DAVID HUME THE INNOVATIVE SCIENTIST: A READING CENTERED ON THE NATURALISM-IMAGINATION INTERFACE

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Stillwater, Oklahoma

1985

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
May, 1991

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PREFACE

Because of the difficulties and the space limitation, this thesis presents only the first fragments of a larger, more exciting project. Originally I had intended to offer an alternative to the traditional understanding about the relationship between David Hume and Immanuel Kant. I was attempting to change the traditional view by focusing on the unnoticed agreement Hume and Kant had concerning the significant role imagination played in our epistemic experience. This paper will only present my findings as they relate to the Hume half of the story. Hume is presented as a revolutionary scientist who was trying to reconceptualize human understanding as an extension of natural abilities, which we shared with other natural organisms. I attempt to highlight Hume's attempt to develop and clarify the way this naturalism expresses itself through imagination.

Even with this restricted focus my thesis would never have been completed without the encouragement of many people. I am especially indebted to Dr. Dick Eggerman for two reasons. After hearing my first intuitions concerning Hume, Kant, and imagination he was wise enough to encourage me to pursue the subject more deeply. Later, during the

many drafts, his desire for clarity and intelligibility forced me to produce a more understandable paper. I owe Dr. Ed Lawry a debt of gratitude not only because he headed up my committee but also for his patience and flexibility. (How many other instructors would accept a paper two years after it was due?) A special thanks to Dr. Doren Recker. Every once in a while you meet a kindred spirit and I consider my meeting Doren to be one of those occasions. The historical orientation in this paper is a result of his impressing on me the importance this kind of an approach. Hopefully I will be able to emulate your philosophical example of creativity, tenacity and clarity. My thesis benefited immeasurably from our many lengthy conversations. Lastly, I would like to thank all three for their judicious criticism and the way they delivered these criticisms with large doses of encouragement.

Fortunately, there is more to life than doing philosophy. I would also like to thank some people who did not directly shape this paper but their efforts still contributed to its completion. A special friend, Brenda Simons set a very good example by finishing her thesis before me--even though she started after I had begun. Not only did she make exceptionally good editorial suggestions but her friendship was a welcome relief to the sometimes frustrating experience of trying to express myself clearly on paper.

Lastly I would like to thank my parents. My mom has never doubted that I would get this thesis done. Without my dad allowing me to live with him in Norman, while I pursued studies at the University of Oklahoma, I would never have had the free time to get this thesis finished. Thanks to both of you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Initial Idea

The beginning of the this paper can be traced to a desperate graduate student looking for an appropriate thesis topic. During this time he starts an independent reading with one of his committee members (Dick Eggerman) which centered on Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Nothing exceptional happened until Dr. Eggerman suggested that I reread David Hume, the assumption being that Kant was responding to Hume's skeptical conclusions. Since I had already read the Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding and had in the past bought a copy of the Treatise of Human Nature, it seemed philosophically obvious in fulfilling this request to read the Treatise.

In the Treatise I found a new Hume, one who was not purely skeptical but seemed to be pursuing a more constructive endeavor: "An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects." But what really struck me was the way imagination moved from a place of insignificance in the beginning of the Treatise to a place of problematical prominence by the end of Book I.

With my eyes opened, so to speak, I began to discern something similar occurring in Kant's Critique.

I was intrigued by what I deemed as an undiscussed similarity in their description of the human cognitive experience. Was it by chance that both these philosophers seemed compelled, in their first major works, to initiate a preliminary investigation into the role imagination played in our epistemic experience? When I realized that these two drastically dissimilar philosophers both dropped imagination into the oblivion of the unmentioned in their later works, my intrigue turned into amazement. Inwardly I wondered: Why should two philosophers as different as Hume and Kant have identical reactions in response to their preliminary findings concerning imagination?

After discussing these matters with Dr. Eggerman and showing him some of my textual evidence, he suggested that an investigation into the role of imagination in the philosophies of Hume and Kant might be suitable for a good thesis. I began tentatively to pursue this suggestion. Upon hearing this thesis proposal Ed Lawry, another member of my committee, gave me a copy of Martin Heidegger's Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics and asked me to read it. In this book Heidegger described, in a way much clearer than I had yet perceived, a similar movement of the imagination (from insignificance to prominence) in Kant's Critique. It was this confirmation which convinced me to make my thesis

focus: The role of imagination in Hume's and Kant's philosophies.

Except for one small suggestion made by Doren Recker (the newest member on my committee), my first draft took the general pounding most first drafts take. Dr. Recker's suggestion centered on the meaning of 'imagination' for Hume and his contemporaries; was it different from what I had assumed--had I checked to see if it meant the same thing to them that it did to me?

Obviously, in light of the subject matter of my thesis, if I had made a wrong assumption, then it could create the need for more than just a reorganization and clearer presentation of my ideas; it could involve a change in my position. Luckily, it actually reinforced my earlier historical intuitions concerning what David Hume was up to in the Treatise.

The Transitional Phase

In the process of answering Dr. Recker's question I began to realize how inadequate my grasp was of the historical context in which David Hume expressed himself. I neither knew of those who may have influenced his position or established the issues he may have been addressing within the pages of his Treatise. Once I widened my field of interest, I was amazed at the diversity of issues being addressed by Hume's contemporaries and thus also by Hume.

One aspect of my original thesis became a victim of this historical approach, viz. my belief that Hume's focus on imagination exemplified an unprecedented starting point from which to examine the phenomenon of human understanding. What I perceived as Hume's original emphasis on the role of imagination in our ordinary epistemic experience was in reality evidence of my historical ignorance. In fact, it was a French priest, Father Malebranche, who first began to draw attention to the unnoticed and, as he would argue, often unreliable role imagination plays in our epistemic experience. I became convinced that Malebranche had not only influenced David Hume directly but also, and more importantly, indirectly through his popularization of a Cartesian philosophy of the brain.

It was in regards to this Cartesian philosophy of the brain that lady luck had been very good to me. To understand why, let me briefly describe the Hume I discovered in the Treatise. Earlier I mentioned that the Hume of the Treatise seemed to be pursuing a more constructive endeavor. Hume's positive project could be described as an attempt to ground our epistemic experiences in man concretely conceived as a natural organism. This contrasted with attempts, since the Greek philosophers, to understand human epistemic experiences in terms of man as a rational animal. Against this overly rationalistic picture, Hume argued that human knowing was merely an outgrowth of capacities which we shared with other natural organisms.

How does this way of reading Hume relate to the Cartesian philosophy of the brain and the general context of his historical situation? Without going into great detail now, let me just say that Descartes held to a mechanistic conception of imagination--one which relied on a causal connection. To see the connection one only needs to combine Descartes' claim that animals were merely machines with Hume's claim, in the section titled "Of the Reason of Animals," that an animal's reasoning "is not in itself different, nor founded on different principles, from that which appears in human nature."[1]

It was this kind of a significant historical connection and others like it that made me feel that I needed to include these findings in my thesis, and yet there did not seem to be any way to smoothly integrate the new material with the overall structure of the original thesis. One of the reasons I struggled to integrate the historical element with my original focus on imagination centered on the historicity of language. For me, this phrase came to indicate more than the trivial fact that the meaning associated with a certain word changes over time. (This trivial fact can become very significant when, as Dr. Recker's question indicated, it affects how we understand a historical text.)

It became clear to me that in the case of Hume and Kant the problem centered on how to say something <u>new</u> with 'old words' and the meanings traditionally associated with them.

For example, as I read the Treatise, I was struck by the unusual way Hume attempted to use the word "custom." He was attempting to associate custom with an element of necessity which is alien to the range of meanings associated with its modern usage.

Finding a Framework

As I struggled with this problem, it dawned on me that hermeneutical philosophers were interested in some of the same issues I was becoming concerned about--such as the historicity of human understanding, the conflict between tradition and originality, and the intricacy of interpreting a historical text. I began to picture my thesis topic, the role of imagination in the philosophy of Hume and Kant, as a concrete case for illustrating some larger hermeneutical issues.

A very brief outline of the original project would be as follows:

1. Discussion over some of the general concerns of hermeneutical philosophers.
2. Explanation of how a new reading of Hume and Kant which emphasized imagination would be a good concrete case for examining the previously discussed concerns.
3. A discussion about the twofold social role language plays in our form of life and the tensions it creates. This twofoldness of language comes into

view when we examine its role as both a social institution (and thus a mediator of tradition) or the tool used by individuals for expressing "original" insights (i.e., by definition nontraditional).

4. Justification that both Hume and Kant struggled with this problem and yet being overlooked by the traditional reading of both philosophers.
5. An examination of how this oversight by the traditional reading makes possible a new reading of Hume and Kant which emphasizes the similarity of their findings concerning imagination and then argues that this agreement points to what is significant in their findings.
6. An attempt to read Hume in this new way.
7. An attempt to read Kant in this new way.
8. Examination of whether these new readings have established themselves as being both credible and interesting.
9. If this is a legitimate interpretation of Hume and Kant, then what lessons do Hume and Kant have to teach us concerning the right way to proceed in our attempts to develop a more accurate conception of human understanding?

Hopefully, this outline makes clear why the original thesis topic cannot be presented at this time. From a practical perspective it became to large of a task to handle

in a length appropriate for a master's thesis. Also, the hermeneutical framework I wanted to use tended to destabilize the focus of the paper: moving the focus off imagination and onto hermeneutics. This unresolved tension created an ambiguity in regards to the real focus of my thesis. Because of these two problems, I will here present only my initial findings concerning the larger project. In the future, these preliminary findings will, hopefully, be incorporated into my original vision. (A hint from the author about how to read this paper. This paper naturally breaks into two equal parts. The first part (pages 9-45) discusses the other interpretations of Hume and accumulates those elements I think these readings have either overlooked or ignored. The second part (pages 46-81) attempts a reading of Hume's Treatise which is informed by these overlooked elements.)

CHAPTER II

HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES AND HUME'S TREATISE

Modern Readers and an Old Text

One of the issues which hermeneutical philosophers have made us sensitive to is the kind of complexities which surround any attempt to understand a historical text. Philosophers express themselves in language, and the language they use does not exist in an ahistorical or acultural manner. This creates two kinds of difficulties: one assumes a historical gap between reader and author, the other assumes the reader and author are contemporaries.

One of the problems created by the historical gap centers on the fact that the meaning associated with a specific word can change over time. A timely example of this would be the way Locke understands the word "custom." In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding he writes:

> Some of our ideas have a natural Correspondence and Connexion one with another . . . Besides this there is another Connexion of ideas wholly owing to Chance or Custom; ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Men's Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it . . .

> This strong Combination of Ideas, not ally'd by Nature, the Mind makes in it self either voluntarily, or by chance, and hence it comes in different men to be very different, according to their different Inclinations, Educations, Interests, etc. Custom settles habits of Thinking in the Understanding, as well as of Determining in the Will, and of Motions in the Body; all which seems to be but Trains of Motion in the Animal Spirits, which once set a going continue on in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading are worn into a smooth path, and the Motion in it becomes easy and as it were Natural.[2]

The important thing to notice is the description given in the last line concerning how the nervous fluids engrave traces in the brain as a result of repeated experience. In other words, Locke believed that the principle of custom could be explained in terms of some kind of mechanical action. It is this mechanistic grounding of 'custom' that creates the "strong Combination of Ideas".

This understanding of 'custom' contrasts sharply with that which characterizes modern usage. To see this the reader needs only to consult any dictionary, such as Webster's II. There custom is defined as:

1. A practice followed as a matter of course among a people.
2. A habitual practice of an individual.
3. A common tradition or usage so long established that it has the force or validity of law.

In all the entries, 'custom' is usually associated with something relative to the social practices of a given society. What is conspicuously absent is any explanation of its abilities in mechanistic terms.

Generally, most philosophical investigations begin with a modern reading of a text. A hermeneutical methodology questions whether this is the appropriate manner for obtaining a correct understanding of what that particular philosopher is trying to say. Initially, the modern reader should seek to situate the text within its historical and cultural context. Words playing a prominent role in the text, such as "imagination" and "custom" in the Treatise, need to be given the same meaning which they had for the author and his contemporaries. Only then may we arrive at an accurate understanding of what that philosopher is trying to say.

A related or similar problem results from our trivial capacity to use different words to describe the same perspective or idea. Let us designate this problem as the existence of "terminological idiom" in the text. I use this phrase to indicate how a culture's technical language may not be recognized as such, since it has been replaced by modern terminology. Certainly a methodological perspective may remain the same while the technical language through which it is expressed changes over time. This linguistic fact creates the potential for misunderstanding a historical text. Misunderstanding occurs because the words no longer call forth the same kind of cultural associations they had at the time the author used them. For the modern reader these words become a kind of "terminological idiom," words

which communicate little or no meaning, or worse, the wrong meaning.

For example, the guiding thought behind the research program now called "cognitive psychology" would, in Hume's day, have been discussed in terms of "animal spirits." Our modern attempt to model epistemic states in terms of computer programs had its predecessor in the 'brain traces carved by animal spirit' explanation for epistemic states. But, for a modern reader unfamiliar with what this phrase meant, it becomes a terminological idiom which fails to effectively communicate.

Could the overall thrust of Hume's Treatise have been misunderstood as a result of not noticing the existence of this kind of "terminological idiom"? An example of this in the Treatise is the many references Hume makes to "animal spirits." Let me illustrate this by quoting from several places where Hume uses this phrase in the Treatise.

> Twou'd have been easy to have made an imaginary dissection of the brain, and have shewn, why upon our conception of any idea, the animal spirits run into all the contiguous traces, and rouze up the other ideas, that are related to it. . . any idea it pleases; whenever it dispatches the spirits into that region of the brain, in which the idea is plac'd; these spirits always excite the idea, when they run precisely into the proper traces, and rummage that cell, which belongs to the idea. But as their motion is seldom direct, and naturally turns a little to the one side or the other; for this reason the animal spirits, falling into the contiguous traces, present other related ideas in lieu of that which the mind desir'd at first to survey. (pages 60-61; referred to later in the thesis, page 77)

> The vividness of the first conception diffuses itself along the relations, and is convey'd, as by so many pipes or canals, to every idea that has any communication with the primary one. (page 122)

> As nature has given to the body certain appetites and inclinations, which she increases, diminishes, or changes according to the situation of the fluids; she has proceeded in the same manner with the mind. (page 368)

Would Hume's many references to "animal spirits" or just "spirits" bring to the modern reader's mind the same kind of scientific associations it had for Hume and his original readers?

Both of the problems just considered assume a historical gap which must be overcome if a modern reader is to correctly grasp what the author meant at the time he wrote the text. In the first problem, the reader assumes he knows what the author means by his words. In the case of terminological idiom, the reader probably guesses at what the words mean and is aware of this fact. In either case, the recognition of these difficulties is enough to show the concerned reader how he may minimize these problems. Thus, these preceding paragraphs are the justification for my later attempts to situate Hume within the historical and cultural context which imbued his thinking and writing.

Old Words and New Ideas

Unlike the previous problems, which can be minimized if a modern reader attempts to read Hume as his 18th century contemporaries would, the next set of problems result from

the historical and cultural context which Hume shared with his contemporaries. The medium which makes it possible for Hume and his contemporaries to share a historical and cultural context is language. Unfortunately, the process by which language acquires this ability may later conflict with another purpose which language is also expected to fulfill. Generally speaking, conflict results when ordinary language is called upon to express a new and original perspective.

The reader may clearly grasp this conflict if he reminds himself about the way an arbitrary sign or sound is transformed into a word with meaning. This transformation occurs as one gets initiated, by the community, into the usage of a sign. But this fact implies that the meaning of a word is rooted in the way the sign was used in the past. If this element of pastness ended with the establishment of a sign's meaning, then there would not be a problem. However, the preceding linguistic tradition also claims a 'controlling interest' over any future use of this word. This legislative claim creates problems for anyone who, like Hume, is trying to articulate a fresh perspective or original thought.

This second difficulty centers on the fact that a word is like a linguistic reservoir which maintains, as a present reality, all the presuppositions and value judgments of the previous language users. The meanings and perspectives associated with these words represent a theoretical and pragmatic tradition embodying what they viewed as important.

Over time these words were tailor-made to fit what the innovator's predecessor found interesting and significant.

As a result, the first problem the innovator encounters could be described as the inadequacy of the old language to express his new perspective or thought. Since the words and the conventions controlling what these words mean summarize what previous language users deemed important, the innovator may find himself hard pressed to find any words or concepts suitable for expressing the exact point he is wanting to make. Notice how this problem is unavoidable. Language must capture what the society deems as important or, practically speaking, it would be useless.

That this linguistic fact is unavoidable does not help the innovator solve his original problem. The only way through this impasse is to give an old word a new meaning by using it in a manner deviating from its previous or traditional usage. However, if he attempts to do this, he runs into the second problem. He is accused of misusing words, or worse, of speaking nonsense! If he tries to avoid this difficulty by sticking close to common usage then regrettably, since conventional usage embodies the perspective of the author's contemporaries, his attempt to say something "new" is often misinterpreted by his contemporaries. They either misunderstand the main point of his teaching or understand only minor points and thus distort the overall value of his contribution. An innovator's use of words, in communicating a new

perspective, cannot avoid confronting the counter thrust of conventional usage.

Checking for a Fit

The previous paragraphs on the tension between the traditional or conservative element in our social language and its use as a tool to express an individual's new perspective is wasted unless these issues apply to Hume. I believe that they do. For example, in the Treatise Hume claims to be putting forward a new foundation for the science of man:

> In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security.[3]

When commenting on his Treatise in an Abstract he published later, Hume not only strengthens his claim to new discoveries but also points to one as especially novel:

> Thro' this whole book, there are great pretensions to new discoveries in philosophy; but if any thing can entitle the author to so glorious a name as that of an inventor, 'tis the use he makes of the principle of the association of ideas, which enters into most of his philosophy.[4]

These quotes make it clear that Hume self-consciously believed that he was doing something new and original.

If he was attempting to say something new, then we would expect him to have a vague feeling that the old language was not an adequate vehicle for expressing exactly the point he was trying to make. Did he say anything like

this in the Treatise? Yes, he did. After finishing a dense discussion into the causes of belief, he writes:

> I must not conclude this subject without observing, 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. And as this is a source almost inevitable of obscurity and confusion in the author; so it may frequently give rise to doubts and objections in the reader, which otherwise he wou'd never have dream'd of.[5]

In this quote Hume, with his characteristic clarity, takes note of the problem which I previously discussed as the inadequacy of the old language to express the new perspective or thought.

Was Hume aware that his inventive attempt to explain all the sciences in terms of the principle of human nature had been misunderstood by his contemporaries because of its originality? He seems to suggest as much in the Abstract:

> Tis sufficient, if I can make the learned world apprehend, that there is some difficulty in the case, and that who-ever solves the difficulty must say some thing very new and extraordinary; as new as the difficulty itself.[6]

In this quote Hume expresses his belief that whoever solves this difficulty must be committed to the task of using old words to say new things and that this individual must be evaluated with this requirement in mind.

Conflicting Interpretations

I will use the two difficulties (the historical gap and the tension between old and new) just discussed as a

touchstone to distinguish my reading of Hume from both a traditional one, as well as Kemp-Smith's.

In a traditional reading of Hume, he is often portrayed as the last in a trio of empiricist philosophers which began with Locke. On the traditional reading it is not an accident that Hume is the last empiricist philosopher. For the tradition pictures Hume as the empiricist philosopher par excellence who logically thought through the presuppositions of empiricism to their skeptical conclusions. Thus, Hume's direct contribution was largely negative, and only indirectly (by awakening Kant from his dogmatic slumbers) did he have a positive influence. This briefly describes the Hume most freshman philosophy students are introduced to.

I agree with Kemp-Smith that this traditional reading of Hume overemphasizes Hume's negative purposes at the expense of his more positive or constructive purposes. Overall, my reading of Hume can be identified with what is commonly called Hume's philosophical naturalism, first popularized by Norman Kemp-Smith[7] in the early twentieth century and recently refined and developed by Barry Stroud in his book Hume.[8] They insist that Hume's teaching consisted of more than just a negative skeptical thrust, that he also had a positive aim in his philosophical program. Barry Stroud believes that Hume used his skeptical arguments to discredit "a largely inherited or a priori framework of thinking about human nature--in particular

about man's rationality."[9] John Wright believes another target of Hume's skeptical arguments are the theological conclusions drawn by Malebranche, and the modern Cartesians, who deny all power and activity in second causes and ascribe all to God.[10] In neither of these examples is Hume's skepticism an expression of a general attitude towards the world; it has a specific target, though the targets themselves introduce a certain generality into the discussion. In both cases he tries to replace these conceptions with a naturalistic alternative.

The skeptical or negative Hume emphasized by the traditional reading may be traced to his contemporaries who, for theological reasons, were unwilling to see the positive implications of his philosophical naturalism. John Yolton described how:

> The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Great Britain are marked by a general and persistent concern about threats to orthodoxy in religion. Many doctrines and views were seen as threatening: theories about the origin and nature of human knowledge,. . . claims about human nature,. . .[11]

Hume's attempts to develop a naturalistic explanation for human understanding had put him at cross purposes with many of his contemporaries.

If Hume's contemporaries perceived his philosophical project as a threat, then this may explain the overly negative picture they had of Hume. This becomes more plausible if we remember that Hume was trying to say something new and thus, as we have seen, was already

susceptible to misinterpretation. Whatever the reasons for the traditional picture of Hume the skeptic, one of the purposes of this paper is to supplement it with Hume the scientist.

In spite of my agreement with Kemp-Smith's attempt to balance the skeptical Hume with a naturalistic Hume, we differ on how to conceptualize Hume's naturalism. My reading of Hume's naturalism diverges from Kemp-Smith in two important ways. Against Kemp-Smith I will argue first that Hume holds to a full-bodied naturalism and second that in the Treatise this naturalism manifests itself in the form of a psychophysiological conception of imagination (which was first suggested by Descartes). Kemp-Smith acknowledges, in a footnote, that:

> Hume sought, it is true, to get behind both sympathy and belief, and to account for them in a mechanistic manner,. . . Both, however, it should be noted are in themselves, for Hume, more certain than any explanation that can be offered of them.[12]

Yet he bemoans this Newtonian influence because it "exercises a disturbing influence on the argument of the first two books of the Treatise."[13] I hope to reverse this value judgment and show that, far from disturbing the arguments of the Treatise, it is actually the anchor securing those things Hume wants to maintain, like our common sense and our scientific beliefs.

Paralleling Kemp-Smith's desire to deny a mechanistic conception of Hume's naturalism is his disowning the faculty

through which it worked--imagination! Kemp-Smith's final opinion on the role of imagination in Hume's philosophy is that:

> Hume's ascription of primacy to the imagination has no greater importance in the philosophy of the Treatise than that of being merely a corollary to his early doctrine of belief.[14]

But, even on a superficial reading of the Treatise, it would be hard not to notice the important role imagination plays in Hume's philosophical system.

Since my reading of Hume will bring me into conflict with Kemp-Smith's influential interpretation of Hume's naturalism, which emphasizes the natural priority of feeling over reason, let me give some of my reasons for questioning his interpretation.

First, I question Kemp-Smith's identification of Hume's "new Scene of Thought" with his reading of Hutcheson. Kemp-Smith identifies Hutcheson as a primary influence on Hume's teaching and argues for the thesis:

> That it was under the direct influence of Francis Hutcheson that he was led to recognise that judgments of moral approval and disapproval,. . . are based not on rational insight or on evidence, but solely on feeling.[15]

No doubt it was a part of this "new Scene," yet it may have been only one component among many (see Hendel).[16] In this paper I hope to show that Kemp-Smith has exaggerated Hutcheson's influence on Hume, slanting his portrayal of Hume's naturalism. I will let Kemp-Smith describe how Hutcheson's teaching influenced Hume:

> . . . if the fundamental judgments of morals, as of aesthetics, rest on feeling, not on reason; and if in matters of moral conduct Nature has been thus careful in providing us, independently of all calculation and reflexion, with these 'immediate monitors', may it not be so likewise in the professedly theoretical field? May not our so-called judgments of knowledge in regard to matters of fact and existence be really acts of belief, not of knowledge--belief being a passion and not a form of insight, and therefore like all passions, fixed and predetermined by the de facto frame and constitution of our human nature?[17]

In general, I agree with this paragraph and, in light of Kemp-Smith's overall thesis, have reservations only about the statement: "belief being a passion."

In his book The Philosophy of David Hume, Kemp-Smith attempts to portray passion as a belief-producing mechanism in matters of fact and existence. My problem with this picture is that it ignores Hume's account of it, in the Treatise, in terms of "custom operating upon imagination."[18] Later, in the Abstract, Hume writes in regards to the principles of association:

> For as it is by means of thought only that any thing operates upon our passions, and as these are the only ties of our thoughts, they are really to us the cement of the universe, and all the operation of the mind must, in a great measure, depend on them.[19]

Contra Kemp-Smith, Hume argues that the passions are acted on by thought and that what we think depends "in a great measure" on the principles of association.

Of course, if a connection can be established between Hume's phrase "principles of association" and a Cartesian philosophy of the brain, then Kemp-Smith's desire to replace

this feature of Hume's thought with passions is consistent with his desire to purge Hume's philosophy of any form of mechanism. If this is so, then it indicates another reason why I reject Kemp-Smith's interpretation. Instead of attempting to read Hume as his contemporaries would, he is trying to mold Hume in light of his own philosophical convictions. This is not wrong *per se*, but it almost guarantees that Hume's philosophy will be misinterpreted.

CHAPTER III

WIDENING THE HISTORICAL HORIZON

Making the Mechanistic Connection

I agree with Kemp-Smith's attempt to understand Hume in light of those who may have influenced him, such as Hutcheson. I only want to widen the historical focus and examine other sources which may have contributed to the "new Scene of Thought," which prompted Hume to write his Treatise.

Evidently Hume had, before the age of twenty, thought about the subject of religion and had recorded these thoughts in a notebook. About the time he began to write the Dialogues, he burned this earlier notebook, and yet he seems to have overlooked a few stray leaves of paper which survived to the present. On these he wrote:

> There is a remarkable story to confirm the Cartesian philosophy of the brain. A man hurt by the fall of a horse, forgot about twenty years of his life, and remembered what went before in a much more lively manner than usual.[20]

Hendel believes that these remarks, on a confirmation of the Cartesian philosophy of the brain, predate his later discovery of Hutcheson (Kemp-Smith disputes the dating[21]). If true, it seems plausible that Hume had somehow synthesized these two components. (The last line is

noteworthy because it gives Hume's description of the first person phenomenal characteristics which he associates with a Cartesian philosophy of the brain.)

Another timely historical fact helps to establish Hume's commitment to a Cartesian philosophy of the brain. In 1734, before Hume had composed the Treatise, he had been suffering from some kind of physical malady, and he sought medical advice from a well-read Scottish physician. During this letter he describes how his practice of a Stoic lifestyle led to a wasting of his spirit and compares his experience to those French mystics.

> As this kind of devotion depends entirely on the force of passion, and consequently of the animal spirits, I have often thought that their case and mine were pretty parallel, and that their rapturous admirations might discompose the fabric of the nerves and brain, as much as profound reflections, and that warmth or enthusiasm which is inseparable from them.[22]

In this quote Hume seems to indicate a causal connection between passion and the animal spirits.

Both of these quotes indicate that Hume believed that the passions were causally dependent on the state of our animal spirits. This is confirmed by John Wright in his book The Skeptical Realism of David Hume (which I have relied on heavily in this area). He argues that the letter to the Scottish physician may hold some valuable clues concerning Hume's attitudes about the subject of animal spirits. He writes:

> Hume's own attitude to the existence and function of the animal spirits may have been determined by his own reading of Bernard de Mandeville's A Treatise of the Hypochondriac and Hysterick Diseases (1730). Mandeville's attitude to the theory is of particular interest because Hume's analysis of his own early psychosomatic illness as a `waste' of `spirits' is based on that which is presented in Mandeville's book, and because Mandeville is cited by Hume as one of the authors who has introduced the experimental method of reasoning into English moral philosophy. . . Mandeville assumed the existence of animal spirits and argued from experience that those spirits responsible for thinking and digestion are of the smallest kind.[23]

The historical facts mentioned make it very probable that Hume accepted animal spirits as a valid scientific hypothesis--which had been verified from experience.

The phrase "animal spirits" was used earlier as an example of terminological idiom, and this suggests a need to explain its significance. A Cartesian philosophy of the brain postulated the existence of 'animal spirits' and then pictured them as a kind of nervous fluid which played a dynamic role in changing the structures of the brain. They were purely physical and acted in a totally mechanical manner. This mechanistic perspective is clearly expressed in Hume's concluding remarks at the end of his book A Dissertation On the Passions:

> I pretend not to have here exhausted this subject. It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy.[24]

These kinds of remarks strengthen my claim that Hume held to a full-bodied or mechanistic naturalism.

That Hume accepted this conception of how the brain works may still be looked upon as insignificant unless it can be established that this concept was part of the cultural context Hume shared with his contemporaries. If so, then naturally they would read this into the text. This explains why I have underscored this one specific biographical belief out of the many others that could have been mentioned. Obviously, if Hume and his contemporaries held to a mechanistic Cartesian philosophy of the brain and if, in the Treatise, this naturalism expressed itself via the imagination, then by ignoring or down playing these two features one cannot keep from distorting what Hume was attempting (and interpreted by his contemporaries) to say.

Don't Forget the Malebranche, Popular in His Time

The last influence I will consider is, in many ways, the most decisive, not only historically, but also for making the connection between Hume's naturalism and the faculty of imagination. Nicolas Malebranche (though unknown to most of the English-speaking world at present) not only directly impacted Hume, he also popularized the Cartesian philosophy of the brain in Great Britain. Malebranche was a French priest who in 1674 had his work

The Search After Truth (Wherein Are Treated the Nature of Man's Mind and the Use He Must Make of It to Avoid Error in the Sciences)[25] published anonymously and with this book obtained instant recognition. As the title suggests, Malebranche attempts, by an examination of the mind, to disclose the principal sources of human error and to teach us a reliable method by which we may obtain truth. (Evidently Descartes' Treatise of Man inspired Malebranche's own philosophical attempt to identify and expose the causes of human error.)

Probably Descartes' mechanistic conception of the human body had emphasized to Malebranche the ambiguous and awkward position the minds of humans had within the world. As he puts it in his preface:

> The mind of man is by its nature situated, as it were, between its Creator and corporeal creatures,. . . But as the mind`s position above all material things does not prevent it from being joined to them, and even depending in a way on a part of matter,. . . (so) our senses, our imagination, and our passions are altogether useless for discovering the truth and our good, that, on the contrary, they dazzle us and seduce us in every instance, and generally that all the knowledge the mind receives through the body, or on account of some motion occurring in the body, is false and confused in relation to the objects it represents. . . these errors are almost all consequences of the mind's union with the body.[26]

As a theist philosopher he has a very negative attitude concerning the union of the mind with the body. In this quote he argues that almost all the errors of human understanding were a consequence of this union.

Ultimately, Malebranche hoped that by showing "that all the knowledge the mind receives through the body or on account of some motion occurring in the body, is false," people would turn away from these false notions to the true knowledge that only God gives.

Malebranche was widely read and admired in his lifetime. Between 1694 and 1700, at the peak of British interest in Malebranche, more of his works were translated into English than were ever to be translated into any other language. Thus, it is not surprising to find that as Locke readied An Essay Concerning Human Understanding for its second edition, he contemplated the addition of a new chapter refuting Malebranche's vision of all things being in God. In light of these facts, it is not surprising to discover that Hume owned a copy of the third edition of Malebranche's Search After Truth.[27] Even more pertinent is a letter Hume wrote, in 1737, from France to his friend Michael Ramsay expressing his anticipation of Ramsay's examination of his prepublished manuscript (what would be the Treatise). To help prepare Ramsay for his manuscript, Hume suggest that he read:

> La Recherche de la Verite of Pere Malebranche, the Principles of Human Knowledge by Dr. Berkeley, some of the more metaphysical Articles of Bailes Dictionary,. . . Des-Cartes Meditations would also be useful. . . These Books will make you easily comprehend the metaphysical parts of my Reasoning . . .[28]

In Pere Malebranche we seem to have discovered a philosopher of some repute just before and during the time Hume was

writing his own Treatise. (The source for my material in this paragraph is Charles McCracken's book Malebranche and British Philosophy.)

I will not discuss in detail all the ways Malebranche may have influenced Hume; these are ably discussed by McCracken. One which I will briefly discuss is Malebranche's rejection of the common belief in some natural necessity connecting events that are constantly conjoined. He replaced it with a psychological account of how we attain this belief. A noteworthy fact is Malebranche's insistence that the belief in 'necessary connection' is rooted in our faculty of imagination and is a specific expression of a more general tendency of our mind to:

> always blindly follow. . . the natural judgments of the senses, and that it is content, as it were, to spread itself onto the objects it considers by clothing them with what it has stripped from itself.[29]

Compare this quote with a famous one found in Hume`s Treatise:

> Tis a common observation, that the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion, and which always make their appearance at the same time that these objects discover themselves to the senses.[30]

There can be no doubt that Hume's account of causality draws heavily upon Malebranche's Search and that early in his section on the 'idea of necessary connection' Hume refers his readers to Malebranche's work.

Malebranche and a Mechanistic Imagination

Did Malebranche have anything to say about imagination? McCracken observes: "The imagination was also a topic of central importance in the Search; indeed, the book on the imagination is longer than any other in the Search save that on method."[31] What would Hume and his contemporaries have learned from Malebranche concerning the imagination?

In these long sections concerning the imagination, Hume and his contemporaries would have discovered Malebranche's discussion of this faculty couched in psychophysiological terminology like this:

> We have said in the first book that our sense organs are composed of tiny fibers that on the one hand terminate in the external parts of the body and skin, and on the other lead toward the center of the brain. Now, these tiny fibers can be moved in two ways, either beginning with the ends in the brain, or with those outside. If the agitation originates through the impressions made by objects on the exterior surface of our nerve fibers and is communicated to the brain, then the soul senses, and it judges that what it senses is outside,. . . But if the internal fibers alone are lightly disturbed by the flow of animal spirits,. . . Then the soul imagines, and judges that what it imagines is not outside, but inside the brain, . . . This is the difference between sensing and imagining.[32]

> Since the imagination consists only in the soul's power to form images of objects by imprinting them, so to speak, in the fibers of its brain, the greater and more distinct the traces of the animal spirits, which are the strokes of these images, the more strongly and distinctly the soul will imagine these objects. Now, just as the breadth, depth, and clarity of the strokes of an engraving depend upon the pressure applied to the burin, and the pliancy of the copper, so the depth and clarity of the traces in the imagination depend upon the pressure of the animal spirits, and upon the constitution of the brain fibers.[33]

In light of this strong mechanistic metaphor, the question that needs to be asked is: What kind of impression would it have on Hume's philosophical development?

Is it possible that Hume may have seen more in Malebranche's mechanistic metaphor than just a general picture to be used in prompting people to turn to Divine truth? What if Hume saw in Malebranche's description of the causal connection between imagination and the animal spirits a good scientific explanation for a large section of our beliefs? Because of the theological prejudices which existed at the time, Hume may have used Malebranche's descriptive terms without making explicit the mechanistic model which undergirded them. In other words, the best scientific explanation for Hume's principles of association or the "secret tie or union among our ideas" was a Cartesian philosophy of the brain.

Is there any evidence for this in Malebranche's book Search After Truth? A few quotes are certainly suggestive.

> the most ordinary cause of the confusion and falsity of our ideas. For the animal spirits that were directed by the action of external objects, or even by orders of the soul, to produce certain traces in the brain often produce others that truly resemble them in some things, but that are not quite the same objects,. . . because the animal spirits, finding some resistance in the parts of the brain whence they should pass, and being easily detoured crowd into the deep traces of the ideas that are more familiar to us.[34]

In this quote Malebranche is trying to explain the occurrence of errors of resemblance by tracing them to a causal glitch in the underlying mechanistic philosophy of

the brain. Immediately following this quote Malebranche gives some examples to illustrate his point. In these examples Malebranche discusses how the animal spirits, in finding some resistance, detour into traces that are more familiar and yet still resemble the previous impression in some fashion.

Elsewhere he describes in terms of brain traces how an idea will call up another if both have been frequently or regularly conjoined in our previous experience:

> This connection consists in the fact that the brain traces are so well tied to one another that none can be aroused without all those which were imprinted at the same time being aroused. . . Now the mutual connection of the traces and consequently of the ideas with one another is not only the basis for all rhetorical figures but also for an infinity of other things of greater importance in morality, politics, and generally in all the sciences having some relation to man, and consequently to many things of which I shall speak in the sequel.[35]

This passage is strikingly similar to the description Hume gives of contiguity on page eleven of the Treatise:

> '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.

Another noteworthy similarity from the previous quote is the way Malebranche asserts that "connection of the traces and consequently of the ideas" has the potential for becoming the basis for all the sciences. This sounds remarkably like Hume's later claim, in the introduction of the Treatise,

that "all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature."[36]

Could Hume have actually found within Malebranche's Search some material which would have suggested the fruitfulness of developing a 'methodological naturalism'? To substantiate this I will examine a set of judgments that Malebranche viewed as wholly independent of our wills, which he called 'natural judgments'.

Transforming Natural Judgements into Natural Law

Malebranche admits that he "speaks of sensations as natural judgments, because this way of speaking makes sense of certain things."[37] What things did it make sense of? Theologically speaking, Malebranche believed that the "mind was made only for God." However, this creates a problem since we are not just a 'Cartesian mind' but an embodied mind that seems interfaced with a particular body. Thus:

> Being composed of a mind and a body, we have two kinds of goods to look for, those of the mind and those of the body. . . The goods of the body do not deserve the attention of a mind, which God made only for Him. The mind, then, must recognize this sort of good without examination, and. . . since God does not will that we attend to them, He leads us to these things only by instinct, i.e., by pleasant or unpleasant sensations (emphasis mine).[38]

Here, Malebranche distinguishes between two modes of cognition. The former is characterized by a self-conscious mental awareness, but the latter is 'instinctive' and thus

not a cognitive mode one is fully in control of, or totally conscious of.

But this was not the only reason that Malebranche had for believing in these 'natural judgments'; he also had what we would call a scientific reason for believing in this unique set of judgments:

> I feel I must again warn that judgments about the distance, size, and so on, of objects are formed in the ways I have just explained, not by the soul, but by God according to the laws concerning the union of the soul and body. I have therefore called these sorts of judgments natural in order to emphasize that they occur in us independently of us, and even in spite of us. . . I attribute to the soul the performance of judgments and inferences as well as the subsequent production of its sensations, which can be the effect only of an infinite power and intelligence. As soon as we open our eyes, God alone can inform us instantaneously of the size, figure, motion,and color of objects surrounding us.[39]

It seems to me that Malebranche would argue that only an 'infinite power and intelligence' can make sense of the complex facts the new science of optics had discovered concerning our perceptual capacities. These "compound sensations"[40] which involve an "infinity of instantaneous inferences which vary with each movement of our eyes"[41] are the result of God acting in us in "consequence of the same laws."[42]

Repeatedly Malebranche refers to the "<u>laws</u> concerning the union of the soul and body" (emphasis mine). This idea of existing laws which regulate the frontier between soul and body certainly makes room for a "science of Man" as attempted later by Hume. That Malebranche considered this

claim to be scientific may be suggested by the claim he makes later in his Elucidations when he defends these laws by appealing to the principle of simplicity:

> Since order would have it that the laws concerning the union of body and soul should be very simple, they must be very general; and God ought not to have established particular laws for cases that hardly ever occur. . . But the senses are determined toward certain natural judgments that are the most useful that can be conceived of, as I have shown in the first book. Nonetheless, these judgments sometimes deceive us, because it is impossible that it should be otherwise without multiplying the very simple laws concerning the union of body and soul.[43]

In this quote Malebranche is arguing that God is committed to creating only a few simple and very general laws by which to regulate the union of body and soul. I want to emphasize the scientific status Malebranche believed these natural judgments held because this could have suggested to Hume the fruitfulness of attempting to discover the "principles of human nature."

Malebranche's manner of expressing his position on natural judgments may have inadvertently presented Hume with a choice. The potential for a misinterpretation can be clearly seen in this paragraph:

> There are three very important causes of the connection of ideas with traces. The first, and the one the other presuppose, is nature, or the constant and immutable will of the Creator. There is, for example, a natural connection, independent of our will, between the traces producing a tree or a mountain we see and the ideas of tree or mountain,. . .[44]

It seems likely when Malebranche wrote this he intended the disjunction between nature or the Creator to be one of

identity. In other words, from Malebranche's perspective (Occasionalism) nature is another name for the Creator. However, it can be read in a manner that presents the reader with a logical disjunction, either nature or the Creator. If read this way then the reader is presented with a choice: Either nature or the Creator is presupposed to explain the connection between our ideas and brain traces. I believe that Hume chose the former and, in typical Humean fashion, later used some of Malebranche's own principles against the overall position Malebranche was trying to establish.

The important reversal Hume makes in opposition to Malebranche concerns the latter's value judgment in regard to the union of the mind with the body. What conclusions did this Catholic priest draw from these observations on the dependence of our senses and imagination on the body?

> This is how all the thoughts we have as a result of our dependence upon our bodies are completely false, and the more dangerous for our soul as they are useful to our bodies.
>
> Therefore, let us try to deliver ourselves gradually from the illusions of our senses, from the visions of our imaginations,. . . Let us carefully reject all the confused ideas we have as a result of our dependence upon our bodies, and only admit the clear and evident ideas the mind receives through the union it necessarily has with the divine Word, or with eternal truth and wisdom,. . .[45]

Where Malebranche counsels us to reject and seek deliverance from the confused ideas which are a product of the mind's union with the body, Hume believes that this dependence upon nature is what saves us from skepticism.

Locke's Logical Point

Since Malebranche lived and wrote before the time of Hume and his contemporaries, I need to establish that Hume's contemporaries were concerned and interested in naturalism. Let me now attempt to establish my claim that a naturalistic conception of human understanding was at the time a well-known and hotly debated topic. The controversy begins with, of all people, the illustrious theist philosopher John Locke and centered on a suggestion he made in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. In book four his topic of discussion is knowledge and opinion, and in chapter three he focuses on the extent and limits of human knowledge. One example, of the limitations of human knowledge, which he discusses is the relationship between matter and thinking.

> We have the ideas of matter and Thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know, whether any mere material Being thinks, or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own Ideas, without revelation, to discover, whether Omnipotency had not given to some Systems of Matter fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to Matter so disposed, a thinking immaterial Substance: it being, in respect of our Notions, not much more remote from our Comprehension to conceive, that GOD can, if he pleases, superadd to Matter a Faculty of Thinking, than that he should superadd to it another Substance, with Faculty of Thinking; since we know not wherein Thinking consists, nor to what sort of Substance the Almighty has been pleased to give that Power, which cannot be in any created Being, but merely by the good pleasure and Bounty of the Creator. For I see no contradiction in it, that the first eternal thinking Being should, if he pleased, give to certain Systems of created senseless matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of sense, perception, and thought:[46]

In this passage Locke is making the logical point that since it is not contradictory an all-powerful God may have "given to some System of Matter" the capacity of thought, instead of uniting "a thinking immaterial Substance" to it (the traditional conception).

In his book Thinking Matter (Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain), John Yolton documents how this "suggestion echoed down the years of the eighteenth century, attacked here, cited there, reinforced and expanded towards the end of the century."[47] Locke's suggestion provoked this outpouring because the religiously orthodox felt that the acceptance of this idea would be used as a weapon by those who were interested in undermining traditional religion. Yolton identifies three discernible strands in the development of materialism in Britain:

> Locke's suggestion of thinking matter; Collin's insistence that organized masses of matter can have properties that none of the individual parts has; and the change in the scientific concept of matter, from passive corpuscles to active forces. Reaction to the first two of these strands frequently involved the fear that man would be viewed as a machine, as a piece of clockwork. Closely related was the debate over animals: do they reason or are they machines?[48]

I am not going to repeat the documentation Yolton provides since, for my purposes, it is enough to establish that materialism was a topic of widespread interest and one which we should expect Hume to address in the Treatise.

Hume Sharpens the Point

He discusses this very issue in the section titled 'Of the Immateriality of the Soul', and the conclusion he arrives at will, I believe, reinforce that Hume accepted a Cartesian philosophy of the brain. Hume begins by discussing an argument he believes few have been able to withstand:

> "Matter and motion, 'tis commonly said in 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.[49]

He believes that a connection exists between this subject and what has been previously discovered about the causal relation:

> that we are never sensible of any connexion betwixt causes and effects, and that 'tis only by our experience of their constant conjunction, we can arrive at any knowledge of this relation. . . I have inferr'd from these principles, that to consider the matter 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, however great, or however little the resemblance may be betwixt them. . . For tho' there appear no manner of connexion betwixt motion or thought, the case is the same with all other causes and effects.[50]

Hume does not just deny that it is "impossible motion can ever produce thought, or a different position of parts give rise to a different passion or reflection;"[51] he affirms that not only is it?

> possible we may have such an experience but 'tis certain we have it; since every one may perceive, that the different dispositions of his body change his thoughts and sentiments. . . I wou'd answer, that we must separate the question concerning the substance of the mind from that concerning the cause of its thought; and that confining ourselves to the latter question we find by the comparing their ideas, that thought and motion are different from each other, and by experience, that they are constantly united; which being all the circumstances, that enter into the idea of cause and effect, when apply'd to the operations of matter, we may certainly conclude, that motion may be, and actually is, the cause of thought and perception.[52]
>
> To pronounce, then, the final decision upon the whole;. . . the constant conjunction of objects constitutes the very essence of cause and effect, matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation.[53]

In this quote, Hume uses his methodological naturalism as a razor to distinguish "the question concerning the substance of the mind from that concerning the cause of its thought." He suggests that we confine ourselves to the latter question which can be answered by a scientific approach. If we accept this methodological limitation, then Hume believes it supports the claim that "as far as we have any notion" concerning the essence of the casual relation then "matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought."

A Mechanistic Imagination

It will prove simple to move from the general claim concerning "thinking matter" to the more specific claim concerning a Cartesian conception of imagination. John

Wright, who has done work trying to establish the meaning of 'imagination' at the time Hume wrote, reports that:

> When contemporaries of Hume opened up their copy of Chambers' Cyclopaedia--a standard scientific reference book of the day--to the entry 'Imagination' they read the following definition:
>
> > A Power or Faculty of the Soul, by which it conceives, and forms Ideas of Things, by means of certain Traces and Impressions that had been before made in the Fibres of the Brain by Sensation.
>
> The theory of imagination presented by Chambers was the standard account of this faculty accepted by most philosophers in the first half of the eighteenth century. . . There is every reason to think that the discussion of impressions and ideas in the opening pages of the Treatise would have been understood by Hume and his readers in the context of the basic theory laid down by Chambers.[54]

I consider this quote from Wright to be the concluding capstone confirming my claims that Hume needs to be read in terms of a mechanistic conception of imagination.

Wright discusses another point of interest concerning the entry on imagination in Chambers' Cyclopedia. It has to do with the citation which Chambers offers as the source for his views on imagination.

> At the end of his entry Chambers writes: 'See Father Malebranch Recher. de la Verite, lib.2'. In fact, most of Chambers' entry is simply a loose translation of passages in the opening chapter of Book II of Malebranche's Recherche.[55]

It would seem that Kemp-Smith's thesis that Hutcheson was the primary influence on Hume's naturalism may be only partially correct. The evidence marshalled in this paper

indicates that Malebranche influenced not only Hume, but also his contemporaries.

If this is true, then we can explain why imagination came to play such a significant role in Hume's philosophy. Reading Malebranche may have suggested to Hume (contrary to Malebranche's original intention) the fruitfulness of developing a methodological naturalism. As Hume described it:

> Our present business, then, must be to find some natural production, where the operation and efficacy of a cause can be clearly conceiv'd and comprehended by the mind, without any danger of obscurity or mistake.[56]

Hume wanted to limit the kinds of questions we asked about human understanding to their natural causes.

In proposing this methodological dictum Hume may have hoped to reorient our investigation into human understanding from the traditional emphasis on substance to an emphasis on causes. A by-product of the new orientation would be the possibility of describing the manner in which these causes produced our thoughts and passions. It was the descriptive element of his task which allowed imagination to rise to a place of prominence in our epistemic experience. Nevertheless, Malebranche pointed the way even in this aspect of Hume's task.

Summarizing the New Picture

Before attempting a new reading of the Treatise, I would like to summarize the previous points. Acting out of

my hermeneutical convictions, I began to situate Hume and his writings within the historical context out of which they arose. This period was characterized by a tension between the older religious worldview and the emerging scientific worldview. One topic of intense interest and debate centered on the different conceptions of what it meant to be human. Just how far could one go in using matter in motion, the fundamental concepts of the scientific worldview, to explain human nature? Thus, Hume's title A Treatise of Human Nature: Being An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects.

Hume wants to use a methodological naturalism as a new foundation upon which "to explain the principles of human nature."[57] These "laws concerning the union of the soul and body" were the expression of "a certain regular mechanism" and thus a part of natural philosophy. Hume's methodological naturalism implied that the statement "motion may be, and actually is, the cause of thought and perception," was the most acceptable scientific hypothesis at the time. Even though Hume may have adopted a Cartesian philosophy of the brain early in his life, its explanatory powers may not have been apparent to him, until he read Malebranche. This is certainly speculation on my part, and nothing substantial in this paper hinges on this; nevertheless, Hume did embark on a program to see how far one could go in discovering some natural production for

explaining why we hold the beliefs we do and think the way we do.

From Malebranche he already had lessons on how the imagination "spread itself onto the objects it considers by clothing them with what it has stripped from itself" and thus played a subtle and unnoticed role in creating some of our most fundamental beliefs, like cause and effect. By combining these two elements Hume could develop a consistent system of thought in which our most fundamental beliefs were grounded in a mechanistic conception of human nature and thus forced on us "even against our will." Though rationally unjustified they were nonetheless unavoidably required by the laws of nature which expressed this necessity through the spontaneous creations of a mechanistically controlled imagination.

CHAPTER IV

A NEW VISION OF DAVID HUME

Making My Points Count

My reading of the Treatise is informed by this vision of Hume's task. Thus, I compare him to a scientist who is developing a promising research program. I will see his Treatise as a documentation of his attempts to deepen and develop Malebranche's idea of "laws concerning the union of the soul and body," particularly as it applies to our cognitive experiences. It is Hume's positive attitude concerning these laws and his attempt not only to identify them (principle of association), but show their explanatory power, which distinguishes him as an 'inventor'. His attempt at revolutionary science could be compared to a Newton or Darwin.

By situating the revolutionary character of what Hume was attempting within the theological prejudices some of his contemporaries held, we have sought to show how the traditional reading originated. It is because Hume is attempting to broaden the boundaries of science that he comes into conflict with the theological prejudices of some

of his contemporaries (recall the theologically motivated conclusions Malebranche drew from his investigation). Since the revolutionary character of his endeavor involves him in all the problems any innovator faces, my paper will not attempt to clearly articulate Hume's theory of imagination. Any attempt to do so flies in the face of one important fact--Hume did not intend to do this. He was attempting to develop a scientific conception of human nature.

Instead my reading will focus on the tension between the presuppositions Hume and his contemporaries already shared about human understanding, and his attempts to break out of this inherited set of beliefs and say something new. By seeking to make a fundamental shift in the way we view human understanding, Hume commits himself to a violation of existing beliefs and conceptions. My reading will seek to identify those old words which he must use in new ways if he is to accomplish the task he has taken on. If we encounter confusion and obscurity, this will not surprise us; it should warn us that at this point Hume may be trying to say something very significant.

In the following paragraphs I will structure the paper in three parts:

1. Hume's discussion of imagination as motivated by his empiricist presuppositions.
2. His ad hoc discussion of imagination in terms of its role in producing the concept of causality.

3. A discussion of the role imagination plays in producing basic beliefs like personal identity and the existence of external objects.

The reader should keep in mind the background information previously given (in the earlier sections of this paper) as he works through these three sections. If he does this, then hopefully a new picture of Hume and his philosophy will begin to develop.

Science, Hume, and His Reader

It is obvious from what has already been presented that I do not buy into the traditional scenario which presents Hume as the one who works to reveal the skeptical conclusions which are hidden in the first principles of an empiricist philosophy. I would suggest that Hume adopted as a working assumption, "the general proposition, That all our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent,"[58] because it seems to represent a philosophical expression of science as he understood it.

Furthermore, I seriously doubt the candor of his confessional style and tend to view it as a literary device he uses to help engage the interest of his reader. This intuition is further strengthened by the fact that in an age in which science is rapidly establishing itself as a reliable source of knowledge, the first stubborn piece of

data, resisting an empiricist explanation, is the concept of causation. This paradox would certainly be worthy of a reader's pursuit: the fundamental concept of science is itself unscientific--not grounded in experience!

What should he (Hume and his reader) do? Should they allow this apparent anomaly to overpower the first principle of a scientific philosophy? It seems that he wants his readers to be aware of this conflict since he asks just this question:

> Shall the despair of success make me assert, that I am here possest of an idea, which is not preceded by any similar impression? This wou'd be too strong a proof of levity and inconstancy; since the contrary principle has been already so firmly establish'd as to admit of no farther doubt; at least, till we have more fully examin'd the present difficulty.[59]

The solving of this puzzle would certainly have been of interest to any armchair sleuth of the sciences.

In support of Hume's decision to press on, most philosophers of science realize that any beginning research program must ignore apparent problems in pursuit of deeper solutions or hope that a later discovery may justify the original approach while uncovering material which explains why the present apparent anomaly is in reality a pseudo-problem.

It is not clear to me that anyone should fault Hume for maintaining his commitment, in the face of conflicting evidence, to what he considered an established principle. Thus, he chooses to continue to develop the implications of

his empiricist position, though he does, for the moment, abandon its systematic development. Here is how he describes his present situation and the impact it has on the way he plans to proceed:

> We must, therefore, proceed like those, who being in search of anything, that lies conceal'd from them, and not finding it in the place they expected, beat about all the neighboring fields, without any certain view or design, in hopes their good fortune will at last guide them to what they search for. 'Tis necessary for us to leave the direct survey of this question concerning the nature of that necessary connexion, which enters into our idea of cause and endeavour to find some other questions, the examination of which will perhaps afford a hint, that may serve to clear up the present difficulty.'[60]

Is this confession of confused belief any different from a scientist who is confronted by the need to account for some unexpected phenomenon in terms of his previous conceptual scheme? Could not Kepler have said this to himself as he worked at trying to bring order to what appeared to be nothing but random numbers?

Since his readers share the same historical horizon, it would seem reasonable to them that an ad hoc investigation was better than abandoning the scientific style of philosophizing. As Hume's readers we are committed to following him in his ad hoc attempt to discover an impression from which we derive the idea of necessary connection as implied by the phrase 'cause and effect.' But here I am getting ahead of myself if we want to investigate the role imagination plays in the philosophy of Hume.

Working the Empiricist Tradition

In the opening sections of part one, Hume's discussion of imagination is informed by the standard empiricist scenario. Thus, he begins his discussion of human understanding by repeating the standard empiricist distinction between impressions and ideas. This distinction "consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind."[61]

Almost immediately he clarifies the relation that exists between them: simple ideas are derived from simple impressions. Next he divides impressions into two kinds: "those of sensation and those of reflexion."[62] The latter are "derived in a great measure from our ideas"[63] and represent faint copies of previous impressions. The introduction of the term 'copy' naturally leads into a discussion of the faculties commonly associated with copying and picturing: memory and imagination.

Hume originally attempts to distinguish these two faculties in terms of the force or vivacity which accompanies the reappearance of the idea: memory retains a considerable degree of the original impression's vivacity, while imagination has entirely lost this element of vivacity. He then attempts a second distinction in terms of the freedom which each faculty has in regard to the original order of the impressions. Thus, "imagination is not restrain'd to the same order and form with the original

impressions; while the memory is in a manner ty'd down in that respect, without any power of variation."[64] He transforms the former's lack of restraint into a positive trait, characteristic of the imagination's?

> liberty . . . to transpose and change its ideas . . . Where-ever the imagination perceives a difference among ideas, it can easily produce a separation.[65]

Hume immediately admits that the liberty of the imagination would make the operations of that faculty unaccountable "were it not guided by some universal principles which render it, in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places."[66]

He describes this universal principle as "some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another."[67] There are three qualities: resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cause and effect--with causality being not only the most extensive but also creating the strongest connection. Hume's summary of these principles of union is very suggestive:

> These are therefore the principles of union or cohesion among our simple ideas, and in the imagination supply the place of that inseparable connexion, by which they are united in our memory. Here is a kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world will be found to have as extra-ordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms its effects are every where conspicuous; but as to its causes, they are mostly unknown, and must be resolv'd into original qualities of human nature, which I pretend not to explain.[68]

We know from our previous discussion of Malebranche that Hume was aware that his three qualities of association could be explained in terms of a mechanistic conception of imagination. By building an analogy between gravity and his association of ideas, Hume may have been hinting that he believed that these principles of union expressed a kind of natural law or mechanical regularity.

In these sections imagination is pictured as dependent upon both kinds of impressions: sensation and reflection. This expresses the influence of Hume's empiricist presuppositions which naturally place emphasis on the importance of our sensory impressions. Hume's order of exposition is here probably a good indicator of the kind of hierarchy his empiricist heritage would have established concerning the various faculties which comprised human understanding: sensations, reflection, memory, and imagination. Notice how Hume, by closely identifying the imagination with the principle of association and by extravagantly praising the latter, is subtly calling into question these empiricist evaluations.

Most of the comments in this early section really are not that exceptional, but it is important to keep in mind that this reflects Hume's empiricist presupposition. All of this will change if, as mentioned earlier in the paper, we pick up Hume's investigation where he had suspended any attempt to systematically develop his empiricist

methodology, and sets out ad hoc in an attempt to discover the impression from which we derive an idea of necessary connection. I have arbitrarily designated this looser style of continuing as the second phase of Hume's investigation into human understanding.

How Necessary Connection Causes a Break

As we have previously seen, Hume is unable to identify the impression from which our idea of necessary connection is derived. But, Hume asks:

> Shall we then rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a compleat idea of causation? By no means. An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being consider'd as its cause. There is a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mention'd.[69]

With these remarks Hume has made the idea of causality stand or fall dependent upon his finding an impression from which we derive the idea of necessary connection.

Hume seems to realize that the idea of causality is so significant that if he is unable to find an impression from which it is derived, he may have to reject the very first principle of his empiricist philosophy. Maybe it is because he realizes that, in the eyes of most, this counter-example proves the falsity of his system that he decides to abandon a systematic development of an empiricist conception of human understanding--opting to proceed ad hoc "in hopes

their good fortune will at last guide them to what they search for." This shift to an ad hoc method occurs on page seventy-eight, and not until page one hundred sixty-four has he successfully identified the impression from which we derive the idea of necessary connection.

Within these almost hundred pages imagination will replace memory within the previously identified empiricist hierarchy. It is this reversal of position within the empiricist hierarchy that I will be interested in highlighting in the following paragraphs.

In the beginning of this ad hoc search Hume maintains a standard empiricist line asserting that in all reasonings from causes or effects there must be:

> some mixture of impressions, or at least of ideas of the memory, which are equivalent to impressions. When we infer effects from causes, we must establish the existence of these causes; which we have only two ways of doing, either by an immediate perception of our memory or senses . . . without the authority either of the memory or senses our whole reasoning wou'd be chimerical and without foundation.[70]

This new emphasis on memory may express Hume's intuition that past experiences or memories must play some kind of role in our causal reasoning.

Imagination's Emergence in an Ad Hoc Methodology

Whatever the reason, whether it was this new emphasis on memory or the unexpected problems besetting his

investigation, Hume felt a need to reexamine the foundations upon which his previous distinctions between memory and imagination had rested. This time he rejected the previous distinction based upon memory's commitment to preserving the original order of the impressions, arguing that it was "impossible to recall the past impressions, in order to compare them with our present ideas, and see whether their arrangement be exactly similar."[71] Of course, the only distinction left was the one based on memory's "superior force and vivacity" which contrasted with imagination's "fainter and more obscure" ideas.

All this is old hat until Hume immediately proceeds to obliterate this distinction through a new set of observations:

> We are frequently in doubt concerning the ideas of the memory, as they become very weak and feeble; and are at a loss to determine whether any image proceeds from the fancy or the memory, when it is not drawn in such lively colours as distinguish that latter faculty. I think, I remember such an event, says one; but am not sure. A long tract of time has almost worn it out of my memory, and leaves me uncertain whether or not it be the pure offspring of my fancy.[72]

In the next paragraph he shows how ideas of the imagination "may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory." Then without blinking an eye Hume re-affirms the distinction he has just offered counter-examples to.

What is going on here? I believe that this is a textual mark signaling the beginning of the end for memory as a potential source from which the idea of necessary connection arises. A few pages later Hume explicitly argues for this:

> As our senses shew us in one instance two bodies, or motions, or qualities in certain relations of succession and contiguity; so our memory presents us only with a multitude of instances, wherein we always find like bodies, motions, or qualities in like relations. From the mere repetition of any past impression, even to infinity, there never will arise any new original idea, such as that of a necessary connexion; and the number of impressions has in this case no more effect than if we confin'd ourselves to one only.[73]

Basically Hume is arguing that if we did not find the idea for necessary connection in any one sense impression then why do we think that memory can solve our dilemma when all it can offer is a multitude of past sense impressions. Once again Hume's empiricist presupposition lead him to a dead end.

However, Hume wants to turn this negative conclusion into a positive clue, since during this time he discovered that after "the constant conjunction of any objects, we always drew an inference from one object to another."[74] He wonders if the idea of necessary connection "depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion."[75] This is a strategic question for Hume to ask since it encourages his reader to consider this subject in terms of how, in fact, humans think. If the idea

of necessary connection depends on the inference, then the next question becomes: How does this inference get produced? Or, as Hume frames it:

> Whether experience produces the idea by means of the understanding or of the imagination; whether we are determin'd by reason to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perceptions.[76]

Hume believes that if reason produces this transition it must proceed upon the principle:

> that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble instances, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.[77]

Furthermore, this principle can be understood as an expression of knowledge or probabilities. If it is an expression of the former, then our ability to imagine a change in the course of nature reveals that it is not an absolute impossibility, and this alone refutes "any pretended demonstration against it."[78]

Against the latter, Hume argues that probability itself is:

> founded on the presumption of a resemblance betwixt those objects, of which we have had experience, and those, of which we have had none; and therefore 'tis impossible this presumption can arise from probability. The same principle cannot be both the cause and effect of another; and this is, perhaps, the only proposition concerning that relation, which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain.[79]

At this point Hume has shown that the causal inference is not derived from either the impressions of the senses or memory, nor from demonstrative or probable reasoning thus, by default, imagination is left.

Imagination and Its Associates

That the faculty of imagination is alone left, as a possibility for producing this inference, should not lead one to think that it acts alone in bringing about this inference. Some commentators point to a passage in the Appendix in which Hume asserts that "it is impossible, that that faculty (imagination) can ever, of itself, reach belief"[80] as evidence against any claims that imagination plays an important role in Hume's philosophy. But this passage is not incompatible with the view I believe Hume was trying to develop.

Furthermore, this confusion was not created by Hume. He expressed himself clearly when making the transition from reason, as the possible source of causal reasoning, to imagination, as its actual source.

> 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. Now this is exactly the present case . . . the mind is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination.[81]

These relations have already been mentioned in the opening sections of the Treatise where their ability to unite ideas was compared with the ability of gravity to unite objects. It is these relations which "associate together the ideas of these object, and unite them in the imagination."

The imagination "of itself" or "alone" does not ever produce an idea that has the same kind of forceful or vivacious feeling which characterizes causal reasoning. This is an important point to remember since Hume identifies as one of his hypotheses: "that all belief arises from the association of ideas."[82] Thus, contrary to Kemp-Smith and others, Hume's is not only a philosophy of belief, it is also an investigation into the causal sources of our beliefs. With this clarification behind us we shall return to Hume's search for the impression from which the idea of necessary connection is derived.

In this paragraph there are two points I wish to highlight in Hume's continuing efforts to discover the source of our idea of necessary connection. First I want to bring out the way he clarifies and strengthens the difference between imagination and memory. Using an interesting example Hume argues that our use of words provides a case in which:

> it is not absolutely necessary, that upon hearing such a particular sound, we shou'd reflect on any past experience, and consider what idea has been usually connected with sound. The imagination of itself supplies the place of this reflection, and is so accustom'd to pass from the word to the idea, that it interposes not a moment's delay betwixt the hearing of the one, and the conception of the other.[83]

Notice that in the quote one could possibly accuse Hume of contradicting the passage found in the Appendix. However in this case, Hume is not using the phrase "of itself" to indicate that imagination by itself, without any help, produces this causal relation. If the remark is placed in its larger context, it seems fairly clear that he is using these words to indicate the faculty through which the associating principles work. (This also explains a reference which occurs a few pages later in which Hume writes "that this belief, I say, arises immediately, without any new operation of the reason or imagination.")

Imagination is not the original source of this impression but only the faculty through which it is expressed. It is this idea of origins which is the key to reconciling the insufficiency of the imagination to produce "of itself" an impression of such vivacity as Hume pictures characterizing the phenomena called belief, and the forceful impressions which result from these associating principles uniting ideas in the imagination. The ideas which originated nonmechanistically out of the imagination we might call fantasies or creative hypotheses: and these characteristically have less force and vivacity. (It was this conception of imagination as daydreaming or a fiction which is a product of my will that I had read, and most modern readers probably do read into Hume's Treatise.)

Distinct from these are those ideas which result from the principle of association using the imagination to

produce a set of ideas characterized by a force and vivacity which Hume calls belief. Hume uses this interaction of imagination and the principles of association to make a positive distinction between memory and imagination. This line of interpretation is verified by Hume's example of the man who on a journey stops before a river, knowing that if he continues he will sink. Hume observes:

> But can we think, that on this occasion he reflects on any past experience, and calls to remembrance instances, that he has seen or heard of, in order to discover the effects of water on animal bodies? No surely; this is not the method in which he proceeds in his reasoning. The idea of sinking is so closely connected with that of water, and the idea of suffocating with that of sinking, that the mind makes the transition without the assistance of the memory. The custom operates before we have time for reflexion.[84]

Notice how this causal transition occurs "without the assistance of the memory." On first reading this statement it is counter-intuitive: Is not causal reasoning based on past experiences? How has custom established this autonomy from memory, and in the process created this positive relationship with imagination? Also, in this example the ideas of imagination are certainly lively and vivacious contra Hume's original distinction between imagination and memory based on the latter's greater vivacity.

Once again we discover that imagination does not work alone in producing the causal inference, but in this case Hume attributes the initial impulse to custom. In previous discussions concerning the original source of human causal reasoning, Hume had identified it as the principle of

association. Now we see that Hume's description of causal reasoning exhibits an ambiguity. Even though in both cases imagination does not act alone, it is not clear whether it is the principle of association or custom which acts through imagination in creating the causal inference. What is the relationship between the principle of association and custom?

Association and Custom: An Ambiguity

As we begin this investigation into the relationship between the principle of association and custom it would be good to remind the reader of what was written earlier in regard to custom. The word custom had a different meaning for Hume and his contemporaries than it has for us today: remember my discussion of Locke's conception of custom? This mechanistic conception of custom is hinted at in the beginning of the section out of which this quote was obtained: appropriately enough it is titled "Of the causes of belief." In the opening paragraphs Hume makes reference to animal spirits and what he calls "a natural transition of the disposition,"[85] while a little later he suggests that the whole affair may be put in a fuller light by being considered "as a question in natural philosophy."[86]

When, after his river example, Hume claims that "we must necessarily acknowledge, that experience may produce a belief and a judgement of causes and effects by a secret operation, and without being once thought of,"[87] would he

have identified this secret (unconscious) operation with a mechanistic conception of human nature? If Hume held to a mechanistic conception of custom and the principle of association, then how did he conceive of these two interacting? Did these two words indicate the same thing for Hume? Or did they stand for something different which nevertheless interacted? In both cases, was he trying to use them to say new things?

Let us pursue this thought through examining what kind of relationship obtains between custom, imagination, and belief. In the previous quote we have discovered that custom, like the principle of association, can produce belief via the imagination. In a section of the Treatise entitled "Of the reason of animals," he hints at the kind of relationship he believes obtains.

> Now let any philosopher make a trial, and endeavour to explain that act of the mind, which we call belief, and give an account of the principles, from which it is deriv'd, independent of the influence of custom on the imagination, and let his hypothesis be equally applicable to beasts as to the human species.[88]

Hume is insisting that the act of mind called belief is necessarily derived from the "influence of custom on the imagination." How does this claim harmonize with a claim previously discussed (on page 60) "that all belief arises from the association of ideas"?

Another interesting point found in the quote is Hume's belief that whatever principles are operating through 'custom' must be the same for beasts as for humans. That

Hume seems to be arguing for some kind of natural or lawlike necessity becomes clear when in the next paragraph he asserts:

> To consider the matter aright, reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular qualities,[90]

In this case, has Hume pushed to its logical conclusion Malebranche's claim that God ought to establish very simple and general laws concerning the union of soul and body? Once humans are considered as part of the causal system we call 'nature,' as natural organisms, then human cognitive experiences should manifest certain lawlike traits. Thus, the species of reasoning being considered here is an expression of natural necessity--it is "one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin."[91]

Later, in 'Of skepticism with regard to reason' he states this conclusion in the strongest and clearest terms possible.

> Nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity had determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine.[92]

In these statements (along with the previous ones) it is clear that by associating the word 'custom' with terms like "instinct," "absolute," and "uncontrollable" Hume is giving

this word a different content than that established or acknowledged by ordinary linguistic usage. Furthermore, if we compare the claims Hume makes in regard to custom and the principle of association, it suggest that they have the same meaning for him.

Now we have seen that during this ad hoc search Hume realizes that imagination is the faculty through which experience and the principles of association combine in a "secret operation" to produce a belief in cause and effect. One element that contributes to this sense of 'secrecy' is the fact that the principles of association work prereflectively, or as Hume puts it "without allowing any time for reflection." In his concluding section on this subject, Hume identifies another reason why the idea of necessity seems to be hidden.

> The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression convey'd by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be deriv'd from some internal impression, or impression of reflexion.[93]

Evidently, this impression originates spontaneously in the mind and thus is not to be found in the objects with which it is usually identified.

The Origin of Internal Impressions

Hume is amazed when, at the end of his ad hoc search, he realizes that "Necessity, then . . . is nothing but an internal impression of the mind."[94] He fears others will reject the conclusion he believes follows from this fact:

"Upon the whole, necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects."[95] In an attempt to make himself clear he draws an analogy:

> Thus as the necessity, which makes two times two equal to four, or three angles of a triangle equal to two right ones, lies only in the act of the understanding, by which we consider and compare these ideas; in like manner the necessity or power, which unites causes and effects, lies in the determination of the mind to pass from the one to the other.[96]

In this quote Hume is struggling to "say new things," and the point of the analogy is that the idea of necessary connection originates in how the mind is determined to work.

Hume immediately admits that by asserting that the real power of causes "belongs entirely to the soul"[97] he is advancing a paradox of incredible "violence" against the common "prejudices of mankind." Nevertheless, against those who would accuse him of reversing "the order of nature,"[98] he argues that:

> Tis a common observation, that the mind has a great propensity to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion . . . (possibly quoting from Malebranche).[99]

Hume is painfully aware that his attempt to say "new things" about human understanding has brought him into conflict with the existing presuppositions concerning causality. But this kind of problem is what the reader would expect by my interpretation.

An interesting thing to note about the new things Hume is attempting to say is the way it anticipates Kant's own

Copernican revolution. Contra his original empiricist's presupposition Hume is claiming that the 'experience' from which we derive the idea of cause and effect is a product of two different sources: sense impressions (experience) and internal impressions (custom). In response to those who dispute this claim, I would first agree; at this point there is not convincing textual evidence. However, it is not yet clear what Hume means by the phrase "internal impression."

In other words, I believe that Hume gave the phrase 'internal impression' a genealogical meaning which, in this case, is contrasted with those impressions which originate outside of our bodies. My claim is supported by a description Hume puts in the mouth of an imaginary opponent:

> Thought may well depend on causes for its operation, but not causes on thought. This is to reverse the order of nature, and make that secondary, which is really primary. To every operation there is a power proportion'd; and this power must be plac'd on the body, that operates. If we remove the power from one cause, we must ascribe it to another: But to remove it from all causes, and bestow it on a being, that is no ways related to the cause or effect, but by perceiving them, is a gross absurdity,[100]

Basically, Hume's opponent is upset that Hume is claiming that the concept of causality originates from out of our own being and not from the objects. If my reading is right, then Kant's distinction between a priori and a posteriori actually clarifies and develops a distinction Hume was attempting to make. Furthermore--and this bears directly on the lack of textual support for my claim--the idea of

necessary connection is just the first, out of a set of internal impressions, which Hume will identify.

Before examining the third section of Hume's investigation into human beliefs and their causes, it would be good to summarize what we have learned up to this point. Hume is attempting to reconceptualize human understanding by rooting it in human nature. He wants to show that fundamental beliefs like causality are a natural product of the human species acting in accordance with "simple laws concerning the union of soul and body." The unknown forces which produce these beliefs he calls custom or the principle of association. However, the reader must not understand the former word with the meaning it has today (the latter is an example of a terminological idiom and is also misunderstood). Both of these words may have indicated for Hume a mechanistic substratum which secretly but necessarily influences, via the imagination, the cognitive beliefs humans come to hold. Hume uses these phrases to indicate the way nature forces us to hold certain beliefs even against our will.

Imagination Overwhelms Its Competitors

These findings should be kept in mind as we turn to the third part of my investigation in which Hume attempts to answer the question: "What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?"[101] Since he has framed his question in terms of causes and not "Whether there be body or

not?"[102] he attempts to find an answer by identifying those sources from which this belief may arise. He identifies senses, reason, or the imagination as the only possible sources capable of producing "the opinion of a continu'd or of a distinct existence."[103]

By a process of elimination Hume quickly establishes that imagination is the only faculty from which this belief may arise. Against the senses he argues that:

> these faculties are incapable of giving rise to the notion of the continu'd existence of their objects, after they no longer appear to the senses.[104]

He believes that it would be a contradiction to insist that the senses could give rise to the belief in the continued existence of objects when the senses by their very nature can only produce "internal and perishing existence."[105]

Interestingly enough, against reason or philosophical principles he argues that:

> whatever convincing arguments philosophers may fancy they can produce to establish the belief of objects independent of the mind, 'tis obvious these arguments are known but to very few, and that 'tis not by them, that children, peasants, and the greatest part of mankind are induc'd to attribute objects to some impressions, and deny them to others.[106]

I find this interesting since his objection against a philosophical justification of this belief assumes that it must be produced by some natural principle applicable to everyone who holds this belief, even if they are incapable of grasping the philosophical arguments produced to support this belief. Since everyone who holds to this belief is not

aware of the philosophical justifications given for it, then it must have been produced through some other cause.

The avenue through which humans acquire this belief is imagination. But how is it produced? Hume tries to philosophically account for its production in terms of constancy and coherence,[107] but I believe that his own explanation is open to the same objections he made against a philosophical production of this belief--would children and peasants explain it in these terms? For example, in the earlier example, involving the man on a journey who comes to a river, Hume denied that his causal reasoning involved an explicit check on past experiences. Similarly, our belief in the continued existence of objects is not a product of our self-consciously noticing that our sense impressions manifest a constancy and coherence. This explanation would not be understandable to children and peasants, yet they too believe in the existence of external objects.

Observing the Distinction: Strike One

Hume does make a more promising observation when he remarks on the <u>difference</u> between the way we derive a belief in causal reasoning from custom and past experiences, and the way we derive a belief in the continued existence of objects. He describes it thus:

> we shall find upon examination, that they are at the bottom considerably different from each other, and that this inference arises from the understanding, and from custom in an indirect and oblique manner.[108]

This recognition on Hume's part provided him with the opportunity to make a distinction between the different kind of roles imagination has in human cognitive experiences.

Our belief in continued existence of objects can be distinguished from our causal beliefs by the greater degree of conviction with which we hold them. But this fact creates a problem for Hume's position. Here is his description of the problem:

> 'tis not only impossible, that any habit shou'd ever be acquir'd otherwise than by the regular succession of these perceptions, but also that any habit shou'd exceed that degree of regularity. Any degree, therefore, of regularity in our perceptions, can never be a foundation for us to infer a greater degree of regularity in some objects, which are not perceiv'd; since this supposes a contradiction, viz. a habit acquir'd by what was never present to the mind.[109]

Hume is wondering how humans acquired a habit of thought which is more regular than what is present to the mind through our impressions?

Hume combines these observations with several already made in regarding causal reasoning. The first concerns the way causal reasoning "arises only from custom."[110] However, in this case, custom itself was only the effect of past impressions. Because of these differences between the two beliefs he concludes that the belief in the continued existence of objects "must arise from the co-operation of some other principles."[111]

How should Hume proceed here? Should he attempt to trace this belief to a prior impression like he did with the

idea of necessary connection? But this would create a problem, since Hume has already established that the regularity which characterizes this belief is not derived from custom. Thus, this move does not appear to be a live option. Nevertheless, Hume's previous reasonings have shown him that imagination is the only faculty through which this belief may be produced. What principle expressing itself through the imagination could produce this belief?

Hume's initial answer is to direct the reader to an earlier section of the Treatise where he has already observed 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.[112]

Hume is suggesting that once imagination has acquired a habit of thought, it has an inherent propensity to develop this line of thinking to its fullest expression. Thus,

> as the mind is once in the train of observing an uniformity among objects, it naturally continues, till it renders the uniformity as compleat as possible.[113]

Evidently, objects appear in our perceptions to present a limited kind of uniformity which is then taken over and fully developed by this inner propensity of the imagination. Though this natural propensity of the imagination will allow Hume to explain how humans obtain a habit that was "never present to the mind," it still is not entirely acceptable.

This initial answer seems problematic since it does not distinguish between those trains of thought we call

'reveries' and those trains of thought which we call 'reality.' Hume admits that this principle alone is too "weak to support so vast an edifice"[114] as the whole of external existence, and he launches into what he calls some "profound reasoning," in which he attempts to develop a satisfactory account of how this belief is produced.

Observing the Distinction: Strike Two

The first difficulty Hume encounters is how to account for the relation of identity. Hume describes the difficulty in terms of number and unity:

> After one object is suppos'd to exist, we must either suppose another also to exist; in which case we have the idea of number: Or we must suppose it not to exist; in which case the first object remains at unity.[115]

Hume attempts to use the idea of time to remove this difficulty. In discussing time he writes:

> I have already observ'd[1], that time, in a strict sense, implies succession, and that when we apply its idea to any unchangeable object, 'tis only by a fiction of the imagination, by which the unchangeable object is suppos'd to participate in the changes of the co-existent objects, and in particular of that of our perceptions. This fiction of the imagination almost universally takes place; and 'tis by means of it, that a single object, plac'd before us, and survey'd for any time without our discovering in it any interruption or variation, is able to give us a notion of identity.[116]

Hume believes that the idea of time can act as a "medium betwixt unity and number." But its ability to mediate between the two is dependent upon a <u>fiction of the imagination</u> which "almost universally takes place."

Immediately afterwards Hume asks a question concerning the source of this fiction of the imagination which "almost universally takes place." His response?

> I must here recall an observation, which I have already prov'd and explain'd[1]. Nothing is more apt to make us mistake one idea for another, than any relation betwixt them, which associates them together in the imagination, and makes it pass with facility from one to the other. Of all relations that of resemblance is in this respect the most efficacious: and that because it not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea by an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other. This circumstance I have observ'd to be of great moment;[117]

Once again Hume identifies the principle of association as the initial impetus for a fundamental belief. In this case, the relation which acts through the imagination is resemblance.

That Hume needs, at this fundamental point in his investigation, to appeal once again to the relationship between the principle of association and the imagination is from the perspective of this paper very noteworthy and significant. But just as noteworthy are the two footnotes which Hume gives in both of the quotes just examined. In both footnotes Hume refers the reader to a portion of the Treatise in which he explicitly discusses the connection between his Cartesian philosophy of the brain and the relation of resemblance (this quote was listed earlier in the thesis, on page twelve). I find this fascinating because whenever Hume's system runs into difficulties he

often makes reference to this mechanistic grounding as his trump card. By combining the claims made in these two quotes the reader can discover just how central (and hidden) a Cartesian philosophy of the brain is to Hume's overall system.

To support my previous claim concerning the centrality of a Cartesian philosophy of the brain let me list without comment the concepts he associates with this Cartesian picture of the brain: the principle of association, imagination's propensity to continue in a train of thought, prereflective operations of the mind, the causal inference, the imagination's fiction of the unchangeable object, and the universality which characterizes most of the items on this list. Most of these concepts play a significant role as either a part of his philosophical system or as the fundamental beliefs characterizing human understanding. And it is the latter beliefs that motivate his attempt to provide a philosophical account of how they come about.

Observing the Distinction:
Strike Three, You Are Out

But the last quote is also significant because it records Hume's effort to introduce something new into his account. Let me repeat the significant portion.

> Of all relations that of resemblance is in this respect the most efficacious: and that because it not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea by an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other.

I believe that in this instance a dispositional account of belief acquisition is more accurate than any of the previous accounts Hume has offered. Our belief in the continued existence of objects is neither characterized by a forceful impression nor reducible to any one impression. If this is admitted, then a dispositional description would fit the phenomenal characteristics of this belief.

Furthermore, dispositions are the results of many years of living and all this includes. Most of us have acquired dispositions through a process we would be hard pressed to describe. But this fact is an important one to note in light of Hume's Cartesian philosophy of the brain. On the Cartesian model the animal spirits were the tiniest particle in the body and worked on the brain in a manner similar to erosion. Thus, as the sensory organs were stimulated, they sent tiny animal spirits to the brain, which in turn left an imperceptible trace on the brain tissue. With the repetition of similar experiences the first faint brain traces begin to deepen. Malebranche believed it was through this process of deepening that our ideas became both livelier and distinct. Therefore, on Hume's model he could explain the process through which ideas or beliefs acquire their vivacity or forcefulness-and still account for the fact that he was not able to trace it back to a particular impression occurring presently.

In other words, he <u>could</u> have made a distinction between the principle of association and custom. The former

referred to the causal connection between brain traces, animal spirits, and ideas. But the latter refers to the process by which the animal spirits established and deepened certain brain traces. Once established these traces would offer little or no resistance to the flow of animal spirits coming from the sensory organs. Thus, the ideas associated with these brain traces are characterized by a certain force or vivacity.

If this is possible, it creates an opportunity to make a distinction between resemblance as it relates to the associating of sensory perceptions and as it relates to mental dispositions. In a footnote Hume draws attention to the possibility of this distinction, but he fails to develop it. All he writes is:

> 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 perception: 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.[118]

Hume's point is that if the mind finds itself to be in a similar state of disposition when surveying two similar but different situations, then the resemblance that obtains between these two dispositional states may initiate an "easy transition or passage of the imagination."[119]

Instead of pursuing and developing this distinction, Hume focuses on the role of memory in producing the belief in the continued existence of objects. Later he does make a

couple of scattered remarks about how the belief in continued existence "has taken such deep root in the imagination, that 'tis impossible ever to eradicate it"[120] and that we "embrace it by a kind of instinct or natural impulse."[121] Both of these comments could be interpreted in terms of the distinction suggested earlier in regard to custom and the principle of association.

Personal Identity is Nothing New

Hume's discussion of personal identity was modeled on his previous discussion of how our belief in the continued existence of objects is produced. However, in this case he almost identifies memory "as the source of personal identity."[122] What prevents him from doing this is the realization that we can imagine existing at some time in the past without being able to remember any specific detail concerning that period of time. This realization causes him to identify memory as a necessary but not sufficient cause. As he puts it, "memory does not so much produce as discover personal identity."[123] So, how is the idea of personal identity <u>produced</u>?

> Identity depends on the relations of ideas: and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion.[124]

Once again we see that Hume's philosophy is grounded in the hidden but <u>productive</u> abilities the principle of association has on the faculty of imagination.

The reason my reading highlighted the opportunities Hume had for making a distinction among those principles which influenced the imagination is that Hume himself is aware of this need.

> In order to justify myself, I must distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular; such as those I have just now taken notice of. The former are the foundation of all our thought and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary, or so much as useful in the conduct of life.[125]

Throughout his investigation Hume was haunted by the need to make clear exactly how these distinctions should be applied to human understanding. On my reading, if he had pursued this distinction, he may have produced Kant's transcendental philosophy.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW HUME AND THE OLD KANT

Building a Bridge

The motivating belief behind this thesis can now be expressed in a more specific manner. Hume's description of the way the principles of association interface with the imagination in producing basic cognitive beliefs is remarkably similar to the description Kant will later express in his Critique.

With Hume we have discovered a philosopher who not only sees but also tries to describe the two radically different roles imagination plays in the human cognitive experience. Going against his empiricist presupposition Hume anticipates Kant's claim that the genealogy of some of our ideas cannot be traced "to vulgar origins in common experience."[126] Hume agrees with this assessment and draws attention to the way that the idea of necessary connection did not originate in any "impressions convey'd by the senses" but expressed a determination of the mind. He even compares this determination of the mind with that manifested by mathematical necessity.

One can also discern in Hume an attempt to display how the two radically different senses of imagination relate to the empiricist understanding of 'common experience'. There is the modern conception of reproductive imagination by which we humans daydream or fantasize. The images self-consciously willed originate a posteriori and fall in the category Hume described as "changeable, weak, and irregular." This a posteriori kind of relationship which a weak conception of imagination has with 'common experience' should not be confused with the strong conception of imagination and the way it makes possible 'common experience.' In the latter case it operates productively acting "before we have time for reflection" and making possible our 'common experience' of both personal identity and external objects.

If Hume had followed up on the numerous observations he made concerning the different role imagination played in producing our belief in the continued existence of objects --from the way it produced our belief in cause and effect, or even reveries--then he might have said something similar to Kant. Nevertheless, he does picture imagination as doing double duty in our cognitive experience. Originally it creates the pseudo-observation of objects which "have an existence DISTINCT from the mind and perception,"[127] and then it turns back on its source in the form of custom

causing imagination to create an expectation which gets expressed in the form of a causal rule.

In both these cases the principle of association uses imagination, even against our will, to produce certain beliefs, as Hume makes clear in the section on personal identity. In this section he clearly uses this productive characteristic as grounds for making a distinction. But he could have discussed how the principle of resemblance produced in us a disposition which, when similar in different situations, would also initiate a transition in the imagination. One should not fail to notice that Hume often compared the kind of necessity which he identified with the production of these beliefs to instinct. In other words, they express a natural necessity generally characteristic of the human species considered as a natural organism and expressing the very general and simple laws concerning the union of soul and body.

Can we compare Hume's fundamental principles in the imagination which "upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin" with what Kant calls the transcendental imagination (over against the empirical imagination)? Hume believes these principles are "permanent, irresistible, and universal." Kant could have agreed with this statement. Could Kant have agreed with Hume's conclusion?

> The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas.[128]

Though Kant would have rejected Hume's vivacity thesis, could he have accepted Hume's findings concerning those principles which irresistibly produce through the imagination certain basic cognitive beliefs? Does imagination play an important role in Kant's description of human understanding? Hopefully I will pursue this subject at a later time.

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VITA

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