, then, that the concepts of possibility and probability do not have identical roles to play in talk of dispositional properties. Hume signals this difference when he says: "we consider a person as endow'd with any ability when we find from past experience, that 'tis probable, _or at least_ possible he may exert it". (T,313. Italics mine.) Despite these differences, however, the connection which Hume points to between the notion of a dispositional property and the notions of possibility and probability is a highly illuminating one.

One element of the connections between the notion of capacity and those of possibility and probability that Hume does not make explicit mention of in the passage in question is that the possibility or probability that a given event will occur is a conditional one. That is to say, the claim that it is possible that R_x is in fact the claim that it is possible that R_x, if O_x. Even where the identity of the operations O is not known, it is assumed that there are such operations necessary for the response R. Hume does, however, make this point quite explicitly elsewhere. But making it here enables us to see the exact nature of Hume's claim about dispositional properties: one is justified in saying that x has some dispositional property D, if one is justified in saying either or both: (a) it is possible that if O_x, then R_x; or (b) it is probable that if O_x, then R_x, where both O and R refer to events that are introspectible or observable in some normal way.

We can now consider Hume's claim that the distinction between a power and its exercise is without foundation. Is this an ontological claim, or must it be interpreted in some other way?

As I have argued at several places in this thesis, it is extremely important, if we are to interpret Hume correctly, to realize that he fails to distinguish,

as it seems we must distinguish, between the meaning of an expression, and the conditions which justify its use. That is to say, he fails to distinguish (a) the meaning of p, and (b) how we can tell that p. Furthermore, in at least many instances that I have considered elsewhere, Hume seems in fact to be concerned with the latter problem, rather than with the former. I have argued that this is so at least in the cases of causal propositions and of moral judgments. I would suggest that the same is true, at least to a large extent, in the case of propositions ascribing dispositional properties.

For one thing, Hume consistently uses a particular form of expression which is paradoxical in the extreme if a reductivist theory of dispositions is attributed to him.[1] He says, for example, that an "ability ... (is) exerted and put in action" (T,311) and that a "power has always a reference to its exercise". (T,313) The language at least suggests that there is something which is or can be exercised. The exercise of a power seems to presuppose a power, just as the stretching of a rubber-band presupposes a rubber-band. To say that a power is its exercise sounds as odd as to say that a rubber-band is its stretching. But perhaps this is just a defect of ordinary language, or just a lack of care and precision on Hume's part. In any case, my argument does not rest on it.

More to the point, Hume frequently uses what I would call the language of justification, rather than the language of definition. For example, he says that "neither man nor any other being ought ever to be thought possest of any ability, unless it be exerted and put in action". (T,311. Italics mine.) In this, he certainly appears to be claiming that one can not legitimately say that some person or object has a given dispositional property unless one has performed some test or presented certain stimuli, and achieved an appropriate

[1] I would stress that by "reductivist theory" here I mean a theory which claims that mental dispositions are reducible to introspectible mental states or publicly observable behavior, given appropriate stimuli.

response. One is not justified in saying that a given object is elastic unless one tries to stretch it and it both stretches and returns to its original shape, or unless one has other grounds for saying that if one were to try to stretch it, it would stretch, etc. But to say this is not necessarily to say either (a) that one's account of the test conditions and the response is an account of the meaning of the proposition whose truth is being tested, or (b) there is nothing about that object at a particular time when it is not being tested, no more or less permanent state of that object, *in virtue of which* it will stretch, etc., if one tries to stretch it. Hume need not be saying that an apparently categorical proposition ascribing a mental disposition to some individual is analyzable into an overtly hypothetical proposition correlating test conditions and response. Nor need he be saying a person may not have mental qualities which are neither introspectible nor observable in any normal way.

Nor is this an isolated remark on Hume's part. He later says, in a passage already quoted, that "the only *known* difference" betwixt them [i.e. the case in which we say that X can't Ø, and the case in which we say that X can Ø]" is a difference in our past experience. (T,312) Likewise, he says that "*we consider* a person as endow'd with any ability when we find from past experience, that 'tis probable, or at least possible he may exert it." (T,313. Italics mine.) He is, in other words, commenting on how we tell that a person has a certain dispositional property, or on what justified us in saying that he has that property. But to say this is not in any important sense to *reduce* the property to its exercise.

Despite the arguments which I have marshalled in support of the view that Hume does believe that one must distinguish between a dispositional property, whether ability, capacity, habit, or whatever, and its exercise, however, the case is surely far from settled. Hume *does* say that one ought not to distinguish a power and its exercise, and this does seem to mean that a power simply

is its exercise, no matter how paradoxical this may sound. Perhaps we must simply say that Hume is inconsistent, talking, at one place or another in the Treatise, in ways which, at other places, he says are impermissible. I think, in fact, that Hume is inconsistent, and that some of the things he says about knowing the meaning of words, natural abilities, natural virtues, and characters cannot be squared with what he says, explicitly, about the concept of power. But a very interesting question remains: What considerations could have led Hume to be so inconsistent?

We have already seen at some length what I take to be the most serious consideration which would have led Hume to suggest a distinction between a power, or any other mental dispositional property, and its exercise, viz. the requirements of adequate scientific explanation. Another consideration would be the apparent implications or ordinary language. We do seem to think that, for example, knowing mathematics is not just a matter of making appropriate moves, in one's head or on paper, in appropriate situations. A mathematician, we want to say, knows mathematics even when he is sleeping. It is this knowledge of mathematics which the mathematician has even when he is sleeping that explains the fact that, in appropriate situations, he makes the appropriate moves in his head or on paper. Similarly, sugar is soluble even when it is not in water.

On the other hand, given the materials with which he chooses to work, viz. introspectible mental events or publicly observable behavior, there are insuperable difficulties for Hume in admitting such enduring properties and distinguishing them from their exercise. On very general grounds, unless one can cash the notion of such an enduring property in terms of something observable, one simply cannot have, on Hume's principles, an idea of such an enduring property. This is the whole point of his principle of the priority of impressions over ideas. More particularly, what possible sense can be made of an alleged mental

quality which is non-introspectible? The mind is, after all, in Hume's theory "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions" (T,252). We must remember, too, Hume's quite explicit and significant restriction of the field of inquiry for his science of human nature. The proper subject-matter for any given scientist of human nature is his own perceptions, the contents of his own mind. At times, of course, the scientist of human nature will consider the publicly observable causes and effects of his own perceptions. Thus, he may talk of the actions of A which give rise, in B, to the passion of love for A. Or he may talk of the kindly actions which B performs for A's benefit, as a result of the feeling of benevolence which B has for A. But this sets the limits of the sorts of phenomena with which the scientist of human nature is concerned. Thus, if such a scientist is to make use of dispositional concepts, he must be able to cash them in terms either of perceptions (i.e. mental states or events introspectible by the person whose states or events they are) or of publicly observable behavior. If this is so, then it can make no sense to talk of a mathematician having an enduring mental property which exists even when he is not having mathematical thoughts or writing formulae on paper.

This, it seems to me, provides the clue to understanding Hume's dilemma about mental dispositions. He wants to talk of enduring mental states, and many times does so. But he can find no way of cashing talk of such enduring mental states in terms of introspectible mental processes or publicly observable behavior. He fails, however, to consider a possibility that was surely open to him, viz. talk of enduring states of the person's brain. If one were to postulate such enduring brain states as the continuing causal conditions which Hume seems to require in his talk of enduring mental qualities which are distinct from their exercise, one could talk of enduring properties which are in principle observable and which would thus satisfy the requirements of Hume's principle of the priority of impressions over ideas. Moreover, talk of enduring mental

properties in this sense would not require the most problematic notion of non-introspectible perceptions. One may not, at present, be able to identify those enduring brain states which, by hypothesis, in part explain the fact that the mathematician has mathematical thoughts, and writes mathematical formulae on paper. But this does not affect the issue. What is important is that such enduring brain states are in principle susceptible to identification. And this is all that is required for one to be justified in leaving a place for them in one's explanatory laws concerning mental phenomena. Hume's polemic against occult qualities was a polemic against allegedly explanatory qualities which could not, in principle, be identified or observed. But as Hume himself recognizes in the Treatise, there is nothing illegitimate in talking about the cause of some event when that cause has not, in fact, been identified. (cf. T,403-404)

Construing talk of mental dispositions along these lines would bring out what I earlier called the promissory character of propositions making use of dispositional predicates. As I suggested, part of what we seem to assert when we ascribe a dispositional predicate is that there is some quality, perhaps unknown, of the subject, which would serve to explain the response to be explained, were it known. What was problematic was the character of the intrinsic property which was to be looked for. The brain-state theory seems a plausible solution in the case of mental dispositions. An analogy can be drawn between this suggestion, and the common assumption among natural scientists that dispositional properties are in fact to be cashed in terms of the micro-properties of objects. Thus, the behavior of gasses is to be explained by the micro-properties described by kinetic theory. Similarly, sugar dissolves in water, we may assume, because it has certain structural micro-properties which are in principle identifiable. As Arthur Pap says, talking of the dispositional property of water - solubility in the case of sagar: "It is ... plausible

to assume that in making an assertion such as 'All sugar is water-soluble' we are not just generalizing the observed regularity that things with the secondary qualities of sugar dissolve when immersed in a liquid with the secondary qualities of water, but express our belief that this empirical law admits of theoretical explanation in terms of the microstructures of sugar and water and indirectly confirmable postulates about the interactions of their constituent particles".[1]

Hume's dilemma, then, stems from his initial restriction of the subject-matter proper to his science of human nature. Having decided to talk only of introspectible mental states or events and bits of publicly observable behavior, he cannot find a place for enduring mental properties. But scientific explanation and ordinary language both seem to require that we postulate such enduring qualities even when we have not observed them. Hume's mistake, as it seems to me, is in having rejected the notion of independent, long-term mental qualities just because alleged explanations in terms of faculties and occult qualities are vacuous. So long as one can give a reasonable account of the sorts of entities such enduring mental properties will be, one is justified, other things being equal, in talking of them. Hume's practice indicates that he found it essential to do so.

It is interesting to notice that the move of cashing talk of enduring mental dispositions in terms of permanent or semi-permanent states of the brain was open to Hume. In restricting the subject-matter of his mental science, Hume says that "there must be some impressions, which without any introduction make their appearance in the soul". (T,275) Significantly, however, he goes on to say: "As these depend upon natural and physical causes, the examination of them wou'd lead me too far from my present subject, into the sciences of

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[1] Pap, <u>Introduction</u>, p. 283.

anatomy and natural philosophy". (T,275) He even, at one point, indulges in a bit of armchair theorizing about the physiological basis of thinking, and says: "'Twould have been easy to have made an imaginary dissection of the brain, and have shewn, why upon the conception of any idea, the animal spirits run into all the contiguous traces, and rouze up the other ideas, that are related to it". (T,60) He argues, as well, that there is no logical objection to the claim that physical changes in the body cause conscious events. Talking of the "cause of our perceptions" he says:

> Matter and motion, 'tis commonly said in the schools, however vary'd, are still matter and motion, and produce only a difference in the position and situation of objects. Divide a body as often as you please, 'tis still body. Place it in any figure, nothing ever results but figure, or the relation of parts. Move it in any manner, you still find motion or a change of relation. 'Tis absurd to imagine, that motion in a circle, for instance, shou'd be nothing but merely motion in a circle; while motion in another direction, as in a ellipse, shou'd also be a passion or moral reflexion: That the shocking of two globular particles shou'd become a sensation of pain, and that the meeting of two triangular ones shou'd afford a pleasure. Now as these different shocks, and variations, and mixtures are the only changes, of which matter is susceptible, and as these never afford us any idea of thought or perception, 'tis concluded to be impossible, that thought can ever be caus'd by matter.
>
> Few have been able to withstand the seeming evidence of this argument; and yet nothing in the world is more easy than to refute it. We need only reflect on what has been prov'd at large, that we are never sensible of any connexion betwixt causes and effects, and that 'tis only by experience of their constant conjunction, we can arrive at any knowledge of this relation. (T,246-247)

Thus, Hume could have suggested that the enduring intrinsic mental properties which he often assumes when talking of mental dispositions are in fact long-term physiological states in the person's brain. He did not, however, make this move. Had he done he could, it seems to me, have avoided his dilemma.

C H A P T E R IV

THEORY OF THE PASSIONS

1. The Classification of the Passions

Hume begins the Treatise with the highly ambiguous remark: "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS". (T, 1) One particularly crucial source of ambiguity is the word "perception". How is one to interpret the word? Two quite different possibilities present themselves at the outset: (1) impressions and ideas are perceptions; (2) impressions and ideas are the objects of perceptions. I shall begin with the second interpretation.

According to this interpretation, Hume is saying that a human being can be or become aware of two more or less different sorts of things, called "impressions" and "ideas". On this interpretation the expression "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into . . . IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS" is shorthand for "All the things the human mind perceives (can perceive) are IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS". "Perceptions" is taken as a (perhaps very general) cognitive word, for which one might substitute, without fundamental change of meaning, some such expression as "object of awareness", or "object of attention", or "object of cognition". This would entail that every possible object of awareness is either an impression or an idea. Thus mathematical relations, cows, municipal governments, shrieks, memories, fears, and pains would all be, in some sense or other, either impressions or ideas. All of these things somehow "strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness". (T, 1) This is to say no more than that I can think of the square root of -2, be aware of the cow in the meadow, or be conscious of my fear. The distinction between those objects of perception which are ideas, and those which are impressions, is framed as a distinction between objects of thought

and objects of feeling: "Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking". (T, 1-2) Under "feeling" Hume includes "all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul". (T, 1) Under "thinking" he places "the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning; such as, for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse, excepting only, those which arise from the sight and touch, and excepting the immediate pleasure or uneasiness it may occasion". (T, 1) Thus, the reader's awareness of the shape or color of the book at which he is looking, his awareness of the hardness of the desk on which he is leaning, his anger at the superficial character of the distinctions made, are all matters of feeling. His recollection of a similar passage in Locke's Essay, his thought that the word "perception" is being used ambiguously, or his understanding of the character of the distinction made are all instarces of thinking.

Already, however, a serious problem is obvious. In what sense is the reader's anger an object of perception? Clearly enough it can be an object of perception in the sense of an object of thought, in Hume's sense of this expression: years later the reader may recall his being angered by the book. But can it be an object of perception in the sense of an object of feeling? Hume explicitly mentions the emotions as instances of "perceptions" that are matters of "feeling". Moreover, if "perceptions" is a cognitive word, there must be a sense in which I can be aware of my being angry. The reader should therefore be able to "perceive" his anger in two very different ways: he may think about it, in which case his anger is an "idea", or he may actually feel it, in which case it is an "impression".

But it would be highly misleading to use the expression "feel one's anger" if "feel" is taken as more or less equivalent to "perceive", in cases where the objects of perception are alleged to be impressions rather than ideas. If "feel" is a substitute for "perceive", and "perceive" is a cognitive word, then "feel" is a cognitive

word. To say "I feel my anger" is, in such a case, like saying "I am noticing my anger" or "I am aware of my anger" and not like the ordinary use of "I feel anger" or "I feel angry". In the latter cases the locutions mentioned are equivalent to "I am angry". In the former cases "I am angry" is, perhaps, implied: but something more is said as well. Thus, if Hume is construing "perceive" as a cognition word, and passions oremotions are "impressions", it would seem that Hume is talking of some inner sense, by means of which we perceive our emotions, just as we perceive colors and sounds by our external senses.[1]

Hume is seriously misleading when he lumps together indiscriminately, under the heading of "impressions", "all our sensations, passions, and emotions". (T, 1) This is evident if one considers the example he gives of an impression that is also a (complex) sensation: an apple with a particular color, taste, and smell. (T, 2) It is at least _prima facie_ plausible to say that one may distinguish the seeing of an apple from the apple one sees; one can see other things than apples, and one can smell an apple without seeing it. Moreover, if Hume is taking the possibility of introspection for granted, as he seems to be doing, it should make sense to use such locutions as "being aware that I am seeing an apple" or "paying attention to my seeing an apple". Such things might be said by an introspective psychologist. If "perceive" is being used as a cognitive word, two distinct perceptions are taking place: my perceiving (seeing) an apple; and my perceiving (being aware of) my perceiving an apple. In contrast, in the case of my fear, only one perceiving

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[1]Anthony Kenny interprets Hume in this way when, in talking of Hume's theory of the passions, as well as that of other philosophers, he says: "The pattern of 'act and object' was present in their accounts but the active verb was 'perceive' and the object was the emotion itself presented to inner perception". See Anthony Kenny, _Action, Emotion and Will_ (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 62.

takes place: my perceiving my fear. My fear is not, in turn, a perceiving, though my seeing is.

Hume seems to be conflating two very different sorts of cases: what I shall call reflective perception and non-reflective perception. (That is to say, such a distinction must be made if Hume's classification of perceptions is to have even a superficially plausible application to experience.) "Perceiving an apple" is a non-reflective perception; "perceiving my fear" or "perceiving my perceiving an apple" are instances of reflective perception. Reflective perception is perception by an individual of his own mental states or mental acts; non-reflective perception is perception of non-mental things, events, or states of affairs. It would follow from this that Hume's list of perceptions which are impressions, including "sensations, passions and emotions", can only confuse, because sensations (e.g. the color or taste of an apple) are objects of a non-reflective perception, whereas passions and emotions would be objects of reflective perception.

My account assumes, of course, that one can distinguish mental acts or mental states from their objects. As I have already had occasion to remark[1] Hume sometimes does make this sort of distinction in the course of the Treatise. But it is clear why he would prefer, for systematic reasons, to overlook this distinction. His account of belief requires that the distinction between thought and experience be stated in terms of vivacity or liveliness: impressions are vivacious, ideas are not. But if my distinction of reflective and non-reflective perceptions were allowed, it would seem that thinking, just as seeing or feeling angry, would be an impression. Each of these mental acts or mental states could be the object of a reflective perception, and there would be no reason for saying that the mental act of thinking should

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[1] pp. 127-129.

be any less lively than the mental act of seeing. Hume would, at best, be able to say that the <u>object</u> of a mental act of seeing is lively or vivacious, whereas the <u>object</u> of a mental act of thinking is not. To be accurate, then, Hume's list of impression-perceptions would have to comprise not only sensations, emotions, and passions, but also seeings, hearings, thoughts, recollections, imaginings, and so on (though not the objects of the thoughts, recollections, or imaginings). He might still use his criterion of liveliness to distinguish impressions from ideas, but the class of impressions would have to include more things than he would normally care to mention.

It should be noted that nothing said thus far entails that what I have called the objects of perception only exist in so far as they are being perceived. That is to say, Hume, in referring to "all the perceptions of the human mind", is not necessarily endorsing Berkeley's principle, "<u>esse</u> is <u>percipi</u>". It is clear, however, that Hume is on a slippery slope, in so far as he uses the terms "impression" and "idea" as possible surrogates for the expression "(objects of) perception". This seems to permit a whole series of odd locutions or puzzled questions. Do I understand a scientific theory, or the idea of a scientific theory? Do I recall Paris, or the idea of Paris? Can I taste apples, or only the impressions of apples? Do I feel my anger, or, most oddly, merely the impression of my anger? Hume must not, however, be interpreted to be insisting on this mentalistic thesis at this early point in the <u>Treatise</u>. The terms "idea" and "impression" are, after all, introduced in a completely non-polemical way. As Kemp Smith has observed, Hume introduces his more or less technical terminology as though nothing of philosophical importance hinges on the terminology.[1]

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[1]Cf. Kemp Smith, pp. 113-116.

Moreover, the mentalistic thesis is a special philosophical thesis, one that must be argued for, and not something Hume can take for granted in the opening pages of his book.

More importantly for an account of the passions, however, it does not even follow from what has been said up to now that those objects of perception which I have called objects of reflective perception, i.e. all mental acts or states, must be perceived if they are to exist. Hume might want to say that whenever I am experiencing some emotion, or whenever I am thinking, etc., I am necessarily perceiving my experiencing the emotion, or my thinking, etc. But he does not argue for this view at this point of the Treatise. Moreover, such a view would seem to involve an infinite regress, since, if it is a necessary condition for being a mental act or mental state that the alleged mental act or state be the object of the mental act of (reflective) perceiving, the same condition would apply to the alleged mental act of (reflective) perceiving, and so on, ad infinitum.

At the start of this discussion I suggested another possible interpretation of "perception", viz. that impressions and ideas are perceptions. This view is suggested by Hume's assertion:

> It will not be very necessary to employ many words in explaining this distinction [between impressions and ideas]. Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking". (T, 1-2 Italics mine.)

Drawn in this way, Hume's distinction of impressions and ideas looks like a distinction between two classes of mental acts. Elucidated by example, the class of impressions would then include such things as seeing, hearing, feeling (in the tactual sense), being in pain, feeling angry, and so on. The class of ideas would include thinking, believing, imagining, remembering, and so on. Given such a classification, it is

difficult to say where one would list what I earlier called reflective perceptions. Presumably, if they are construed in terms of an introspective model, they would be impressions; if a retrospective model were used, they would be ideas.

It is very tempting to interpret Hume in this way, but one cannot do so consistently. For, given this interpretation, it is impossible to understand Hume's use of his criterion for distinguishing impressions and ideas, viz. their degrees of liveliness or vivacity. For one thing, there seems to be no reason why seeing, qua mental act, should be considered more lively than thinking, qua mental act. For another, Hume's examples do not suit this interpretation. A reasonably straightforward instance of the sort of distinction which Hume thinks this criterion permits him to make is the following: "When I shut my ideas and think of my chamber, the ideas I form are exact representations of the impressions I felt". (T, 3) The same distinction is allegedly drawn when Hume says: "All the perceptions of the mind are double, and appear both as impressions and ideas". (T, 2-3) Clearly here a distinction is being drawn between different kinds of objects of perception, and not between different kinds of mental acts.

However one tries to interpret Hume's use of "perception", "impression" and "idea", major difficulties arise. And there seems no point in pursuing the discussion further. It is sufficient for our present purposes to draw the following conclusions: (1) The meaning of Hume's distinctions is not at all apparent; (2) If impressions and ideas are taken as objects of perception, different levels of perception must be assumed; (3) If impressions and ideas are taken as kinds of mental act, it is not clear that a distinction between them can be drawn in terms of vivacity or liveliness; (4) If passions are impressions, and if the interpretation implied in (2) is correct, then my passions are to be classed with odors that I smell, colors that I see,

<u>shapes</u> that I feel, <u>sounds</u> that I hear; (5) If passions are impressions, and the interpretation implied in (3) is correct, then experiencing a passion is like <u>smelling</u> an odor, <u>seeing</u> a color, <u>feeling</u> a shape, or <u>hearing</u> a sound, and, presumably, unlike remembering what Paris looks like, or thinking out the solution of a mathematical puzzle; (6) It does not seem possible to make these alternative interpretations consistent; (7) On either interpretation, passions are lively or vivacious mental states. In what follows, since I shall be concerned mainly with passions, I shall use the term "perception" in the sense of mental acts or states, and not in the sense of objects of perception. In the light of my discussion of mental acts or states in the previous chapter, this is the least misleading of the two senses of "perception". It must be emphasized that, when used in this way, "perception" is not a cognition word. An act of choosing is, in this usage, as much a perception as an act of remembering; an emotion is as much a perception as is a perception (in the ordinary-language use of "perception").

Hume distinguishes, within the class of impressions, two kinds, which he calls "impressions of sensation" and "impressions of reflexion". (T, 7) This is an important distinction for Hume's theory of the passions, and so must be considered in some detail.

The difference between the two is first stated in this way: an impression of sensation "arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes"; impressions of reflection, on the other hand, are "derived in a great measure from our ideas".(T, 7) Hume illustrates the distinction by an example:

> An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, 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)

An appropriate instance of an impression of sensation would be the pain we experience in a dentist's chair; and the fear we experience as we walk up to the dentist's door on a later occasion and recall our earlier pain would be an impression of reflection.

Hume gives another account of this distinction later in the Treatise when he contrasts "original impressions" and "secondary impressions". (T, 275) (He there remarks that this division is "the same with that which I formerly made use of when I distinguish'd them /impressions/ into impressions of sensation and reflexion". (T, 275) "Original impressions or impressions of sensation," he says, "are such as without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs". (T, 275) "Secondary, or reflective impressions," on the other hand, "are such as proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea". (T, 275) The class of impressions of sensation includes "all the impressions of the senses, and all bodily pains and pleasures"; that of the impressions of reflection includes "the passions, and other emotions resembling them". (T, 275)

Hume's second formulation of the distinction is by far the better one, because it avoids two very misleading apparent implications of the first. In the earlier formulation, Hume seems to suggest that a prior idea is necessary if one is to have an impression of reflection. He signals the fact that he feels uneasy about this by his remark that "the impressions of reflection . . . arise mostly from ideas". (T, 8. Italics mine.) There is no uncertainty, however, in his later formulation, where he says that an impression of reflection arises from an impression of sensation "either immediately or by the interposition of its idea". (T, 275)

The earlier formulation also seems to suggest that the impressions of reflection require a prior impression or idea of pleasure or pain. This is not said explicitly, but is certainly suggested by Hume's illustrations. As examples of impressions of sensation he mentions "heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain"; not, interestingly enough, such things as colors, shapes, or sounds. He then refers to the "idea of pleasure or pain" which "produces" such impressions of reflection as "desire and aversion, hope and fear". This suggestion is not as clear in the second formulation. It is true that he does give, by way of illustration, the case of a "fit of the gout", which, as a physical pain, is an impression of sensation, and which "produces a long train of passions, as grief, hope, fear". (T, 276) But there is nothing in his principal formulation of the distinction of original and secondary impressions which implies that the perception which precedes a secondary impression must be a perception of pain or pleasure. Quite the contrary. All Hume says is that the secondary impressions "proceed from some of these original ones". (T, 275) It may be the case that Hume does think that secondary impressions require the prior occurrence of original impressions of pain or pleasure, though, as I shall argue later, this does not fit what Hume says at various other places in the *Treatise*. I would only insist here that Hume's introduction of the concept of an impression of reflection does not have this implication.

What, then, is the difference between an impression of sensation and an impression of reflection? The difference, as Hume formulates it, is in terms of the causal antecedents of each. Impressions of reflection are caused by prior *perceptions*; impressions of sensation are not. It is for this reason that the former are called secondary, and the latter primary. This is not at all to say that impressions of sensation are uncaused. In fact Hume suggests, without argument, that they have

physical or physiological causes: "these depend upon natural and physical causes". (T, 275) But the point is that they do not have mental causes; they do not require the prior occurrence of perceptions in order to occur. One can have an impression of sensation without any specific conscious occurrence preceding it; this is (empirically) not the case with impressions of reflection. Consider the case of hearing a sound: I may hear a sound without being aware of what caused the sound. Of course, I can know what caused the sound. I may, for example, see the violinist draw his bow across the strings of his violin. But this seeing is not necessary if I am to hear the sound. The same, Hume would suggest, is true of physical pains or pleasures. I can feel a cramp in my stomach without knowing what physical condition is causing the pain. Perhaps Hume's point would be better made by saying that I cannot give my reasons for hearing the sound, or for feeling the cramp (though I can, of course, have reasons for listening to the sound, or investigating the causes of my cramp.)

This (empirically) could not be true of those perceptions which are called impressions of reflection, according to Hume. I (empirically) cannot have a feeling of aesthetic pleasure without having some (prior) awareness of the object which is the source of my pleasure. I cannot (empirically) be angry, unless I am aware that someone has, for example, harmed me, or someone in whom I am interested. And, according to Hume, this is true of all those perceptions which he classes as secondary impressions or impressions of reflection. The difference, then, comes to this: the only causal laws which explain the occurrence of original impressions are laws correlating the occurrence of physical or physiological events and mental events

(*viz.* the original impressions); in the case of secondary impressions it is possible to discover empirical laws correlating their occurrence with the occurrence of other mental events (i.e. the prior perceptions). Nothing is said here about the possibility or impossibility of *also* explaining the occurrence of secondary impressions by reference to physiological or physical events. Once again we can see Hume's restriction on the type of explanations of mental events which he will offer in his mental science. The discussion of impressions of sensation stops at this point because "the examination of them [i.e. their physical causes] wou'd lead me too far from my present subject, into the science of anatomy and natural philosophy". (T, 275-276) Among impressions, only the impressions of reflection can be explained by the sorts of laws proper to Hume's mental science.

We may now turn to the question whether a necessary causal condition for the occurrence of an impression of reflection is the prior occurrence of a perception (whether impression or idea) or pleasure or pain. This is an especially vexing question for the interpretation of Hume's theory of the passions, because it involves the interpretation of a notably obscure remark he makes in the course of his discussion. It also, as I shall try to show, has some bearing on Hume's aesthetic theory. Finally, it raises a material point in Hume's ethics.

The obscure remark mentioned above occurs in Hume's section "Of the direct passions". Having given brief descriptions of several direct passions in terms of those conditions other than an awareness of good or evil which

are necessary for their occurrence, Hume says:

> Beside good and evil, or in other words, pain and pleasure, the direct passions frequently arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable. Of this kind is the desire of punishment to our enemies, and of happiness to our friends; hunger, lust, and a few other bodily appetities. These passions, properly speaking, *produce good and evil, and proceed not from them,* like the other affections. (T, 439 Italics mine.)

This passage raises a number of problems, but I shall here consider only one of them: whether the passions must be preceded by a perception of pleasure or pain.

One point that seems certain from this passage is that Hume does think there are passions, and thus, that there are impressions of reflection, which do not require, for their occurrence, a prior perception of pleasure or pain. This point has been noted by several commentators, including Kemp Smith, who makes use of the expression "primary passions" to classify them,[1] and Árdal, who follows Kemp Smith in this terminology.[2] Thus, Hume is saying that I can feel hungry, without having any prior perception of pleasure or pain which is the cause of my hunger. Similarly with lust. Also, I can desire the punishment of my enemies, without any prior perception of pain, or desire the happiness of my friends, without any prior pleasure. There seem to me to be many problems in all this.

Let us assume that one can make sense of Hume's claim that the desire for the punishment of our enemies, the desire of the happiness of our friends, hunger, lust, and other bodily appetities, are all passions, and thus that all require, for their occurrence, a prior perception. It would seem plausible to accept that hunger, lust, and other bodily appetites do not require a prior perception of pleasure or pain. For one thing, no candidate for

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[1] Kemp Smith, p. 168

[2] Árdal, p. 10.

such a pleasure or pain seems forthcoming. For another, it is difficult if not impossible to attach sense to the claim that if, for example, I feel hungry, I feel this way <u>because of</u> some painful or pleasant experience I have had. Assuming that hunger and lust are pleasant or painful experiences (cf. T, 394), we would perhaps want to say that they are primitive pains or pleasures in <u>this</u> sense, that one can experience either without first having experienced some other pleasure or pain. It cannot be the case that every pain or pleasure presupposes some other pain or pleasure, since this would involve an infinite regress. The enumeration of pleasures and pains, we might say, must stop somewhere, and hunger and lust are two of the places at which it seems necessary to stop.

But what of the desire for an enemy's punishment or a friend's happiness? Hume's mention of these seems most puzzling indeed. For one thing, in what respect do these two desires differ from the desires which, in another place, Hume calls "benevolence" and "anger"? Hume describes benevolence as, in part, "a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd". (T, 382) Anger he describes as being, in part, "a desire of the misery of the person hated". (T, 382) Given the very loose way in which Hume uses the terms "friend", "enemy", "beloved", "hatred", and so on, I fail to see how the two desires first mentioned differ from benevolence and anger. And, it should be noted, it is Hume's view that benevolence and anger are partly caused by a prior experience of love and hatred, i.e. a prior peculiar perception of pleasure and pain.

Perhaps, however, Hume is thinking of this sort of case. A man, A, is my friend. This is to say that he has done certain things, has certain

qualities which have pleased me and thus have led me to feel something describable as love for him. This, in turn, granted the occurrence of the thought of his happiness, leads me to desire his happiness. But there may be a particular occasion on which, though A is not at that moment doing anything that pleases me, and though I am not thinking of anything which A has done and which has pleased, me, I yet have an actual feeling of benevolence toward him, and perhaps even act kindly toward him. Hume might want to describe this case as one in which I experience a pleasant passion (benevolence) without having a particular prior pleasant experience which triggers it off, as it were. That such a passion is not completely independent of prior pleasure, and that anger, in a similar situation, would not be completely independent of a prior pain, is clear, however, from the fact that the persons toward whom we have these feelings are described as "friends" and "enemies". There seems, however, to be some reason for saying that I desired my friend's happiness, or did something thought to be conducive to his happiness, not because he has done me a good turn, but simply because he is my friend. This may be the sense which we must attach to Hume's claim that the desire of a friend's happiness does not require a prior perception of pleasure. But if this is what Hume's intends to say, I can see no reason for denying that the same may be the case in a given instance of feeling tenderness toward some person. And thus I can see no reason for making special mention of this desire as a passion which does not require a prior pain or pleasure. If this is not what Hume intends to assert, I can make no sense of his claim.

Is it Hume's view that only passions of the sort mentioned in the

passage quoted above can occur without the occurrence of a prior perception of pleasure or pain? If so, Hume's theory of the passions would seem to have a perhaps unwanted consequence for his moral philosophy. As I pointed out above, one gets involved in an infinite regress if one asserts that every passion depends on the prior occurrence of a perception of pleasure or pain. This regress can be stopped if one says that the requisite perception of pleasure or pain is physical pleasure or pain, and such physical sensations are, as impressions of sensations, primitive from the point of view of the conscious subject. But this would be to say that physical pleasures or pains are, in some ultimate sense, the only source of the passions men experience. Every passion would, on this view, be traceable back to a physical pain or pleasure. If, however, one admits with Hume that passions such as the desire for the punishment of one's enemies or happiness of one's friends, hunger, lust, etc., are passions that do not require prior pleasures or pains, one has other possible candidates for stopping the regress which threatens. We have, however, seen the difficulties in Hume's claim that such desires relevant to friends and enemies are independent of prior pains and pleasures. It would seem, then, that Hume is forced to make all the passions ultimately dependent on physical pains or pleasures, or bodily appetites. This conclusion he might be reluctant to draw in his moral theory.

There are, however, very good grounds for asserting that Hume does not think that these are the only pleasures or pains which do not depend on prior pleasures or pains. I shall rest my case for this claim on my proof that at least some aesthetic sentiments (and thus some pleasures and pains that are not in any ordinary sense physical pleasures or pains) are also

independent of prior perceptions of pain or pleasure.

How does Hume describe the aesthetic sentiments? It is clear, first of all, that these sentiments are pleasant or painful feelings or sensations. Hume is quite insistent on this point in his account of how personal beauty or deformity can be the source of pride or humility. In the course of this discussion he claims "that beauty is such an order and construction of parts, as either by the primary constitution of our nature, by custom, or by caprice, is fitted to give a pleasure and satisfaction to the soul". (T, 299) He then goes on to say: "Pleasure and pain, therefore, are not only necessary attendants of beauty and deformity, but constitute their very essence". (T, 299) Since "beauty like wit, cannot be defin'd, but is discern'd only by a taste or sensation, we may conclude, that beauty is nothing but a form, which produces pleasure, as deformity is a structure of parts, which conveys pain". (T, 299) Aesthetic sentiments, then, are pleasant or painful feelings or sensations. In this they are similar to bodily pleasures and pains.

The question then arises: how do the aesthetic sentiments occur? Restricting his account to explanations appropriate to his science of mind, Hume clearly means to deny that they are "original", in the sense that physical pains and pleasures are "original". The aesthetic sentiments are caused by prior perceptions, and thus are impressions of reflection. It is always some quality or qualities of a person or object, of which we are aware, that gives rise to the pleasant or painful aesthetic sentiment. The question next arises: must this prior perception involve either the thought of pleasure or pain, or an experience of pleasure or pain? The correct answer to this question, is, I would submit, that in some cases the aesthetic senti-

ments do require a prior pleasure or pain, and in some cases they do not.

It must be noted that Hume distinguishes two kinds of beauty, a "beauty of interest", and a beauty "of form". (T, 364) At the very end of the <u>Treatise</u> a similar distinction is drawn in the case of moral sentiments, and then applied to those of aesthetics. Moral sentiments, Hume says, "may arise either from the mere species or appearance of characters and passions, or from reflexions on their tendency to the happiness of mankind, and of particular persons". (T, 589) His opinion is "that both these causes are intermix'd in our judgments of morals; after the same manner as they are in our decisions concerning most kinds of external beauty". (T, 590) We need not consider the moral sentiments in detail at this point, but Hume's thesis is amply clear: some moral judgments are based on utilitarian considerations, and some are not. In many, perhaps in most instances, we approve of a man's action, or of his character, because it is conducive to some state of affairs which is a source of pleasure to others, or even to himself. But in some cases, Hume suggests, the action or quality of character is itself pleasurable to the agent or to others. Thus there is no point in commending them because of their utility in bringing about pleasure. A man's "wit", or his "easy and disengag'd behavior", Hume claims, "are qualities <u>immediately agreeable</u> to others". (T, 590) That is to say, there are some qualities which please us because they bring about some other (distinct) pleasure; there are other qualities which please us <u>without</u> bringing about some other (distinct) pleasure. These latter are "immediately agreeable". The pleasure we take in them does not depend on any other pleasure.

The same is true of the aesthetic sentiments. In some instances, an

object is thought beautiful (i.e. pleases in a certain way) because of some property or properties which give rise to a distinct pleasure; in others, an object pleases because it has a certain form or appearance. In a case of the first sort we may say: "That pleases me in a certain way (i.e. is beautiful) because it is comfortable (i.e. because it is a source of a certain pleasure)". In the latter case we might say: "That pleases me in a certain way (i.e. is beautiful) just because of the way it looks". In saying this one is, in effect, saying that the object which pleases does not give rise to any other pleasure than an aesthetic one, or at least that any other pleasures it might give rise to are of no interest, or are beside the point. To be sure, Hume stresses aesthetic sentiments of the first sort: his account of aesthetic judgments is perhaps regrettably utilitarian. In noticing the utilitarianism of his aesthetics, however, we must not fail to notice its non-utilitarian dimension. The very fact that Hume, despite his utilitarian bias, should consistently make concessions to a non-utilitarian account reveals the fact of his continuing awareness of this other dimension. And Hume does consistently make concessions to a non-utilitarian account of aesthetic sentiments. Consider the following passages:

> The order andconvenience of a palace are *no less essential* to its beauty, than its mere figure and appearance. (T, 299. Italics mine)

> This observation extends to tables, chairs, scritoires, chimneys, coaches, saddles, ploughs, and indeed to every work of art; it being a universal rule, that their beauty is *chiefly* deriv'd from utility, and from their fitness for that purpose, to which they are destin'd. (T, 364. Italics mine)

> 'Tis evident, that nothing renders a field more agreeable than its fertility, and that *scarce any advantages of ornament or situation* will be able to equal this beauty. (T, 364. Italics mine)

> The principal part of personal beauty is an air of health and vigour, and such a construction of members as promises strength and activity. (T, 365. Italics mine.)

In each of these passages, while stressing the utilitarian dimension of his aesthetic theory, Hume reveals his recognition of instances in which the aesthetic sentiments occur directly or immediately, from the "mere figure and appearance" of an object or a person.

Granted this, it is surely implausible to insist that such non-utilitarian aesthetic sentiments nevertheless depend on a prior pleasure or pain. That is to say, it is implausible to suggest that, in a case where one has a pleasant feeling upon contemplating the face of a beautiful woman, this aesthetic feeling is the effect of a prior pleasant feeling. The case seems rather to be that pleasure enters the situation, as it were, upon the occurrence of the pleasant (aesthetic) feeling. Such aesthetic feelings suit Hume's account of a few passions mentioned earlier: "These passions, properly speaking, produce good and evil /read: pleasure and pain/ and proceed not from them, like the other affections." (T, 439)

Some aesthetic sentiments, then, may properly be described as impressions of reflection which do not presuppose a prior pleasure or pain. They are like bodily pleasures and pains in that they do not require a prior pain or pleasure, but unlike them, and like the other impressions of reflection, in that they do require a prior (cognitive) perception. Unless one is aware of an object, one cannot have an aesthetic response to it.[1]

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[1] I must point out here that I am not talking of objective aesthetic sentiments. On Hume's view, for a sentiment to be objective the mechanism of sympathy must operate, and thus prior pleasures or pains in the sense of a sympathetic experience of the pleasures or pains of others are involved in one's having the objective sentiment in question. For this reason, no moral sentiments can occur without prior pleasures or pains. But I can see no reason for saying that Hume does not allow non-objective aesthetic sentiments, and thus aesthetic sentiments which do not depend on prior (sympathetic) pleasures or pains. For a discussion of these points see the chapter "The natural virtues and sympathy" in Árdal, Passion and Value, pp. 148-161.

It follows from this that the class of impressions of reflection which do not require a prior perception of pain or pleasure is larger than at first appears. Besides the desire of the happiness of our friends or of punishment to our enemies, lust, hunger, and other bodily appetites, this class includes at least some sentiments of aesthetic pleasure or displeasure. This class of passions is, in fact, broader still. It would include also the sentiments we receive from those immediately agreeable objects mentioned in the course of Hume's discussion of the moral sentiments. (Whether such sentiments would themselves be moral sentiments is a question which need not be considered here.) It would further include the pleasure we derive from the exercise of our powers (T, 449), from the pursuit of truth (T, 450-451), from novelty (T, 423), and so on. In none of these cases would we say that the pleasures or emotions involved are physical ones, or the result of the satisfaction of bodily appetites. It is not, then, only physical pleasures which are the source of our values; nor are physical pleasures and pains the only pleasures and pains from which our emotions are derived.

We may now move to that aspect of Hume's classification which is most prominent in his own presentation of his theory of the passions, the distinction between the direct and the indirect passions. When Hume first introduces the distinction, he does so in the following way:

> By direct passions I understand such as arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure. By indirect such as proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities. (T, 276)

The criterion for the distinction is designed by the word "immediately". Direct passions arise immediately from pleasure or pain; indirect passions

arise not immediately from pleasure or pain, but from pleasure or pain in conjunction with other qualities. At this early stage in his account Hume states that this distinction is not one that he can "at present justify or explain any farther". (T, 276) It must be sufficient to indicate what passions he will place under each heading. As indirect passions he mentions "pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependents"; under the heading of "direct passions" come "desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair, and security". (T, 276-277)

The distinction between the direct and the indirect passions, then, is based on alleged differences in the kinds of causal conditions which give rise to each. What are these differences? More particularly, what are the "other qualities", the "conjunction" of which with pleasure or pain are requisite for the occurrence of the direct passions? We may notice, at the start, that Hume does not think that pleasure and pain are alone sufficient for the occurrence of the direct passions. Some element of cognition is also required: one must be aware of some object or state of affairs as pleasant or painful. For example, in most cases one must believe that the occurrence of a given state of affairs would be pleasant before one can desire its occurrence; one must believe that a "good is certain or probable" before one can experience joy; it is only when "either good or evil is uncertain" that one may experience "FEAR or HOPE, according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side or the other". (T, 439) Thus the "other qualities," which, together with pleasure and pain, give rise to the indirect passions can not be, simply, the occurrence of any cognitive state, such as the awareness of such things as the certainty or probability

that a state of affairs will or will not occur. Such cognitions may be constituents of the causal conditions which give rise to the direct passions.

Hume nowhere explicitly redeems his implied promise to give an account of these "other qualities", but the nature of these other qualities is clear enough from Hume's discussion of the indirect passions. Consider his discussion of the possibility that a direct and an indirect passion <u>both</u> arise from the same prior pleasure or pain. Hume remarks that "the impressions, which arise from good and evil most naturally, and with the least preparation are the <u>direct</u> passions of desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, along with volition". (T, 438) "But," he says, "supposing that there is an immediate impression of pain or pleasure /i.e. the direct passion/, and <u>that</u> arising from an object related to ourselves or others, this does not prevent the propensity or aversion /i.e. the direct passion/, with the consequent emotions, but by concurring with certain dormant principles of the human mind, excites the new impressions of pride and humility, love or hatred". (T, 438-439) "That propensity", he continues, "which unites us to the object, or separates us from it, still continues to operate, but in conjunction with the <u>indirect</u> passions, which arise from a double relation of impressions and ideas". (T, 439)

These statements provide the clue to the distinction between the direct and indirect passions. Roughly, the distinction is this. In the case of indirect passions, the prior perceptions must include not only the thought or experience of a pleasant or painful state of affairs, but also the thought of this state of affairs as connected in some way <u>with some person</u>, either oneself, or someone else. Among the necessary conditions for the occurrence of an indirect passion is the awareness that a pleasant or painful state of

affairs was caused by myself or some other person, or is a property of myself or some other person, and so on. An appropriate cause of an indirect passion must be some such thing as my stupid behavior, your ugliness, or a third person's sharp tongue. One cannot give an adequate causal account of an indirect passion without referring to some person. This is not the case with respect to the direct passions, and this, I would suggest, is precisely what is meant by reference to the "immediacy" of these latter passions.

Take the case of the indirect passion of pride. Hume distinguishes the object of a feeling of pride from the cause of that feeling, and then, within the cause of the feeling, he distinguishes a "quality" and the "subject" to which that quality is related. Hume offers the case of a man proud of a beautiful house.

> A man, for instance, is vain of a beautiful house, which belongs to him, or which he has himself built and contriv'd. Here the object of the passion is himself, and the cause is the beautiful house: Which cause again is sub-divided into two parts, viz. the quality, which operates upon the passion, and the subject, in which the quality inheres. The quality is the beauty, and the subject is the house, consider'd as his property or contrivance. Both these parts are essential, nor is the distinction vain and chimerical. Beauty consider'd merely as such, unless plac'd upon something related to us, never produces any pride or vanity; and the strongest relation alone, without beauty, or something else in its place, has as little influence on that passion. (T, 279. Italics mine.)

Hume is somewhat misleading in this passage, in that he distinguishes only two elements of the alleged cause, the "quality" and the "subject", when in fact he is making use of three. Given his account of the association of impressions and ideas, Hume must postulate a pleasant or painful feeling, or at least the idea of one, to explain the feeling-component of the resultant mental state. This pleasant or painful feeling is connected with the

so-called "quality" of the cause, because the quality mentioned is that property of the cause which gives rise to an independent pleasure or pain. But to have an association of ideas it is necessary that there be some relation between the object of the causal cognitive state and the object of the passion. In the present case this means that the causal conditions must involve some thought of the person who is the object of the passion of pride, viz. some thought of the man himself. This is a different causal condition than the thought of the "subject" of the "quality", since the subject is here identified as the house. A full statement of the causal conditions of pride requires, then, in Hume's actual practice, not only the thought of some quality of an object, together with the separate pleasure or pain produced by that quality, and the thought of the subject of that quality, but also the thought of the person who possesses or is in some other way connected with the subject. In the present case it is necessary that the man (1) be aware of the house; (2) be aware of the beauty of the house (i.e. have a feeling of pleasure); (3) be aware that the house belongs to himself. It is this last condition which is not stated with sufficient clarity in Hume's account, but which is, if my interpretation of Hume's theory of the indirect passions is correct, essential for distinguishing the indirect from the direct passions.

This interpretation of the alleged causal conditions of pride is more unequivocally supported by another of Hume's examples:

> Thus a suit of fine cloaths produces pleasure from their beauty; and this pleasure produces the direct passions, or the impressions of volition and desire. Again, when these cloaths are *consider'd as belonging to ourself*, the double relation conveys to us the sentiment of pride, which is an indirect passion. (T, 439. Italics mine.)

The distinction between the two responses to the "fine cloaths" is that,

in the latter response, the object (in Hume's expression, "subject") whose qualities give rise to a pleasant feeling, is "consider'd as belonging to ourself". It is not sufficient that the person be aware of the clothes; he must be aware of them as his own. On Hume's account of pride as a peculiar pleasant feeling directed toward the self, and his causal explanation of the occurrence of pride in terms of a double association of impressions and ideas, it is of course necessary that some reference be made to the self in his description the causal conditions.

A similar account is offered of love and hatred. Each is an indirect passion because it arises not from a pleasure or pain alone, or even from an awareness of some state of affairs as pleasant or painful, but from an awareness of some pleasant or painful state of affairs as connected with some person other than the person who experiences the love or hatred. "A prince", Hume says, "that is possess'd of a stately palace, commands the esteem of the people upon that account; and that first, by the beauty of the palace, and secondly, by the relation of property, which connects it with him". (T, 330) Abbreviating his account of love and hatred Hume remarks: "We may . . . suppose with some shew of probability, that the cause of both these passions is always related to a thinking being". (T, 331) He then goes on to say that this supposition "is not only probable, but too evident to be contested". (T, 331) Why is this so?

> Virtue and vice, when consider'd in the abstract; beauty and deformity, when plac'd on inanimate objects; poverty and riches, when belonging to a third person, excite no degree of love or hatred, esteem or contempt towards those, who have not relation to them. A person looking out at a window, sees me in the street, and beyond me a beautiful palace, with which I have no concern: I believe none will pretend, thatthis person will pay me the same respect, as if I were the owner of the palace. (T, 331)

Through all this it is clear that the distinctive feature of the causal conditions which give rise to the indirect passion of love is the connection of the pleasure- or pain-causing quality with some human person. This, I would submit, is the source of the distinction between a direct and an indirect passion.

To avoid a possible misapprehension, we may notice that those indirect passions which Hume describes as "desires", including the passions of ambition, benevolence, anger, pity, and malice, all fall under the heading of the indirect passions according to the criterion I have indicated. The criterion is that the complex cause of the passion include an awareness that the pleasant or painful state of affairs is connected with some person. Now on Hume's account of these desires, they are immediately caused by a prior state of love or hatred. (Pride and humility, being "pure emotions in the soul", do not give rise to desires, according to Hume.) But in the case of both love and hatred, on Hume's theory, one experiences a complex mental state, comprising both a peculiar pleasant or painful feeling, and the thought of some person other than oneself. This person is the object of one's love or hatred. Thus the cause of each of the desires in question is, in part, the thought of some person. The desires, then, are indirect passions according to the criterion described.[1]

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[1]This account of the desires mentioned seems to imply that, if asked why he feels benevolence or malevolence toward A, a person can only appropriately answer that he does so because he loves or hates A. That is, he would refer to another emotion of his own, and not to some valued action or quality of A's. Whether this account of benevolence and hatred is adequate is a large question which I shall not try to answer here.

We can now see in what sense a direct passion arises from a prior pain or pleasure immediately. This is to say that it is not a necessary (causal) condition for the occurrence of a direct passion that one be aware of some connection between a pleasant or painful state of affairs and some person. We shall later have occasion to emphasize this difference between a direct and an indirect passion when we notice the difference between the objects of each. Since Hume's account, however, explains the difference in the objects of the direct and indirect passions by a difference in the causal conditions of each, the criterion for distinguishing them can be stated exclusively in terms of their causes.[1]

I have said nothing thus far concerning a distinction of the passions on which some commentators have placed great stress, the difference between calm and violent passions. In agreement with Dr. Árdal, I do not feel that the distinction has the importance for Hume's theory of the passions, that some commentators have attributed to it.[2] It certainly does not have the logical status of the other distinctions discussed above. Nevertheless, a few words are required.

First introducing the distinction of calm and violent impressions of reflection Hume states:

> The reflective impressions may be divided into two kinds, _viz._ the _calm_ and the _violent_. Of the first kind is the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects. Of the second are the passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility. (T, 276)

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[1] It should be recalled that Hume does not require even the occurrence of a prior perception of pleasure or pain as a necessary (causal) condition for the occurrence of a direct passion. See my earlier discussion of this point.

[2] Árdal, pp. 93f.

"This division," however, "is far from being exact". (T, 276) The reason for this inexactness seems to be that one cannot determine under which of the two headings to classify a given particular emotional state by considering whether, as now experienced, it is a calm emotional state or a violent one. "The raptures of poetry and music", Hume remarks, "frequently rise to the greatest height; while those other impressions, properly called passions, may decay into so soft an emotion, as to become, in a manner, imperceptible". (T, 276) Thus a calm passion may in fact be, as experienced, violent; and a violent passion may, as experienced, be calm. Hume dispells this apparent paradox when he explains that "as in general the passions are more violent than the emotions arising from beauty and deformity, these impressions have been commonly distinguish'd from each other". (T, 276. Italics mine.)

There are two senses, then, of "calm passion". On the one hand, a passion is calm if it is a passion of the kind that is usually calm, as experienced. In this sense of "calm" all aesthetic sentiments, and perhaps other sentiments, are calm passions. On the other hand, any passion is calm if, as experienced, it is calm. In this sense some (most) instances of the calm passions are calm, and some (perhaps very few) instances of the violent passions are calm. The distinction of calm and violent passions as mutually exclusive classes of passions, with mutually exclusive kinds of passions as their members, is not, then, one on which too much stress can be placed. The distinction is a useful one: "The subject of the human mind being so copious and various, I shall here take advantage of this . . . division, that I may proceed with the greater order". (T, 276) The division is also, however, a "vulgar and specious" one. (T, 276)

It is important not to confuse the distinction between calm and violent passions with a very different distinction between weak and strong passions. A passion is violent if its occurrence involves a disturbance of one's mental state (or if, though calm in this sense, it is a member of a class of passions instances of which normally involve a disturbance of the mind). A passion is strong, however, not in virtue of the emotional disturbance it causes, but in virtue of its actual influence on conduct. "We must," Hume says, "distinguish betwixt a calm and a weak passion; betwixt a violent and a strong one". (T, 419) It may, however, be the case that one can establish an empirical connection between the violence of a passion and its strength. Thus, it may be the case that, <u>as a rule</u>, violent passions are strong ones. Hume seems to think this is so, but cautions that the correlation will only be a probabilistic one; it will not hold in all cases. He expresses this view when he says: "'tis certain, that when we wou'd govern a man, and push him to any action, 'twill commonly be better policy to work upon the violent than the calm passions, and rather take him by his inclination, than what is vulgarly call'd his <u>reason</u>". (T, 419) But there is such a thing as strength of mind, and this, according to Hume, "implies the prevalence of the calm passions over the violent". (T, 418)

We must now turn to what is the central question about Hume's classification of the passions: How is one to distinguish passions, as mental states, from other mental states. We have already seen one way in which Hume makes this distinction: passions are different because they are impressions, and because they are impressions of reflection. As impressions they differ from ideas, and as impressions of reflection they differ from impressions of sensation. We

have noted, however, that the distinction Hume makes between impressions and ideas is not a very satisfactory one because it is not clear whether he is distinguishing different kinds of object of awareness, or different kinds of mental acts or states. In some reppects, it would seem, Hume's distinction is intended to be the latter one, but this is not unambiguously so. Yet it is this distinction which is of interest in understanding Hume's theory of the passions. We want to know whether Hume has anything of interest to say about the difference between the passions and other mental acts or states, other than his unhelpful remarks about vivacity.

For help on this question we must turn to the end of Book II and the beginning of Book III, to the sections entitled "Of the influencing motives of the will" and "Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason".

In the first of the two sections Hume asserts:

> A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. When I am angry, I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high. 'Tis impossible, therefore, that this passion can be oppos'd by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider'd as copies, with those objects, which they represent. (T, 415)

In the later sections he makes essentially the same point:

> Reason is the discovery of truth or falshood. Truth or falshood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the real relations of ideas, or to real existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. Now 'tis evident our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible of any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions. 'Tis impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. (T, 458)

Many things in both passages are very odd indeed, and I shall have occasion in the next chapter to discuss both in much greater detail than is useful at present. The one point, however, which is necessary for our present purposes, is reasonably clear, at least in outline. In both passages Hume is drawing a distinction between what I shall call "representative" mental states, and those which are not represenative, between mental states which are, in some sense, "copies", and those which are not. A representative mental state is one which "agrees" or "disagrees" with a "relation of ideas" or a "matter of fact". A non-representative mental state is one which neither "agrees" nor "disagrees" in this way, because it is not capable of agreeing or disagreeing. Because representative mental states may agree or disagree with relations of ideas or with matters of fact, they are either true or false; true, if they agree with the way things are, and false, if they disagree. Because non-representative mental states neither agree nor disagree with the way things are, they are neither true nor false. One may appropriately criticize a representative state as true or false; such criticism is inappropriate in the case of non-representative mental states because there simply is no way in which they can either agree or disagree with the way things are. Such agreement and disagreement are not, one might say, their point.

Hume does not, so far, say _how_ one determines whether a given mental state is representative or non-representative; perhaps he thinks of the difference as an irreducible one which is transparent to consciousness. In any case, all representative mental states are grouped under the heading of "reason"; all non-representative mental states under that of "passions".

The division is roughly the same as that which I drew earlier between cognitive states and emotional states. Under "emotional states", in this context, Hume would place "passions" (including "desires"), "volitions", and, at times, "actions", especially "internal actions". (cf. T, 465)

Hume certainly insists on a rigid dichotomy between reason and the passions, or between cognitive states and emotional states. They are, for him, radically difference kinds of things. This does not, however, involve him in saying that the passions and cognition have no connections, or no important connections. We have already had occasion to notice his views about impressions of reflection, and their objects. Moreover, as he says in a rather different context: "Human nature . . . /is/ compos'd of two principal parts, which are requisite in all its actions, the affections and understanding". (T, 493) It is in fact such precedent or accompanying cognitive states whose occurrence, and whose truth or falsity, lead us to describe a passion as reasonable or unreasonable: As Hume remarks, " a passion must be accompany'd with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable". (T, 416) In such a case, however, and this is his point, "'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment". (T, 416)

In formulating this distinction between cognitive and emotional states, Hume occasionally uses terminology which can only be misleading. In introducing the question whether moral distinctions are derived from reason, Hume adopts the following principle:

> Now as perceptions resolve themselves into two kinds, viz. <u>impressions</u> and <u>ideas</u>, this distinction gives rise to a question, with which we shall open up our present enquiry concerning morals, <u>whether 'tis by means of our</u> ideas <u>or</u> impressions <u>we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praise-worthy</u>? (T, 456)

The upshot of Hume's argument is that we do not distinguish vice and virtue by means of our ideas; therefore they must be distinguished by our impressions. But the term "impression" is too general to suit Hume's purpose, since it includes perceptions of colors, sounds, tastes, and so on. If calling moral judgments impressions were sufficient to distinguish the class of perceptions within which they fall, Hume would still have the problem of distinguishing moral judgments from other impressions such as colors, shapes, and sounds, or, on an alternative interpretation of "perception", from such mental acts as seeing a color, hearing a sound, and so on. But it is difficult to believe that Hume does not think he has already shown, by his criterion of non-representativeness (however that is to be cashed), that moral judgments are not like _these_ perceptions. It is difficult, that is to say, to believe that perceptions of colors are, in the relevant sense, any less _representative_ than recollections of Paris, or the thought that all triangles have three sides. This is especially so if we recall Hume's claim that the three traditional "acts of the understanding", _viz_. "conception, judgment, and reasoning" all "resolve themselves into the first, and are nothing but particular ways of conceiving our objects". (T, 96-97 n.) There is, of course, the difficulty that Hume, in the section entitled "Of scepticism with regard to the senses", asserts that "our senses offer not their impressions as the images of something _distinct_, or _independent_, and _external_". (T, 189) But if Hume were to insist on this point in his later discussion of reason and the passions, it would be extremely difficult to see how he expects the representative/non-representative distinction to be drawn. We may, with

good reason then, take Hume's point to be that moral judgments are members of the class of impressions of reflection, and not just the class of impressions. And the reason for this must be that impressions of reflection are non-representative, whereas ideas, and impressions other than impressions of reflection, are representative.

Even this, however, will not do, for it seems clearly to be the case that some impressions of sensation are non-representative, if this means they are not _about_ any matters of fact. I am thinking about what Hume calls physical pains and pleasures. Whereas it seems Hume must want to say that my seeing a color or hearing a sound is in some sense representative, i.e. that such mental states somehow copy the world, he would surely not want to say that a mental state describable as my being in pain in any way copies the world, or even myself. It is at least _prima facie_ plausible to suggest that physical pain and pleasure fall on the non-representative side of Hume's divide. They are, in this respect, more like the passions than like reason.

I mentioned earlier that it is difficult to know how Hume, in fact, makes his non-representative/representative distinction. I suggested that perhaps he thought the distinction was immediately apparent. My remarks in the previous paragraph, however, suggest a possible independent criterion which Hume may have used to distinguish mental acts or states as representative or non-representative. The criterion is whether the mental act or state in question has an hedonic quality, whether, that is, it is intrinsically either pleasant or painful. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that this new criterion provides, on Hume's theory, for a division of mental acts or states that is extensionally equivalent with that created by the represent-

ative/non-representative distinction. It seems to be Hume's view that all passions, or all impressions of reflection, are, intrinsically, pleasant or painful feelings. Certainly all those passions which are not described as desires are thought of as pleasant or painful sensations. And, as I shall argue in the next section, Hume describes even desires as though they were pleasant or painful sensations. Moreover, it is tautologous that all physical pleasures and pains are pleasant or painful sensations. On the other hand, no representative mental act or state, qua representative, is described in this way. By applying the criterion hedonic/non-hedonic, then, Hume seems to arrive at the same classification of mental states as he does by applying the criterion non-representative/representative.

A third possible criterion for this classification of mental acts or states depends on whether the mental act or state is a member of that class of mental acts or states reference to which provides a logically impeccable reason for doing anything. But I shall treat this question in detail in the next chapter, and so shall leave any comment until then.

One further terminological ambiguity in Hume's distinction of representative and non-representative mental states needs to be noticed. In a passage quoted earlier, Hume makes the claim: "When I am angry, I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high". (T, 415) The ambiguity resides in Hume's use of "object". Given Hume's account of "anger" earlier in the Treatise, it is simply untrue to say that anger has no "reference to any other object", at least in one possible sense of that very vague expression. Anger is an indirect passion, and as such always has an object. Thirst as wellhas an object, unless it be construed simply

as a physical pain. But Hume's point in this passage does not depend on the very dubious claim (which Hume elsewhere rejects) that passions have no objects. His remark should rather be read as a way of saying that passions, unlike cognitive states, are non-representative mental states. In so far as I am angry, I am not describing the world, or myself, in any way.

By way of summary of this very long discussion of the classification of the passions, I will append an outline of Hume's classification of perceptions, putting particular emphasis on non-representative perceptions. Several points may be noticed about this classification. It displays the quite sharp distinction Hume draws between the passions and cognition. This distinction, in turn, seems very closely connected in Hume's mind with the view that passions are intrinsically pleasant or painful sensations, and that it is passions which, in some sense, move one to action. The classification also serves to show the close ties between physical pains or pleasures and the passions, despite their important differences (and especially despite the fact that passions are reflective impressions). It points up, as well, a possible source of confusion in Kemp Smith's use of the expression "primary passions". Saying that a passion is primary is not, as might initially seem the case, the same as saying that an impression is original. No original impressions are passions, and no primary passions are original impressions. All primary passions are non-original in so far as their occurrence presupposes a prior perception. They are primary only in the sense that they do not presuppose a prior perception of pleasure or pain. The classification also, in so far as it mentions instances of the

primary passions, shows that some instances of aesthetic sentiment are primary passions. On this point, my view differs from that of Kemp Smith[1] and of Árdal[2]. The classification also makes explicit the criterion for distinguishing the direct and indirect passions. No mention is made of the calm or violent passions, since this distinction could be made within at least each of the sub-classes below that of reflective impressions.

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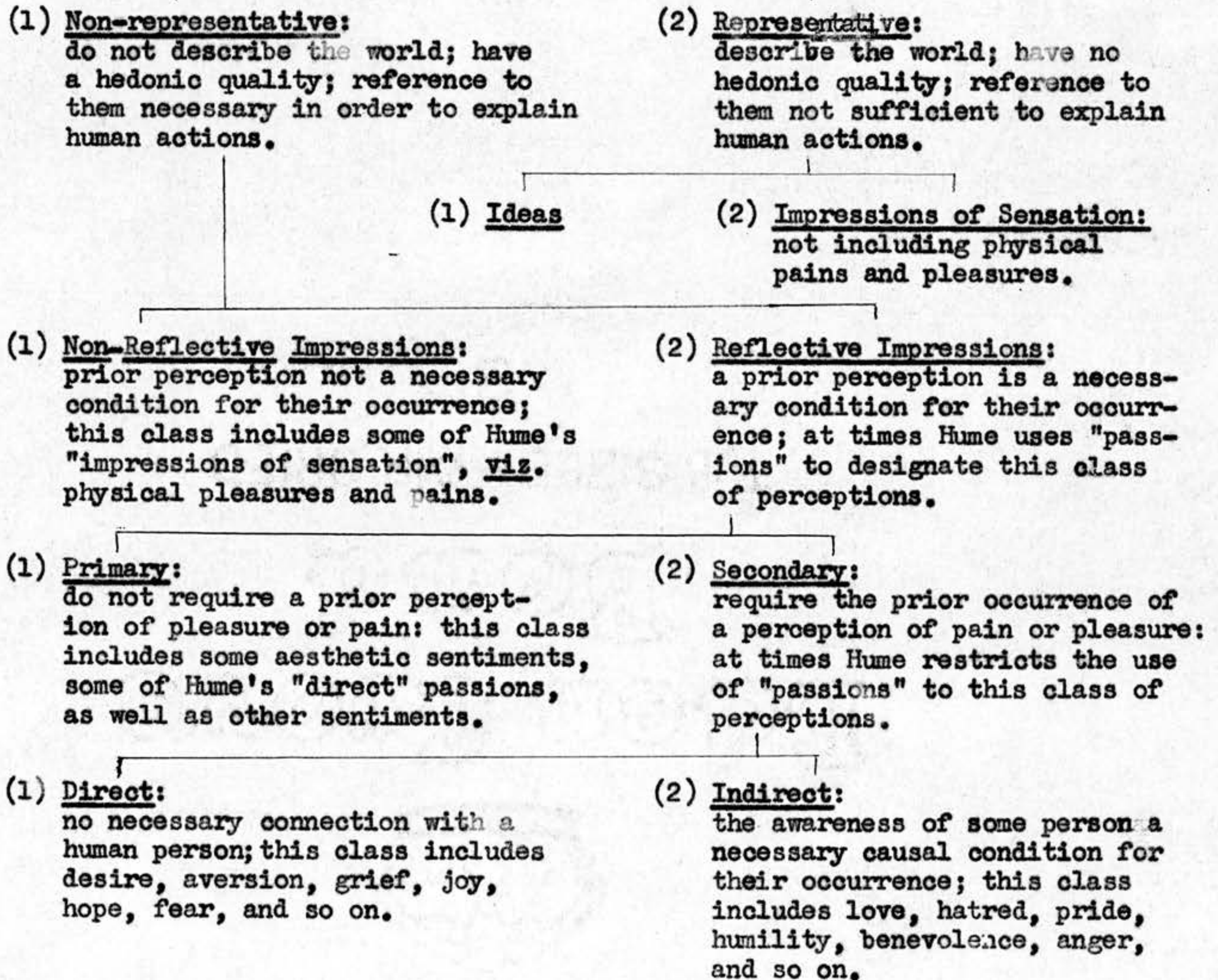
[1]Kemp Smith, p. 168

[2]Árdal, p. 11.

Perceptions (taken as mental acts or states)



2. The Nature of the Passions

Having considered at length the way in which Hume classifies the passions, I turn now to discuss his views on the nature of the passions. I shall pay particular attention to the following points: Hume's claim that the passions are simple impressions; his account of the objects of the various passions; his account of the relations between the passions and human behavior; his discussion of the circumstances within which the passions occur; the elasticity of Hume's use of the term "passion"; and the distinction between passions as occurrences and passions as dispositions.

More than one commentator has noted that, on Hume's view, the passions are simple impressions, or simple feeling-states. As Hume remarks of pride and humility, they are "simple and uniform impressions". (T,277) Similarly, he says of love and hatred: "they produce merely a simple impression, without any mixture or composition". (T,329) But what does being a "simple impression" amount to? Introducing the notion of "simple impressions" very early in the Treatise Hume says that they are "such as admit of no distinction nor separation". (T,2) The perceptions of a particular color, a particular taste, or a particular smell are given as examples. He elucidates the notion of simplicity in his comments on the simplicity of the impressions of pride and humility. It is a consequence of their simplicity that "'tis impossible we can ever, by a multitude of words, give a just definition of them, or indeed of any of the passions". (T,277) Similarly, because love and hatred are simple impressions, it is "altogether impossible to give any definition" of them. (T,329) Moreover, talking of volition, which he sometimes construes as a passion, Hume observes: "This impression, like the preceding ones of pride and humility, love and hatred, 'tis impossible to define". (T,399) Because there are no simpler

elements into which any passion can be analyzed, there are no more primitive terms by means of which a definition might be given. Each passion, i.e. each kind of passion, is fundamentally irreducible.

The simplicity of the passions does not, on Hume's account, compromise the possibility of similarities between them. Love and pride, though distinct simple feeling-states, are similar in that both are pleasant; hatred and humility are likewise similar in their unpleasantness. In Hume's words, it is possible for there to be a "similarity or resemblance" between two ideas (and thus between the impressions of which the ideas are ideas) without it being "necessary, that the point or circumstance of resemblance shou'd be distinct or separable from that in which they differ". (T,637) "_Blue_ and _green_," Hume claims, "are different simple ideas, but are more resembling than _blue_ and _scarlet_; tho' their perfect simplicity excludes all possibility of separation or distinction". (T,637) Whether Hume is justified in asserting that simplicity is consistent with similarity is a point which need not detain us here.[1] It is sufficient at this point to notice that Hume's causal account of the passions in terms of the association of impressions and ideas requires that the two notions be consistent. Hume's explanation depends on a _resemblance_ between two passions which are, by hypothesis, simple impressions.

It is difficult to know how Hume would draw a line between one distinct passion and another. Presumably he would think that the ordinary language of the passions goes some way toward marking the major distinctions. He does, however, give some indication of the accuracy of discernment which he thinks is possible on the part of a careful observer at various places in the _Treatise_.

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[1]For a defense of Hume on this point see Árdal, pp.13-15.

(Theoretically, it must be remembered, such discernment can only be a matter of reading the differences of the passions off their faces, as it were.) The results of one such discernment are recorded in a very interesting passage on the varieties of pleasures and pains:

> 'Tis evident, that under the term pleasure, we comprehend sensations, which are very different from each other, and which have only such a distant resemblance, as is requisite to make them be express'd by the same abstract term. A good composition of music and a bottle of good wine equally produces pleasure; and what is more, their goodness is determin'd merely by the pleasure. But shall we say upon that account, that the wine is harmonious, or the music of a good flavour? In like manner an inanimate object, and the character or sentiments of any person may, both of them, give satisfaction; but as the satisfaction is different, this keeps our sentiments concerning them from being confounded, and makes us ascribe virtue to one, and not to the other. Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and action, of that peculiar kind, which makes us praise or condemn. The good qualities of an enemy are hurtful to us; but may still command our esteem and respect. 'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil. (T,472)

Presumably it is a similar nice discernment which enables Hume to say: "Terror, consternation, astonishment, anxiety, and other passions of that kind, are nothing but different species and degrees of fear". (T,447) Apparently, too, it is possible to distinguish several distinct simple impressions, all of which come to be grouped under the heading of love: "Love may shew itself in the shape of tenderness, friendship, intimacy, esteem, good-will, and in many other appearances". (T,448)

I shall try, at a later point, to offer some explanation why Hume should have insisted that each distinct kind of passion is a unique kind of simple impression. The account surely has, prima facie, a highly implausible ring to it. At this point I would merely call attention to the fact that Hume's theory

is independent of any explicit theory about the language of the emotions. That is to say, Hume's thesis about the simplicity of the passions is neither supported by linguistic considerations nor tested against the facts of language. It is presented as a psychological thesis about what appears to the careful observer of his own emotions. In fact, there is some reason to believe that Hume thinks ordinary language does not mark, with sufficient accuracy, each of the intrinsically different kinds of passions we may experience, and of which we may become aware. Speaking generally about the "operations of the mind" Hume observes that "'tis very difficult to talk of the operations of the mind with perfect propriety and exactness; because common language has seldom made any very nice distinctions among them, but has generally call'd by the same term all such as nearly resemble each other". (T,105) It is surely to be expected, then, that some actual differences between intrinsically different but closely resembling passions will not be captured by ordinary language.[1]

Presumably Hume thinks that kind-differences between two very closely resembling passions are discernible by some form of reflective or introspective attending to one's own feeling-states. The ability to make such distinctions with any precision may not be common; in fact, great care may need to be exercised in the project. We may recall Hume's remarks, in the first Enquiry, about the difficulties of this exercise, which is looked upon as a peculiarly philosophical one. (EHU,13) But, if his claim about the intrinsic differences of simple impressions is to be sustained with respect to the passions, Hume

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[1] In this connection it is interesting to note the claim of a recent writer, John Benson, that ordinary language is extremely deficient in its specifically emotional vocabulary. According to Benson, this deficiency is remedied by our ability to express differences of emotion in language that is not exclusively emotion-language. See John Benson, "Emotion and Expression", Philosophical Review, LXXVI (1967), pp.335-357.

must assume, or have reason to believe, that the project is capable of prosecution. In fact, he does not think it a difficult task in all cases. As he says of pride and humility, "the impressions they represent [are] the most common of any", and thus "every one, of himself, will be able to form a just idea of them, without any danger of mistake". (T,277) The same is alleged to be true of the passions of love and hatred: "These passions of themselves are sufficiently known from our common feeling and experience". (T,329) But even in the case of these four passions a difficulty arises. At least at times the terms "love", "hatred", "pride" and "humility" are taken as designating classes of passions which are in turn divisible into _intrinsically different_ sub-classes, as we have seen above. But on Hume's account, this division into sub-classes is justified only if members of one sub-class are intrinsically different, as "impressions", from members of other sub-classes. Despite the difficulties, however, Hume gives some indication of the discriminatory procedure he envisages, when he describes a case in which someone might be uncertain whether his judgment of another person's character is a biased or a moral judgment. On Hume's theory, these two responses are, as experiences, intrinsically different. Can the claim be justified by introspection, or by some other form of reflection on one's conscious experience? Hume describes the problem and the alleged solution in this way:

> 'Tis true, those sentiments, from interest and morals, are apt to be confounded, and naturally run into one another. It seldom happens, that we do not think an enemy vicious, and can distinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest and real villainy or baseness. But this hinders not, but that the sentiments are, in themselves, distinct; and a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself from these illusions. In like manner, tho' 'tis certain a musical voice is nothing but one that naturally gives a _particular_ kind of pleasure; yet 'tis difficult for a man to be sensible, that the voice of an enemy is agreeable, or to allow it to be musical. But a person of a fine ear, who has the command of himself, can separate these feelings, and give praise to what deserves it. (T,472)

Clearly, then, Hume thinks that though it is often difficult, it is in principle possible to distinguish each of those intrinsically distinct kinds of simple impressions which he calls passions, by a close and careful inner scrutiny of the impression qua impression.

In fact, however, Hume does notthink the situation is quite as desperate as it appears from the description I have given. This is so because clues are available which assist one to notice the difference between intrinsically different but similar passions. Differences in the passions are thought to be lawfully correlated with differences in the circumstances which give rise to them, their objects, and their effects. As Hume remarks at one point in the Treatise: "'Tis easy to imagine how a different situation of the object, or a different turn of thought, may change even the sensation of a passion". (T,447-448) If this is so, Hume has some reason for suggesting that by noticing differences in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, the direction of our attention, and the character of our behavior, our attention may be drawn to differences between closely resembling, though unique, feeling-states. This is the procedure Hume recommends in his methodological remarks in the first chapter of the first Enquiry, as I noted much earlier.[1] Hume touches on this possibility in the Treatise as well when, remarking on the impossibility of defining the simple impressions of pride and humility, he says: "The utmost we can pretend to is a description of them, by an enumeration of such circumstances, as attend them". (T,277) He then "enter[s] upon the examination of these passions", and the examination begins with a discussion of the "causes" and "objects" of each. Later, talking of love and hatred, Hume elaborates upon this notion of a description of a simple impression, referring to a "description of them, drawn

[1]Chapter I, section 4.

from their nature, origin, causes and objects". (T,329) Much of Hume's associationist account of the passions is, in fact, an attempt to state, in some detail, the lawful correlations which do obtain.

For the sake of accuracy, we must notice some difficulties in the view that Hume insists that all the passions are simple impressions. We have already quoted Hume's remarks that "'tis impossible we can ever, by a multitude of words, give a just definition of them [i.e. pride and humility], *or indeed of any of the passions*". (T,277. Italics mine.) Reading this remark in its context, it is clear that the reason for the impossibility of defining any of the passions is that each is a simple impression. If a passion were not simple, it would, in principle at any rate, be possible to define it. At other places in the *Treatise*, however, Hume does seem to talk of non-simple passions. Fear and hope, for example, seem to be non-simple passions: "grief and joy being intermingled with each other, by means of the contrary views of the imagination, produce by their union the passions of hope and fear". (T,441) Hume mentions, as well, several "compound passions, which proceed from a mixture of love and hatred with other affections". (T,394) Of these "compound passions" he pays most attention to "that love, which arises betwixt the sexes". (T,394) "'Tis plain," he says, "that this affection, in its most natural state, is deriv'd from the conjunction of three different impressions or passions". (T,394) Can Hume, consistent with these statements, maintain the simplicity of all the passions?

It is at least clear that he tries to do so. At one point Hume distinguishes two kinds of compounds. (T,366) Some kinds of compounds are formed by a "conjunction" of distinct elements that remain distinct in the compound. Compound ideas (in the sense of objects of perception) are always mere conjunctions: "Ideas never admit of a total union, but are endow'd with a kind of impenetrability,

by which they exclude one another". (T,366) Other compounds are formed by a "mixture" of distinct elements which lose their distinctness in the compound. Impressions and passions form compounds in this way. They are "susceptible of an entire union; and like colours, may be blended so perfectly together, that each of them may lose itself, and contribute only to vary that uniform impression, which arises from the whole". (T,366. Italics mine.) Hume's mention of colours is interesting, and helps explain his meaning. If a painter mixes some yellow and some red paint the result will be orange. If a normal observer were to be asked the color of the paint on the painter's palette, he would say it was orange. Nevertheless, a sense could be attached to the statement that the paint is red and yellow, or perhaps, a mixture of red and yellow. Saying this in no way, however, detracts from the truth of the statement: "The paint is orange". The two statements are compatible with one another. And this seems to be Hume's point about the compound passions. If two passions are mixed together, and not just conjoined, the resultant compound will produce a uniform impression, i.e. to be a simple impression. The point is brought out, in Hume's discussion of hope and fear, when Hume draws an analogy between the mixing of grief and joy, and the mixing of lights of different colors. Hope and fear are mixtures of grief and joy in much the same way as "a colour'd ray of the sun ... is a composition of two others". (T,444) (Sense is attached to this latter statement by referring to the results of passing a ray of light through a prism.)

Thus it would seem that Hume's talk of compound passions need not compromise his claim that all passions are simple impressions. Whether this means of achieving consistency is used in every instance in which Hume talks of compound passions is a further question which I shall not try to answer.

We may now turn to Hume's account of the connections between the passions, construed as simple impressions, and their causes, objects, and effects. I shall begin with the objects of the passions.

Hume makes particular use of the concept of the object of a passion in his discussion of the indirect passions, pride and humility, love and hatred. Pride and humility, he says, "tho' directly contrary, have yet the same object. This object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness". (T,277) When I experience pride I am, in some sense, proud _of myself_; when I experience humility I am similarly ashamed _of myself_. The same is true of love and hatred: "The _object_ of love and hatred is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are not conscious". (T,329)

What is involved in this notion of an "object" of a passion? Hume tries to elucidate this notion by a series of metaphors, involving the ideas of being directed or of having one's thoughts turned. The self is the object of pride: "Here the view always fixes when we are actuated by either of these passions". (T,277) Again, describing the self as "that individual person, of whose actions and sentiments each of us is intimately conscious", Hume says: "Here at last the view always rests, when we are actuated by either of these passions". (T,286) Love and hatred, similarly, "are always directed to some sensible being external to us". (T,329) Hume refers to this phenomenon as a "peculiar direction of the thought". (T,286) Hume's talk of the direction of the passions to their objects bears, at least initially, a striking similarity to Wittgenstein's remark that the emotions have targets:

> We should distinguish between the object of fear and the cause of fear.
>
> Thus a face which inspires fear or delight (the object of fear or delight), is not on that account its cause, but - one might say - its target.[1]

It is not at all clear, however, what sense one is to make of Hume's claim that each of the indirect passions is directed to some person as its object. In what sense can a simple impression have a direction? Surely, qua simple impression, a passion is logically independent of any other state of affairs. That is to say, if words for passions are words for simple impressions, then propositions using those words can not entail propositions about other states of affairs, including other psychological states, in virtue of the meaning of these words. Hume is on the right track, certainly, when he says that each of the indirect passions has an object; one can adduce independent reasons for making this claim. For example, one can point to the oddity of such locutions as "Jack loves" or "Jill hates". Or one can point to the fact that in most uses of "pride", one correctly expects some appropriate answer to the question "What are you proud of?" addressed to someone who says "I am very proud".[2] But Hume does not mention any facts about the language of the passions, and, in fact, his thesis of the simplicity of the passions rejects the basis of any linguistic support for the thesis that passions have objects.

Hume apparently tries to give sense to this notion of the direction of a passion by talking of a causal connection between the passion and its object. The mind, Hume says, "has certain organs naturally fitted to produce a passion; that passion, when produc'd, naturally turns the view to a certain object". (T,396)

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963),I,476.

[2] I shall later have occasion to point out that, on Hume's account of the objects of the indirect passions, the normal sorts of correct answer to this question would not identify what he calls the object of the passion.

One can thus determine the direction of a passion by considering what thoughts the passion naturally gives rise to. Pride is directed to the self; that is to say, when one experiences pride, one always thinks of oneself. Love is directed to some other person; that is, whenever one experiences the simple impression of love, one thinks of some other person.

We saw, in the previous chapter, a major difficulty which this account creates within Hume's associationist scheme.[1] There are, however, more interesting independent objections to this account, a consideration of which will reveal the deficiencies of Hume's attempt to show how passions are related to their objects.

Let us take the case of love. What is it that the feeling of love is supposed to cause? Whatever this is will be the object of love, and the identification of it will enable us to say to what the passion is directed. Using the distinction framed earlier between act and object, there are two possibilities: either the passion causes the thought of someone other than myself; or the passion causes the object of the thought of someone else, i.e. someone else.

The second possibility may be rejected immediately as absurd. My love of Mary doesn't _cause_ Mary; nor does my pride _cause_ me! "Love is directed to some person other than oneself" must, then, if "direction" is to be cashed in terms of "causal connection", be interpreted as "Love causes the thought of some other person". But this cannot be the correct interpretation of "Love is directed to some person other than oneself", if this is supposedly equivalent to "The object of love is some person other than oneself", because the object of love is

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[1] pp. 143-146.

not the thought of someone other than oneself, but that person himself (or herself). If John loves Mary, the object of John's love is not the thought of Mary, but Mary herself. Even if Hume is correct in saying that the self is the object of pride, he cannot intend this to mean that the thought of myself is the object of my pride. But if he wants to say, fairly unexceptionably, that Mary is the object of John's love, he cannot construe the relation between a passion and its object as a causal one. From this it seems to follow that the notion of direction cannot be elucidated in terms of the notion of cause and effect.

It is only an act-object ambiguity in Hume's use of the term "idea" which could have led him down this particular blind alley. The object of an indirect passion is not the thought of oneself or of someone else, but, simply, oneself or someone else. And it is only the accompanying idea, in the sense of cognitive mental act or state, that can with any plausibility be said to be caused by the passion. Only because the term "idea" sometimes does service for "the thought of ..." and sometimes for "that of which we think" could this particular attempted elucidation of "direction" recommend itself. Once this ambiguity is sorted out, however, it is clear that the notion of causation applies only in cases where one is not talking about the object of the passions, and the concept of an object of a passion can be understood only in cases where the relation is not a causal one.

It is worth stressing, however, that it is not in fact clear that Hume wishes to assert a causal connection between a passion and its object. Anthony Kenny claims that, on Hume's account, a passion is "not related, except causally, to any object of its own; for an emotion was private and mental and its object (frequently) public and physical".[1] This claim has a very peculiar

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[1]Kenny, p.62.

ring, because it seems to imply, on Hume's part, the very odd suggestion that my (private) pride-feeling causes some public thing or event, viz. its object.[1] This is the first of the two alternatives mentioned above and rejected; it is difficult to think Hume wanted to say this. The second of the alternatives would not, obviously, suit Kenny's description, since thoughts, for Hume at any rate, are not "public and physical". But what other alternatives are open to Hume? Perhaps my suggestion in the previous chapter is closer to what Hume wanted to assert.[2] He may, that is, have been primarily concerned to insist on a lawlike, though contingent, connection between a passion and a cognitive state. This, of course, does not entail a causal connection between the two. It is simply to say that, for example, when I am proud my thoughts are always directed to myself. On this view, the notion of the direction of a passion would not be cashed in terms of a causal connection between a passion and its object, but in terms of the direction of the specific cognitive states which always accompany specific kinds of passions. Even if this is Hume's view, however, it is open to two main objections, and is still inadequate for elucidating the notion of the direction of a passion to its object. If formulated in the way I have formulated it, the account is circular, since it presupposes a notion of the direction of a cognitive state to its object. Moreover, this account has the very peculiar consequence that no passions have objects because, in the situation so envisaged, the self is not, in fact, the object of the passion but the object of the thought. A proud person would, on this view, have two mental experiences: the feeling of pride and the thought

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[1] If Kenny means rather to say that a passion is caused by its object, he is misrepresenting Hume, who insists, as we shall see later, on the difference between the cause of a passion and its object.

[2] p. 146.

of himself. The two experiences would be lawfully related, though contingently so, but there would be no genuine sense in which the self would be the object of the pride, as opposed to the object of the thought.

It would seem, then, that Hume can offer no satisfactory account of the object of a passion so long as he construes the passion as a logically independent simple impression. In fact, construing passions as simple impressions, it seems contradictory even to say that there is a _contingent_ connection between a passion and _its_ object; though there is no harm in talking of a contingent connection between a passion and the object of some other mental state. As I said earlier, Hume is on the right track when he claims that the passions have objects; but if my subsequent analysis is correct, it is clearly inconsistent with this to claim that a passion is a logically independent simple impression. If a passion has an object, the connection between it and its object must be something other than a contingent one.

The fact that Hume's general theory of the relation between a passion and its object is inadequate does not, of course, mean that Hume has nothing of interest to say about the objects of the passions. One philosophically interesting point that may be noticed is Hume's insistence that a distinction must be made between the cause of a passion, and its object. Talking of pride and humility Hume asserts, quite emphatically: "But tho' that connected succession of perceptions, which we call _self_, be always the object of these two passions, 'tis impossible it can be their CAUSE, or be sufficient alone to excite them". (T,277-278) Similarly in the case of love and hatred: "But tho' the objects of love and hatred be always some other person, 'tis plain that the object is not, properly speaking, the _cause_ of these passions, or alone sufficient to excite

them". (T,330) Once again, because of the act-object ambiguity in Hume's use of the term "idea" it is essential to be quite careful in interpreting Hume. Is Hume saying (a) that the (complex) mental state which causes pride or humility, love or hatred, and which comprises both an emotional and a cognitive element, is a numerically distinct mental state from that cognitive state describable, ambiguously to be sure, as "the thought of the object of p" (where "p" stands for a passion); or (b), more restrictedly, that the initial cognitive state is numerically distinct from the later one describable as "the thought of the object of p"; or (c), very differently, that the _object_ of the complex mental state is different from the _object_ of the second, resultant mental state. Hume would certainly say both (a) and (b), because the truth of both is presupposed by his associationist account of mental events. But in the passage quoted he seems rather to be interested in asserting (c). What, then, is he asserting in asserting (c)?

Consider Hume's argument in support of the claim that the cause of a passion is different from the object of that passion. In the case of pride and humility he claims that, since both passions have the same object (the self), if the self could justifiably be called the cause of pride, it could with equal justification be called the cause of humility. But then no reason can be given why one passion and not the other would arise, given (an awareness of) the self.

> For as these passions are directly contrary, and have the same object in common; were their object also their cause; it cou'd never produce any degree of the one passion, but at the same time it must excite an equal degree of the other; which opposition and contrariety must destroy both ... [S]upposing it to be the view only of ourself, which excited them [i.e. both pride and humility], that being perfectly indifferent to either, must produce both in the very same proportion; or in other words, can produce neither. To excite any passion, and at the same time raise an equal share of its antagonist, is immediately to undo what was done, and must leave the mind at last perfectly calm and indifferent. (T,278)

Precisely the same argument leads to the same conclusion with regard to the object and cause of love and hatred:

> For since love and hatred are directly contrary in their sensation, and have the same object in common, if that object were also their cause, it wou'd produce these opposite passions in an equal degree; and as they must, from the very first moment, destroy each other, none of them wou'd ever be able to make its appearance. There must, therefore, be some cause different from the object. (T,330)

But what does this argument prove? It does prove that one's description of the object of love or the object of hatred can not be identical with one's description of the cause of either. But it does not prove that the object of the passion can not be mentioned in one's description of the cause. In fact, as we have seen earlier, the object of the passion _must_ be mentioned in one's description of the cause if one is to give an associationist account; after all, such an account requires an association of ideas. Strictly, then, Hume wants to say not (a) the object of a passion is not a part cause of the passion; but (b) the object of the passion is not the _sufficient_ cause of the passion. Awareness of the object of a passion is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of that passion. This interpretation is certainly borne out by Hume's formulation of his thesis, if read carefully: "tho' ... [the] _self_, be always the object of these two passions [i.e. pride and humility], 'tis impossible it can be their CAUSE, _or be sufficient alone_ to excite them". (T,277-278. Italics mine.) Similarly, "'tis plain that the object [of love or hatred] is not, properly speaking, the _cause_ of these passions, _or alone sufficient_ to excite them". (T,330. Only "cause" is italicized in original.) On Hume's account, then, the object of pride or humility, love or hatred, is that person _whose_ actions, qualities, etc. cause the passion. I am proud _of_ myself, because of _my_ virtue.

I love Sally because of <u>her</u> kindness tto me. I hate Sam because <u>he</u> has insulted me in public.

Hume's thesis seems to amount to this. In the case of the indirect passions of pride, humility, love, and hatred, the object of each passion is some person, oneself or someone other than oneself. Somehow or other this is to be interpreted as having one's attention fixed on oneself or someone else. But in any case of any of these passions, there is something else of which I am aware as well. It is this something else which is properly called the cause of the passion. At least in the case of the indirect passions, it is necessary to distinguish the objects of these two different awarenesses, if this expression may be allowed. It is not sufficient that I be aware of myself for me to be proud of myself. I must be aware as well of some valuable quality I possess, some notable action I have performed, and so on. This is similar to the linguistic thesis that if I am to give a <u>reason why</u> I am proud, or in love, or experience any other of Hume's indirect passions, I must do more than mention the <u>object</u> of the passion. It is (logically) insufficient, in reply to the question "Why do you love X?" to say simply "Because I am aware of X". To give a reason, one must mention some state of affairs connected with X; not just mention X. For example, one may say "X has been very kind to me". Just to mention X is to do no more than give the object of one's love; it is to give no reason for one's love. When I say "I love X because of X's kindness to me" I do at least two things which must, on Hume's account, be kept separate: I mention the <u>object</u> of my love (X); I give the <u>reason</u> for my loving X (X's kindness to me). Similarly in the case of humility. If I say "I am ashamed of myself for talking to him like that" I make explicit mention of the object of my shame (myself) and give the reason for being

ashamed (talking to him like that). In the case of the indirect passions, Hume seems quite correct in making this distinction.

It is interesting to notice that Hume gives an explicit account of the objects of the passions only in the cases of <u>some</u> of the indirect passions, <u>viz</u>. pride and humility, love and hatred. Whether Hume thinks that passions other than these have objects, and, if so, how the relations between these passions and their objects are to be understood, are questions we may profitably try to answer. The answers, however, will be far from clear. I shall begin with the direct passions.

Regrettably, Hume does not seem to have thought out the question whether the direct passions have objects, and if so, in what sense they have objects. In talking of the direct passions his use of the term "object" is fairly ambiguous. Talking of the anxiety which one may experience concerning the well-being of an absent, ill friend Hume says: "In this case, tho' the principal object of the passion, <u>viz</u>. the life or death of his friend, be to him equally uncertain when present as when absent ...". (T,446) On another occasion he refers to "an object either of desire or aversion". (T,440) One is tempted to construe "object" here analogously to the use of "object" in talk of the indirect passions: i.e. as designating the state of affairs to which one's attention is directed, granted the occurrence of the passion of anxiety. In other cases, however, Hume uses "objects", where, it would seem, he wants to talk of the causes of a passion. In the section "Of the causes of the violent passions" Hume remarks: "We ought to place the object in such particular situations as are proper to encrease the violence of the passion". (T,419) In a similar way he says that "all depends upon the situation of the object, and ... a variation in this particular will be able to change the calm and violent passions into each other". (T,419) It is

significant that the variations in the situation of the objects to which he refers come under a discussion of the "causes" of the violent passions. In this connection "object" seems to be a dummy-word, serving the place of any state of affairs which might cause the occurrence of a passion. (Cf. Hume's later remark: "But when along with this, the objects, that cause pleasure or pain, acquire a relation to ourselves or others; they still continue to excite desire and aversion, grief and joy: But cause, at the same time, the indirect passions". (T,574. Italics mine.) It is at least uncertain, then, whether Hume does think that the direct passions have objects. But, and this must be noticed, this does not, in his theory, prevent the use of such locutions as "I was frightened by the crack of thunder" or "I wanted to go to the cinema" or "She was grief-stricken at the death of her husband". In the three examples, the expressions which apparently refer to the objects of the passions in question would be for Hume designations of the causes of these passions.

This is rather what one would expect, given Hume's insistence, in the case of the indirect passions, on the distinction between the object and the cause of a passion. In the case of love, it is plausible to distinguish the object, some person, from the cause, that person's qualities, behavior, and so on. But consider a direct passion such as joy. Suppose that I am pleased (joyous) by a sumptuous dinner. If someone were to ask "What has caused you to be so pleased?" or "Why are you so pleased?" I would answer by mentioning the sumptuous dinner in which I am partaking. Let us say that this answer gives the cause, in Hume's use of the term, of my joy. But I can also say "I am delighted with the sumptuous dinner" and this seems to be an indication of the object of my joy or my pleasure. In each case, however, I have mentioned the same state of affairs. It is thus not quite so easy to distinguish the cause and object of my joy, as it is to distinguish the cause and object of my love. The difficulty of making this

distinction in the case of (some) direct passions may perhaps have lead Hume to sweep under the carpet a distinction he insisted on with love, hatred, pride, and humility.

Further support for the view that the direct passions do not have objects, but only causes, is given by the fact that Hume does not make explicit use of the fifth law of association in his account of the direct passions. (This law, it will be recalled, invokes a double relation of impressions and ideas.) That Hume does not think the direct passions can be explained by the fifth law of association is implied by a passage in Book III of the _Treatise_. Hume notes that the "chief spring or actuating principle of the human mind is pleasure or pain". (T,574) The "most immediate effects of pleasure and pain", he continues, "are the direct passions". "But when," he says, "the objects, that cause pleasure or pain, acquire a relation to ourselves or others; they still continue to excite desire and aversion, grief and joy: But cause, at the same time, the indirect passions of pride or humility, love or hatred, _which in this case have a double relation of impressions and ideas to the pain or pleasure_." (T,574. Italics mine.) This seems to imply that the direct passions do _not_ "have a double relation of impressions and ideas to the pain or pleasure", which is equivalent to saying that they are not explainable by the fifth law of association. It may plausibly be suggested that this fact is connected with a belief that the direct passions do not occur conjointly with a cognitive state related by resemblance of objects to some prior cognitive state. Since Hume normally connects the concept of the object of a passion with that of the cognitive state accompanying that passion, the fact that Hume does not use the fifth law of association in connection with the direct passions suggests that he does not think the direct passions are accompanied by a special cognitive state, and thus that the direct passions do not have objects.

Another argument in support of the thesis that Hume's direct passions are object-less, is to be derived from the admittedly ambiguous way in which Hume describes the relation between an indirect passion and its object. Pride "turns the view" to oneself; love "turns one's view" to someone else. Given this account it would be strikingly implausible to suggest that, say, one's delight caused by a sumptuous dinner turns one's view to the sumptuous dinner in which one is partaking. After all, one's thoughts are directed to the sumptuous dinner from the start.

On the other hand, considerations of systematic simplicity suggest that, though Hume did not in fact give an associationist account of the direct passions, he probably <u>assumed</u> that such an account could be given at least in most cases. For one thing, the direct passions are all impressions of reflection. If my previous elucidation of this concept is correct, this is to say that the cause of such a passion comprises among its constituents a cognitive state. It would then be quite natural for Hume to assume that this cognitive element had a correspondent associated element in a later complex emotional mental state. As we have seen earlier, Hume considers the simplicity of its explanatory laws to be a virtue of any scientific system. Thus we may assume that he would, if possible, hold that a single model explains both the direct and the indirect passions. Considerations of this sort lead one to expect that Hume thought that the direct passions, including desires, have objects. This argument does not, however, settle the issue. We can only conclude that it is uncertain whether Hume thinks the direct passions have objects in any sense analogous to that in which the indirect passions have objects.

A special problem seems to arise concerning the concept of an object in the case of some indirect passions, viz. those described as desires. Benevolence Hume describes as "a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery". (T,367) Anger is "a desire of the misery and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated". (T,367) Does Hume think that these desires have objects? He does say that when "we are possess'd with love or hatred, the correspondent desire of happiness or misery of the person, who is the object of these passions, arises in the mind, and varies with each variation of these opposite passions". (T,368) But in this case the objects referred to are the objects of the love and hatred, not the benevolence or anger, and love and hatred are not desires. (Cf. T,367)

There is, however, a very good reason for suggesting that Hume would distinguish the objects of these desires from their causes; viz. the fact that Hume's associationist account, and especially his use of the fifth law of association, applies to these indirect passions, as well as to pride and humility, love and hatred.[1] But if this is so, then the occurrence of the (presumably) simple impression of benevolence must be accompanied by some cognitive state, and this, again presumably, would involve one in talk of the object of the benevolence. Unless one can (a) distinguish a cognitive state from the impression of benevolence, (b) distinguish this cognitive state from that which accompanies love, and (c) indicate a resemblance (or some other relation) between the two cognitive states, one cannot make use of the fifth law of association. It would seem, then, that Hume must, as in the case of love and hatred,

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[1] It will be recalled that the fifth law of association involves a double relation of impressions and ideas, or of emotional and cognitive mental states.

distinguish the cause of the passion, from the cognitive state accompanying the passion. It is plausible to suggest that in so far as he makes this move, Hume would invoke the notion of "objects". Thus benevolence and anger would both have objects.

Following this line of reasoning would, however, possibly lead Hume to the rejection of the thesis, argued earlier, that the cause of a passion is distinct from the object of the passion. This problem would not arise if Hume were simply claiming that one cognitive state is logically distinct from another. But, as I suggested earlier, Hume seems to be saying that the <u>object</u> of one cognitive state is distinct from the <u>object</u> of another and the object of the first is a (partial) "cause"of the passion, while the object of the second is the "object"of the passion. Hume's difficulty is seen if we ask how one is to describe the object of, say, benevolence. Benevolence is a desire for the happiness of a beloved person, or an aversion to his unhappiness. Presumably, the object of benevolence, or the object of the desire, is whatever follows "for" in the formula "desire for ..." or "to" in the formula "aversion to ...". The difficulty is that the alleged cause of benevolence would, at least in part, be described as "the thought of the happiness of a beloved person" or "the thought of the unhappiness of a beloved person". Described in this way, no distinction is made between the cause and the object of benevolence. Thus Hume's claim about the distinction between the two seems compromised.

Hume could perhaps avoid this particular difficulty if he were to describe the object of the benevolence-desire in terms of the agent's possible actions: thus, "the desire to bring about or foster the happiness of a beloved person, or to prevent his unhappiness". In such a formulation, the description of the <u>object</u>

of the desire would differ from the description of the correspondent element of the <u>cause</u> of the desire. Now in so far as, for Hume, it is one's desires which "excite" one to action (Cf. T,367) it is plausible to suggest that Hume would endorse this account of desires. He does not, however, explicitly do so.

At this point it would be well to summarise the results of this overlong discussion of the passions and their objects. Hume says at least that some passions have objects, or that some kinds of passions always have objects. There is also some reason to believe that he thought that all the passions, or at least that some passions other than the direct passions of pride, humility, love and hatred, have objects. The case for this claim, however, is far from conclusive. Hume's principal reason for saying that a passion has an object seems to be an inner awareness that the passion is "directed" to some state of affairs, or to some person, or that the occurrence of the passion "turns one's view" to some state of affairs or to some person. Hume's elucidation of this notion of "direction" is, however, highly unsatisfactory, since his general associationist theory only justifies him in saying either (a) that the passion <u>causes</u> some cognitive state whose object is that person or state of affairs (mis-)described as the object of the passion; or (b) that the passion is (always) accompanied by some cognitive state whose object is that person or state of affairs (mis-)described as the object of the passion. Moreover, given the act-object ambiguity present in Hume's theory of impressions and ideas, his account of the relation between a cognitive state and its object is unsatisfactory, though in a different way than is his account of the relations between a passion and its object. Finally, the relation between a passion and its object is wrongly described as a contingent one. If Hume does think that the relation of a passion to its object is that of a cause to its effect, the contingency of the

relation follows from the fact that the relation is a causal one. Even if the relation is not alleged to be a causal one, its contingency follows from the claim that the passions are simple impressions. If we translate Hume's theory into a linguistic one, it is a contingent matter of fact that all our desires are _for_ something, or that we are proud _of_ ourselves, or love other people. For Hume, there can be no logical difficulty in saying that I desire, but that there is nothing I desire, or that I love, but there is no one whom I love, or that I am proud, but my pride has no connections with myself.

I turn now to consider some elements in Hume's account of the relations between the passions and human behavior. The main part of this discussion will take place in the next chapter, but a few comments are necessary at this juncture.

As I shall argue later, Hume construes the relation between the passions and human conduct as, either directly or indirectly, a causal one. The fear of X leads me to act in such a way as to avoid X, but the connection between my fear and my behavior is a causal, and thus a contingent one. Similarly my benevolence towards Smith explains my offering assistance to Smith, but the explanation is a causal one, invoking an empirical law correlating feeling benevolence with offering assistance. I shall question the adequacy of this theory later; at the moment it is just necessary to notice that the connection between a passion and one's behavior, in being described in causal terms, is implicitly alleged to be a contingent one.

Let us consider the indirect passions of pride and humility, love and hatred. What connections does Hume think these passions have with a person's actions? On Hume's theory none of these passions has an immediate connection with action. Two of them, however, have a mediate connection, and two do not.

"The passions of love and hatred", Hume says, "are always followed by, or rather conjoin'd with benevolence and anger". (T,367) Because of this lawlike connection with desires, love and hatred have a connection with human action. This is brought out by Hume's contrast of love and hatred with pride and humility. "Pride and humility," he observes, "are pure emotions in the soul, unattended with any desire, and not immediately exciting us to action". (T,367) If Hume is consistent in maintaining this view, it would seem that one need not ask whether pride and humility have a contingent or some other kind of connection with a person's actions, since they have no connection at all. Love and hatred, on the other hand, do have a connection with human action. The question thus arises: is this connection a contingent one? Since the connection, of whatever sort it be, between love or hatred and human action is a mediate one, via the connection between these passions and the desires of benevolence and anger, we may refrain here from a discussion of the nature of the connection between these desires and human acts, and consider, simply, the connection between love or hatred and benevolence or anger. If <u>this</u> connection is alleged to be contingent, then the connection between love or hatred and human actions must be contingent.

In a most remarkable passage Hume seems emphatically to assert the contingency of the relation between love or hatred and benevolence or anger. This passage is sufficiently illuminating to deserve quotation in full:

> We may ... infer, that benevolence and anger are passions different from love and hatred, and only conjoin'd with them, by the original constitution of the mind. As nature has given to the body certain appetites and inclinations, which she encreases, diminishes, or changes according to the situation of the fluids or solids; she has proceeded in the same manner with the mind. According as we are posses'd with love or hatred, the correspondent desire of the happiness or misery of the person, who is the object of these passions, arises in the mind, and varies with each variation of these passions. This order of things, abstractedly consider'd, is not necessary. Love and hatred might have been unattended with any such desires, or their particular connexion might have been entirely revers'd. If nature had so pleas'd, love might have had the same effect as hatred, and hatred as love. I see no contradiction in supposing a desire of producing misery annex'd to love, and of happiness to hatred. If the sensation of the passion and desire be opposite, nature cou'd have alter'd the sensation without altering the tendency of the desire, and by that means made them compatible with each other. (T,368)

What exactly is being claimed in this passage? For a start, it does not seem that Hume is thinking of those abnormal cases, presumably familiar to psychologists, in which the fact that I love someone somehow explains my desire to injure that person. Hume's account is not so sophisticated as this. Rather, it seems clear that he wishes to assert that, <u>in all cases</u>, a person's love for another person could lead him to desire the harm of that other person. It could, that is, be a true empirical law that love is correlated with the desire to injure the person loved, that love is lawfully correlated with malevolence (Hume's "anger"). And it is most important to notice that this change in the way things are would, on Hume's principles, involve no change in our concept of love; the only change would be in our scientific laws. This, I take it, is the meaning of the assertion introduced by "abstractedly consider'd": that there is no

relation of ideas, and thus no necessary connection, between the idea of love and that of benevolence.

This, of course, is simply a consequence of Hume's thesis that the passions are simple impressions. To say that love is a simple impression is to say that love cannot be analyzed; which in turn is to say that no definition of love is possible. Granted this, if Jack in fact experiences toward Jill that peculiar non-representative pleasant impression which is the necessary and sufficient condition for Jack's being in love, then Jack is in fact in love with Jill, no matter how he acts, or desires to act, towards her.

In the context of the passage quoted, however, Hume does not invoke this argument to support his claim that love and benevolence, or hatred and anger, are only contingently related. Let us look, then, at the argument Hume actually presents. He begins by remarking that love and hatred, in contrast to pride and humility, are not "pure emotions in the soul"; they are "not compleated within themselves, nor rest in that emotion, which they produce, but carry the mind to something farther." (T,367) In the case of love and hatred, the following empirical proposition is true: "The passions of love and hatred are always followed by, or rather conjoin'd with benevolence and anger". (T,367) In somewhat greater detail: "Love is always follow'd by a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd, and an aversion to his misery: As hatred produces a desire of the misery, and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated". (T,367) It is this noticeable conjunction of love and benevolence, hatred and anger, which Hume sets out to explain.

Hume immediately places the question in a polemical context by stating that two different hypotheses may be alleged to account for this feature of experience. One hypothesis, the one Hume rejects, claims:

> Love is nothing but the desire of happiness to another person, and hatred that of misery. The desire and aversion constitute the very nature of love and hatred. They are not only inseparable but the same. (T,367)

It must be noted, then, that at least one of the points which Hume wishes to make against this hypothesis is that love and benevolence are distinct phenomena. He will conclude "that benevolence and anger are passions different from love and hatred, and only conjoin'd with them, by the original constitution of the mind". (T,368)

Hume's actual argument in support of this conclusion is a curious one. He admits that "we never love any person without desiring his happiness, nor hate any without wishing his misery". (T,367) He insists, however, that the necessary (causal) conditions for the occurrence of benevolence and anger include a condition which is not necessary for the occurrence of love or hatred, _viz_. "the ideas of the happiness or misery of our friend or enemy". (T,367) Moreover, the passions of love and hatred "may express themselves in a hundred ways", and not just by benevolence or anger. (T,368) Finally the passions of love and hatred "may subsist a considerable time without our reflecting on the happiness or misery of their objects" (T,368), i.e. without the occurrence of one of the necessary (causal) conditions for benevolence and anger. Though love and benevolence, hatred and anger, are always connected, a time-gap is possible between them, and thus love cannot be _identical_ with benevolence, nor hatred with anger. For Hume, then, to

show that two states of affairs A and B are logically distinct states of affairs, it is sufficient to show (a) that the causal conditions for the one differ in at least one respect from the causal conditions for the other, even if in many respects they are the same; and/or (b) that a time-gap may obtain between the time of the occurrence of A and the time of the occurrence of B, even if A and B are always conjoined.

Now if we grant Hume's premises, it would follow that love and benevolence are not identical. And, it should be recalled, it is precisely <u>this</u> point that Hume sets out to prove. But from the fact that two states of affairs are not identical, it does not follow that the states of affairs in question are only contingently related. There is no contradiction in asserting that two states of affairs A and B are not identical and yet claiming that there is a logical connection between them. I may, with perfect consistency, assert that my desire to Ø is different from my actually Ø-ing, while maintaining that the two are logically related. Or, using an example of Hume's, property is not justice, nor justice property, but the two are connected by a relation of ideas. Thus, Hume's arguments in the passage in question, if they show only that love and benevolence are not identical, would prove the error of the theory Hume sets out to oppose, but they would not support his larger claim, that the connection between love and benevolence "abstractedly consider'd, is not necessary". (T,368)

The fact that Hume has mistaken his game here is clear from one of the implications of his thesis; <u>viz</u>. that our concept of love would suffer no change in conditions in which one might truthfully assert the empirical law: Whenever someone loves another person, he subsequently desires the

unhappiness of that person. This, we want to say, is just not possible, in a logical sense of "possible", given the concept of "love". Our problem, then, is to pinpoint the source of Hume's mistake.

Two possibilities present themselves. On the one hand, one might want to say that, though there is a logical connection between love and benevolence, it does not follow from this that in every case of love the person who loves must also feel benevolence toward the person loved (in the sense of explicitly thinking of and desiring his happiness). Similarly, though there is a logical connection between fear and certain sorts of behavior, we do not say that in every case of fear fearful behavior must be exhibited. But this does not entail that the connection between fear and fearful behavior is a contingent one, much less a causal one. Similarly, it does not appear impossible that a person might feel tenderly toward some other person, without in fact even thinking of that person's happiness, or of any ways of securing that person's happiness. But what of the suggestion that such tender feelings be followed by a desire for the injury of the person loved? Perhaps, in an abnormal case, we would permit this to be said. But the fact that we would look upon the case as abnormal is symptomatic of our unease in thus using the concepts of love and malevolence. Even if we are willing to admit that love may sometimes not be accompanied by feelings of benevolence, we would want to lay down restrictions on the possible application of the concepts, by asserting that, except in abnormal cases, we cannot both love X and desire his unhappiness.

A rather different approach would be the following. One might agree that whatever takes place in a person's mind when he loves someone, assuming that there are things that go on in a person's mind when he loves someone,

is causally connected with whatever takes place in his mind when he explicitly thinks of and desires the happiness of that person. For example, whenever Jack feels tenderly toward Jill he may have certain visual images, bodily sensations, and so on, and whenever he feels benevolently toward Jill, he has certain other visual images, bodily sensations, and so on. It may also be possible to provide independent identifications of these phenomena. Moreover, it may be the case that these phenomena are lawfully correlated. Now if this is what Hume means when he asserts that love and benevolence are contingently related, there seems to be no prima facie objection to his thesis. The truth of such laws would, in principle at least, be open to disconfirmation by experience. Given Hume's doctrine that the passions are simple impressions, it is at least plausible to suggest that his own view runs along these lines. But from this it does not follow that, in any normal sense of "love" or "benevolence", love and benevolence are not logically connected. For it does not seem that the ordinary concept of love refers to such goings-on in one's mind, and to them alone, nor that the ordinary concept of benevolence refers to such mental happenings, and to them alone. Assuming, however, that there are such happenings, and that they are independently identifiable, there seems no logical reason to insist that they cannot be causally (and thus contingently) related. The mistake in this case, however, is to say that love and benevolence are only contingently related. Thus, in so far as Hume's thesis is one about the lawful correlation of independently identifiable mental events, he is correct in asserting that such correlations are only contingent. But if his thesis is about the meaning of "love" or "benevolence" he is mistaken.

Returning to the question with which we started this discussion of love and benevolence, we may conclude that, for Hume, at least some passions have only a contingent relation with human actions. Some passions, such as pride and humility, are alleged to have no direct connection with human action. Others, such as love and hatred, are connected with human actions _via_ the desires to which they give rise. But since they are said to be contingently related with these desires, they must be thought to be contingently related to action. A question still remains, however, concerning the nature of the relation between desires and the actions which they explain. I shall discuss this question at some length in the next chapter.

Perhaps, however, we are being premature in insisting that Hume views the connection between love or hatred and human behavior to be a contingent one. In at least one place Hume talks in a way that at least _seems_ to be inconsistent with this thesis. The passage in question occurs in the course of Hume's discussion of the indirect passions of pity and malice. We must discuss this passage in some detail, since the principal objection to the thesis I am defending here rests on it.

We may begin by noticing the dilemma in which Hume finds himself when he comes to talk of pity and malice. Hume describes these passions as follows: "_Pity_ is a concern for, and _malice_ a joy in the misery of others, without any friendship or enmity to occasion this concern or joy". (T,369) Given Hume's account, in terms of the doctrine of sympathy, of the manner in which each of these passions arises, however, he is faced with a peculiar difficulty. For the mechanism of sympathy to work, Hume must say that

pity is an unpleasant feeling-state, and malice a pleasant one. He does in fact say this: "pity is an uneasiness, and malice a joy". (T,381) It seems to be the case, however, that, as Hume points out, "There is always a mixture of love or tenderness with pity, and of hatred or anger with malice". (T,381) On Hume's account there can be no logical difficulty in this, but there is a good reason why, on other than logical grounds, Hume should be bothered by this alleged fact, for it runs counter to his theory of the association of impressions and ideas as stated thus far. Granted Hume's associationism, how can he explain the fact that the unpleasant feeling-state which is pity is lawfully correlated with the pleasant feeling-state which is love? Passions are supposed to cause other passions by virtue of a resemblance in hedonic quality between them. In the case of love and pity, one is said to be lawfully correlated with the other _despite_ a contrariety of hedonic quality. Hume is quite aware of this difficulty: "as pity is an uneasiness, and malice a joy, arising from the misery of others, pity shou'd naturally, as in all other cases, produce hatred; and malice, love." (T,381)

To get past this dilemma, Hume appears to make some crucial changes in his general theory of the nature of a passion. As we have seen many times, he considers the passions as simple impressions, each kind of passion being different from every other kind of passion by virtue of its intrinsic character as an unanalyzable simple impression. Each distinct kind of passion is in principle identifiable and distinguishable solely by reference to its character as a feeling-state, independent of reference to the circumstances within which it occurs, its symptoms, the behavior it leads to,

and so on. Throughout his account, moreover, Hume has insisted that an explanation of the occurrence of a passion in most cases takes the form of invoking the fourth or fifth law of association.[1] Both laws, in so far as they refer to the impressions which are the passions, refer only to the pleasant or unpleasant hedonic quality of the simple impressions. Pleasant passions give rise to pleasant passions, and unpleasant to unpleasant.

Now, however, a new note is struck. To "understand the full force of this double relation" of impressions and ideas, Hume observes:

> We must consider, that 'tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the whole bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end. One impression may be related to another, not only when their sensations are resembling, as we have all along suppos'd in the preceding cases; but also when their impulses or directions are similar and correspondent. (T,381)

This remark certainly <u>seems</u> inconsistent with the view that the passions are simple impressions. If "'tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion", then surely, it seems, the passion cannot just <u>be</u> a present sensation or a simple impression. Great care must be taken, however, in interpreting this claim. For one thing, love is one of the passions said to have a "bent or tendency", "impulse or direction". By the argument above, love would not then be just a simple impression. But Hume has, quite explicitly, said that love <u>is</u> a simple impression. (T,329) To suggest that Hume wants now to deny that love is a simple impression implies that he is quite blatantly contradicting himself.

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[1] The fourth law states that one passion (impression) causes another when they are related by resemblance. The fifth law states that one complex mental state, comprising an emotional and a cognitive element, causes another complex mental state, comprising an emotional and a cognitive element, when the emotional elements in each are related by resemblance, and the objects of the cognitive elements of each are related by resemblance, contiguity, or causation.

If an alternative interpretation can be offered which salvages both Hume's thesis about the simplicity of the passions and his present remarks about the direction or tendency of the passions, it would seem that this alternative interpretation must be adopted. As I shall try to show, such an alternative interpretation can be given.

We can begin by considering the notions of "bent or tendency", "impulse or direction". One thing is clear: to talk of the "bent or tendency", "impulse or direction", of a passion is not the same as to talk of the direction of a passion to its object, as the term "object" has been used thus far. Hume explicitly states that pride and humility do not have such a "bent or tendency", "direction or impulse". (T,381-382) The reason for this is that these are "only pure sensations, without any _direction or tendency to action_". (T,382. Italics mine.) But, it will be recalled, pride and humility both have objects. Thus, the "direction" of a passion, in the present sense, is not the same as that used when Hume talks of a passion being directed to its object. Love and hatred, however, do have such a "bent or tendency", "impulse or direction". This cannot be in virtue of their having an object - in this they are in the same condition as pride or humility. In what sense, then, do they have a "direction or tendency to action"?

The reason, I would suggest, why Hume thinks that love and hatred have a "direction or tendency to action" is that they "are _attended_ with a certain appetite or desire". (T,382. Italics mine.) What desire? The desires of benevolence and anger. To say that love and hatred have a "direction or tendency to action" is simply to say that they are lawfully connected as causes to effects with these desires. And, via these desires, love and

hatred are connected with human conduct. But, as we saw above, the connection between love or hatred and benevolence or anger is explicitly declared to be an contingent one. Thus, it would seem most implausible, in fact, to suggest that Hume here intends to reject his thesis about the contingency of the relation between love or hatred and human conduct. In saying that the present sensation alone does not determine the character of a passion, but "the whole bent or tendency of it from beginning to end", he is only saying, albeit in a misleading way, that an adequate account of any passion must take into consideration those empirical laws which apply to the passions. It is a fact about love that those who experience this passion normally also experience the feeling of benevolence, and those who experience this latter passion normally act in certain ways. It is in this sense, on Hume's view, that one can speak of love's "direction or tendency to action". But clearly enough, on Hume's theory, this is not at all inconsistent with speaking of love as a simple impression.

This interpretation of the passage in question is further strengthened by the fact that, throughout the passage, Hume is at pains to give an account of the relations between, on the one hand, love, benevolence, and pity, and, on the other, between hatred, anger, and malice, that squares with his theory of the association of impressions and ideas. As we have seen, it is this project which creates Hume's dilemma. But it is a central tenet of Hume's theory that the laws of association are causal laws, and thus contingent laws. Thus, when Hume cashes the notion of the direction or tendency of love in terms of its associative connections with benevolence, he must be taken to imply a contingent relation between the two. The genuine novelty in Hume's theory at this point is not any denial that the passions are simple impressions.

It is rather the peculiar emendations he seems to make in his account of the mechanics of the fifth law of association. But we need not go into this here.

Since it would seem that Hume construes the connection between the passions (at least those passions other than desires) and human actions to be a contingent one, there seems little point in trying to show that, for Hume, the relation between a passion and what may be called its symptoms is a contingent one as well. (By "symptoms" I here mean all normally observable physical or physiological changes which the person experiencing the passion undergoes. This includes all behavior that would not be said to be motivated by the passion in question.) This is, after all, a weaker thesis. Furthermore, it follows with equal rigor from the premise that the passions are simple impressions. Moreover, there is some textual grounding for this view. Talking of the pride and humility of animals Hume says: "There are many evident marks of pride and humility". (T,326. Italics mine.) He then proceeds to talk of the "port and gait of a swan, or turkey, or peacock"; the "vanity and emulation of nightingales in singing"; the vanity and emulation "of horses in swiftness, of hounds in sagacity and smell, of the bull and cock in strength". (T,326) Presumably Hume here refers to aspects of the behavior of these animals that would not count as actions. This is suggested by his remark that "pride and humility are pure emotions in the soul, unattended with any desire, and not immediately exciting us to action". (T,367) Hume nowhere, however, seems to have attempted a clear demarcation of actions from other elements of a person's behavior, from physiological changes, and so on. In general, as we shall see later, Hume uses the word "action" to designate all sorts of things that would not normally be called actions.[1]

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[1] pp. 309-311.

Perhaps, however, we may assume that Hume would distinguish actions from symptoms on the grounds that the former are, and the latter are not, voluntary. But there is no need to press this point here.

Another aspect of Hume's theory of the passions which is quite interesting and important to consider is his account of the various circumstances within which the various passions occur. To discuss this topic in detail would take us too far from the main line of my present argument. This is not, however, to suggest that the detail is not, at least in some cases, illuminating. As Dr. Árdal has shown in his detailed account of Hume's theory of pride, Hume has much to say that is of interest from the point of view of conceptual analysis.[1] Of necessity, however, I must restrict myself to doing two things: giving a few examples of the sort of analysis to which I am referring; and considering the character of the connection alleged between these circumstances and the passions. I shall then consider one particular circumstance that Hume notes in connection with many passions, and which seems to have a quite general significance.

The sort of discussion of circumstances I have in mind comes out most clearly in Hume's account of the indirect passions of pride, humility, love and hatred, though not in them alone. In the case of pride, Hume points out that a variety of circumstances must be satisfied if pride or humility are to occur. Those things or actions or qualities which make us proud must be valued by us in some way. For example, if it is my house that makes me proud the house must be beautiful, or unique, or expensive, or in some other way describable by me in terms of (positive) valuation. If it is a particular action which makes me proud, it must likewise be described by me

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[1] Árdal. Chapter II. "The indirect passions". pp. 17-40.

in terms that imply my (positive) valuation of that action. For example, the action must be heroic, or virtuous, or kind, or dexterously done, or something of that sort. The same with any qualities that may make me proud. (In the case of humility, these things must be negatively valued.) In Hume's language, the things, or actions, or qualities, which make me proud must "produce a separate pain or pleasure". (T,285)[1] Besides being objects of value or disvalue to me, however, the things, actions, or qualities which make me proud or ashamed must somehow be connected with myself. In Hume's words, "the subjects, on which the qualities are plac'd, are related to self". (T,285-285) That is to say that they must be my actions, my qualities, my possessions, and so on; or the actions, qualities, or possessions of someone bearing a special relation to me. They may, for example, be the actions, qualities, or possessions of my brother, my son, my fellow-countryman, my co-religionist, and so on. In short, these actions, qualities or possessions must be connected with someone somehow bearing a special relationship to myself (or else must be connected directly with myself) if they are to make me proud.

A similar discussion takes place in the case of love or hatred. Hume insists that at least two conditions are necessary for a person to experience either passion. One must be aware of some action, quality or possession connected with some person other than oneself (the person being that person who is the object of one's love); and that action, quality or possession must be considered to be of value in some respect, in the case of love, or disvalued in some way, in the case of hatred. Hume asserts these conditions in this way: "The cause of love and hatred must be related to a person or thinking

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[1] I shall later have occasion to question the adequacy of this formula. See p.p. 266-267.

being, in order to produce these passions" (T,331); the causes of these passions "excite a pain or pleasure independent of the passion". (T,332) In the case of other passions other conditions are described. For fear or hope to occur, one must believe that "either good or evil is uncertain". (T,439) For joy, it is necessary that one believe that some "good is certain or probable"; for grief or sorrow, that some "evil is in the same situation". (T,439) And so on for the other passions.

The account I have given of the circumstances necessary for the occurrence of the passions is, for the most part, a very schematic one. At least in the cases of pride, humility, love and hatred, Hume introduces further restrictions into his description of the conditions necessary for their occurrence. This schematic account is, however, sufficient for my present purpose, which is to show that Hume considers the connection between the passions and the circumstances of their occurrence to be a contingent one.

Referring to the two conditions of pride and humility mentioned above, he describes them as "two properties of the *causes* of these affections". (T,285. Italics mine.) Likewise, his point is that "the *cause* of love and hatred must be related to a person or thinking being, in order to *produce* these passions". (T,331. Italics mine.) Moreover, "all the arguments that have been employ'd to prove, that the *causes* of the former passions [i.e. pride and humility] excite a pain or pleasure *independent* of the passion, will be applicable with equal evidence to the *causes* of the latter [i.e. love and hatred]". (T,332. Italics mine.) This seems to be Hume's view of the relation between *all* the other passions and their circumstances. It is, for Hume, a contingent matter of fact that pride occurs only when I am aware of the valued actions, qualities, or possessions of myself or of someone bearing

a special relationship to me. It is an empirical discovery that love occurs only when the person loved is believed to have some quality or to have performed some action which I believe to be commendable. But if the relations between the passions and the circumstances within which they occur is a contingent one, it is logically possible that the passions could occur in quite different circumstances. I could, for example, be proud of what I believe to be the praiseworthy conduct of someone whom I believe to have no relation to myself at all. I could be proud of what I believe to be the reprehensible conduct of someone I believe to bear no special relation to myself. I could be proud without having any beliefs about any circumstances whatever. Similarly in the cases of love, hatred, and the other passions. All these circumstances are causally necessary conditions for the occurrence of the appropriate passions; none of them are logically necessary conditions.

But if the possibility of these states of affairs is a consequence of the claim that the passions are causally related to their circumstances then the connection must be of some other kind than causal. We cannot (in a logical sense) be proud of conduct that we consider to be valueless in every respect, or of the conduct of someone who is not thought of as bearing some kind of special relation to ourselves. Nor can we be proud, while not being proud of anything at all.[1] It is part of the concept of pride that we have beliefs of the sort described by Hume; without having beliefs such as these, we logically cannot be proud. Thus, if Hume's theory of the passions as simple impressions implies, as it does, a merely contingent connection between having the passion in question and having the appropriate beliefs, the theory is mistaken. And if the theory of the association of impressions

[1] Unless, that is, we are using "proud" in the sense of "He's too proud to accept National Assistance".

and ideas, of which Hume's account of the circumstances of the passions is a part, has these consequences, it too must be mistaken.

This is not to say that what Hume has to say about the circumstances of the various passions is wholly mistaken. A great deal of what Hume actually says about these circumstances is in fact quite illuminating. It is this which gives genuine interest to his account. Where Hume is mistaken, however, is in his description of the logical status of the relations between the passions and the circumstances of their occurrence. To describe these relations as merely contingent ones is to mistake their nature completely.

One of the circumstances which Hume mentions as conditioning the occurrence of many of the passions deserves special attention because of its more general interest. This is the circumstance that the person who experiences the simple impression which is the passion must believe that the quality (in Hume's very broad use of the term) which is said to be the cause of the passion is of value or is lacking in value. The connection between this belief and the passion is said to be a causal one. In saying this, Hume is surely mistaken. Despite <u>this</u> defect in his theory, however, Hume's emphasis on the connections between the passions and evaluation is of great importance.

We saw earlier, in considering Hume's classification of the passions, that <u>all</u> passions are impressions of reflection, and that <u>most</u> passions require the prior occurrence of some pleasure or pain. To say that all passions are impressions of reflection is in part to say that all depend causally on the prior occurrence of some "idea", i.e. on the prior awareness of some state of affairs. In some cases, however, such as some aesthetic sentiments, the pleasant experience which <u>is</u> the passion is original, in the sense that a

prior cognitive state is alone sufficient to explain the occurrence of the passion (at least from the point of view of Hume's mental science). No prior pleasure or pain is required. In this, these passions are similar to bodily pleasures or pains. We have seen that Hume must have some doctrine of original pleasures and pains if he is to avoid an infinite regress in his account of the passions.

In other cases, however, the occurrence of one passion (causally) requires the prior occurrence of another pleasure or pain, whether this pleasure or pain be itself a passion, or just a physical pleasure or pain. This is the case with all the indirect passions, and with most of the direct passions. The occurrence of any one of these passions is in part explained by the prior occurrence of a distinct pleasure or pain. At one point Hume says:

> What I discover to be true in some instances, I suppose to be so in all; and take it for granted at present, without any farther proof, that every cause of pride, by its peculiar qualities, produces a separate pleasure, and of humility a separate uneasiness. (T,285)

Later in the Treatise Hume makes this point more generally when he says: "the passions, both direct and indirect, are founded on pain and pleasure". (T,438)

At times, as in the first of the two passages just quoted, Hume apparently wants to say that the requisite prior pleasure or pain must be an impression of pleasure or pain, i.e. an actual experience of pleasure or pain. This is theoretically necessary especially in those cases where he invokes the fifth law of association, with its reference to a double relation of impressions and ideas. To have a relation of impressions one must have two impressions: the passion to be explained, and the prior impression which in part explains it. At other times, however, the thought of a pleasure or pain, or the thought that some state of affairs is pleasant or painful, suffices.

This seems to be the case with some of the direct passions, such as fear or hope. I shall not labor this point, however. It is enough to notice that one of the necessary conditions for most of the passions is an independent pleasure or pain.

But what has this to do with valuation? We may take a start from Hume's remark: "Beside good and evil, or in other words, pain and pleasure, the direct passions frequently arise from a natural impulse or instinct, which is perfectly unaccountable". (T,439. Italics mine.) Similarly, he says: "'Tis easy to observe, that the passions, both direct and indirect, are founded on pain and pleasure, and that in order to produce an affection of any kind, 'tis only requisite to present some good or evil". (T,438. Italics mine.) That is to say, the concepts of good and evil, the prime evaluative concepts, are inseparably linked in Hume's theory with the concepts of pleasure and pain. A painting is a good painting if it produces the unique pleasure of aesthetic enjoyment. A man is a good man if the view of his character produces the unique pleasure of moral approval, and bad if the corresponding pain is produced. A bottle of wine is a good bottle of wine if it produces its appropriate pleasure. It is analytic for Hume that if something is good in any sense of "good" it causes pleasure, and if something is bad it produces pain. (Other conditions, of course, are necessary, if one is to talk of different kinds of goodness or pleasure, and evil or pain.) It follows from this, that the occurrence of any passion, other than a member of that restricted range of passions which does not require a prior pleasure or pain, requires the occurrence of some prior evaluation.

In Hume's view, this is an empirical law. If one knows the laws governing the occurrence of the passions, and if one knows that, say, Smith

hates Jones, one is entitled to say thatthere is some respect in which Jones's character, or actions, or whatever, is an object of negative valuation on Smith's part. (This is like saying that where there is smoke I am entitled to say that there is fire.) This empirical law will be disconfirmed if it is true that there is no quality or action or whatever of Jones that is the object of a negative valuation on Smith's part. Such falsification is a logical possibility. The same is true of the other passions of the class in question. Smith cannot (in the causal sense) be ashamed of having done X, if there is no respect in which he judges doing X to be a bad thing. He cannot be proud of doing Y, if he does not judge that doing Y is a good thing. He cannot hope that some state of affairs will come about, unless he believes that, in some respect, the obtaining of this state of affairs is something of value.

If we disregard Hume's claim that this is a contingent fact about many of the passions, as well as his assimilation of the concept of valuation to the concepts of pleasure and pain, the point he is stressing is a very important one. As several recent philosophers have noted, the connection between emotion and evaluation is a particularly intimate one. Many of the passions _are_ connected with evaluations, though the connection is a conceptual one. Pride is connected with valuation in the sense that I (logically) cannot be proud of what I consider to be lacking of value in every respect. Hope is connected with evaluation in the sense that that state of affairs for which I hope (logically) must be considered by me to have some value, in some respect. Errol Bedford makes this point concerning hope in a linguistic way:

> The expression "I hope that ..." implies, in addition to a very vague estimate of probability, an assessment of whatever is referred to in the clause that follows. I think it is clear that one cannot hope for something, although one can expect something, without judging it favorably in some respect, or from some point of view.[1]

To this we may compare Hume's remark: "When either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to FEAR or HOPE". (T,439) Similar intimate connections obtain between many other passions and evaluation or assessment. Though he mistakes the logical status of his claim, Hume's claim is at least significantly similar to one of philosophical interest.[2]

I shall conclude my account of Hume's theory of the passions by considering two further points: the elasticity of Hume's use of the word "passion"; and the distinction between passions as dispositions and passions as occurrences. The two topics are interconnected, and commentators on Hume's theory have paid insufficient attention to both.

I have already drawn attention to Hume's criteria for distinguishing the passions from other mental acts or states. Passions are distinct from cognitive acts or states because they (i.e. passions) are representative and either pleasant or painful. Moreover, mention of a passion is necessary if one is to give a reason for any action. The passions differ from physical pains or pleasures because they (i.e. the passions) are causally dependent on the prior occurrence of some cognitive mental act or state, whereas physical pains or pleasures are, from the point of view of mental science,

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[1] Errol Bedford, "Emotions", The Philosophy of Mind, ed. V.C. Chappell (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1962), p.118. A similar point is made in G. Pitcher, "Emotion", Mind, LXXIV (1965), esp. pp.333 ff.

[2] I would draw attention to the fact that I am not here considering another connection between evaluation and the passions which has a central place in Hume's theory. Hume considers that moral evaluations of character are indirect passions of a unique sort, occurring within unique circumstances. Dr. Árdal has discussed this point at length in Passion and Value, and so there is no need for me to consider it here. I would just observe that even these passions require, on Hume's view, a prior evaluation of some sort.

original. Whether or not there is in fact such a clear line separating sensations and passions (construing "passions" here as equivalent to "emotions") is a question which I shall waive at this point. It is sufficient to note that, for Hume, if a pleasure or pain is one for which one can assign a mental cause, that pleasure or pain is a passion.

Let us consider, now, what mental acts or states are alleged to be passions on these criteria. All those mental states for which our ordinary language of the emotions is appropriate are passions. Thus, under "passions" we may list love, hatred, pride, humility, envy, malice, pity, benevolence, anger, esteem, joy, grief, despair, fear, hope, and so on. Also, we must include the aesthetic and moral sentiments, i.e. those unique sentiments which justify us in saying that something or someone is beautiful or ugly, or that someone is morally good or bad. We must include, as well, any act or state which is describable as "a desire for ..." or "an aversion to ...". Thus, if it is true that I want to buy a textbook in symbolic logic, this wanting of mine is a passion. If I want not to take an overnight bus-ride to London, this wanting-not is a passion. This class of phenomena overlaps the first. Hume also includes "volitions", though he displays some uneasiness in doing so. He says, for example, that the will "properly speaking" is "not comprehended among the passions". (T,399) Also, in giving a list of the direct passions he significantly separates volition from the others: "desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, _along with volition_". (T,438. Italics mine.)

It is more illuminating, however, to take a sample of particular phenomena which Hume considers to be instances of the passions. In the course of Books II and III of the _Treatise_ Hume mentions many phenomena which one might

expect to be treated as passions: love, hatred, pride, compassion, and so on. There are also, however, many surprising candidates for the class of passions, including: "constancy and fidelity" (T,406); "the desire of showing our liberty" (T,408); "prefer[ing] the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger" (T,416); "chus[ing] my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me" (T,416); "desir[ing] any fruit as of excellent relish" (T,417); "courage and confidence" (T,420); "curiosity, or the love of truth" (T,448); "hunting and philosophy" (T,451); "gaming" (T,452). None of these various things would normally be considered emotions. Hume's use of "passions" is not, then, in fact the same as our ordinary use of "emotions". The former class includes the latter, rather than being co-extensive with it. The class of emotions does not, while the class of passions does, include things such as preferences, choices, interests, hobbies, occupations, and perhaps others as well. Moreover, some character traits which would not normally be considered emotions, would have to be included under passions.

It is difficult to see why Hume would consider all of these various phenomena as passions, especially if passions are considered as pleasant or unpleasant feeling states. They are, however, much more plausibly construed as passions on the other two criteria mentioned. In all the instances given one would want to say that the phenomena are, roughly in Hume's sense, non-representative. Choices, preferences, interests are, none of them, the sorts of things that can, even with a bit of stretching, be thought of as true or false (though they may be reasonable or unreasonable, and so on). Moreover, the mention of any of these things can, as I shall argue later, suffice to explain or give a reason for a man's actions. I would suggest, then, that in fact Hume considers a mental act or state to be a passion if it satisfies

one or other or both of these latter two criteria. Nevertheless, he does seem to assume that any phenomenon which satisfies these two criteria will also satisfy that of pleasantness/unpleasantness. He seems in fact to think that only if a mental state is pleasant or painful can it move a person to act. The pleasantness or unpleasantness of the mental state provides, for Hume, the ultimate explanation of that state's power to cause human actions. I shall return to this point in my next chapter.

But if Hume is so completely wedded to the idea that passions are pleasant or unpleasant feeling-states, how can he construe traits of character, interests, preferences, and other such things as passions? Is a character trait, such as courage, a pleasant (or unpleasant) feeling-state? It's not very likely. For light on this issue we must recall the distinction made earlier between occurrences and dispositions.[1]

It is obvious, at the start, that Hume's interest centers on the passions as occurrences. This is quite understandable. He wants to give an associationist account of the passions, but this is necessarily an account of individual occurrences of the passions. It is one occurrent impression or idea that is related to some other occurrent impression or idea. Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter, Hume finds himself unable to give any very explicit account of those permanent or semi-permanent conditions of the subject whose existence he feels he must postulate in order to account for the complex phenomena of human mental life. These two facts would explain Hume's reluctance to talk of the passions in dispositional terms. Nevertheless, we have seen that Hume does have some theory of mental dispositions.

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[1] See Chapter III, Section 2.

Since this is so, and since he does make use of dispositional concepts of the passions, we may ask what sort of account Hume would give of the passions as dispositions.

The model Hume is working with when he uses dispositional concepts of the passions seems to be just a slightly complicated version of the one already described. A passion is a pleasant or painful sensation dependent on an awareness of some state of affairs. This model is alleged to cover not only love, anger, shame, and so on, but also all desires and even choices. The reader is asked to construe the desire for a long, cool drink as a pleasant sensation, consequent upon the thought of the drink, which desire propels one, as it were, towards securing the drink. In the case of dispositional concepts, what is added does not change this basic pattern. If a man is said to be a proud man, in the dispositional sense of "pride", he is said to be such a person that, if he or someone related to him performs some commendable action, or has some notable property, and his attention is drawn to this fact, he will experience that unique pleasant sensation which is pride, and which is directed towards himself. Likewise, if a man is said to be a lover of truth, it is implied that if an occasion presents itself for learning some truth, he will have the pleasant sensation of a desire to learn, which desire will propel him to take the necessary steps to discovering this truth. That is to say, the use of dispositional concepts of the passions does not, in fact, compromise Hume's general theory of the passions. It is simply a matter of including in one's analysis of a dispositional statement a reference to appropriate circumstances and to appropriate <u>occurrences</u> of the passions. A man is an irascible man (dispositional) because he tends to feel angry (occurrence), given certain conditions. He is interested in symbolic logic

if he tends to want (in the occurrence sense) to read books on symbolic logic, attend lectures, and so on. To ascribe a passion to someone in the dispositional sense involves, of course, saying that he normally experiences the appropriate passion, in the occurrence sense. In this respect, somewhat different information is given when one ascribes a disposition to a passion, than when one says that a person is experiencing a passion. But, at least, on Hume's view, the dispositional use of the concept of a passion must be tied down to occurrences of the passions.

It would seem, then, that one cannot object to Hume's belief that the passions are pleasant or painful feeling-states by pointing out that he uses words for passions in a dispositional way. The objection may, however, be entered against those occurrences to which the disposition is tied.

CHAPTER V

MOTIVES, CAUSES AND ACTIONS

In previous chapters I have discussed Hume's views on the nature of explanation in general and the nature of the explanation of mental events in particular. I have also considered Hume's allegedly scientific account of the passions, that is, his explanatory account of how the various passions, considered as internal impressions, occur. In this chapter I shall consider his theory of the explanation of human actions. I shall try to show what Hume thinks is involved in the explanation of such actions as those reported in sentences such as "Smith opened the window" or "Jones picked up his pen". Questions about the explanation of human actions are closely, and traditionally, connected with questions about the freedom of human actions. It is, for example, a serious philosophical problem whether the possibility of explaining a particular human action is compatible with the claim that that same action is a free action. The present chapter thus has two sections. In the first I shall provide an account of Hume's theory of the explanation of human actions. In the second I shall discuss what he has to say about human freedom.

1. The Explanation of Actions

The problem of the explanation of human actions is an enormously complex one involving a great number of highly controversial philosophical issues. In addition to the inherent philosophical difficulties of this discussion, the task of stating Hume's views on the explanation of human actions is further complicated by the fact that on a number of the issues involved in the general problem he has not attempted to provide any clearly articulated

theory. Hume has a great deal to say that is of interest for an understanding of the nature of the explanation of human actions. But in many cases his attention is centered not on questions about explanation but on specific problems in ethics, politics, and so on. Thus the interpreter's problem is one of constructing a theory of the explanation of human actions that is in fact Hume's theory, though Hume has himself not attempted to formulate it in any very systematic way. To make this discussion reasonably manageable I shall take it in the following stages. I shall first consider Hume's views on the conditions which must be satisfied if one is to explain an action, and the character of such explanations. This will require a detailed analysis of Hume's theory of the nature of desires, and of the ways in which thinking influences a person's conduct. I shall then consider three important objections to Hume's theory of desires and the explanation of actions. This will require a close analysis of what Hume means by the terms "action" and "volition". I shall begin by stating the problem of the explanation of actions as clearly as possible, and by defining the terms I shall use.

The problem at issue is this. What is involved in explaining an action A performed by a person P by saying that P performed A in order to x. I shall call this sort of explanation of A a "motivational explanation". There are, of course, other sorts of explanations of actions. One can explain an action by referring to some dispositional property of the agent. For example, one can explain the fact that Smith has just lit a cigarette by saying "He's a chain-smoker". One can explain an action by referring to some agitated state of the agent. For example, one can explain Smith's shaking his fist by saying "He's terribly angry with Jones". Neither of these two ways of explaining actions are incompatible with motivational explanations.

Smith may have lit a cigarette automatically; but he may also have lit it in order to have a smoke. His shaking his fist at Jones may have been a mere expression of his anger; but he may also have shaken his fist in order to make Jones aware of his anger. I shall not, however, discuss these two ways of explaining actions. Rather, I shall concentrate on explanations such as "Smith opened the window in order to get a breath of air" or "Jones picked up his pen in order to write a letter". I shall take explanations of this kind to be equivalent to explanations given in such other ways as "Smith opened the window because he wanted a breath of air", "Smith opened the window out of a desire for a breath of air", "Smith's reason for opening the window was to get a breath of air", and so on.

In each such case I shall call that fact about a person P which provides a motivational explanation for his action A his motive. This does not, of course, accord very well with the ordinary usage of "motive". Normally, we only talk of a person's motives in unusual circumstances, as when we believe that his actions cannot be explained in any straightforward way, or when we doubt whether the explanation he offers of his actions is a sincere one. Thus, we may wonder about the motives of a normally selfcentered man who is going out of his way to be of assistance. We might disbelieve his claim that he just wanted to be of assistance, and suspect that he has some hidden or ulterior motives. Despite its lack of consonance with ordinary usage, however, my use of the word "motive" should not be misleading, and is convenient. In this usage, to explain a man's action by saying that he did it in order to $\underline{x}$ is to provide the motive of his action.

Three further comments must be made about my use of "motive" and "motivational explanation". First, as should be clear from the above

explanations of "motive" and "motivational explanation", I am restricting the use of both expressions to cases where the motives mentioned or motivational explanations offered have to do with what may roughly be called occurrences as opposed to dispositions. Thus, I am concerned not with a motive explanation of the sort "Smith acted out of vanity" but rather of the sort "Smith related his exploits in order to draw attention to himself".[1] Secondly, I am not concerned with cases of unconscious motives. Thus, my use of "motive" and "motivational explanation" is not intended to cover cases of this sort: "He thought that his reason for sacking Jones was Jones's incompetence, but in fact he did so in order to eliminate a possible challenge to his own position in the firm". Finally, in using "motive" and "motivational explanation" in the way I propose I do not intend to deny the fact that, in ordinary language, a motive is not a thing of the same ontological status as, say, a thought, or a feeling, or a desire. That is, I am aware that one makes a category-mistake if one talks, in the same breath, as it were, of Jones's thoughts and feelings and motives.[2] Nevertheless, my use of "motive" is a convenient and useful one, especially for giving an account of Hume's theory. It accords, as well, with the way Hume uses the word.

We may now turn to Hume's theory of the motivational explanation of human actions, and may begin with the question: What, according to Hume, must one mention if one is to give the motive of a person's action, and thus provide

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[1] I shall later consider an objection to Hume's theory of motivational explanations which claims that such explanations are dispositional, and do not involve mention of occurrences which may be called motives. See pp. 302-304.

[2] For an excellent discussion of this point see A.R. White, "The Language of Motives", Mind, LXVII (1958), pp.258-263.

a motivational explanation of that action? According to Hume, one must mention two things: the person's thoughts and his passions. "Human nature", he says, is "compos'd of two principal parts, which are requisite in all its actions, the affections and understanding". (T,493) To explain any action, then, or at least to provide a fully explicit explanation of any action, we must make mention of both these factors.

Given his ethical interests, and especially his polemic against various Rationalist theories of ethics, Hume is particularly concerned to stress that one of these two factors, the passions, is absolutely essential to the explanation of a human action. The Rationalists, according to Hume, thought that "every rational creature ... is oblig'd to regulate his actions by reason; and if any other motive or principle challenge the direction of his conduct, he ought to oppose it, 'till it be entirely subdu'd, or at least brought to a conformity with that superior principle". (T,413) To show the "fallacy of all this philosophy", Hume proposes to prove two points: "*First*, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and *secondly*, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will". (T,413) Later Hume claims that the second point is a "consequence" of the first. If it can be shown that "reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition", one may "infer, that the same faculty is as incapable of preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion". (T,414-415) "This consequence", Hume says, "is necessary", because it is "impossible reason cou'd have the latter effect of preventing volition, but by giving an impulse in a contrary direction to our passion; and that impulse, had it operated alone, wou'd have been able to produce volition". (T,415) Thus it is sufficient, for Hume's purposes, to prove the first point, "that reason

alone can never be a motive to any action of the will". (T,413)

Hume's principal argument in support of this claim is a fairly straightforward one. If reason alone can be a motive to an action of the will, then it must be able to do so in one or other or both of the two distinct ways in which it (i.e. reason) operates. "The understanding exerts itself after two different ways, as it judges from demonstration or probability; as it regards the abstract relations of our ideas, or those relations of objects, of which experience only gives us information". (T,413) That is to say, if reason alone can be a motive of the will it must be possible to be moved to act by one's belief in necessary or contingent propositions, or by the conclusions to one's demonstrative or non-demonstrative inferences. But, Hume insists, it is just not the case that a man is moved to act just by what he knows or believes. Put somewhat differently, a description of a man's state of mind that mentions only what he knows or believes is just not sufficient to explain what he does. Hume takes each of the two kinds of reasoning in turn.

"I believe", he says, "it scarce will be asserted, that the first species of reasoning alone is ever the cause of any action". (T,413) "As it's proper province is the world of ideas, and as the will always places us in that of realities, demonstration and volition seem, upon that account, to be totally remov'd, from each other". (T,413) Hume's point is clearer from his examples. Taking mathematics and arithmetic as two forms of inquiry which are exclusively demonstrative in character, Hume asks whether the knowledge of any truth in either subject is sufficient to move a man to act. This is not to say that mathematics and arithmetic have no influence on conduct. When mathematical or arithmetical knowledge is applied in practical situations, it may have such an influence. "Mathematics, indeed, are useful in all

mechanical operations, and arithmetic in almost every art and profession". (T,413) But, Hume insists, "'tis not of themselves they have any influence". (T,413) A merchant's actions are influenced by his beliefs about the truth of certain arithmetical propositions, but this is only because he is interested in collecting proper payment and settling his accounts, and arithmetic plays a crucial role in these projects. An engineer's actions are similarly influenced by his beliefs about the truth of certain mathematical propositions, but again this is only because he wants to build a bridge that will support a certain weight, resist certain wind-velocities, and so on, and mathematics is involved in determining these things. In Hume's terminology: "Abstract or demonstrative reasoning ... never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgment concerning causes and effects". (T,414)

The question thus turns to one about the sufficiency of empirical judgments for moving a man to act. Once again, it is clear that causal judgments, to use Hume's expression, influence our actions. If we want to secure state of affairs A we may try to discover how best to bring A about, and may discover that by doing B A will be secured. "Here", Hume says, "reasoning takes place to discover this relation; and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation". (T,414) But, and this is the point Hume insists on:

> It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us. Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us. (T,414)

This is to say that "reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition". (T,414)

This general thesis has a particular, and very important, application in the sphere of morals. As we have seen, Hume is attacking those philosophers who maintain "that morality, like truth, is discern'd merely by ideas, and by their juxta-position and comparison" (T,456-457), or that the moral quality of an action is a "matter of fact, which can be discover'd by the understanding" (T,468). Against such philosophers Hume points out that "common experience, ... informs us, that men are often govern'd by their duties, and are deter'd from some actions by the opinion of injustice, and impell'd to others by that of obligation". (T,457) Put somewhat differently, it seems to be the case that we believe that an action has received a motivational explanation if reference is made to an appropriate moral judgment. Thus, one can explain the fact that Smith returned Jones's lost wallet to Jones by saying that Smith felt morally obliged to do so.

Starting from the fact of "common experience" that we are moved to act by our moral judgments, or that our actions may be explained (motivationally) by our moral judgments, Hume states his argument in a way remarkable for its conciseness:

> Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason. (T,457)

If one is to explain the facts that moral judgments can move us to action, or be used to explain our actions, one must admit that "morality ... is more properly felt than judg'd of". (T,470) Moral judgments, that is to say, are matters of passion, not of thought. "The distinguishing impressions, by which moral good or evil is known, are nothing but particular pains or pleasures". (T,471)

How good is Hume's argument to the effect that "reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition" (T,414), and what does it amount to? Hume's argument is, to me, a convincing one. Its force is best seen if one excludes those cases in which one explains a person's action by a motive that is a specifically moral one. It is part of our concept of the motivational explanation of human actions, or of explanations of the form "P did A in order to x", that one has only given such an explanation if one makes reference to what may be called, for want of a less-misleading and sufficiently general ordinary expression, a pro- or con-attitude on the part of the person whose action is to be explained. By the expressions "pro-attitude" and "con-attitude" I mean to designate any member of that class of things designated by such verbs as "wants", "desires", "likes", "dislikes", "is interested in", "prefers", "feels obligated to", "feels repelled by", and so on.

Let us take an example. Suppose Jones to be asked to explain the fact that he suddenly reduces the speed of his automobile from 90 to 60 m.p.h. Jones could explain his action by saying "There is a police car ahead". In saying this Jones is making a statement of fact, and would certainly have explained his action of reducing the speed of his automobile. But supposing the person who asked for the explanation were to say (which he ordinarily would not say, but which he would be logically entitled to say): "I presume, then, that you do not want to be fined for speeding". If Jones were to say "No, that's not the case" to this and other statements about his presumed wants or desires, his examiner would certainly be puzzled. In fact, if Jones would agree to no relevant statement other than "There is a police

car ahead" his claim to have offered a (motivational) explanation of his behavior would simply be discounted. Unless some assumption is permitted about his pro- or con-attitudes, he just has not given a (motivational) explanation of his conduct. One explains one's actions motivationally only if one says or permits the assumption of such statements as "I want to x", and so on. As G.E.M. Anscombe has pointed out, an action is explainable in the present sense of explainable only if it is capable of a "desirability-characterization".[1] In Hume's terminology, the (motivational) explanation of an action requires explicit or implicit reference to a passion.

We can see the import of Hume's insistence that "reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to a volition" (T,414) if we consider its extension to moral situations. If it is the case, as it seems to be, that one can explain one's action by referring to a moral judgment, a moral belief, a sense of obligation, and so on, then the logic of moral terms, or at least the logic of those moral terms which can be used to explain actions, bears an important similarity to the logic of such non-moral terms as "want", "desire", "interest", preference", "attitude", etc. and an important dissimilarity to the logic of such terms as "think", "believe", "know", "understand", and so on. That is, moral language is on the side of the "affections" in Hume's divide between "the affections and understanding". (T,493)

This comes out quite clearly in a second argument which Hume provides in support of his thesis about the explanation of human actions. Having concluded that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (T,415), Hume remarks:

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[1] G.E.M. Anscombe, Intention (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), p.72.

"As this opinion may appear somewhat extraordinary, it may not be improper to confirm it by some other considerations". (T,415) What Hume here has in mind is the question of the possibility of applying the predicates "true" or "false" to the passions (as well as to volitions and to actions). Hume takes it as obvious that "true" or "false" can not be applied to these cases. "A passion", he says, "is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification". (T,415) Thus, it is "impossible ... that this passion [i.e. anger] can be oppos'd by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider'd as copies, with those objects, which they represent". (T,415) "Nothing", he says, "can be contrary to truth or reason, except what has a reference to it, and ... the judgments of our understanding only have this reference". (T,415-416)[1] The contrast Hume has in mind seems to be this. Of some mental states, such as beliefs or surmisals, one may say that they are true or false, correct or incorrect. Thus a man may have a true belief that Edinburgh is north of London, or a detective may surmise, correctly, that the butler did it. Of other mental states, such as wants, desires, preferences, or feelings of obligation, one may not say that they are true or false, correct or incorrect, in the same sense as above. My belief that there is a beer in the refrigerator may be true or false; my desire to drink that beer is neither. Similarly my wanting to visit Spain, or my preference for baseball over cricket, or my feeling obliged to pay my income tax are, none of them, either true or false, correct or incorrect. Any of these may be reasonable or

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[1]See Hume's succinct re-statement of this thesis at T,458.

unreasonable, but this is a very different matter from describing them as true or false. I shall return to the question of reasonableness later on.

Hume's thesis about the motivational explanation of actions thus involves two distinct points. The first is that no motivational explanation can be given unless one invokes, explicitly or implicitly, the notion of a passion. The second point is that passions can not be described as true or false because they are not the sorts of things which represent either the relations of ideas or the way things are in the world. The upshot of this is the thesis that motives, in the sense explained earlier, are not true or false. Applied to the sphere of morals, moral motives, such as the judgment that participating in a war is immoral, or the feeling that one is obliged to voice one's dissent, are neither true nor false. This is not, of course, to say that a particular motive may not be truly or falsely ascribed to someone. It is simply to say that motives can only be assessed in terms other than those of truth or falsity.

As we saw earlier, Hume believes that _two_ things must be mentioned in a motivational explanation of a man's action, _viz._ his thoughts as well as his passions. So far, I have said nothing about the role which the mention of thoughts is supposed to play in motivational explanation. To discover the role which Hume attributes to the mention of thoughts in motivational explanations, however, it is best to proceed, somewhat obliquely, by considering in somewhat greater detail how Hume would characterize those mental states which, because they involve passions, are motives to actions.

It is clearly Hume's view that having a motive, in the requisite sense, is having a certain _desire_, such as a desire for the happiness of another, a desire for the injury of another, a desire for the obtaining of a certain

state of affairs thought beneficial to oneself, a desire for the avoidance of some painful situation, and so on. In saying that all motives are, for Hume, desires, two clarifying comments are in order. First, it is not the case that, on Hume's view, mention of <u>any</u> passion provides a motivational explanation of an action. Not all passions are desires, and if desires alone provide motives, then not all passions provide motives. Thus, the passions of pride or humility, love or hatred, none of which are desires, would not provide motives for an action in the requisite sense. This is not, of course, to say that these passions play no role in the explanation of a human action, but only to say that they cannot be mentioned if one is required to provide that state of mind which <u>immediately</u> explains the action to be explained. If one is not concerned to mention that immediately preceding state of mind which provides the motive of the action, one can, on Hume's theory, explain an action by reference to a passion that is not a desire. Thus, one might explain A's kindly behavior toward B by saying that A loves B, but this is only possible, on Hume's theory, because the passion of love is normally followed by the passion of benevolence, and benevolence is a desire. Thus, the fact that one can explain a person's actions by reference to a passion that is not a desire does not force one to say that all actions are not caused only by those passions describable as desires. This point is brought out most clearly if one contrasts, as we have done earlier, Hume's theory of pride or humility with his theory of love or hatred. The former passions differ from the latter in that the former are "pure emotions in the soul" whereas the latter lead to actions. Moreover, as we have also seen, to say that the latter lead to action is an elliptical way of saying they are lawfully correlated with desires, <u>viz</u>. benevolence and anger, and these lead to action. It is,

Hume insists, possible that A love B without feeling benevolence toward B. But if this were the case, A could not act out of love for B. Thus Hume's principal thesis about the necessity of a passion to the explanation of human actions should be emended to read: All human actions require the occurrence of a member of that sub-class of passions which are desires.

A second comment which must be made on my suggestion that Hume construes motives as desires is that the term "desire", as used in this way, is not equivalent to the term "desire" used to identify one of several direct passions in the _Treatise_ section entitled "Of the direct passions". In that section Hume describes what he means by "desire" by saying: "DESIRE arises from good consider'd simply" (T,439), and distinguishes desire from aversion, joy, grief, hope, and fear. By calling desire a direct passion he also distinguishes it from such indirect passions, also described as desires, as benevolence or anger, pity or malice, and so on. In saying that all motives are, for Hume, desires, I am using "desire" in Hume's general rather than restricted sense.

But is it, in fact, the case that Hume construes those passions which may be invoked to provide motivational explanations as desires? One reason for claiming this is a consideration of the way in which, as we have just seen, Hume draws the contrast between those passions which are pure emotions in the soul, and those which lead to actions, and yet are not themselves desires. Love leads to action _precisely because_, according to Hume, it gives rise to that desire which is benevolence. Further support for this contention is provided by remarks made in the course of Hume's argument to prove that "the _union_ betwixt motives and actions has the same constancy, as that in any natural operations" (T,404), or that "all actions of the will have particular causes" (T,412), or in the course of his remarks on "the influencing motives

of the will" (T,413). In countering the claim that a libertarian's purposely non-characteristic action might show the falsity of the determinist thesis Hume claims that the "desire of showing our liberty is the sole motive of our actions". (T,408. Italics mine.) Later he says that "when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction". (T,414) As we shall see later, these notions of aversion or propensity are used by Hume to clarify the concept of desire. The same is true of the notion of a "design'd end" used when Hume talks of a situation "when in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end". (T,416) Making a point about the "influencing motives of the will" Hume makes explicit use of the concept of desire when he says that a "trivial good may, from certain circumstances, produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment" (T,416. Italics mine.), or when he talks of a person "will[ing] the performance of certain actions as means of obtaining any desir'd good". (T,417. Italics mine.) Moreover, in distinguishing those "actions of minds" which, because they "produce little emotion in the mind", are sometimes mistaken for activities of reason, he refers to them as "certain calm desires and tendencies", and remarks that "these desires are of two kinds". (T,417. Italics mine.) There is, then, ample evidence that when Hume contrasts reason with the passions, with the intention of showing what is necessary to an "influencing motive of the will", he is thinking of those passions which are desires. It is one's desires which give rise to one's actions. We must try now to elucidate Hume's theory of desire.

As passions, all desires have at least one property, according to Hume's theory of the passions: they are psychological states possessing what I have elsewhere called an "hedonic quality", whether pleasant or painful. This is certainly the case with all those desires discussed under the heading of "indirect passions". For one thing, all the indirect passions are alleged to be susceptible of explanation by the fifth law of association, that one complex mental state, comprising an emotional and a cognitive element, gives rise to another complex mental state, comprising an emotional and a cognitive element, when the emotional components of each state are resembling, and the objects of the cognitive states are related by resemblance or contiguity or causation. Moreover, as we have seen elsewhere, by a resemblance between associated emotional states Hume normally means that both are pleasant or both are unpleasant. Passions, or impressions, are normally related by "the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure". (T,381) The impression of benevolence, for example, is related to that of love in so far as each is a pleasant sensation. This comes out quite clearly when Hume, in arguing that love and benevolence are only contingently related, says: "If the _sensation_ of the passion [i.e. love] and _desire_ [i.e. benevolence] be opposite, nature cou'd have alter'd the _sensation_ without altering the tendency of the _desire_, and by that means made them compatible with each other". (T,368. Italics mine.) Though one can apparently distinguish the tendency and the sensation of a desire, it remains that a desire has or is a sensation, i.e. has an hedonic quality or is a pleasant or unpleasant sensation.

This fact about desires comes out clearly, as well, in Hume's discussion of pity, which is described at one point as "a desire ... of the happiness of another, and aversion to his misery". (T,382) Pity presents a problem for

Hume's associationist account of the passions precisely because he thinks of it as having or being an unpleasant sensation, and yet being associated with love, which is a pleasant sensation. Pity arises by means of a sympathetic communication of the pain of another person, and thus must itself be painful. Faced with this problem for his associationist theory, Hume alters the theory somewhat by saying that "'tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the whole bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end". (T,381) He can thus explain the association between love and pity by means of the similarity between pity and benevolence (both are desires for the happiness of others, and aversions to their misery), and the similarity between benevolence and love (both are pleasant sensations). These theoretical gymnastics, however, clearly reveal that the desires which are pity and benevolence are thought of as pleasant or painful sensations.

It is not, however, just those desires which come under the heading of "indirect passions" that Hume construes, at least partially, as pleasant or painful sensations. Those desires which are direct passions are also, for Hume, pleasant or painful sensations. The point is not made explicitly by Hume, but underlies much that he says. Thus, in pointing out that the same situation may give rise to both an indirect passion such as pride, and a direct passion such as desire (in the restricted sense), Hume talks of associative links between the two passions, and the associative link is precisely the fact that both are pleasant impressions. As he says in the Treatise:

> These indirect passions, being always agreeable or uneasy, give in their turn additional force to the direct passions, and encrease our desire and aversion to the object. Thus a suit of fine cloaths produces pleasure from their beauty; and this pleasure produces the direct passions, or the impressions of volition and desire. Again, when these cloaths are consider'd as belonging to ourself, the double relation conveys to us the sentiment of pride, which is an indirect passion; and the pleasure, which attends that passion, returns back to the direct affections, and gives new force to our desire or volition, joy or hope.
> (T,439. Italics mine.)

Assuming, too, that the direct passions, including desire and aversion, are, on Hume's theory, open to explanation by the fifth associationist law governing the double relation of impressions and ideas, there is added reason to think that Hume construes desires as sensations with an hedonic quality.

Desires, as impressions, are described as well in terms other than those of pleasantness or unpleasantness. Desires can be characterized as "propensit[ies]" or "aversion[s]" (T,438); they are "propense and averse motions of the mind" (T,574), or "appetites and inclinations" (T,368), or "emotion[s] of aversion or propensity" (T,414), "impulse[s]" (T,415), "tendencies" (T,417), "active principle[s]" (T,457), "actuating passion[s]" (T,518), "impelling passions" (T,479), "propension[s]" (T,537), "instinct[s]" (T,417,439). That is to say, as impressions or sensations, desires are describable as felt urges or impulses toward those actions or states of affairs which are said to be their objects.[1] They are felt to push or pull the agent to the performance of some action or the securing of some state of affairs. Presumably this characteristic of desires is something of which we simply are aware in having a desire. We feel ourselves impelled toward the object of our desire. This awareness of a desire as an impulse to perform

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[1] See my earlier discussion of the question whether desires have objects, Chapter IV, Section 2.

some action or secure some desired state of affairs does not, however, show that the desire must give rise to its object. As we shall see later, the connection between desires and actions is alleged to be a causal one, and causal connections are contingent. If there is a necessary connection between desires and actions, the necessity is a causal necessity, and not a logical or quasi-logical one.

It seems to be Hume's view that desires are impulses precisely because they are pleasant or painful sensations, though he does not draw out this implication of his theory in any very explicit way. The economy of the mind, that is to say, depends on the pleasantness or unpleasantness of some of its impressions in order for actions to result from what goes on in the mind. The "chief spring or actuating principle of the human mind", Hume claims, is "pleasure or pain; and when these sensations are remov'd, both from our thought and feeling, we are, in a great measure, incapable of passion or action, of desire or volition". (T,574) The last part of this passage shows clearly that Hume is here talking of those pleasures and pains which are the <u>antecedents</u> of desires, rather than of desires themselves. But the point seems to apply as well to desires. It is only in so far as they are themselves pleasures or pains that <u>they</u> are "springs" or "actuating principles". That is to say, in Hume's mental mechanics, it is not just the fact that a prior pleasure or pain has given rise to a desire (as, for example, in the cases of love-benevolence or hatred-anger), or that the desired state of affairs is believed to be pleasant, or eliminative of pain, that explains what takes place in a man's mind which leads him to act in a certain way. Among the members of the series of mental events to be accounted for are the pleasant or painful sensations of desire or aversion, and the fact that these are pleasant or

painful in part accounts for what follows from them.

A further question concerning the nature of desires concerns the simplicity or non-simplicity of the impression which is alleged to be the desire. At least one remark in the Treatise seems to imply the simplicity of desire-impressions. Talking of pride and humility Hume says: "The passions of PRIDE and HUMILITY being simple and uniform impressions, 'tis impossible we can ever, by a multitude of words, give a just definition of them, or indeed of any of the passions". (T,277. Italics mine.) If desires are passions, then they too seem to be simple impressions. There is, as well, more indirect evidence that Hume believed desires to be simple impressions. Talking of "volitions", which he takes to be impressions, and members of that class of indirect passions which comprises "desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear, along with volition" (T,438) Hume says: "This impression, like the preceding ones of pride and humility, love and hatred, 'tis impossible to define, and needless to describe any farther". (T,399) Volition, at any rate, is an indefinable simple impression. Perhaps, then, desire (in Hume's restricted sense) and aversion are likewise simple impressions. There seems to be as much (or as little) reason to say that a desire (in the restricted sense) is a simple impression, as there is to say that volition is a simple impression. With respect to such "indirect" desires as benevolence or anger, Hume, though he construes them as impressions, says nothing about their simplicity or non-simplicity. Nevertheless, if we realize that to talk of a desire as complex is not, for Hume, to say that a desire comprises a feeling and a thought, but that, *qua feeling*, it is complex, it is plausible to suggest that Hume views the members of all the various classes of passions as simple impressions. If one takes a desire to be solely an impression, there

seems to be no way to break it down, as it were, into more simple elements which are themselves impressions.

Despite his belief that desires are impressions, whether simple or complex, however, Hume does believe that they are conjoined with thoughts, the objects of which are said to be the objects of the desires. Though the desire which is benevolence is, qua desire, an impression, it is conjoined with a particular thought, viz. the thought of the happiness of the person loved. Presumably, the connection between the benevolence-impression and the thought of the beloved person is a contingent one. Nevertheless, the benevolence-impression always is, as a matter of fact, accompanied by the thought of the happiness of the person loved.

Another thought which is always, as a matter of fact, conjoined with a desire is the thought which is, from the point of view of Hume's mental science, the partial or total cause of the desire. Again taking the example of benevolence, a partial cause of benevolence is the thought of some person other than oneself, which thought is the cognitive element of the prior complex mental state of a person who is said to love someone. If we go one step back in the causal series, another thought is involved in the causal explanation of benevolence, viz. the thought of the pleasure-causing quality or action of the person whom we come to love. All of this simply follows from Hume's causal associationist explanation of the desire of benevolence in terms of a double relation of impressions and ideas. There are, thus, a number of thoughts which are antecedent to and (partial) causes of the desire of benevolence, as well as a thought which accompanies the benevolence-impression, viz. the thought of the happiness of the person beloved. Though these thoughts do not make part of benevolence, granted that benevolence is simply a specific

impression, they always, as it were, surround benevolence.

The same holds true of those desires which are "direct passions". If desire "arises from good consider'd simply", it is preceded by the thought of that action or state of affairs which is considered good. If a desire is always a desire to do something, or to secure some state of affairs, the desire is always accompanied by some thought, viz. the thought of the action or state of affairs desired.[1] Moreover, even those desires which do not require the prior occurrence of pleasure or pain do require the prior occurrence of some thought. This follows from the fact that they are nonetheless "impressions of reflection". This is just what it means to say that all passions, and *a fortiori* all desires, are impressions of reflection. Moreover, if these desires have objects they too are accompanied, as well as preceded, by thoughts.

Besides the fact that all desires are impressions of reflection, and have objects, there is a third way in which, according to Hume, thinking is connected with having a desire. Hume discusses this aspect of the connection between thought and desire in his account of the two ways in which a passion, and thus a desire, may be "unreasonable". Passions, Hume says, "can be contrary to reason only so far as they are *accompany'd* with some judgment or opinion". (T,416) "According to this principle", he continues, "'tis only in two senses, that any affection can be call'd unreasonable". (T,416) He then describes these two senses as follows:

> First, When a passion, such as hope or fear, grief or joy, despair or security, is founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, When in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects. Where

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[1]For a discussion of the question whether Hume distinguishes the objects of desires which are direct passions from the causes of these desires, see Chapter IV, Section 2, pp. 240-244.

> a passion is neither founded on false suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it. (T,416)

Later Hume recapitulates the two ways in which a judgment or opinion may accompany a passion, and thus "have an influence on our conduct": "Either when it [i.e. reason] excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it; or when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects, so as to afford us means of exerting any passions". (T,459) He further elucidates the two ways in which erroneous judgments may render a passion "unreasonable" by saying:

> A person may be affected with passion, by supposing a pain or pleasure to lie in an object, which has no tendency to produce either of these sensations, or which produces the contrary to what is imagin'd. A person may also take false measures for the attaining his end, and may retard, by his foolish conduct, instead of forwarding the execution of any project. (T,459)

One peculiarity of Hume's account of the two ways in which an erroneous judgment may render a passion "unreasonable" should be noted. From the way Hume describes the second of the two cases, it would seem that what is rendered "unreasonable" is not a passion but an action. If I do an action A in order to secure a state of affairs B, and A is either not conducive to B, or is in fact conducive to some state of affairs C which is incompatible with B, then my judgment about the connection between doing A and securing B is mistaken, and my <u>action</u> consequently "unreasonable". But Hume's point can, it seems to me, be restated in such a way that it becomes apparent that not only my action is unreasonable, but my passion as well. Thus, if I want to secure a certain state of affairs B, and I believe that doing A will lead to B, then, according to Hume, I shall want to do A. That is to say, I want

to do A because I believe it conducive to B, which I want, or I want to do A under the description "conducive to B". Doing A is wanted as a means to securing a state of affairs B which I believe to be pleasant. But there is surely nothing odd in saying that it is "unreasonable", in Hume's sense, to want A if I only want A under the description "conducive to B" and A is not in fact conducive to B. In such a case it is "unreasonable" to want A because A is not, in fact, what I take it to be.[1]

According to Hume's account of this third way in which thinking is connected with having a desire, then, the following two types of cases should be distinguished. On the one hand, a person P may want to do some action A in order to bring about some state of affairs S, believing that state of affairs S is a pleasant state of affairs. If he did not believe that S was in some way pleasant, he would not want S. That is to say, S must be believed to be capable of a "desirability-characterization". But P may be mistaken in his belief that S is pleasant. In as much as P's belief about the pleasantness of S is mistaken, P's desire for S is "unreasonable". On the other hand, P may believe that by doing A he can secure S. In such a case, P may be said to want to do A as a means to bringing about S. P may, however, be mistaken in his belief that doing A will bring about S. In as much as this belief is mistaken P's passion, describable as wanting to do A, is "unreasonable". According to Hume, once a person comes to realize that his beliefs either about the pleasantness of S or the efficacy of A in securing S are mistaken, his wanting S or his wanting to do A will cease.

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[1]It should be noted that Hume is using "unreasonable" in an odd, and very strong sense. From the way Hume speaks, it would follow that a passion is reasonable only if the beliefs on which it is based are true, and a passion is unreasonable if the beliefs on which it is based are false. That is, Hume shows no awareness here that the reasonableness of a belief depends on the <u>evidence</u> for that belief and not on the belief's truth.

> The moment we perceive the falshood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means, our passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases. I may will the performance of certain actions as means of obtaining any desir'd good; but as my willing of these actions is only secondary, and founded on the supposition, that they are causes of the propos'd effect; as soon as I discover the falshood of that supposition, they must become indifferent to me. (T,416-417)

In the case of the desire for S, this would, it seems to me, follow from the fact that desires are considered as reflective passions dependent on prior pains or pleasures. If S is no longer believed to be characterizable as pleasant, then we must cease to desire S. The case of wanting to do A is not, however, so straight-forward. It is important to notice that in the passage quoted above, my wanting to do A is described as "only secondary". Described in this way, it would be the case that upon becoming convinced that doing A is not efficacious in the way believed, doing A must "become indifferent to me". But this does not, of course, rule out the possibility that, having originally wanted to do A in order to secure S, I may have come to enjoy doing A for its own sake, and thus, even if I become convinced that doing A is not in fact efficacious in securing S, I might continue wanting to do A. I would simply cease wanting to do A under the description "conducive to S".

Having considered the three different ways in which, according to Hume, thinking is connected with having a desire, we can see that it is possible for Hume to offer a number of different ways of explaining the same action, A, that do, in fact, match the many ways in which, in ordinary discourse, we explain actions. That is to say, Hume does seem able to offer an account of the explanation of actions that fits with our practice of using what may be

called "explanatory patterns" in the explanation of actions. Anthony Kenny suggests that we make use, in motive explanations of human behavior, of "a single fundamental pattern of description and explanation of human behavior".[1] Hume's account seems capable of elucidation along these lines. Let us suppose that a person, P, acts in a certain way, A, towards another person, Q, out of benevolence (in Hume's restricted sense of "benevolence"). Hume's account permits at least the following different explanations of P's doing A: "P loves Q", "Q has acted kindly toward P", "P believes Q has acted kindly toward him in the past", "P feels benevolent toward Q", "P believes that doing A will please Q", "P wants to please Q", "P did A in order to please Q", and so on. Each of these explanations will do the job of explaining P's doing A. Some, however, refer to P's beliefs, and some to his desires. Some refer to P's beliefs about past situations, others to his beliefs about future situations, or about ways of securing future situations. Some refer to P's being pleased, and some to the pleasure of Q. Each, however, is in a sense elliptical. That is to say, each does the job of explaining P's doing A because it implies at least some of the others. "P loves Q" explains P's doing A only because loving gives rise to benevolence, and benevolence gives rise to action. "P believes that doing A will please B" explains P's doing A only because it implies that P wants to please B, and thus wants to do what will please B. Similar considerations hold for the other sentences given. Consider the result of saying both (a) "P did A because he believed that doing A would please Q" and (b) "P did not want to please Q". Or consider a case where one says "P did A because he felt benevolent toward Q and believed that doing A would displease Q".

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[1] Kenny, p. 90.

On Hume's view, of course, the use of such an explanatory pattern in which the mention of one element of the pattern explains an action by bringing in its train, as it were, the other elements of the pattern, is based on the fact that the thoughts and feelings (ideas and impressions) mentioned are causally, or at least lawfully, connected. Such-and-such thoughts and such-and-such feelings just happen, as a matter of fact, to be lawfully connected. It is logically possible that one have any of the constituents of this pattern without any or all of the others. We have already seen, in discussing Hume's theory of the passions as simple impressions, some of the difficulties in this sort of theory. I shall consider further difficulties peculiar to Hume's theory of desires at a later point in this section.

It is important, however, to notice that, despite the errors or implausibilities of many aspects of Hume's theory of motivational explanation, he does in fact manage to make many illuminating comments on the ways in which we explain human actions. He is quite correct, it seems to me, in insisting that a non-elliptical explanation of a human action requires mention of both a person's beliefs and his desires, so long as we construe "desires" in the broad way described earlier. In insisting on this point, Hume is making essentially the same and important point which Donald Davidson has stressed in a recent, well-known article:

> Whenever someone does something for a reason ... he can be characterized as (a) having some sort of pro attitude toward actions of a certain kind, and (b) believing (or knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering) that his action is of that kind. Under (a) are to be included desires, wantings, urges, promptings, and a great variety of moral views, aesthetic principles, economic prejudices,

> social conventions, and public and private goals and values in so far as these can be interpreted as attitudes of an agent directed toward actions of a certain kind.[1]

Moreover, in so far as Hume's theory of motivational explanation admits of interpretation in the way I have described above, that is, as involving explanatory patterns which enable one to explain actions by reference to a variety of beliefs and passions of the agent, it illuminates the nature of motivational explanations in a way at least analogous to that in which the accounts of Kenny[2] or Anscombe[3] illuminate such explanations.

There are, however, serious objections which may be raised against Hume's account of motivational explanation, and to these we must now turn. I shall consider three objections. One of these objections is the objection that the whole attempt to construe motivational explanations as explanations by reference to occurrences, viz. the occurrence of desires, wants, or whatever, is simply misguided. Motives, it may be alleged, are dispositions, not occurrences, and thus Hume's theory has got off on the wrong foot. As Ryle says: "To explain an action as done from a certain motive is not to correlate it with an occult cause, but to subsume it under a propensity or behaviour-trend".[4] At another place, Ryle contrasts the occult-cause theory of motivation with his own dispositional theory, by example:

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[1] Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes", The Journal of Philosophy, LX (1963), pp. 685-686. In connection with the broad way I have construed "desire" or "want" it is interesting to note a further remark of Davidson's: "It is not unnatural ... to treat wanting as a genus including all pro-attitudes as species". (p. 688)

[2] Kenny, pp.90-95.

[3] Anscombe, pp. 20-21.

[4] Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 106.

> The statement 'he boasted from vanity' ought, on one view [the occult-cause view], to be construed as saying that 'he boasted and the cause of his boasting was the occurrence in him of a feeling or impulse of vanity'. On the other view [Ryle's dispositional view], it is to be construed as saying 'he boasted on meeting the stranger and his doing so satisfies the law-like proposition that whenever he finds a chance of securing the admiration and envy of others, he does whatever he thinks will produce this admiration and envy'.[1]

It does not, however, seem to me that Ryle's arguments prove his main contention, viz. that motive explanations are always dispositional ones, requiring no reference to what he terms "occult causes". Even granted that some motive explanations of a person's behavior are dispositional, it does not follow that no motive explanations are non-dispositional. Later on in the Concept of Mind, in distinguishing "actions done, say, from vanity or affection from those done automatically in one of these other ways [i.e. from habit, instinct, or reflex]", Ryle says that with respect to the former "we imply that the agent was in some way thinking or heeding what he was doing".[2] He then elucidates the notion of "thinking what he was doing" by saying that the agent is "acting more or less carefully, critically, consistently and *purposefully*".[3] But, it seems to me, it is precisely this notion of acting purposefully which Ryle's dispositional account of motive-explanations does not elucidate satisfactorily. There is at least a *prima facie* similarity

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[1]Ryle, p. 87.

[2]Ryle, p. 106.

[3]Ryle, p. 107. Italics mine.

between doing some action A "with the purpose of ..." and doing A "out of a desire to ...". And unless Ryle can provide a purely dispositional account of "having a purpose" or "having a desire" he can not provide a purely dispositional account of motive explanations.

It should be noted that, as we have already seen at several places, Hume does himself have a concept of dispositional properties, and thus can give a dispositional account of a person's behavior. He can, that is, offer an interpretation of "Smith acted out of vanity" such that the intended explanatory job of this sentence is just to say, with Ryle, that the vain action to be explained is "just the sort of thing that [i.e. vanity] was an inclination to do", and is equivalent, roughly, to saying "he would do that".[1] But this, on Hume's view, would be little more than a first step toward explaining Smith's action. Moreover, Hume would differ from Ryle in his account of dispositions in at least two important respects. First, some at least of the events which would have to be mentioned when one cashes a disposition in terms of responses to stimuli are inner mental events. Secondly, some of these inner events or occurrences, those, namely, which provide motive explanations, are desires, wants, etc.

There remain, however, two principal objections to Hume's theory of motives which are, on the face of it, much more cogent. The first is that desires or wants just are not the sorts of thing

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[1] Ryle, p. 90.

Hume describes them as being. The second is that whatever account one gives of the nature of desires or wants, one cannot say that they <u>cause</u> the actions to which they are said to give rise. I shall consider each of these objections in turn.

The first objection claims that Hume misdescribes desires and wants. On Hume's view, a desire is an impression or feeling which occurs in conjunction with the thought of some action or state of affairs characterizable as good. If it is true that I desire to have a beer, it is true that I both (a) have a peculiar and pleasant feeling, and (b) have the thought of a beer. This feeling and this thought are only contingently related; I might have either without the other. As a first point of criticism, we may say that Hume is simply mistaken about the nature of the connection between a desire and its object. One cannot have a desire which is not a desire <u>for</u> anything or <u>to</u> <u>do</u> anything. Desires, that is to say, have objects. We identify desires by reference to their objects. In this, they are unlike twinges or sinking feelings which, we would say, are objectless. But I have deployed this objection against Hume at an earlier stage in this dissertation[1] and will not pursue it further here.

A second possible criticism is that we just do not (can not?) discriminate desires as specifically different pleasant sensations from other pleasant sensations. Nor, for that matter, can we discriminate that allegedly specific desire-sensation which is a benevolence-desire from that specific desire which is a pity-desire

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[1]Pp. 2466-247.

or an anger-desire, as Hume's theory requires.

More importantly, however, it is just false to say that whenever it is true that I desire something, in a non-dispositional sense of desire, I have any particular _feeling_, or, indeed, any _feeling_ at all _vis à vis_ the object of my desire. I can desire to buy a copy of this morning's newspaper without having any noticeable pleasant sensations at the thought of buying it, or unpleasant sensations at the thought of not having a copy. I may, in some cases, actually have some such sensations describable as a warm, pleasant glow at the thought of the Mediterranean cruise which I propose to take. But not all (non-dispositional) cases of desire are like this. Nor, when I desire something, do I always experience felt urges or impulses toward what I want. I may have such feelings, as, for example, when, after three hours in a library where smoking is prohibited, I feel a yen or a craving for a smoke. But this surely is not the usual case. When I walk into an ironmonger's wanting to purchase a mole-wrench, I do not experience any felt urges or impulses, pushes or pulls, yens or cravings for a mole-wrench. But I do want one.

William Alston states this sort of objection to Hume's kind of theory of motives when he says:

> The basic mistake of the "phenomenological" account is to construe a want as a much more concrete and directly accessible entity than it is. Felt impulses, and ideas of something as pleasant or attractive, are ways in which wants manifest themselves in consciousness from time to time. And different wants, under different circumstances, will be manifested consciously in different ways. No doubt some wants give rise to more or less insistent felt urges or impulses; this is typical of sexual desires and other desires based on identifiable states of physiological tension, as well as of desire for things that are very important to us, such as a desire to finish a paper which is very important to one professionally. But such manifestations are not the rule for more routine wants.[1]

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[1] William P. Alston, "Motives and Motivation," _The Encyclopedia of Philosophy_, ed. Paul Edwards (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1967), V, pp. 402-403.

Alston presents another objection to Hume's sort of view of desires which is not, as stated, convincing, but which suggests a difficulty of which Hume does not seem to be aware. Alston says that it is difficult to apply Hume's account of desires "where, as with wanting to get a job, the object of the want might conceivably be attained by a number of different courses of action".[1] He goes on to say:

> How can that want consist in an impulse to do one particular thing rather than another? In other words, one-one correlations between wants and actions designed to satisfy them are the exception rather than the rule.[2]

That is to say, Hume's theory of motives is alleged to be unable to cope with the sort of case Hume himself describes when talking of the second of the two ways in which a passion or desire may be "unreasonable".

But there is no reason to think that, in the sort of case Alston cites, Hume would suggest that my desire to get a job is the same desire as my desire to read the job adverts in the newspaper, or the desire to call on the personnel manager of a particular firm, or the desire to request a friend to mention my name to his boss. Hume would probably say that, having a desire to get a job, and thinking of the various ways in which I might go about getting one, I would have consequent desires to do the various things which, as I believe, have some likelihood of securing me a job. But if one

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[1]Alston, p. 402.

[2]Alston, p. 402.

adopts Hume's theory of motives, this would seem to imply that I have a number of numerically distinct desire-impressions, pleasant sensations, felt impulses, or whatever, each of which must be independently discriminable. It is _this_ apparent implication of Hume's theory that renders it further implausible.

Hume's implausible theory of the nature of motives has, it would seem, several sources. For one thing, given his principle of the priority of impressions over ideas, he feels himself required to discover those reasonably concrete mental entities which are presumably designated by the term "desire". For another, his view of mental mechanics seems to require the presence of more or less concrete entities which act and react with others. For a third, his associationism seems to require talk of discrete pleasures and pains which can give rise to other pleasures and pains by virtue of their resemblance. For a fourth, he seems to have been over-impressed by cases in which his sort of account does have a _prima facie_ plausibility, as, for example, the case of a felt sexual desire.

Perhaps most interestingly, however, Hume's account of motives may have its source in Hume's awareness of the fact that, at least in a good many cases, we know directly that and what we want. We often, that is to say, have immediate knowledge of our own wants and desires; we usually do not have to find out what we want. If Hume's theory were correct, _this_ fact would be readily understandable. We would know that we desire and what our desires are in roughly the same way that we know the colors of objects before our eyes. In rejecting Hume's theory of the nature of motives, then, one must face the problem of

offering an alternative account of this immediate knowledge of one's own desires. I shall not, however, attempt to offer such an alternative theory at this point.

The second major objection to Hume's theory of motivation is the claim that Hume has completely misconstrued the relationship between motives and the actions which they explain. Hume believes that motives are the causes of actions, and thus that motive-explanations are causal explanations. But, many recent philosophers have argued, motives cannot be causes, and thus motive-explanations cannot be causal ones. The case against the causal theory of motives has been ably argued by many philosophers, including A. I. Melden,[1] G. E. M. Anscombe,[2] Stuart Hampshire,[3] and Anthony Kenny.[4] We must now consider whether what I take to be the principal argument offered by these writers against the causal theory of motives concludes the discussion.

First, however, we must try to determine what precisely Hume is claiming when he claims that motives are causes of actions. We can best begin this task by considering the way in which Hume uses some of his key terms, especially the term "action". Hume uses the term "action" in a great many ways and takes no pains at all to distinguish these different uses. Sometimes "action" is used so broadly as to include any event whatsoever, even the motion of a billiard ball, as

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[1] A. I. Melden, Free Action (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

[2] G.E.M. Anscombe, Intention (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963).

[3] Stuart Hampshire, Thought and Action (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

[4] Anthony Kenny, Action, Emotion and Will (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

when Hume says that "the actions ... of matter are to be regarded as instances of necessary actions". (T,400) Such "actions of matter" are contrasted with "actions of the mind". (T,400) Under "actions of the mind" Hume sometimes includes all "perceptions" (in the mental-act sense of "perception" distinguished earlier[1]), as when he talks of the "actions of seeing, hearing, judging, loving, hating and thinking". (T,456) In such cases "action" is equivalent to "operation of the mind". (T,456) At times, however, "actions" are distinguished from "passions and volitions" (T,458), or "motives" (T,400), or from "passions, motives, volitions and thoughts" (T,468). In some cases, "actions" are described as "voluntary actions" (T,609), or as proceeding from "the exertion of the will (T,12). In such cases, a person is said to "will the performance of certain actions". (T,417) As examples of "actions" Hume cites killing a parent and incest. (T,467) At other times, however, mere bodily movement is an action. (T,399, 632-633)

Faced with this bewildering array of ways in which Hume uses the term "action", we can only select those usages which seem most appropriate to the present discussion. The particularly crucial sense I take to be that involved when Hume first begins to talk of the will, and says: "I desire it may be observ'd, that by the _will_, I mean nothing but _the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind_". (T,399) That is, I shall consider only those cases in which, according to Hume, the will is present or operative in the way described. I shall take "action" as equivalent

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[1] Pp. 127-129.

to "voluntary action", and shall sometimes refer to this as the primary sense of action.

It is clear, I would submit, that Hume is primarily concerned, in Part 3 of Book II of the Treatise, only with actions in this primary sense. It is also clear that Hume believes that all actions, in this primary sense, are caused by "volitions" (T,407) or "act/s/ of volition" (T,415), or "willing/s/" (T,417), or a "will or choice" (T,467). It is these volitions which are alleged to be the immediate causes of actions. Volitions themselves are caused by motives, but it is only via volitions that motives cause actions. Thus we have the reiterated trio of "motives, volitions and actions" (T,407) or "passions, volitions, and actions" (T,458, 465). Most usually, however, Hume speaks in an elliptical fashion, and fails to mention volition. At any number of places he speaks simply of "motives and actions" (T,404, 407, 408, 478, 518) or "passions and actions" (T,457, 410, 518). Nevertheless, he always assumes that volitions link motives and actions, as is clear from his discussion "Of the influencing motives of the will". There Hume states the problem as one of determining what is necessary to "produce any action, or give rise to volition" (T,414), and what is capable of "preventing volition, or disputing the preference with any passion or emotion" (T,415).

Granted that all actions are voluntary, or are caused immediately by volitions, it is not at all clear what a volition is supposed to be. The best Hume can do explicitly is to say that a volition is the most "remarkable" of "all the immediate effects of pain and pleasure", is

an "impression" that "'tis impossible to define", and that it is "<u>the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind</u>". (T,399) According to this description, then, a volition or an act of will occurs in a case in which I can truthfully and sincerely say "I am raising my arm". But what is the volition, and what the action in such a situation?

Hume gives little help in answering this question. In fact having given the account of volition just quoted, he says that this "impression ... 'tis needless to describe any farther; for which reason we shall cut off all those definitions and distinctions, with which philosophers are wont to perplex rather than clear up this question". (T,399) He is, in fact, little concerned to give an account of this most baffling connection between willing and doing. Nevertheless, he does make some remarks in his "Appendix" to the <u>Treatise</u> which throw some light on this matter. In the "Appendix" Hume mentions, apparently without demurring, the view of some philosophers that "the motions of our body, and the thoughts and sentiments of our mind, ... obey the will". (T,632) Arguing that this fact goes no way toward providing us with a notion of quasi-logical necessary connections between causes and effects, he remarks:

> The will being here consider'd as a cause, has no more a discoverable connexion with its effects, than any material cause has with its proper effect. So far from perceiving the connexion betwixt an act of volition, and a motion of the body; 'tis allow'd that no effect is more inexplicable from the powers and essence of thought and matter. (T,632)

The causal connection, then, is between "an act of volition" and a "motion of the body", and this is construed as an instance of the

inexplicable connection between "thought" and "matter". This two-fold contrast at least suggests a way of interpreting Hume on this point. Speaking very roughly, if we divide "thought" from "matter", an "act of volition" falls on the "thought" side of the divide, and the "motion of the body", caused by the "act of volition", falls on the "matter" side of the divide. And the connection between the two is a contingent one. Recalling Hume's account of volition given earlier, this seems to imply that it may be the case both that (a) a person may have that "internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body" (such as, for example, raising our arm), and (b) that the arm not go up. Read in this way, an act of volition is simply, one might say, the mental side of raising one's arm. That is to say, if, taking "volit" as the verb form of "volition", one wanted to say that Smith volited his moving his arm, the simplest way to say this would be: "Smith moved his arm". But if one were talking only of Smith's volition, and not of his action (and we should be able to do this on Hume's account, since they are contingently related), saying "Smith moved his arm" would not imply "Smith's arm went up". It is a contingent matter, for Hume, that when it is true that Smith moves his arm (in the sense that Smith volits the moving of his arm) it is also, at least normally, true that Smith's arm goes up.

The view of volition which I am tentatively attributing to Hume, then, is in some respects similar to that of G. N. A. Vesey, in his article "Volition".[1] Vesey argues for a distinction between "what a person really does" and "what he does",[2] which is at least similar

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[1]G.N.A. Vesey, "Volition", in Essays in Philosophical Psychology, ed. Donald F. Gustafson (New York: Anchor Books, 1964), pp. 41-57.

[2]Vesey, p. 55.

to the distinction between not-necessarily-successful and successful voliting, as described above. He then points out that in "our language as it stands" there is "no description of what a person _really_ does which is as much a part of our everyday language as is the description, 'He moved his arm', of what he _does_."[1] "But", Vesey continues, "there is no reason why we should not introduce some new expression, such as 'So far as he, but not necessarily his arm, was concerned, he moved his arm', or 'So far as the mental side of him as an agent is concerned, he moved his arm', at the same time stipulating that it is to work like 'He moved his arm', _except that it can be true even when 'His arm moved' is false_".[2]

I must, however, emphasize that I offer this interpretation of Hume's theory of volition only tentatively, and without full conviction of its correctness. There seem, in fact, to be three objections to attributing this view to Hume. First, in so far as Hume construes a volition as a simple, indefinable impression, there is reason to think that the volition involved in raising my arm is not appropriately designated by saying "I moved my arm", even when this sentence is taken as not implying that my arm moved. The sentence "I moved my arm" _says too much_. It refers to more than the occurrence of the simple volition-impression, just as the sentence "I desire to have a beer" refers to more than the simple desire-impression. Given Hume's view about the contingent connection between a desire and its object, it should be possible to say, correctly, "I desire, and there is nothing

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[1] Vesey, p. 55.

[2] Vesey, p. 55.

that I desire". Similarly, he is perhaps suggesting that it is possible to say "I volited, but there was nothing that I volited". If this follows from Hume's theory, then the Vesey-like interpretation would be incorrectly attributed to Hume.

Secondly, it is difficult to see how the Vesey-like interpretation of volition could be made out in the case of a voluntary "internal" action, such as "conjuring up an image of the Eiffel Tower". Even if it be admitted that a Vesey-like account is possible in the case of bodily movements which are actions, it seems impossible to draw the same sort of distinction between what a person "really does" when he conjures up an image of the Eiffel Tower, and what he "does" when he conjures up an image of the Eiffel Tower. But in the "Appendix" remarks quoted, Hume indicates no significant differences between the way "motions of our body" are alleged to "obey the will", and the way "the thoughts and sentiments of our mind" are alleged to "obey the will". (T,632)

The third objection to attributing a Vesey-like view of volition to Hume is of a somewhat different sort. It just seems to be the case that Hume did not raise the sorts of problems about the concept of volition that provide the background for a discussion like that which Vesey conducts. That is to say, Hume's attention was not fixed on that particular form of the mind-body problem in which the connection between alleged volitions and overt behavior becomes a crucial one. Perhaps this is just another instance of Hume's restricting his attention, in his mental science, to the mental side of the supposed mental-physical divide which he mentions in

the "Appendix". In any case, Hume certainly gives no very explicit account of volitions, or their relation to overt behavior. Rather, he centers his attention on the connection between motives and actions, skipping the volitional linkage between the two. It is the connection between motives and actions which is the principal object of inquiry in the third part of Book II. In what follows, I shall assume that when Hume says that a particular motive causes a particular action he means that a motive such as the desire of having a beer causes the action of having a beer. This, at any rate, is the way he normally speaks.

We may now return to the question of the correctness of Hume's view that motives cause actions, and may begin by establishing that this is Hume's view. Hume uses a number of different expressions to characterize the connection between motives and actions. Motives "produce ... [an] action, or give rise to volition". (T,414) Similarly, they are capable of "preventing volition". (T,415) They "have an ... influence on the will, and ... [are] able to cause, as well as hinder any act of volition". (T,415) A motive is a "spring" or "moving principle" of an action. (T,118) Actions may be considered "as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind" (T,477), or "as signs of motives" (T,479). We may speak of "the motive, from which the external action is deriv'd". (T,480) We may speak, in a similar vein, of "some actuating passion or motive, capable of producing the action". (T,518) Hume concludes his discussion of liberty and necessity by claiming to have proved "that all actions of the will have particular causes". (T,412)

The "union betwixt motives and actions," Hume claims, "has the same constancy, as that in any natural operation". (T,404) "No union," he says, "can be more constant and certain, than that of some actions with some motives and characters". (T,404) This constant union between some motives and some actions has "its influence on the understanding ... in determining us to infer the existence of one from that of another". (T,404) Since the union of motives and actions is, at least in some cases, one of constant conjunction, the union must be, on Hume's principles, a merely contingent one. Assuming volitional links between motives and actions, the contingency of the connection between motives and actions follows from the contingency of the connection between volitions and actions. And the contingency of this latter connection is quite explicitly claimed when Hume asserts that "the will being here consider'd as a cause, has no more a discoverable connexion with its effects, than any material cause has with its proper effect". (T,632) A causal, and thus contingent, connection between motives and actions, is, moreover, clearly implied in Hume's whole project of defending the determinist thesis by asserting that, just as in natural science, one can discover laws correlating motives and actions.

The principal objection against a causal theory of motives, and the only one which I shall consider here, is the claim that causes are only contingently connected with their effects, but motives are not contingently connected with the actions they explain, and so motives cannot be causes of actions. According to A. I. Melden, elaborating on Hume, "the very notion of a causal sequence logically

implies that cause and effect are intelligible without any logically internal relation of the one to the other".[1] Further, according to Melden, "there is a logical connection between the concept of a motive and that of an action",[2] or, somewhat differently, there is a "logical connection between motives and actions".[3] The notion of "logical connection" which Melden has in mind is best brought out in the course of his comments on Prichard's theory of volitions:

> Let the interior event which we call 'the act of volition' be mental or physical, ... it must be logically distinct from the alleged effect--this surely is one lesson we can derive from a reading of Hume's discussion of causation. Yet nothing can be an act of volition that is not *logically connected with* that which is willed--*the act of willing is intelligible only as the act of willing whatever it is that is willed*.[4]

That is to say, the act of willing is only *identifiable* as the act of willing that action of which it is said to be the cause. Similarly, the motive which is alleged to cause an action (*via* an act of willing) is only identifiable by reference to the action which is its alleged effect. I can only say what my motive is by saying "It is the desire to drink a beer", but this identification of my motive makes mention of the action which it motivates, *viz*. drinking a beer. Thus a motive and the action it motivates are logically connected, and thus a motive cannot be a cause of an action, since causes are only contingently connected with their effects. Thus Hume, who stressed the principle that causes and effects are only contingently connected,

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[1]Melden, p. 52.

[2]Melden, p. 83.

[3]Melden, p. 83.

[4]Melden, p. 53. Italics mine.

violated his own principle by saying that motives cause actions.

It is interesting to note that, on Hume's account of motives, the problem which Melden sees would not even arise. According to Hume, a desire is a (simple) impression and is independently identifiable as such. But we have already had occasion to reject this view of desires, so it cannot be used to defend a causal-theory of motives against Melden's criticism. If a causal-theory of motives is to be defended it must be defended despite the fact that we normally identify motives by reference to the actions of which they are motives. The question, then, is: Does it follow from the fact that we normally identify motives by reference to the actions they motivate that motives cannot be causes of actions?

David Pears takes a very brief, and to me convincing, course with the sort of argument offered by Melden, claiming:

> This argument is invalid, as can be seen from countless examples. Fear of a particular accident may cause that accident, and it is only a contingent fact that magic wishes do not bring about the events which are their objects. This, in spite of the fact that the relevant fear and the relevant wish cannot be specified except in ways that mention the very things that are suggested as their effects. So this objection to the causal account of desire tries to exclude too much, and fails.[1]

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[1]David Pears, "Desires as Causes of Actions", The Human Agent ("Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures", Vol. I; London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 86-87. It is interesting to note, in connection with Pears's reference to "magic wishes", the following passage from the first Enquiry: "Were we empowered, by a secret wish, to remove mountains, or control the planets in their orbit; this extensive authority would not be more extraordinary, nor more beyond our comprehension [than that of the "soul" over the "body"]". (EHU, 65)

That is to say, the fact that a description of a motive involves reference to the action which is its alleged effect does not show that it is improper to speak of a motive as the cause of the action which it explains, even though it be admitted that causes and their effects are only contingently related. To say that motives and actions are logically, and thus not causally, related requires that one say more than that the object of the desire, and thus the means by which we normally identify a desire, is the desired action. Stronger arguments in support of the thesis that motives and actions are logically, not causally, related might be constructed by imposing more stringent conditions for the truth of a statement of the form "X desires to Ø" than are normally required. For example, it might be argued that one may only legitimately talk of desires when the actions desired actually take place.[1] I shall not deal with arguments of this sort here, but shall rest content with having made, with Pears, the general point that the fact that the identification of a desire normally requires reference to the action desired does not entail that a desire can not be the cause of an action.

A further point about the assumptions of the logical-connection theory of motives may be noted. The logical-connection theory apparently assumes that the identification of desires is possible solely by reference to the object of the desire, and thus by reference

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[1]The largest part of Pears's article is a critique of arguments in support of a logical-connection theory of motives which impose such more stringent restrictions on the notion of desire. See Pears, pp. 87-97.

to the action desired. It is, however, at least possible that we may become able to identify desires in ways other than by reference to their objects. It is conceivable, for example, that we may become able to identify desires on the basis of neurophysiological information. But if this be admitted possible, we have further reason for rejecting the view that desires cannot be causes, at least in so far as this view depends on the sort of argument outlined above.

There are, of course, many different arguments which have been deployed against the causal-theory of motives,[1] but which I cannot consider here. I have, however, considered what I take to be the most widely used argument in support of the logical-connection theory of motives. This argument also has the added interest of implying, if it were convincing, that in the discussion of one of the main topics in the *Treatise*, *viz.* the nature of motives, Hume failed to see the implications of one of his chief contributions to philosophical analysis, the thesis that causal connections are contingent ones.

If Hume is not mistaken in his claim that motive-explanations, whatever else they may be, are causal explanations, this can only make his discussion of freedom and necessity more plausible. As we shall see in the next section, Hume's argument for determinism assumes that we can give motivational explanation of human conduct, and that *this* fact supports the thesis of universal causation.

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[1]Davidson mentions a number of these other arguments in his article cited earlier, pp. 693-700.

2. Liberty and Necessity

As I noted earlier, questions about the explanation of human actions are closely, and traditionally, connected with questions about the freedom of human actions. It is an important philosophical question whether it follows, from the fact that one can explain human actions, that such actions are, in some important sense, not free. We may turn, now, to Hume's illuminating discussion of this question. I shall consider Hume's discussion in two stages. First, I shall consider the relevant elements of Hume's theory of the explanation of human actions, and thus the character of Hume's determinism. Secondly, I shall consider his positive account of human freedom and responsibility. This discussion will complete my account of Hume's theory of human actions.

It is important, at the start, to understand the context within which Hume conducts his discussion of the hoary problem of free-will. As we have seen at many places in the course of this study, Hume's chief interest, in the Treatise of Human Nature, is in prosecuting a scientific inquiry into the economy of the human mind along the lines of a Newtonian mechanics. More generally, Hume was concerned to secure a scientific understanding of human conduct. His interest ranged over many, at least, of what today we would call the social sciences: psychology, sociology, political science, history, economics, and so on. He believed that such sciences of human nature were both possible and important to achieve, and believed himself to have made some contribution to their advance. Moreover, in his morephilosophical moods, he was concerned with problems of the "methodology of the social sciences".[1]

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[1] Passmore, p. 6.

As we have seen in Chapter II, he was interested in such problems as the nature of scientific explanation, the character of scientific laws, and the differences between universal and statistical laws. As we have seen at other places, he was particularly interested in the application of these discussions to an elucidation of the character of the social, as opposed to natural, sciences. Given this context, we can see the importance which Hume attaches to his discussion of liberty and necessity. If a scientific study of human behavior is to be possible, it would seem that it must, in principle, be possible that the sciences of human nature be capable of explaining and predicting human actions. That is to say, the notion of scientific explanation involves the notions of scientific laws, whether universal or statistical, and scientific prediction. But these latter notions seem to compromise the concept of human freedom. If it is, at least in principle, possible to explain and predict a man's actions, how can those actions be free? But the concept of human freedom is essential to that of responsibility, and thus to those of morals. Is it not the case, then, that the possibility of a science of human nature implies the impossibility of morality? And if we are convinced that a distinction can be drawn between free and non-free behavior, must we not insist that an adequate science of human nature is a pipe-dream?

Hume's problem can be looked at from the side of the scientist as well as from that of the moralist. If it be admitted that some human actions are free, does this not imply that an adequate science of human nature is in principle impossible? How can an action be both free and predictable or explainable? If some actions are free, and a free action is inexplicable

and unpredictable, how can a scientist of human nature even hope to construct an adequate science? The possibility of such a science seems ruled-out from the start if one admits free actions. Thus the problem of human freedom is right at the heart of Hume's own most cherished project: a science of human nature. If the alleged connection between "free", "inexplicable", and "unpredictable" be allowed, then one must choose: science, or morality, but not both. The main point of Hume's argument is to deny the alleged connections between the concepts of freedom, inexplicability, and unpredictability. Along the way, he tries to justify a belief both in the possibility of social science, and in the distinction between free and non-free human actions. He even tries to make out a case for the view that the concept of responsibility depends on the concept of the causal explanation of human actions. I shall begin by considering Hume's argument in defense of the social sciences.

Hume begins by considering the (to him) unproblematic case of explanation and prediction in the natural sciences. In some instances, he points out, we have universal laws governing the occurrence of physical events, and by virtue of these universal laws we are capable of predicting the occurrence of certain events, given the satisfaction of appropriate conditions, with perfect assurance. "Every object", Hume says, talking of <u>physical</u> objects, "is determin'd by an absolute fate to a certain degree and direction of its motion". (T, 400) In the <u>Enquiry</u> he remarks:

> Every natural effect is so precisely determined by the energy of its cause that no other effect, in such particular circumstances, could possibly have resulted from it. The degree and direction of every motion is, by the laws of nature, prescribed with such exactness that a living creature may as soon arise from the shock of two bodies as motion in any other degree, or direction than what is actually produced by it. (EHU, 82)

In fact, in the passages quoted, Hume is asserting not that we have such universal laws but that we believe that such universal explanatory laws are capable of being discovered in natural science, even if we do not in fact possess such laws. Nevertheless, as is clear from his talk on the "influence /of the constant union of "natural operations"/ on the understanding. . . in determining us to infer the existence of one from that of another" (T, 404), Hume is concerned with the possibility of formulating such universal laws, and does, in fact, believe that some such laws are in our possession, as, for example, the laws of Newtonian mechanics. "When any phaenomena are constantly and invariably conjoin'd together", he says, "they acquire such a connexion in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation". (T, 403)

In some cases, however, we possess only statistical laws.[1] "Below this /i.e. observed constant conjunction/," Hume remarks, "there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind ballances the contrary experiments, and deducting the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance or evidence, which remains". (T, 403) We have, however, already discussed Hume's views on statistical laws at some length, and need not elaborate that discussion here.

The important point to notice, however, is that even in those cases in

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[1] I should point out that, as before, I am using the term "statistical" in a rather loose way to designate all those laws which are not universal or formulable in the following way: All A's are B's. Under "statistical laws" I include both those which are actually statistical, such as "51% of A's are B's", and those which are less precise, such as "Most A's are B's" or "The greatest number of A's are B's."

natural science where we in fact possess only statistical laws we believe, according to Hume, that the obtaining of universal laws is in principle possible.

> Even when . . . contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of causes and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain. (T, 403-404)

That is to say, even if we can only, at a particular point in time, state a statistical law governing the occurrence of members of a class of physical events, given the satisfaction of appropriate conditions, we <u>presume</u> that it is in principle possible to discover the non-statistical laws which govern the particular class of physical events. Until such time as we discover the appropriate universal laws, of course, we make do with our statistical laws. But scientific inquiry is in principle intent on the discovery of universal laws. Without such laws we cannot, in fact, explain events, nor can we predict the occurrance of events with perfect assurance.

Hume contrasts the attitudes of the "vulgar" and "philosophers" [read: "scientists"] in terms of the way each respond to non-uniform regularities in nature, i.e. to situations covered only by statistical, and not universal laws:

> The vulgar, who take things according to their first appearance, attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes, as makes them often fail of their usual unfluence, tho' they meet with no obstacle nor impediment in their operation. But philosophers observing, that almost in every part of nature there is contain'd a vast variety of springs and principles, which are hid, by reason of their minuteness or remoteness, find that <u>'tis at least</u>

> possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes. This possibility is converted into certainty by farther observation, when they remark, that upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes, and proceeds from their mutual hindrance and opposition. A peasant can give no better reason for the stopping of any clock or watch than to say, that commonly it does not go right: But an artizan easily perceives that the same force in the spring or pendulum has always the same influence on the wheels; but fails of its usual effect, perhaps by reason of a grain of dust, which puts a stop to the whole movement. From the observation of several parallel instances, philosophers form a maxim, that the connexion betwixt all causes and effects is equally necessary, and that its seeming uncertainty in some instances proceeds from the secret opposition of contrary causes. (T, 132. Italics mine)[1]

This illuminating passage prompts several comments. First, Hume indicates that he construes the principle "All events have causes" or the principle "All events are susceptible to explanation by means of universal (i.e. non-statistical) laws" as a rule which is used in scientific inquiry, and not a logically necessary truth about the world. As he himself argues, the sentence "All events are caused", taken as a universal statement, is, if true, only contingently true. In the passage under discussion, he makes it clear that he nevertheless believes it appropriate to use this principle as a "maxim" governing scientific inquiry. As a maxim adopted by scientists, it has the function of requiring them, despite failures in the past, to continue their characteristic search for those universal laws which are believed to govern all phenomena in the physical world.

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[1]Hume considers this paragraph sufficiently important to repeat it almost verbatim in the first Enquiry (pp. 86-87).

Whether this maxim is in fact essential to scientific inquiry is a question which I shall not attempt to answer here. Nevertheless, it is clearly Hume's view that the use of this maxim is justified by the fact that in some cases where we have observed a merely statistical regularity of phenomena "upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes". (T, 132) We may query the "always" in this assertion but Hume's point is clear enough. The belief in the legitimacy of the principle of universal causation is justified by its results in actual scientific investigation. Scientists have, in some cases, progressed from statistical to universal laws in the past, and this fact justifies the belief that such progress is possible in other cases as well. It is, in fact, the adoption of the principle of universal causation that is one of the marks distinguishing "philosophers" from the "vulgar".

Most importantly, however, this passage brings out the connection, in Hume's theory, between the concept of universal causation (determinism) and the concept of universal laws in science. The point of the passage is to defend the belief in universal causation against the objection that in fact, in at least many cases, we are aware of only statistical regularities in nature. Hume's point is that it is quite consistent both (a) to admit that we possess only statistical laws governing the occurrence of many natural phenomena, and (b) to assert that there are (in fact) no contingent events, in the sense of uncaused events. And he makes this point by arguing that in fact, in a good many cases, scientists have discovered those universal laws governing events which were previously capable of explanation in only a

statistical way. Thus, to say that an event is caused is, for Hume, to say, at least in part, that is is in principle possible to explain the occurrence of that event by means of a universal law. To say that all events are caused is, at least in part, to say that all events are in principle capable of explanation by universal laws.

The concept of necessity present in Hume's determinist thesis is, then, the concept of causal necessity. Recalling our earlier discussion of causal necessity, we may say that the notion of necessity in question is that involved in the notion of legitimately inferring the occurrence of one event, given the occurrence of another, and the knowledge of an empirical law correlating the occurrence of members of the classes of events of which they are members. We may say that an event A <u>must</u> occur if we (a) know that another event B has occurred, and (b) possess a (universal) <u>law</u> correlating the occurrence of A-like events and B-like events. Granted our previous discussion of causal necessity, this interpretation of Hume's determinism is apparent from his comment: "Here then are two particulars, which we are to consider as essential to necessity, <u>viz</u>. the constant <u>union</u> /of events/ and the <u>inference</u> of the mind; and wherever we discover these we must acknowledge a necessity". (T, 400) In any case in which we actually possess a universal empirical law, or are justified in believing that such a law is in principle open to discovery, in that case we are justified in asserting that the events in question are caused. This, in fact, is what, on Hume's view, the thesis of determinism amounts to. As Árdal has pointed out, "Hume's <u>kind</u> of determinism is of the methodological kind".[1]

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[1] Árdal, p. 87.

Having elucidated the concept of necessity in the allegedly unproblematic case of natural science, Hume turns to discuss the possible application of this concept to human actions. In effect he is inquiring whether an adequate science of human conduct is possible. Hume's argument that an adequate science of human conduct is possible takes the following form: (a) in some instances we possess universal empirical laws governing human behavior; (b) in some instances we possess only statistical laws, but in such cases we may, with as much justification as in the natural sciences, assume that universal laws are in principle able to be discovered; (c) in thoseinstances where human conduct appears completely random, we may still be justified in believing that its apparent randomness is a function of our lack of knowledge, rather than of any genuine contingency in human behavior. Hume in fact issues a challenge. If human behavior, is, from the point of view of scientific explanation, in fundamentally the same situation as is the natural world, then we must, to be consistent, admit that human actions are as necessary as are physical events. "The actions . . . of matter", he says, "are to be regarded as instances of necessary actions; and whatever is in this respect on the same footing with matter, must be acknowledg'd to be necessary". (T, 400)

To avoid misunderstanding Hume at this point is is essential to be clear about the character of the universal or statistical laws which, as we shall see, he claims we possess with respect to human conduct. In claiming that we possess universal or statistical laws governing human behavior Hume is not claiming that we possess laws with the _formally scientific_ character of the laws of Newton's mechanics. When he wrote the _Treatise_ and the first _Enquiry_

Hume obviously believed that the sciences of human nature were _just getting started_. As he remarks in the _Enquiry_: "May we not _hope_, that philosophy /read: moral philosophy, as opposed to natural philosophy/, if cultivated with care, and encouraged by the attention of the public, may carry its researches still farther, and discover, at least in some degree, the secret springs and principles, by which the human mind is actuated in its operations?" (EHU, 14. Italics mine.) Hume contrasts the natural sciences, which had already achieved a high degree of development, with the moral sciences which were still in their infancy. The _Treatise_ itself had been "an attempt to _introduce_ the experimental Method of Reasoning into _Moral Subjects_". (T, xi. Italics mine.) One should not, then, expect that the "laws", whether universal or statistical, which Hume gives as laws governing human behavior will have the formal character of the laws of a science. They are rather what we may call common-sense laws, laws which are not very clearly or precisely formulated, but which we nevertheless find adequate for the ordinary purposes of our day-to-day activities.

With this reservation made, Hume sets out to "prove from experience, that our actions have a constant union with our motives, tempers, and circumstances" (T, 401), and that "as the _union_ betwixt motives and actions has the same constancy, as that in any natural operations, so its influence on the understanding is also the same in _determining_ us to infer the existence of one from that of another" (T, 404).

To "prove from experience, that our actions have a constant union with our motives, tempers, and circumstances", Hume says ". . . a very slight and

general view of the common course of human affairs will be sufficient". (T, 401) "Whether we consider mankind according to the difference of sexes, ages, governments, conditions, or methods of education; the same uniformity and regular operation of natural principles are discernible". (T, 401) What Hume has in mind are rough-and-ready correlations between the sex of a person and the character of his actions or emotions (T, 401), between a person's age and mental ability (T, 401), between human needs and the means devised to supply them (T, 401-402), and so on. Experience teaches us, Hume maintains, that "there is a general course of nature in human actions, as well as in the operations of the sun and climate". (T, 402-403) Moreover, we display our belief in such a "general course of nature in human actions" by the fact that we "acknowledge the force of moral evidence, and both in speculation and practice proceed upon it, as upon a reasonable foundation". (T, 404) By "moral evidence" Hume means "a conclusion concerning the actions of men, deriv'd from the consideration of their motives, temper and situation". (T, 404) This "kind of reasoning", or this practical knowledge, Hume says, "runs thro' politics, war, commerce, oeconomy, and indeed mixes itself so entirely in human life, that 'tis impossible to act or subsist a moment without having recourse to it". (T, 405) Hume illustrates this practical knowledge of men and affairs which we make use of in all sorts of situations by a number of examples:

> A prince, who imposes a tax upon his subjects, expects their compliance. A general, who conducts an army, makes account of a certain degree of courage. A merchant looks for fidelity and skill in his factor or super-cargo. A man, who gives orders for his dinner, doubts not of the obedience of his servants. (T, 405)

Hume's point is more amply illustrated in the first Enquiry. He claims, first, that there are regularities in human conduct:

> It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit: these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all the actions and enterprises, which have ever been observed among mankind. (EHU, 83)

In an interesting reference to a discipline sometimes taken to be one of the social sciences, *viz.* history, he remarks:

> Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour. (EHU, 83)

It is not, of course, just our reading of history which enables us to understand the ins and outs of human conduct. Our own experience, provided it is sufficiently wide and varied, can provide us with an almost infallible knowledge of the ways different sorts of men will behave in different sorts of situations.

> Hence likewise the benefit of that experience acquired by long life and a variety of business and company, in order to instruct us in the principles of human nature, and regulate our future conduct, as well as speculation. By means of this guide, we mount up to the knowledge of men's inclinations and motives, from their actions, expressions, and even gestures; and again descend to the interpretation of their actions from our knowledge of their motives and inclinations. The general observations treasured up by a course of experience, give us the clue of human nature, and teach us to unravel all its intricacies. (EHU, 84-85)

Hume's remarks about the regularities in human conduct must not, however, be read in too simple-minded a fashion. Hume is quite well aware of the many variations possible in human conduct, and the consequent complexity and subtlety required if our practical knowledge of men and affairs is to do the job it is required to do, viz. enable us to find our way about in our dealings with others. As Hume points out in the Enquiry:

> We must not, however, expect that this uniformity of human actions should be carried to such a length as that all men, in the same circumstances, will act precisely in the same manner, without making any allowance for the diversity of characters, prejudices, and opinions. Such a uniformity in every particular, is found in no part of nature. On the contrary, from observing the variety of conduct in different men, we are enabled to form a greater variety of maxims, which still suppose a degree of uniformity and regularity. (EHU, 85)

As he remarks in the Treatise: "There is a general course of nature in human actions as well as in the operations of the sun and the climate". (T, 402-403) But, and this is the point to be stressed: "There are also characters peculiar to different nations and particular persons, as well as common to mankind". (T, 403) That is to say, one's practical knowledge of men and affairs in not just a matter of knowledge of those regularities which obtain in the behavior of men simply in so far as they are men. Some of the regularities which we observe are regularities which obtain only in restricted cases, and which depend on facts about the social, economic, educational, political, religious, etc. status of the individuals in question. Some of the principles in our practical knowledge even refer essentially to particular individuals, such as one's brother, one's wife, one's boss. The better we know an individual, the more apt we are to know how he will behave in a given situation, and the

less apt we are to be taken by surprise.

As I pointed out before, Hume's examples are, pretty well exclusively, examples of common-sense, non-scientific universal laws. It is difficult to describe, with any precision, how we come to have such laws, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to express them in any formally precise way, or to display any systematic interconnections between them. They are rough-and-ready laws, but nevertheless may be perfectly adequate for our ordinary purposes. The important point, however, is not their formally scientific or non-scientific character, but the fact that there do seem to be such regularities as they express, and we do, quite obviously, act on the assumption of such regularities. Implicitly, Hume is suggesting that if we once realize that there are such observable regularities in human behavior, and that we do, in countless situations, act on the assumption of such regularities, we have admitted at least a large part of what the determinist, or, less polemically, the defender of the social sciences, is concerned to insist on, _viz._ the fact that there are laws, or that it may be possible to discover laws, which govern human conduct. Once the "lawfulness" of human behavior is admitted, there can be no genuine objection to progressively making more precise the laws we actually possess by a continuing scientific inquiry. It is precisely the legitimacy or the possibility of such a (social) scientific inquiry which, as we have seen, Hume is concerned to defend.

Hume is quite well aware that for the most part the laws of human conduct which we actually possess are only statistical. But he insists that this fact about the laws of conduct should be allowed no greater weight than the fact than many laws in the natural sciences are similarly non-universal. In the

natural sciences we assume, Hume believes, that our merely statistical laws are, at least in principle, capable of being replaced, by dint of further scientific inquiry, by strictly universal laws. There is no reason, then, for not allowing a similar assumption to operate in our study of human behavior. As Hume remarks in the Treatise:

> In judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects. When any phaenomena are constantly and invariably conjoin'd together, they acquire such a connexion in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation. But below this there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind ballances the contrary experiments, and deducting the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance or evidence, which remains. Even when these contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of causes and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain. No union can be more constant and certain, than that of some actions with some motives and characters; and if in other cases the union is uncertain, 'tis no more than what happens in the operations of body, nor can we conclude any thing from the one irregularity, which will not follow equally from the other. (T, 403-404. Italics mine.)

The justification of this assumption in the case of human behavior is the same as that in the case of physical events. As we have seen already, the justification of this assumption in the case of physical events is the fact that in many cases we have in fact progressed from merely statistical to strictly universal laws. The same is true of human actions. As Hume points

out in the Enquiry of the actions of men:

> The most irregular and unexpected resolutions of men may frequently be accounted for by those who know every particular circumstance of their character and situation. A person of an obliging disposition gives a peevish answer: But he has the toothache, or has not dined. A stupid fellow discovers an uncommon alacrity in his carriage: But he has met with a sudden piece of good fortune. (EHU, 88)

Hume concludes from this that "the internal principles and motives may operate in a uniform manner, notwithstanding these seeming irregularities; in the same manner as the winds, rain, clouds, and other variations of the weather are supposed to be governed by steady principles; though not easily discoverable by human sagacity and enquiry". (EHU, 88)

Hume's determinism amounts, then, to this. The principle that all events are capable, at least in principle, of explanation by means of universal laws is not a necessary truth. Nevertheless, it is an amply justified "maxim" of scientific inquiry. This "maxim" has a role to play in the social as well as the natural sciences. Its use is as justified in the former as in the latter. In either case our belief in the truth of the proposition expressed by "All events are capable, at least in principle, of explanation by means of universal laws" is directly supported by the fact that we do have some universal laws in our possession. The truth of this proposition is not discountenanced by the fact that in some cases we are not at present able to explain events, or possess only statistical laws. In at least some cases in the past we have progressed from an inability to explain events, or from the possession of merely statistical laws, to the discovery of universal laws. This fact gives us a justified hope for the future. And it is, in fact, this

justified hope that lies at the heart of scientific progress. In sum, the sciences of human nature are at least possible.

It is convenient, at this point, to notice a most astute remark which Hume makes to counter a most interesting objection to the possiblity of an adequate scientific explanation of human conduct. If the ability to explain an event implies the ability to predict that event, then what of the fact that human agents may deliberately falsify one's predictions about their behavior? Hume presents the case of a libertarian who deliberately falsifies a determinist's prediction of his behavior so as to show the falsity of the determinist thesis. But this, Hume insists, is no disproof of determinism, because "the desire of showing our liberty is the sole motive of our actions". (T, 408) That is to say, the fact that the libertarian can act in a "capricious and irregular" fashion (T, 408) when faced with a prediction of his behavior does not succeed in showing that his "capricious and irregular" behavior is inexplicable. It merely shows that the explanation of his behavior must take into account his awareness of one's prediction. The point can be generalized. The fact that the subjectsof any science of human nature are, in Hume's expression, "intelligent agents" (EHU, 88) requires that a scientist of human nature take the possibility of deliberate falsification of predictions into consideration. But there is no reason to think that no laws can be established allowing for this possibility.

Another objection which Hume considers and rejects depends on what he calls "a <u>false sensation or experience</u> even of the liberty of indifference". (T, 408) Hume points out that "tho' in reflecting on human actions we seldom

feel such a looseness or indifference, yet it very commonly happens, that in performing the actions themselves we are sensible of something like it". (T, 408) "We feel", he says, "that our actions are subject to our own will on most occasions, and imagine we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing". (T, 408) But if Hume's statement of the determinist thesis is correct, this objection would have to show that the statement "I feel that my action is inexplicable" implies the truth of the statement "My action is in fact inexplicable". But this objection rests on a mistaken belief that the agent's own feelings are conclusive, or provide the final answer, with respect to the explicability of his actions. Now there are many cases in which we do not allow what the agent says about himself to be the final answer. We may correctly say that Smith is acting out of envy despite his sincere protestations that this is not so. The same, Hume claims, is true of the present case. The agent has no privileged access to the truth about the explicability or inexplicability of his behavior. Though he have "a false sensation or experience . . . of the liberty of indifference" his behavior may, in fact, be perfectly explicable. The objection rests on a failure to see that "the necessity of any action, whether of matter or of the mind, is not properly a quality in the agent, but in any thinking or intelligent being, who may consider the action, and consists in the determination of his thought to infer its existence from some preceding objects". (T, 408) That is to say, the "necessity" of an agent's actions is a question of whether in fact those actions are, at least in principle, explainable by a universal empirical law. And the agent does not have the last say on this question of fact.

We may now turn to the second major element of Hume's discussion of the problem of free-will, i.e. his account of the sense in which, within a determinist framework of the kind he outlines, some actions are free and some are not free. According to Hume, philosophers have confused two different senses of "liberty". In the Treatise he calls these the "liberty of spontaneity" and the "liberty of indifference". (T, 407) To talk of a free action in the "liberty of indifference" sense is to talk of "a negation of necessity and causes". (T, 407) An action is free in this sense if it is uncaused or a chance occurrence. Though it is logically possible that there be free actions in this sense, the determinist argument which I have sketched above is an argument to show that there is no reason to believe that such free actions do in fact occur. If one accepts this argument, then one rejects the (empirical) possibility of free actions in the "liberty of indifference" sense.

The concept of a free action in the "liberty of spontaneity" sense is a very different concept, and, according to Hume, it is the reality of free actions in this sense "which it concerns us to preserve". (T, 407-408) To say that an action is free in this sense is to say that it is not subject to "force, and violence, and constraint". (407) Hume insists that in this sense of "free" some human actions are free. Unfortunately, however, he does not say very much about this concept of freedom in the Treatise. His account in the first Enquiry is somewhat more satisfactory.

In the Enquiry Hume raises the question: "What is meant by liberty, when applied to voluntary actions?" (EHU, 95) "We cannot surely," he says, "mean that actions have so little connexion with motives, inclinations, and circumstances, that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from

the other, and that one affords no inference by which we can conclude the existence of the other". (EHU, 95) That is, when we describe an action as free we do not mean to say that it is uncaused or inexplicable. "By liberty, then, we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may". (EHU, 95) A free action, then, is an unconstrained action. A person acts freely if he could have done otherwise. That is to say, P acts freely in doing A if, had he chosen, he could have not done A, or could have done B or C instead of A. A person's actions are free if they are, in this sense, within his power to do or not do. This distinction between those actions which are free or unconstrained and those which are not free or are constrained is to be drawn within that class of actions which are, in principle, capable of explanation by universal laws.

Having made this important point, Hume is less successful in providing an account of how we determine which actions are, in fact, free in this sense of free. He tends to restrict his attention to those actions (or omissions) which are subject to physical constraint. In the Enquiry he claims that "this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to every one who is not a prisoner and in chains". (EHU, 95) (As Flew remarks: "He should surely have added at least the clause: 'and who is not physically incapable of doing what he wants to do'".[1]) There is no reason, however, to think that Hume believes that only thoseactions (or omissions) which are physically constrained are unfree actions. He does not, that is, believe that any action which is not physically constrained is a free action. At least at one point in the

Treatise he shows some awareness of non-physical forms of constraint: "'Tis commonly allow'd that mad-men have no liberty". (T, 404) If a man is subject to psychological compulsions (as in the case of kleptomania) and is unable not to do what he is (psychologically) compelled to do, his conduct is as unfree as that of a man subject to physical violence. Hume is aware, as well, that there is a quite normal sense in which a person, though not subject to some psychological disorder or actual physical force, may be said to be constrained to act or not to act in a certain way. As he observes in the Treatise: "According to common notions a man has no power, where very considerable motives lie betwixt him and the satisfaction of his desires, and determine him to forbear what he wishes to perform". (T, 312) "The fear of the civil magistrate," he says, may be "as strong a restraint as any of iron". (T, 312) Elaborating on this remark we may say that a person's behavior is constrained if, for example, he is threatened with dire consequences if he should act as he wishes to act.

Despite these suggestive remarks, however, it must be admitted that Hume does not give a very full account of the ways in which a person's actions may be unfree in the sense of constrained. Perhaps this lacuna in Hume's discussion of freedom is to be explained by recognizing Hume's principal objective in the sections on freedom. It is sufficient, for Hume's purposes, that he be able to show that a sense can be given to the contrast between free and unfree behavior within a determinist framework. If this is Hume's principal objective in the sections in question, and it surely is, then a careful analysis of the

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[1]Flew, p. 140

varieties of constraint can have only a secondary importance.

We may now consider a stronger, but closely related, thesis concerning the notion of human freedom, viz. the thesis that the notion of human freedom depends on the notion of causal necessitation, and thus that the concepts of morality presuppose a belief in determinism. Having argued that the notion of human freedom is compatible with the determinist thesis, Hume goes on to make the much stronger claim that one can only make sense of the concept of a free action, and thus those of morals, if one assumes the truth of the thesis of determinism. "I . . . shall venture to affirm that the doctrines, both of necessity and of liberty, as above explained, are not only consistent with morality, but are absolutely essential to its support". (EHU, 97. Italics mine.) This view has been adopted by a number of recent writers, including Nowell-Smith, who claims: "Freedom, so far from being incompatible with causality, implies it."[1] The view has, however, recently come under attack by Philippa Foot.[2] I shall try, in what follows, to state this thesis of Hume's as clearly as possible, and, along the way, defend it.

We may begin, somewhat obliquely, by considering what Hume takes to be essential to an anti-determinist or libertarian theory. The crux of the libertarian theory is the claim that at least some actions (or, more accurately, some acts of the will) are not caused. That is, some actions are such that they cannot be fully explained by reference to a person's motives, character, or whatever, because the acts of the will which give rise to these actions

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[1] P.H. Nowell-Smith, "Freewill and Moral Responsibility", Mind, LVII (1948), p. 46.

[2] Philippa Foot, "Free Will as Involving Determinism", The Philosophical Review, LXVI (1957), pp. 439-450.

are not adequately determined by a person's motives, character, and so on. There is no set of conditions sufficient to explain the occurrence of these acts of the will. There is no set of conditions given the satisfaction of which the person <u>must</u> choose to act or not to act in a certain way. Some human actions, that is, are caused by uncaused acts of the will. As we have seen, it is Hume's view that there are no actions which are not, in principle, explainable by reference to their antecedent conditions and to the universal laws correlating these conditions with actions of the kind in question.

The libertarian thesis is not, of course, intended to imply that we may not legitimately speak of a man's character, or of his motives in doing what he does. But the libertarian does maintain that talk of a man's character or motives is insufficient to explain the occurrence of at least some of his actions, <u>viz</u>. his free actions. What makes a man's actions free is the fact that at least one of the conditions of their occurrence, the crucially important one, is an act of will which is itself uncaused. And if this act of will is itself uncaused, it is <u>in principle</u> impossible to explain any actions which flow from it. The explanation of an action requires reference to the sufficient conditions for that action, but for a man's free actions, so the libertarian claims, no list of sufficient conditions can <u>in principle</u> be given. Normally the libertarian would claim that the fact that some of an agent's actions are in principle not capable of being explained in terms of their sufficient conditions is a fact of which the agent is aware by some form of immediate awareness.

We have already seen Hume's objection to this last claim. From the fact that I feel that my action is inexplicable it does not follow that it is in

fact inexplicable. A further point at issue, however, is whether the libertarian theory of uncaused acts of the will can do the job it is required to do, viz. explain the fact that we hold men responsible for some of their actions, but not for others. Hume argues two points: that the libertarian theory cannot make sense of the criteria we actually use for ascribing responsibility, or for determining degrees of responsibility, and cannot offer other criteria in place of these; that the libertarian's conception of moral agency is radically different from that in ordinary use, and there seems no reason to adopt it. Hume raises these questions in connection with the liability of an agent to legal punishment. There is no need, however, to restrict his remarks to the context of punishment. They are equally applicable to any case in which we may be said to respond evaluatively to a person or his actions, whether this response takes the form of actual punishment, or moral judgment, or the use of praise and blame.

One question which is, in our ordinary practice, essential to determining responsibility is the question whether the person could have done otherwise than he did. If we judge that a person, even had he wanted to do otherwise than he did, could not have done so, we do not hold him responsible for what he did. For example, if we have reason to believe that a person is a kleptomaniac we do not punish him for stealing from Woolworth's. If we know that a person was physically forced to act against his will we do not consider his action to be his action, in the sense of behavior for which he is responsible. If we judge that a man acted in a particular way because he was threatened with consequences which we consider to be such as no man could reasonably be expected to accept, we do not hold him responsible for what he did. In each

case we have ways, whether rough-and-ready or more or less scientific, for securing an answer to the question: could he have done otherwise? And the answer to this question determines, at least to some extent, whether or the degree to which a man is responsible for his conduct.

Ruling out cases of psychological or physical compulsion, we also determine whether or to what degree a man is responsible for his conduct by determining whether he had a motive for acting as he did, whether the action was intentional, whether it was done on the spur of the moment or as the result of a more or less complex plan of action, whether he could have foreseen the consequences of his behavior or could have been reasonably expected to have taken greater care in determining the consequences of his behavior, whether his behavior was characteristic of him, and so on. These various factors play a variety or roles in our determination of whether or to what degree a person is responsible for his conduct, or the results of his conduct. Some of them seem to be essential, at least in some cases, to responsibility. Others seem rather to be principally connected with questions about the likelihood that a person did the action attributed to him, though they may also contribute to a determination of the degree of a person's responsibility. To determine whether Smith committed the crime the detective may try to discover a motive that Smith might have had for committing it. He might also try to discover whether it was the sort of thing Smith might have been expected to do, i.e. the sort of thing characteristic of Smith. Of course, the fact that Smith had a motive for a crime (in the sense that we can see a reason for Smith's doing it, if he did it), or that the sort of criminal activity in question is characteristic of Smith, does not prove that Smith is, in fact,

the culprit. But if Smith did commit the crime, and it was characteristic of him, this might lead us to attribute a greater degree of responsibility to him. In many cases, too, we require that the action in question be an intentional one. If Smith cuts me in the street, but does not intend to do so, I would not consider him responsible for his action, though, of course, I would not like what he did. But if a man has an office requiring him to take special care to avoid such unintentional actions, he would be held responsible for failing to satisfy the more than usually stringent requirements of that office. If a man kills another in a fit of rage it is one thing; if he kills him, and has worked out the details of the murder beforehand, it is another. We admit, in law, a distinction between premeditated and unpremeditated murder. If it is clear that a person did not realize that in doing one thing, X, he would also be doing something else, Y, this would, in many cases at any rate, diminish his responsibility for doing Y, or even absolve him entirely.

Hume is aware of these facts about our use of the concept of responsibility, and insists that they fit quite well into his determinist scheme. "Men are not blam'd for such evil actions as they perform ignorantly and casually," he remarks, somewhat too strongly, "whatever may by their consequences". (T, 412) And the reason for this is that "the causes of these actions are only momentary, and terminate in them alone". (T, 412) That is to say, such actions do not flow from some more or less permanent elements in a person's make-up. They are not, in a sense we shall have to elucidate further on, <u>his actions</u>. "Men are less blam'd," Hume claims, "for such evil actions,

as they perform hastily and unpremeditately, than for such as proceed from thought and deliberation". (T, 412) Why is this so? According to Hume, "a hasty temper, tho' a constant cause in the mind, operates only by intervals, and infects not the whole character". (T, 412) This claim raises problems for Hume which we shall consider later. At the moment, however, it is sufficient to note Hume's insistence that the way in which we use the concept of responsibility reveals the fact that we give an important place to considerations of a person's motives, intentions, circumstances, character traits, and so on. But if this is so, then our ordinary use of the concept of responsibility fits very well indeed with Hume's determinist thesis, and seems to run quite counter to what one would expect if the libertarian thesis were correct.

When one confronts the libertarian theory with such prominent features of our use of the concept of responsibility one gets rather peculiar results. The fact that a person has a motive for doing what he does, and even the fact that he claims to have acted out of a certain motive, provide no surety that the requisite free (i.e. uncaused) act of the will has taken place, and thus give one no grounds for believing that the agent is responsible for his behavior. The person may, but then again he may not, have freely done the action for which he claims to have a certain motive. The fact that a person acts with a motive can not, then, reveal anything about his responsibility. The same is true of cases in which the agent carefully deliberates about what he is doing, or intends to do what he does. It is not sufficient to show that the person deliberated about doing A, or intended to do A, for it is certainly possible that the person both deliberate about doing A, and intend to do it,

and yet A not be the result of an uncaused act of the will.

Similar considerations are relevant in the case of characteristic actions. The fact that a person does A, and that doing A-like actions is characteristic of him, goes no way at all toward determining whether or to what degree he is responsible for doing A, on the libertarian thesis. A person may perform an action that is wholly characteristic of him, and yet have no responsibility for it at all, provided the particular action does not have its source in an uncaused act of the will. The fact that his behavior is wholly uncharacteristic of him likewise in no way diminishes his responsibility, since responsibility depends, for the libertarian, on the presence or absence of an uncaused act of the will. The presence or absence of such an uncaused act of the will has no connections with the fact that the agent's behavior is uncharacteristic or characteristic. On the libertarian theory, it is difficult, if not impossible, to account for the fact that a person's responsibility, or the degree of his responsibility, is affected by the characteristic or uncharacteristic character of his conduct.

It would seem, too, that according to the libertarian theory it would not be sufficient, in order to determine a person's responsibility for his behavior, to show that his behavior was not physically or psychologically constrained, in the sense usually given to these expressions. For it could well be true that a man's action not be constrained, either physically or psychologically, and yet not be free because not the result of an uncaused act of the will.

The fact that the libertarian theory cannot make sense of the criteria for responsibility actually in use does not of itself, however, show that the

libertarian theory should be rejected. It is at least possible that our criteria for ascribing responsibility or determining degrees of responsibility should be changed, and that the libertarian's single criterion, the occurrence of an uncaused act of the will, be adopted in their place. The difficulty in such a move, however, is this. There seems to be no way in which anyone, whether observer or agent, can determine that such a free act of will has taken place. It is sometimes argued that the agent knows whether his conduct is free or not by some form of immediate awareness. Thus, an agent can tell, immediately, whether he is constrained or not constrained to do or not to do some action. This is sometimes taken as "a demonstrative or even intuitive proof of human liberty". (T, 408) But, as we have seen earlier, this felt lack of constraint can not prove what it is alleged to prove. What the agent must have immediate knowledge of is not the fact that his behavior is unconstrained, but that it is uncaused. But from the fact that the agent is unaware of the causes of his behavior it does not follow that there are no causes of his behavior. Nor does it follow from the fact that no one knows the causes of his behavior that his behavior is uncaused. Moreover, if, as the libertarian claims, the fact that we can identify a man's motives, or say that an action is characteristic of him, in no way compromises the claim that his action is uncaused, it is difficult to know when we shall be able to say that a given action is uncaused (that is, that the act of will from which it flows is uncaused).

As Hume would be quite prepared to admit, an uncaused act of the will is a logical possibility. But what has this to do with the notion of responsibility? Why should we require that a man's action stem from an uncaused

act of the will if it is to be called free, and attributed to him as his responsibility? More importantly, perhaps, how can we operate with this alleged criterion for responsibility? If it is not sufficient to show that an action is done with a motive, is intended, is preceded by deliberation, and is neither physically nor psychologically compelled, then what will count as an action for which the agent is responsible? It would seem that we could never know when an action is in principle inexplicable, and thus one for which the agent may, on the libertarian view, be legitimately held responsible. The judge, in deciding the fate of the accused, would have no way of determining whether his criminal action was, in the all-important libertarian's sense, the accused's own action. It is even quite conceivable that a judge could systematically condemn those who were not, in the libertarian's sense, guilty, and not condemn those who were, and never be the wiser. Nor would the accused himself know whether or not he was being wronged, since he too would have no way of verifying the occurrence of the free choice. But to admit this is to admit that the libertarian theory provides no genuine criterion of responsibility.

As we have seen, Hume simply accepts the normal criteria for ascribing responsibility, and claims their consonance with his determinist theory. Rather than looking for some hypothetical uncaused act of the will, he considers precisely such things as whether the agent was constrained to act as he did, whether he had a motive for doing or intended to do what he was doing, whether he deliberated about his action, and whether the action was characteristic of him. What is particularly interesting about Hume's account, however, is not so much the fact that he accepts the normal criteria for responsibility,

but the reasons that he gives for doing so. By looking at these reasons we will be able to see the nature of the second deficiency which he alleges in the libertarian theory.

Briefly, Hume's argument is this. The principal object of our various moral responses is not so much a person's actions but the person who acts. Or, somewhat differently, we only consider a man's behavior to be behavior for which he is responsible if that behavior has its source in his character. If a man's conduct gives no indication about the character of the man, then he is not held responsible for it. Thus, the way we think of what persons are (our concept of what is relevant to being a person), and the connected question of how we elucidate the notion of a person's character, are crucial for understanding the nature of our moral responses. But our concepts of personality and character involve the concepts of such things as motives, intentions, tendencies, characteristic ways of acting, and so on. Given such a concept of personality and of character, the question "When Smith did X, was X his own action?" must be answered by inquiring into Smith's motives, intentions, etc. One of the principal weaknesses of the libertarian theory is that it rejects all the common features of our concepts of personality and character, and thus of moral agency, in favor of some difficult to conceive notion of an agent moved to act by uncaused acts of the will. In what follows I shall simply comment on the various stages of this argument.

According to Hume "the constant and universal object of hatred or anger is a person or creature endow'd with thought and consciousness; and when any criminal or injurious actions excite that passion, 'tis only by their relation to the person or connexion with him". (411) This claim must be read in the

light of Hume's theory of moral sentiments; i.e. his belief that moral sentiments are, at least in large part, specialized forms of the indirect passions of love and hatred, pride and humility.[1] If this is so, then the object of a moral response is a person, i.e. that thinking or conscious being whose actions are a source of pain or of pleasure to others, or to himself. Moral evaluations are, that is to say, for the most part forms of _personal_ evaluation, or _evaluation of persons_. But it is essential that the pleasure- or pain-causing behavior of a person which gives rise to our valuation of him have a "relation to the person or connexion with him". (T, 411) Just as I can only love X because he has done A if I am convinced that A was an action of X's, so too I can only feel moral approval or disapproval of X for doing A if I believe that A was X's action. Using a distinction Hume uses in his account of the indirect passions, the "object" of a moral valuation is a person, and the "cause" of that valuation is, in part, that person's action. And it is essential that the action have some more or less intimate connection with the agent if the agent is to be the proper object of a moral valuation because of it.

It is important to realize what is required for this more or less intimate connection between agent and action to obtain. It is not sufficient for moral disapproval that the agent be the physical cause of some "criminal" or "injurious" state of affairs. For an agent may be the physical cause of such a state of affairs and yet that state of affairs have only "the most

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[1] See Árdal, _Passion and Value_, especially Chapter 6, "Moral Sentiments", pp. 109-147.

casual and accidental" connection with him. Thus, a person may perform some "injurious" or "criminal" action purely accidentally, and, though this in no way reduces its "injuriousness", it does absolve the agent of responsibility. "Actions," Hume says, "are by their very nature temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the characters and disposition of the person, who perform'd them, they infix not themselves upon him, and can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil". (T, 411) An action may be "blameable" and "contrary to all the rules of morality and religion", and yet the person who performed it be "not responsible for it" and not a proper "object of punishment or vengeance". (T, 411) He is not responsible for it, and thus not liable to "punishment or vengeance", if it "proceeded from nothing in him, that is durable or constant, and leaves nothing of that nature behind it". (T, 411) For a man to be responsible for a given action his "character" must be in some way "concern'd" in it; the action must be "deriv'd" from his character. (T, 411) At a later point Hume says:

> If any <u>action</u> be either virtuous or vicious, 'tis only as a sign of some quality or character. It must depend upon durable principles of the mind, which extend over the whole conduct, and enter into the personal character. Actions themselves, not proceeding from any constant principle, have no influence on love or hatred, pride or humility; and consequently are never consider'd in morality. (T, 575)

Similarly he says:

> We are never to consider any single action in our enquiries concerning the origin of morals; but only the quality or character from which the action proceeded. These alone are <u>durable</u> enough to affect our sentiments concerning the person. Actions are, indeed, better indications of a character than words, or even wishes and sentiments; but 'tis only so far as they are such indications, that they are attended with love or hatred, praise or blame. (T, 575)

The easiest mistake to make in interpreting Hume at this point is to assume that he is asserting the highly unlikely thesis that we only hold, or should only hold, a man responsible for those of his actions that are characteristic of him. Philippa Foot makes at least this mistake when she says, attempting to elucidate Hume: "It would be possible, of course, that we should do this [i.e. "pick out for praise or blame only those actions" for which some "durable and constant" underlying principle can be found], punishing the cruel action of the cruel man but not that of one usually kind".[1] Paul Helm makes the same mistake much more explicitly when he writes:

> But if a person's character does change, if for some reason a miser becomes generous, then it would seem to be Hume's view that such a person can only be held responsible for generous-type actions. That is, the actions of a person subsequent to his change of character must reflect this change if they are to be regarded as actions of this person and still 'redound to his honour, if good, or infamy, if evil'.[2]

Later Helm comments: "It would seem to follow . . . that Hume believed that if it could be shown that an action was 'out of character' then this would count as an exculpating circumstance on a par with other exculpating circumstances such as compulsion, absence of intention, and so on".[3]

But all this is to miss Hume's point. Hume is not claiming that a man is or should only be held responsible for those of his actions which are, in

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[1]Foot, p. 448

[2]Paul Helm "Hume on Exculpation", Philosophy, XLII (1967), p. 267.

[3]Helm, p. 268.

the ordinary sense of the term, <u>characteristic</u> of him. A generous man is not responsible only for his generous actions, and not for the occasional self-centered deed that he does. Nor is the normally faithful husband absolved from responsibility for an uncharacteristic lapse. Hume is not saying that a man is not responsible for his uncharacteristic actions, but, very differently, that only those elements of his behavior which result from more or less long-term aspects of his character are actions for which we hold him responsible. The important point to realize is this: that on Hume's theory it does not follow from the fact that an action is uncharacteristic (in the normal sense of this term) that that action does not have its source in the agent's character. In the way in which Hume is using "character", both characteristic and uncharacteristic actions can, equally, arise from a person's character.

Since this may seem a peculiar view to attribute to Hume I must develop it in somewhat greater detail. On my interpretation of Hume <u>any</u> voluntary action, whether characteristic or not, has its origin in the character of the agent, at least under that description which the agent would acknowledge of the action. If a characteristically selfish man performs a genuinely altruistic action, without being constrained, and intending to do so, that action flows from the man's character. If a man does an action A in order to bring about a state of affairs B, but in fact doing A brings about a state of affairs C which the man did not foresee, then, in so far as the action is unconstrained, and is describable as "doing A in order to bring about B", the action flows from his character, and in so far as it is describable as "bringing about C" it does not flow from his character. An action flows from a person's

character in Hume's sense in so far as it is to be explained by reference to the agent's wants, desires, needs, intentions, prejudices, principles, and so on, and is unconstrained. It does not flow from his character if it is not both unconstrained and explainable in terms of his wants, desires, etc. Helm points out that "it is clearly not necessary that, given that the action was in character, that it was consistent with our expectations of A, that it is the case that A is responsible; for A could have been blackmailed into doing the sort of thing he is accustomed to do, but which he did not on this particular occasion want to do, or saw good reason for not doing".[1] But if the interpretation I am offering of Hume is correct, the case described by Helm would be an instance of an action that Hume would want to say did <u>not</u> flow from the person's character, even though it was characteristic of him.

For Hume, a man's actions, just as his words, or wishes, or sentiments, are "indications of . . . [his] character". (T, 575) Moreover, given Hume's view about the notion of an action, a man's motives, desires, intentions, decisions, and choices, are also "indications of character". What a man does or intends to do, what he hopes for and believes to be important, <u>reveal</u> his character to us. But a description of his character is not exhausted by a description of what he <u>normally</u> does or intends to do, hopes for or believes important. His uncharacteristic as well as characteristic actions, his uncharacteristic as well as characteristic intentions, have importance for enabling us to understand his character. In fact, an uncharacteristic action, intention, or whatever, might, in some cases, reveal aspects of a man's character which are, we might say, recessive or normally under control. But for all that they are still aspects of his character. We might in fact

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[1] Helm, p. 270.

learn a great deal more about the character of a man by observing his uncharacteristic conduct in unusual circumstances than we do by witnessing his thoroughly characteristic behavior in the ordinary run of things.

Recalling our earlier discussion of mental dispositons, we may say that, for Hume, a man's character is a more or less long-term intrinsic property of the man, a property which must be postulated as a causal condition to explain the motives from which he acts on a given occasion, the decisions he makes, the consequences he is willing to accept. And the actions which result from a man's character may be more or less characteristic of him. Moreover, it is precisely because we have this sort of conception of a man's character, Hume argues, that we make use of the criteria for responsibility that we do use. "Men are not blam'd for such evil actions as they perform ignorantly and casually, whatever may be their consequences . . . because the causes of these actions are only momentary, and terminate in them alone". (T, 412) That is to say, such actions, being unintentional, do not reveal any more or less long-term aspect of the agent's character which would perhaps lead him to perform a similar evil action in the future. "Repentance," Hume points out, "wipes off every crime, especially if attended with an evident reformation of life and manners". (T, 412) This, Hume claims, is to be accounted for "by asserting that actions render a person criminal, merely as they are proofs of criminal passions or principles in the mind; and when by any alteration of these principles they cease to be just proofs, they likewise cease to be criminal". (T, 412) That is to say, the change in our evaluative attitude toward A brought about by A's sincere repentance is to be explained by the fact that A's character has changed, and thus it is true that A no longer

has "criminal passions or principles in . . . [his] mind". After repentance A is no longer the same sort of person he was before, and thus is no longer the appropriate object of a negative moral evaluation, construed as a form of hatred.

Though our use of moral concepts presupposes, on Hume's view, certain ways of construing the personality or character of a moral agent in terms of more or less long-term intrinsic mental properties, it is not just any long-term mental property which is presupposed by our moral valuations. Some long-term properties such as mental disorders (e.g. kleptomania) have the opposite effect of absolving the agent from responsibility. Thus, though it is a necessary condition for moral responsibility, on Hume's view, that a person's behavior have its origin in some aspect of his character, this is not sufficient for moral responsibility. It is also necessary that the action which flows from more or less long-term mental traits of the agent be such that the agent could have done otherwise, had he chosen to do so. For this reason, such long-term traits as psychological compulsions eliminate responsibility rather than give rise to it.

Implicit in this view is the suggestion that the concept of moral agency involves the notion of the rational determination of one's own conduct. This suggestion is well brought out by Hume's comments on the fact that if an action is done in haste it is to that extent, other things being equal, something for which the agent has diminished responsibility. "Men are less blam'd," he says, "for such evil actions, as they perform hastily and unpremeditately, than for such as proceed from thought and deliberation". (T, 412) The reason for this, he suggests, is that "a hasty temper, tho' a constant

cause in the mind, operates only by intervals, and infects not the whole character". (T, 412) If an action is done in haste, the agent is less responsible for it because it is less clear evidence of a long-term "criminal passion or principle" in his mind. The paradigm case of a responsible action is one that is unconstrained, and that is done with reflection and deliberation. When an action is done in these circumstances it provides the most unequivocal evidence of the sort of person the agent is. Such actions provide the clearest insight into the principles of his conduct. They are, in the fullest sense, <u>his own</u> actions. As we depart from this paradigm, a person's actions become less unequivocal evidence of his moral character.

We can now consider the notion of moral agency that seems dominant in the libertarian thesis. Hume makes the rather startling claim that "according to the hypothesis of liberty, . . . a man is as pure and untainted, after having committed the most horrid crimes, as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character any way concern'd in his actions; since they are not deriv'd from it, and the wickedness of the one can never be us'd as a proof of the depravity of the other". (T, 411) That is to say, in so far as the libertarian theory implies that certain given facts about an agent, <u>viz</u>. his having certain intentions or having a certain character, are irrelevant to questions of his responsibility as a moral agent, that theory departs from our common conception of what it is to be a moral agent. It is essential to our notion of moral agency that the agent acts on the basis of certain more or less long-term characteristics, his wants, desires, principles, and so on. And it is because the agent is such as he is, that is, has certain wants, desires, needs, and principles, that we evaluate <u>him</u> as we do. But for the

libertarian, the only important question is whether, in a given case, the agent's action results from an uncaused act of his will. His desires, motives, principles, intentions, do not materially affect the issue of responsibility. He is a moral agent precisely in so far as his acts of will are uncaused, precisely in so far as his character does not determine the way he behaves. This, Hume suggests, runs counter to our most fundamental assumptions about the nature of responsibility, nor has any good reason been given why we should revise our conceptual scheme in this way.

I shall conclude my discussion of Hume's theory of human freedom by drawing attention to an interesting, and somewhat neglected, aspect of that theory which is developed toward the end of the Treatise, in the section "Of natural abilities". In that section Hume points out that a distinction is sometimes made in ethical theories between natural abilities, such as "good sense" or "judgment", and moral virtues, such as "honour" or "courage". Though the two are in many ways similar, natural abilities are commonly thought to have no moral worth, principally because they are involuntary. I am not now concerned with the correctness of Hume's rejection of this view, but only with some comments he makes in the course of the argument. Taken together, these constitute an argument for the view that the voluntary-involuntary distinction is not appropriate in all cases in which we may properly speak of a moral response or a moral valuation.

Hume argues, first, that natural abilities cannot be distinguished from moral virtues on the basis of the involuntary character of the former. On the contrary, there are many human qualities which are considered to be moral virtues, and because of which a man is the object of a moral valuation, and which are nevertheless not voluntary. "Of this nature," he says, "are constancy, fortitude, magnanimity; and in short, all the qualities which form

the <u>great</u> man". (T, 608) To a somewhat lesser degree the same is true of other morally significant qualities as well, "it being almost impossible for the mind to change its character in any considerable article, or cure itself of a passionate or splenetic temper, when they are natural to it." (T, 608) Even more strikingly, "the greater the degree there is of these blameable qualities, the more vicious they become, and yet they are the less voluntary". (T, 608)

Hume argues also against the rather <u>a priori</u> character of claims that voluntariness is a necessary condition of moral responsibility:

> I wou'd have any one give me a reason, why virtue and vice may not be involuntary, as well as beauty and deformity. These moral distinctions arise from the natural distinctions of pain and pleasure; and when we receive those feelings from the general consideration of any quality or character, we denominate it vicious or virtuous. Now I believe no one will assert, that a quality can never produce pleasure or pain to the person who considers it unless it be perfectly voluntary in the person who possesses it. (T, 608-609)

Hume's argument strikes us today as odd and rather strained. But it does raise several points that are worth considering. Consider, first, the question of such common character traits as generosity, spitefulness, conscientiousness, or apathy. Consider, too, what may be called "moral wickedness", i.e. the condition of one who acts consistently on his principles, but of whose principles we strongly disapprove. Such conditions would not normally be described as voluntary, at least in the sense of being the intended result of a more or less deliberate course of action. Yet we do disapprove of the apathetic, spiteful, or wicked man, and approve of the generous or conscientious one. It is true, of course, that we approve or disapprove of the generous or spiteful action. It is also true that we may disapprove of

a man not trying to change his character, if it is one of which we disapprove, or approve of his attempts to change it. But there is also a definite sense in which we approve of a generous man, simply because he _is_ generous, or disapprove of an apathetic man, simply because he _is_ apathetic. We approve or disapprove, it would seem, of _being_ that sort of man.

Hume's second argument is also suggestive. Is there any reason for claiming that a possible object of a moral judgment must be such that it can be described as voluntary or involuntary? As a number of philosophers have recently and convincingly argued,[1] a man can be responsible for things he does that are not voluntary or intentional in any usual sense of these expressions. I am not suggesting that Hume is arguing for this position, though it would be perfectly consistent with his general theory. But he is arguing a similar thesis: that we hold people responsible for non-voluntary aspects of their character. And his main contention is, I think, legitimate: that the question of voluntariness has a broad, but not universal, application with respect to the determination of responsibility.

To sum-up Hume's theory of human freedom we may note what I take to be the principal elements of that theory. All human actions are, in principle, able to be explained by means of universal empirical laws. This, on Hume's view, is precisely the thesis of determinism. Within the class of human actions which are capable of being explained by universal laws it is possible

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[1] See, for example: P.S. Árdal, "Motives, Intentions and Responsibility", _The Philosophical Quarterly_, XV (1965), pp. 146-154; J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses", _Philosophical Papers_, pp. 123-152; H.L.A. Hart, "The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights", _Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society_, XLIX (1948-1949), pp. 171-194.

to distinguish free and unfree actions by distinguishing those not done under constraint from those the agent is constrained to do. Using "free" in this way, "free" is the opposite of "constrained", and not of "caused". This account of human freedom is consonant with our ordinary use of the concept of responsibility because it reveals both why we use the criteria we do use for determining responsibility, and what assumptions we make about the nature of moral agency. In this it has the advantage over the libertarian theory of human freedom.

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