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HUMEAN MODELS OF HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

A DISSERTATION

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degree of

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BY

SPENCER KIEFER WERTZ

Norman, Oklahoma

1970

HUMEAN MODELS OF HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

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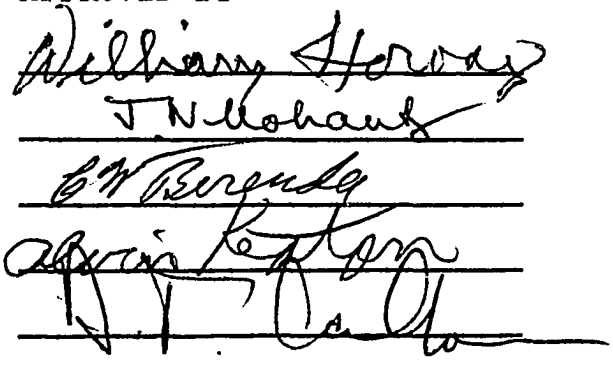

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HUMEAN MODELS OF HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

CHAPTER I

METHODOLOGICAL BEARINGS ON HUME AND PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

> To observe a method, and make that method conspicuous to the hearers . . . will retain a more thorough persuasion than can rise from the strongest reasons which are thrown together in confusion.
>
> I am uneasy to think I approve of one object, and disapprove of another; call one thing beautiful, and another deform'd; decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, without knowing upon what principles I proceed.
>
> David Hume

Subject-Matter and Approach

In the opening chapter of any lengthy essay, it is only reasonable that a writer name the game before playing his cards, or to put the matter less metaphorically, provide some clues to the method and reasoning which is employed in the remainder of the essay. I say "clues" because, obviously, naming the game only supplies the background and rules, and not the play-by-play account of one's hand. It is analogously the case with a philosopher's remarks on his subject-matter and approach; the actual "strokes" remain to be seen.

Likewise, making some theoretical remarks on his subject-matter relieves the pain of being misunderstood. In discussing the issues and arguments that comprise a field of philosophy and a man's contribution to them, there are many equally valid and sound approaches; unless, of course, one wishes to embrace methodological monism and suffer its consequences.[1] Of these various approaches, I remain silent; for I am interested in only one, which is, I think, characteristic of this type of philosophical reasoning, i.e., that kind of reasoning which deals with a field of philosophy (which is simply a group of related conceptual problems and proposed solutions) and a man's thought. I shall attempt to abide by the above prefatory remarks from Hume in the hope of obtaining "a more thorough persuasion." In other

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[1]Methodological monism entails a false, self-contradictory premise which is analogous to the one expressed in censorship. It presupposes both fallibility and infallibility within the same category; namely, that the monist (or censor) knows what errors (or evil) are and the pluralist (or society) does not. The censor must think of himself as infallible, for otherwise he must give up his claim to know what others do not. This position assumes that whoever disagrees is mistaken, and since he has made a mistake he is fallible. But if what is meant by "disagree" is "to be mistaken" then agreement must be exclusive of error and is held infallibly. However, one can obviously agree with another on mistaken grounds. Likewise, the absence of a mistake does not imply infallibility on the part of the knower. That which one agrees with is fallible and is dependent upon theoretical assumptions that may not be observed at a given time. Also, the monist exhibits no extraordinary gift or capacity to recognize mistakes or errors; so his claim to privileged access is unwarranted. Hence, methodological pluralism is a more desirable position. Without further ado, it suffices to say that I do not take my approach as the only one (as our monist would), but one of many.

words, this preliminary section is a way of making my position on these matters clear.

The approach I utilize here is not new in the sense that I have developed it or have even contributed to its development. Nor is it recent. In 1903, Henri Bergson expressed the essential idea behind my approach. One should "consider only that which is living in philosophers."[2] The substance of Bergson's remark was made clear later in the century by Jonathan Bennett:

> The commentator's dominant problem is to display the life below the surface: showing where an argument has an innocent analogue yielding the same conclusion, or a weaker but still untrivial one.[3]

As a commentary, this essay will attempt to do this with Hume's philosophical and historical writings. I shall show where Hume's arguments and theses have an analogue yielding the same conclusions and opinions, or weaker, nontrivial ones, all of which we are concerned with in contemporary philosophy of history; and that Hume is, or can be, an important contributor to our debate.

My sentiments on the treatment of a past figure in philosophy have been amply expressed by R. M. Kydd in her

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[2] An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. T. E. Hulme (2nd rev. ed.; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1955), p. 60.

[3] "Strawson on Kant," Philosophical Review, LXXVII.3 (1968), 340. Ernest Hemingway once voiced the idea that fiction is like an iceburg, where one-tenth is above the surface. We can infer from this that the critic's job is to determine what that other nine-tenths below the surface is.

analysis of Hume's ethics.[4] I am in agreement with Kydd on methodology in that the interest of the theses that constitute this essay is not primarily historical, for the essay is not about Hume as a writer on philosophy of history, but about arguments and issues in philosophy of history insofar as they are considered by Hume. The principal concern with these problems is not because they were, among others, ones which Hume discussed, but because they are in themselves problems of great philosophical interest, and Hume's contribution to their solution is considerable. I am interested in Hume's statements only in light of what interests us, and not in terms of what primarily interested him. The latter is one of the jobs of the intellectual historian, the former that of the philosopher (if the two can be separated, and, I believe, they can). The latter is also not as important to a philosopher, since he seeks assistance in developing current arguments from the insights of those thinkers who have preceded him.

Hence, this study will yield a composite portrait of Hume. I offer no apology for this, since a discussion of a historical figure is philosophically valueless without a contemporary assessment of his ideas and the ways in which they can contribute to today's interests and debates; if they cannot make such contributions, they they are of no

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[4] Reason and Conduct in Hume's Treatise (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. v-vi.

value for the philosopher, and accordingly, are for only the historian to assess. The philosopher, like the historian, however, interpolates and argues from certain committments and points of view.[5] In virtue of working with a historical figure, my work necessarily vacillates between systematic and historical considerations, but within this there are priorities (as I have indicated above). I have found this medium of interpretation the best to do justice to the spirit of my subject's letter, even though he does not explicitly treat certain philosophical questions and issues about history with which we are occupied today. For a great many contemporary developments are by no means incompatible with Hume's accounts. Contemporary ideas are to be found in Hume (some more explicit than others), but they are in need of interpolation and evaluation, and this is precisely my task in the remainder of the essay.

The placement of Hume in philosophy of history also requires interpolation in order to adequately form the judgments necessary to assess his contribution. This shall be done in two ways. The problems, questions, and arguments selected here for treatment are ones that either (a) have

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[5]The idea of "interpolation," or of filling the gaps left in an account and done in perfectly good conscience for the sake of completeness and intelligibility, was first systematically worked out by R. G. Collingwood. See his The Idea of History (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 240. For Collingwood's use of this idea and his illustration, see pp. 244-245. I am extending the idea of interpolation to the philosopher's activity and preoccupation with argumentative, conceptual discourse.

their origin (historically) in Hume's philosophy and history, or (b) have models which are used in the field that from a systematic point of view--due to the concepts themselves--can be labeled as Humean. With both of these, my interests are of a speculative nature in that I am interested in interpretations and consequences that can be derived (logically) from the assumptions and positions that Hume would likely have taken on these matters; that is, what the Humean model would be on an issue that he did not explicitly treat, but that is important in understanding the possible solutions that can be put forth (logically) on a philosophical question. In other words, I shall use Hume as a focal point in talking about the problems and issues in the philosophy of history.

At this point, let me give a brief characterization of what I understand models to be in a discussion of this sort. The term "model" has been used frequently in philosophy of history, and the sense in which I use it does not deviate from its meaning in this context. "Model" has become part of the standard vocabulary of philosophy of history since William Dray's use of the phrase "the 'covering' law model" to refer to the Popper-Hempel theory of causal explanation.[6] And in turn, Carl Hempel uses the idea of

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[6]See his "Explanatory Narrative in History," Philosophical Quarterly, IV.14 (1954), 15-27; and Laws and Explanation in History (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), ch. I, passim.

model in reference to Dray's theory of rational explanation.[7] A glance at the literature shows that there are many other significant uses of "model."[8] When I speak of Humean models of historical discourse, I am referring to "maps" or theories which account for some aspect of historical discourse, and mean that these are Humean in origin or characteristically so.[9]

The commonly accepted characteristic of models which is pertinent to our examination is that they exhibit the given structure of whatever is under investigation. In

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[7] "Rational Action," Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, XXXV (1962), 5-23.

[8] For openers, see A. C. Danto, Analytical Philosophy of History (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965), p. 146-147, 236, passim; J. J. Leach, "The Logic of the Situation," Philosophy of Science, XXXV.3 (1968), 258-273; A. R. Louch, "History as Narrative," History and Theory, VIII.1 (1969), 54-70 and Explanation and Human Action (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), esp. ch. III; Michael Oakeshott, "The Activity of being an Historian," in his Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1962), p.156; and Morton White, Foundations of Historical Knowledge (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), esp. ch. VI.

[9] This use of "model" is obviously loose and ordinary; it is not to be taken in the technical sense, as in Tarski's use of it in mathematics, wherein "model" is interpreted as distinct from theory: "A possible realization in which all valid sentences of a theory T are satisfied is called a model of T." Undecidable Theories, A. Tarski, ed. (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1953), p. 11. If Tarski were literally used, there would be few (if any) models in philosophy that would satisfy this definition. For a further discussion and sources on models, see Max Black, "Models and Archetypes," in Models and Metaphors (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 219-243; and Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1964), ch. VII, "Models," pp. 258-293.

other words, the form of the model and the form of the subject-matter must be the same if it is to be a successful model. Structural properties of the subject are exhibited by its model; this is principally the function of models in philosophical discourse. One immediate observation which results from this characterization is that a model is simpler than its subject-matter. This is both a virtue and a vice. It is a scholarly virtue in that the models allow us to focus our attention on certain formal properties of the subject-matter. As a heuristic device, they help us organize, interpret, and assess the subject-matter by way of the formal properties. But, in turn, models used in a "philosophy of . . ." area, a philosophy which deals with content in addition to form, such as philosophy of history, must be realistic; they must be capable of interpretation. The simplicity of models becomes a vice when it leads to oversimplification and hence to an unrealistic distortion which fails to satisfy the interpretative criterion.

A model is then, above all else, a chosen idiom for interpreting an activity. However, it is not an ordinary idiom, but an idiom with a suppressed theory which is capable of explanatory power. In other words, models are the sorts of generalizations which enable us to observe and to judge certain particular activities or aspects of an activity more carefully, more appreciatively, than would be possible

without their direction.[10] They reflect, in condensed form, philosophical understanding. Moreover, they allow for discriminating observations and aid in the classificatory procedures of the philosopher.

The aim of this essay with regard to Hume in particular is twofold: first, it is a systematic venture which is to demonstrate the predominance of Humean models and assumptions in some of the proposed solutions to the problems in philosophy of history. To study them in their earlier formulation allows us to isolate and evaluate assumptions which are easily overlooked in their contemporary guise. By studying Hume in this way we learn a great deal about our own thinking on these problems. Where Hume's models are absent for other problems in this field, it would perhaps be fruitful to construct a Humean model for use there. Second, a portrait of Hume as a philosopher of history emerges from the discussion of topics which I have centered around his writings. Both of these concerns are notably different from what has been done previously with Hume and his writings. To accomplish what I shall in the forthcoming chapters, I have turned to Hume's History of England, in which he tacitly uses concepts such as narration and practical reasoning in history even though he fails to give a detailed philosophical discussion of these concepts

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[10] W. B. Gallie, Philosophy and the Historical Understanding (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 31.

in his other works. I will utilize such instances in further developing the models.

The discussion which follows may be regarded as an attempt to "make sense" of what Hume, in particular, has to say about the historian's activity. Although reference will be made to his dicta, I will not, in the main, offer any close textual discussion of his account, except in my second chapter. I shall try, rather, to bring out independently by reference to examples, features which anti-Humean theorists seem to me to miss, going on thereafter to discuss likely misunderstandings of and objections to the logical points which appear to emerge from such an exercise.

Survey of Previous Literature on the Subject

This section covers (a) the work done on Hume which borders on my discussion, and ways in which mine differs from it; and (b) the recognized importance of Hume for the philosophy of history by contemporary philosophers.

The work which has been done specifically on Hume in relation to philosophy of history is limited and sketchy. The most recent, extensive treatment of this topic is P. B. Dobson's concluding chapter, "Hume and the Philosophy of History," in his David Hume's Theory of History.[11] However, his discussion is principally historical; it concerns Hume's

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[11](Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in modern history; New York University, 1965), pp. 202-254.

theory of history and its relation to the Age of Enlightenment. Consequently, his treatment of the topic and his selection of problems is different from mine. The major portion of my essay is on topics which Dobson does not treat or mention at all. Dobson has discussed the relationship between Hume's epistemology and theory of history, and questions (like consistency) pertaining to that relationship. Since his treatment is generally adequate, I shall not dwell on this relationship in Hume. Nor is my approach one which reflects preoccupation with this relationship. I am mainly interested in interpolating those things in Hume which are or would be of interest to the contemporary discussion of history. Nonetheless, where Dobson's thesis is relevant, I shall discuss it briefly.

A similar treatment of Hume has been offered by another historian of history and intellectual historian, F. J. Teggart. He has a short essay, "The Method of Hume and Turgot," in his Theory and Processes of History[12] which also treats Hume in terms of his age. The remaining scholarship on Hume on history was done at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It is not as rewarding as that mentioned above, but it made contributions by clarifying the relation of Hume's philosophy to his history. For example, Heinrich Goebel's dissertation,

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[12](Berkeley: University of California Press [1918, 1925] 1960), pp. 180-197.

Das Philosophische in Humes Geschichte von England[13] relates Hume's History to his philosophical writings, and Julius Goldstein in his Die empiristische Geschichtessauffassung Humes[14] relates Hume's philosophy to his History and argues that the latter was derived from the former, whereas Goebel argued contrariwise. Such a debate as this one I have found adequately handled by Dobson, so I shall not enter this debate.

An early assessment of Hume for historiography was made by G. H. Sabine in his "Hume's Contribution to the Historical Method,"[15] but it is of little value for my purposes. The interpretative emphasis is upon human nature and history. Collingwood and Alfred Stern follow the same procedure as Sabine, and even Dobson, who criticizes this type of interpretation, follows it himself.[16] My own treatment of the relationship between history and human nature is limited to the next chapter (II). However, I wish to point out that this relationship does not methodologically

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[13](Published Ph.D. dissertation, Gottingen, Universitat zu Gottingen, 1897), 46 pp.

[14](Published Ph.D. dissertation, Leipzig, Verlag der Durr'schen Buchhandlung, 1903), 58 pp.

[15]Philosophical Review, XV.1 (1906), 17-38.

[16]Collingwood, op. cit., pp. 73-85, 205-231; Alfred Stern, Philosophy of History and the Problem of Values (S'-Gravenhage: Mouton and Co., 1962), pp. 60ff., 147ff; Dobson, op. cit.

govern the arguments and outlook of the other chapters in this essay.

The best of the early work done on Hume is by E. C. Mossner in his "An Apology for David Hume, Historian."[17] Mossner helped both to bring about a more adequate account of Hume as a historian and to dispel some of the serious misrepresentations of his writings that deal with history. All of these works contribute to the study of Hume, but none to the philosophy of history. With the possible exception of Dobson's work, there has been no appraisal of Hume's contribution to the field, or more especially, a study of the relation of Hume to contemporary philosophers. Yet the above men's works have contributed to and made possible the study which I am adventuring upon, for they have accomplished some of the historical work that is always necessary for studies such as this to take place.

The relevance of Hume to the problems to which the contemporary philosopher of history addresses himself today is recognized. But this recognition has come only in a piecemeal fashion. For instance, Hume's ideas have been included in the arguments of many modern works on philosophy of history, but none of these writers has attempted to present an overall estimation of Hume's contribution to the field. The dominance of Hume's thinking here is evident

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[17] Proceedings of the Modern Language Association, LVI (1941), 657-690.

when we observe the literature. For example, Morton White explicitly recognizes the use of a Humean model:

> In a sense I have adopted a quasi-Humean approach to the problem /i.e., explanatory statements/ arguing that reference to more than law is required when we come to analyze an explanatory deductive argument and a singular explanatory statement, and that that extra something may well be custom.[18]

There are countless other philosophers who make limited use of Hume's ideas and models in their arguments.[19] But my point here is that his thinking is very much with us in the field today. (Chapters II through V show this in detail.) Since this is the case and since an overall estimation and evaluation has not been made, I hope that this essay will contribute to the filling of this important gap. No systematic account of Hume and solutions (via his models) to

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[18] Op. cit., p. 77; White's italics. This statement and the problem White refers to are discussed in chapter V.

[19] Some of the other philosophers who utilize Humean ideas are: M. R. Cohen, The Meaning of Human History (2nd ed.; La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1961), ch. 4; R. G. Collingwood, op. cit., Pt. II, sec. 8-10, Pt. V, Sec. 1; A. C. Danto, op. cit.; W. H. Dray, Laws and Explanation in History; Patrick Gardiner, The Nature of Historical Explanation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952); L. J. Goldstein, "Theory in History," Philosophy of Science, XXXIV.1 (1967), 23-40; C. G. Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," Journal of Philosophy, XXXIX (1942), 35-48 and a revision of this paper in his Aspects of Scientific Explanation (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 231-243; A. R. Louch, Explanation and Human Action, esp. chs. 3 and 4; Maurice Mandelbaum, The Problem of Historical Knowledge (New York: Harper and Row /1938/, 1967), ch. VII; W. H. Walsh, Philosophy of History: An Introduction (Rev. ed.; New York: Harper and Row /1951/, 1967); Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (New York: Humanities Press, 1958).

the problems which we today would label as those of philosophy of history has been given. I shall attempt to pull together for the first time Hume's contribution to the philosophy of history, especially as the field is thought of today.

All the scholars I have cited directly above show in a fragmentary way that Hume is relevant and that he tacitly addresses himself to some of the issues, but none has tried to assess his overall contribution. Dobson gives merely a description of Hume's theory of history; and the majority of ideas I have found of interest are absent in Dobson's treatment. (Part of the reason for this is obviously the difference in point of view.) My work is significantly different from Dobson's in that (a) I am interested in analogues, (b) I am primarily interested in Hume as a philosopher of history and not as a historian, and (c) I am not interested in Hume's theory of history for its own sake as Dobson is, but only insofar as it has analogues. The discovery of analogues is my principle of selection. It must be pointed out that Hume was not only interested in speculative questions concerning history, such as those pertaining to "progress" which occupied eighteenth century thinkers as Dobson has pointed out,[20] but also addressed himself to issues that analytic philosophers of history are preoccupied with today,

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[20] Op. cit., pp. 211ff.

such as historical narration, point of view in history, causal explanation, and so on.

There is little philosophical criticism on this subject, for Hume is not generally recognized as a philosopher of history. Danto, Dray, Walsh and others have acknowledged, at least nominally, that Hume's thought is pertinent to philosophy of history. For example, Danto sees the value of Hume's theory of causation for history and offers vindication of it.[21] Walsh finds that Hume's discussion of testimony and miracles is tied up with the issues of historical objectivity and historical truth and fact.[22] But all of these are piecemeal treatments and either entirely miss Hume's model or express only a feature of it.

I have concluded that direct presentation, rather than close controversy, is the best approach to treating Hume. For this reason I have had little to say in what follows of such works as Dobson's. What I do have to say about these works will be noted in chapter II. Most of what I have to say concerns contemporary use (and possible uses) of Hume in arguments on the issues in philosophy of history. I shall rarely embark upon the questions of legitimacy and authenticity concerning that use. I have tried here and will attempt below to point out my agreement with other philosophers and historians wherever possible

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[21] Op. cit., ch. XI. [22] Op. cit., chs. 5 and 4.

when the continuity of my argument is not interrupted; but my primary aim is to present my argument rather than to defend it against Humean scholars. This sort of defense, to be adequate, would comprise what space there is for presentation. And I would hope that from this introduction, the need for a study such as this is evident.

Precursory Claim

It has been partially shown that Hume is a precursor of analytic philosophy,[23] but nowhere has it been demonstrated that he is a precursor of analytical philosophy of history. Walsh sensed that philosophers of the more pedestrian style were suspicious of philosophy of history.[24] My essay may well be the object of the same suspicions, for it is not generally recognized that Hume had anything of a philosophical nature to say about history, much less enough to warrant a lengthy essay. Walsh himself gives some reasons why the suspicion would be present in this case.[25] Hume is associated with eighteenth-century British empiricism, which is usually thought of as either anti-historical or non-historical in outlook. However, the viewing of Hume in this commonplace philosophical classification is to miss some of the contributions he made in attempting to clarify the

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[23] Farhang Zabeeh, Hume, Precursor of Modern Empiricism (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961).

[24] Op. cit., ch. I. [25] Ibid.

foundations of historical knowledge. I shall not be concerned with everything Hume has said on these foundations, but more with the insights and models which he devised in a rudimentary form, and which have become predominant today in our thinking about the foundations of history. It is mainly in this way that I shall argue the precursory claim.

In the History, Hume exhibits an awareness of the need for criteria in order to arrive at methodological decisions in history.[26] Implicit in his role as narrator of historical events of Great Britain is Hume as philosopher of history. This particular avenue of interpretation can help one answer such questions as "In what sense is analytical philosophy of history a continuation of Hume's philosophy?" in instances in which the Treatise and Enquiries fail to provide sufficient premises for argument. The description of such a claim has been supplied by Dobson, Mossner, and others, but an analysis of it is lacking. Hume was concerned either implicitly or explicitly, with many of the questions of analytic philosophy of history while researching and writing the History of England. Hence, this work shall be

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[26]This principally takes the form of notes or appendices, the purpose of which he says was "to avoid as much as possible, the style of dissertation in the body of his history;" History of England (6 Vols; New York: R. Worthington, 1880), IV, 536 (cited in Mossner, p. 678). These notes he added after writing the History; see Dobson, p. 110n; perhaps as guides and reflections on historical discourse, Hume's use of "his" with ". . . in the body of his /i.e., the author's/ history" exhibits this reflective point of view.

utilized along with the philosophical works in discussing Hume in this context. In his philosophical works, Hume does not raise and treat explicitly or in full detail certain problems that are treated today in philosophy of history, and this is probably why the precursory claim has not been shown. However, as a historian, he does make assumptions which may be explicated in such a way as to augment the clues and arguments he gives in his philosophical works and to provide fuller solutions to questions pertaining to the concepts and foundations of history.

Let me illustrate the precursory claim. This example is to serve as a miniature of the sort of procedure (minus the context of argument) which I shall employ in the following chapters to establish analogues. Danto comments on the philosophical reflection which is stimulated by the reading of historical accounts.[27] Likewise, Hume was stimulated by history--written history--to think about philosophical problems connected with history. But how conscious was Hume of problems which we discuss under "philosophy of history?" One straightforward unequivocal example of philosophy of history in Hume's writings comes from the Treatise, where he tells us that:

> It does not belong to my present purpose to shew, that these general principles are

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[27] Op. cit., p. 6. In many of the following arguments I do not consciously cite the contemporary motivation at the beginning as I have done here with Danto. But my motivation becomes apparent later as the argument develops.

> applicable to the late /English/ revolution; and that all the rights and privileges, which ought to be sacred to a free nation, were at that time threaten'd with the utmost danger. I am better pleas'd to leave this controversial subject, if it really admits of controversy; and to indulge myself in some philosophical reflections, which naturally arise from that important event.[28]

The location of this introductory remark is of conceptual importance; it occurs in Book III, "Of Morals," Part II, section x. It is in this book of the Treatise where Hume makes most of his earliest remarks on history and it is from here primarily that we shall take some of our clues for Hume as a philosopher of history. Let us pause for a moment and look at the above passage. Why of all the events in the past is the English Revolution selected by historians to be of the utmost importance? Hume's answer is that the rights and privileges "which ought to be sacred to a free nation,

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[28] A Treatise of Human Nature, L. A. Selby-Bigge, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), pp. 564-565; and in David Hume: Philosophical Historian, D. F. Norton and R. H. Popkin, eds. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), p. 32. The italics are Hume's. It is worth noticing Hume's introductory remark, "It does not belong to my present purpose to shew. . .," for it shows beyond doubt that Hume had plans to write the History at the time of writing the Treatise (ca. 1739). It also confirms Dobson's suspicions that Hume had a long-standing interest in history and that his History was not an "afterthought" pending the failure of the Treatise; op. cit., pp. v-vi, vii. Hence, this quotation, among others, shows that Hume had an eye on history when writing the Treatise, and this overt interest also lends historical support to the treatment of Hume as a philosopher of history. Hume's statement in "My Own Life" concerning the plan of writing the History when at the Advocates Library in 1752 should be taken lightly (see source in footnote /31/, p. 7). In other words, Hume's use of "plan" means the specifics of the History, rather than indicating when he first conceived of writing it.

were at that time threaten'd with the utmost danger." So the term "importance" is here, as it is for Whitehead, a morally or value connotated word.

An analogue between Hume and Teggart on the notion of "importance" is evident when Teggart states that "history is concerned, not with everyday life of individuals, but with happenings which affect the welfare of communities in a higher sense than the vicissitudes of men's private fortunes."[29] And White argues concerning the selectivity of historians:

> These are value-judgments even if they are generally shared. William James remarks that the preferences of sentient creatures are what create the importance of topics; and while there may be some uses of the word "importance" that are not linked to such preferences, certainly some are, and they underlie certain selections of historians.[30]

"Moral" (value) reasoning is involved in historical reasoning; the latter entails "moral" categories that are implicit in what men take as being important (or value-loaded) events in history. Here is an explanation of the problem of selection. Is this a plausible analysis of selection? (The analogues suggest that it is defensible.) I choose not to answer this question in detail here, for the above example

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[29] Op. cit., p. 18.

[30] Op. cit., p. 261. The reference to James is from "The Importance of Individuals," in The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Dover Publishing Co. /1898/, 1956), p. 261.

is simply to give the reader some idea of what is in Hume and what I shall do with what I find. Aside from the above passage, one finds further evidence for the procedure which I am adopting here, by observing that history is characterized by Hume in the first Inquiry as "Moral reasoning" of "particular and general facts."[31]

I will be interested in the course of this essay to develop in greater systematic detail this precursory claim, and many others, with an eye on contemporary philosophy of history. For I wish not only to show something historical about philosophy of history, but also that many of the field's writers use models of analysis which are not only Humean in origin, but are also conceptually so, and that these models have assumptions which are more clearly seen in their origin (in Hume) than in their contemporary make-up. I hope to show two things about Hume in this setting: (1) that Hume is to be regarded as a major figure in the history of the philosophy of history; and (2) that he is of central importance in understanding the presently accepted issues and positions of today's philosophers in the field, for we share many of his assumptions and models, and have learned, or can learn, valuable lessons from his mistakes. So the present study is not solely a study on Hume, but rather a

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[31] An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, With a Supplement, An Abstract of A Treatise of Human Nature, C. W. Hendel, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1955), p. 172. The notion of "fact" is discussed in detail in Chapter II.

study of Humean models that are used in philosophy of history. The importance of this inquiry is to expose some of the models and their assumptions in the field, and to a lessor extent, to attempt to weed out some of the misinterpretations of Hume on history as we go along.

By way of summary, this essay is occasioned by the evidence (as reviewed briefly in this chapter) of an increasing interest in Hume in the philosophy of history. In fact, the relationship he saw between philosophy and history suggests a study such as this one. Hume thought of his philosophy as an integral part of history: "The study of history confirms the reasonings of true philosophy."[32] And the converse (history as an integral part of philosophy) is seen from the following remark from Hume's Inquiry, where he mentions history in connection with the study of human nature and philosophy:

> Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by shewing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials, from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour. These records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science; in the same manner as the physician or natural philosopher becomes acquainted with the

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[32] Treatise, p. 562.

> nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects, by the experiments, which he forms concerning them.[33]

Indeed, the reasoning in the passage suggests that Hume thought of philosophy as principally philosophy of history, for Hume is talking about the use of history which is (to some) definitely an issue in the field.[34]

It is remarkable that Hume should have in the past gained such recognition as a historian, epistemologist, metaphysician, ethical theorist, philosophes, etc., but rarely as a philosopher of history. With the immense interest in Hume and the philosophy of history in this century, there will undoubtedly be alteration in this aspect of

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[33] Op. cit., p. 93. Cited in Mossner, op. cit., p. 666. Hume's analogy between the moral and the natural philosopher, in addition to the fact that he aspired to be the "Newton" of the "moral sciences," is well known (see the Introduction to the Treatise). The above analogy works because there is at least the commanality of references to past instances which are within the domain of history. However, there is obviously much more to it than this. At the beginning of An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1953), we find him saying that "It is full time they /moral philosophers/ should attempt a like reformation in all moral disquisitions; and reject every system of ethics, however subtle or ingenious, which is not founded on fact and observation," p. 7. The initial data from history acts as a philosopher's guide to formulating generalizations, and those generalizations, in turn, are confirmed or disconfirmed by history. So, according to Hume, history lies at the beginning and at the end of philosophical reasoning.

[34] For example, see W. B. Gallie, op. cit., ch. 6; Pieter Geyl, Use and Abuse of History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955); and Friedrich Nietzsche, The Use and Abuse of History, trans. A. Collins (Rev. ed.; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1957).

Hume's thought and its contribution to the philosophy of history today. The present essay is, then, also intended as a contribution to these ends.

Plan of the Essay

Thus far in this introductory chapter I have had a great deal to say about Hume, but little on historical discourse and philosophy of history. The term "historical discourse" in my title can be broadly construed as historical narration. My thesis is that if the task of the critical philosopher of history is to analyze historical concepts *via* historical *writing*, then *a fortiori*, narration is the primary problem within and focus of his activity; and his other questions concerning history are connected, but logically subsidiary, to historical discourse or narration. In other words, what may be considered as typical of and perhaps distinctive about historical discourse is its use of the narrative mode or technique. The contributions which can be made to the understanding of the historian's activity by an analysis of narration will be the subject of the third chapter.

Although I have isolated the topic of narration from the other chapters, this is artificial and is mainly for convenience; for the whole essay is principally concerned with historical narration. My reason for this generalization is that most (if not all) of the other philosophical

problems of history, such as explanation, causation, point of view, practical reasoning, and many more, are within the context of historical narration. The conceptual features that the narrative exhibits usually affect or are reflected in these other issues.

When we view historical narration by way of the notion of point of view (as we do in Chapter IV), we go beyond "stylistic considerations" and learn a great deal about the conceptual foundations of historical research and reasoning.[35] The case is the same when we view historical narration via practical reasoning and via historical causation as we do in Chapter III. In Chapter II, I come to the conclusion that what Hume means by "the constant principles of human nature" has as its referent no eternally or absolutely true set of laws, but carefully guarded generalizations prefixed with temporal or historical references. These become the content of the historian's point of view, i.e., "general laws."

The concluding chapter (V) departs sharply from the others by treating their results and the problems in a

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[35]This is not to imply that the topic of historical narration is only one of "stylistic considerations." This would leave a serious gap in the historian's activity, e.g., research and reasoning, as will be observed in the third chapter. Maurice Mandelbaum thinks that this sort of gap in the historian's activity is created by the preoccupation with narration. See his "A Note on History as Narrative," History and Theory, VI.3 (1967), 412-419. However, Mandelbaum's conception of narrative leaves a great deal to be desired.

systematic fashion without the specific appeals to Hume's work. It is in this chapter where I argue about the assumptions and the details in the Humean models by way of the analogy between deductive arguments and historical discourse. In other words, the relevance of the ideas and positions developed from Hume in the preceding chapters to contemporary philosophy of history is shown by amending the arguments of the Humean theorists, and that these ideas make the models more defensible against anti-Humean theorists. In this way, the present Humean position in philosophy of history has been extended.

The next chapter (II) is synoptic in character and is intended to provide additional setting for the more specific problems handled in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE IDEA OF HISTORY AND HUME

> The only certain means by which nations can indulge their curiosity in researches concerning their remote origin, is to consider the language, manners, and customs of their ancestors, and to compare them with those of the neighbouring nations.
>
> David Hume

Resumé

In recent years there has been a great surge of interest among scholars in David Hume's writings. This interest, however, has been largely confined to his philosophy proper, notably his epistemology and ethics. Nevertheless, it would not be true to say that other areas of his thought and writings have been totally ignored, for they have received considerable attention in J. B. Black's and E. C. Mossner's accounts of his history.[1] With the exception of more contemporary and relatively shorter essays by D. F. Norton and H. R. Trever-Roper, there has been

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[1] "Hume," in The Art of History: A Study of Four Great Historians of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Russell and Russell, 1926), pp. 77-116; and "An Apology for David Hume, Historian," Proceedings of the Modern Language Association, LVI (1941), 657-790; respectively.

no major philosophical treatment of Hume's reasoning on history, its use, and historiography since the early nineteen hundreds.[2] It might well be argued that there is need for a philosophical examination of that aspect of Hume's thought which is devoted to history and to theoretical reflections on history. Specifically, this examination can be made from the perspective of philosophy of history. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to that end.

One reason why this undertaking has been absent is that much of the material for such a study lies implicit in Hume's writings, and thus forces one into the history and historiography of his time besides into philosophy proper. R. G. Collingwood has been an exception in treating these different aspects of Hume's writings; but unfortunately, he devotes very little space to Hume.[3]

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[2]"History and Philosophy in Hume's Thought," in David Hume: Philosophical Historian, D. F. Norton and R. H. Popkin, eds. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), pp. xxxii-l; and "David Hume as a Historian," The Listener, LXV (28 December 1961), 1103, 1119, and the same essay revised and included in David Hume: A Symposium, D. F. Pears, ed. (London: Macmillan Co., 1963), pp. 89-100; respectively. The exception here is the last chapter of Paul Dobson's unpublished dissertation, David Hume's Theory of History (New York University, Modern History, 1965), ch. VI. Although we agree on a similar general conclusion (that Hume has been seriously misunderstood on human nature and history), my argument is significantly different both in detail and consequences. For further details on the literature, see chapter I, survey of literature section. Since many of the issues treated and presented in this chapter are ones which are fundamental to arguments in later chapters, I have discussed them here.

[3]The Idea of History (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1946). The sections specifically devoted

Hume spent little time writing reflections on history in the form of metaphysical speculations like those of G. W. F. Hegel. Instead, Hume primarily used reflections of a theoretical nature in formulating his philosophy, history, and essays. As is evidenced by his writings and his manner of presentation, his statements are based upon concepts which arose from the reflections of a working historian. Noticing this dimension provides an avenue of interpretation which has been ignored by previous examinations. Aspects of historiography and philosophy of history have been overlooked because of an extreme use of the dichotomies of philosophy and history and those of periodization. These dichotomies specifically result in an artificial division of labor and blur many contributions made by Hume to the former areas, as well as hinder a better understanding of Hume in these neglected areas.

Because of the expanse of material, this chapter will be primarily concerned with Hume's Treatise of Human Nature and his History of England. Certain commonplace interpretations of Hume's History are derived from the Treatise, so a brief exposition of it will be necessary in order to put in relief some of the ideas in the History. In the course of this chapter, some of these generally accepted conceptions will be shown to be textually inaccurate and

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to Hume are pp. 73-76 and 81-85. The latter is a brief exposition, "The Science of Human Nature," of the Enlightenment.

conceptually misleading. These conceptions form a commonplace view of Hume that may be seen most clearly in Black's account,[4] and that for convenience, may be labeled as "the standard interpretation."

An extreme use of the dichotomy of "Hume the philosopher" and "Hume the historian" is reflected in Black's method of interpretation and presentation. This method has become the source of much confusion about and debunking of Hume.[5] Black's method rests upon a classification which is more formal than real and which results in a misleading exposition of Hume and history.

> . . . It would be more profitable and practicable to investigate the extent to which Hume the philosopher guided the pen of Hume the historian. And this, incidentally, is the method we shall pursue.[6]

Black's ensuing analysis and criticisms--playing the two "Humes" off one another--are fictional; this produces a rather one-sided and misleading classificatory analysis.

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[4] Op. cit. The following historians also adopt the interpretation: H. E. Barnes, A History of Historical Writing (2nd ed.; New York: Dover Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 148, 155-59, 167; J. W. Thompson, History of Historical Writing (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), II, 69-72; and S. B. Barnes, "The Age of Enlightenment," in The Development of Historiography, M. A. Fitzsimmons and A. G. Pundt, eds. (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Stackpole Co., 1954), pp. 155-57.

[5] Traces of this interpretative method are present in Dobson's essay; but for the most part, he would agree with my argument.

[6] Op. cit., p. 79. Black's two "Humes" imply that they are significantly different. Such a difference becomes an assumption rather than a claim to be demonstrated.

Rather than create two mysterious Humes which lurk between the pages, I shall attempt to draw out concepts of similarity and dissimilarity in Hume's writings without the aid of the ghosts. This is in the hope of being more attentive and faithful to the Humean idiom. At times ideas will be used and mentioned which are unique to the History,[7] and it will be interesting to see them in relief against his more philosophical writings. But this will not be done to the extent of forming classificatory preconceptions which make Hume an entitative ghost of each work. Thus the undesirable consequences that are indicative of such an approach will be avoided.

Problem of Interpretation

Hume's originality in history extends itself in many directions. I shall attempt to disclose some of his insights and techniques which I find relevant to a discussion of philosophy of history and philosophical historiography. It is convenient to take the notion of human nature as a paradigm case by which to exhibit the claims made in the introduction of this chapter and to substantiate the particular interpretation which follows. In explicating the notion, it may be best to start with those particular conceptions of human nature presented in the Treatise which

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[7]This dimension of the present chapter and ones that follow is one that was left unexplored in Dobson's essay.

contribute to the standard interpretation. Then I will examine whether these conceptions are used in the History, and, if so, to what extent they affect his History and other writings. The most severe criticisms of Hume are launched against his concept of human nature; and as a consequence, Hume is generally identified with the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Indeed, he has even been called a Rationalist in history by some historians.[8] This a priori identification of a man with his Age is made so frequently that sometimes the individual's contributions are lost in the process. So it may perhaps be worthwhile to dwell on this point for a moment.

In his David Hume: Prophet of the Counter-Revolution (wherein history is represented as a weapon of counter-revolution for the social reformer and the historian), L. L. Bongie has remarked: "He should consult Hume and Montesquieu, not the reason of the Age of Reason."[9] The reason of the Age of Reason is a non-historical construction that has resulted in an identification of the reason of the Age (Aufklärung) with Hume's particular conceptions of reason and human nature. To avoid misunderstanding, however, I

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[8] E. Fueter, Historie de l'historiographie moderne, Traduit de l'allemand par Emile Jeanmaire avec notes et additions de l'auteur (Paris, 1914), pp. 452-6. Cited in Mossner, p. 657.

[9] (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 71.

should point out that I am not denying that the construction can provide an explanation. Rather, I question whether this provides the most tenable explanation of Hume, his views on human nature and the manner in which these relate to history.

Black maintains that:

> Hume did not grasp the elements of the problem /i.e., did not provide an adequate theory of historical explanation/, because he was dominated, as indeed were all the eighteenth century philosophes, by the belief that human nature was uniformly the same at all times and places.[10]

Here again an a priori statement dwarfs Hume in the generality of a period. Perhaps we should be more cautious and consult Hume on human nature before we consult the nature of the Age. The latter is always fictional and is generally indicative of an a priori handling of categories for periodization. The disciplinary classification, at the expense of description and textual analysis, and the results of such a classification can be clearly seen in Black's conclusion.

> It is not difficult to read between the lines of this analysis that Hume's conception of civilization is simply the idealized picture of the Age of Reason, with its salons, its humanitarianism, its hatred of the "brute facts of the spoiled universe," and its insistence on the doctrine that virtue is simply a form of cultivated reason.[11]

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[10] Op. cit., p. 86. D. F. Norton has a similar thesis which purports that Hume's "problem" was data for history rather than adequate historical explanation: op. cit., pp. lxix-l. Conclusions arrived at in the next chapter on evidence or data tend to cast doubt on Norton's criticism of Hume on this point.

[11] Ibid., p. 89.

From this passage it is evident that Black has a tacit criterion operating which consists of ideas that exemplify the Age. Black's interest is more in the Age than in the individuals of the Age. The portrait of Hume as a philosophical historian struggling with problems and attempting to find solutions is absent. The themes of his essay do not pertain to individual merits, but to the Age. This is hazardous for one tends to read deductively or categorically instead of hypothetically. Because of this procedure, Black's characterization of "enlightenment" or "cultivated reason" lacks essential elements which are central in Hume's idea. This will be a theme for a subsequent discussion.

In his essay, R. G. Collingwood maintains a Weltanschauung identification which echoes some of the implications of the standard interpretation.[12] In The Idea of History, he concludes that Hume, like other men of the Enlightenment, was barred "from scientific history by a substantialistic view of human nature;"[13] but Collingwood adds a qualifying clause which exhibits less of a Weltanschauung identification than Black's: This view of human nature "was really inconsistent with his philosophical principles." Collingwood's qualifying clause is symptomatic of the problems of interpretation involved in the Weltanschauung identification discussed earlier. The "inconsistency" he

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[12] Op. cit., pp. 81-85; 73-76. [13] Ibid., p. 76.

speaks of above is between the period and the individual rather than among Hume's philosophical principles. The attempt to subsume Hume under the period discloses an error in the scholar's method. It is because of his philosophical principles that one should be cautious in making periodization remarks which purport to offer an explanation of Hume's philosophy of history. Furthermore, Collingwood's statement is misleading on its own basis. The criterion which he sets forth at the beginning of his essay is for judging whether an individual is a historian or not. One of the components of the criterion for history is that it be "scientific;" in other words that it begin with the author's questions about the human past.[14] Obviously Hume does make inquiries of this sort, and the question arises whether Collingwood meant more than this. It is reasonably safe to assume that he did. But what he meant by the substantialistic claim, (viz. the treatment of the knowable as an unchanging substance),[15] that Hume was not "scientific," is unclear and remains to be clarified. In any event, Collingwood's general idea of an inconsistency suggests that something peculiar is implied by the Weltanschauung identification with the individual to which it is applied in this case. This methodological inconsistency marks the recognition and beginning of a need for a different approach. The

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[14] Ibid., pp. 9-10, 18-19. [15] Ibid., p. 42.

playing of one level, the classificatory, against another level, the individual, is suspect; for the force of an individual's reasoning or line of argument is lost when it is identified with the general classification.[16] With these procedural remarks in mind we may now turn to Hume.

The 'Treatise' and Human Nature

In order to make a better evaluation of the claims just reviewed, it may well be best to discuss the work which preceded the History to see if the standard interpretation has formed an adequate appraisal of the Treatise which, in turn, has been applied to the History.

The full title of the early work is indicative of its subject-matter: A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects. This work is divided into three books, "Of the Understanding," "Of the Passions," and "Of Morals." Hume remarks about the Treatise and the divisions that:

> What is principally remarkable in this whole affair is the strong confirmation these phaenomena give to the foregoing system concerning the understanding, and consequently to the present one concerning the passions; since these are analogous to each other. 'Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in our mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv'd

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[16] For a more thorough discussion of various approaches, see John Passmore, "The Idea of a History of Philosophy," History and Theory, IV (1965, Beiheft 5), 1-32.

> to belong to another person, as we conceive any other matter of fact. 'Tis also evident, that the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them.[17]

Together, this passage and the full title of the Treatise contain perhaps the best summation, in Hume's own words, of his early work. Furthermore, they are rich with implications of his ideas which will contribute to the formation of the view of human nature that is reflected in the epistemology of the History. The most conspicuous item in the title is, of course, the reference to the experimental method of reasoning. The method proclaimed by Hume is nothing new, for Hume was living in a period conscious of Sir Issac Newton's achievements in "natural philosophy."[18] Indeed, Hume aspired to make an application of this method which would in results equal Newton's achievements. The method served as a criterion: "The only solid foundation we can give to this science /i.e., science of man/ itself must be laid on experience and observation."[19] The foundation is constructed on the idea that the understanding and the passions are analogous to each other. But the application

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[17] A Treatise of Human Nature, L. A. Selby-Bigge, ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 319.

[18] For a discussion of Newton's influence on Hume's methodology, see J. A. Passmore, Hume's Intentions (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), ch. 3.

[19] Treatise, p. xx.

of this criterion as a method is radically different from Newton's as is evidenced by the passage above, and I shall attempt to demonstrate this in this section.

"The science of man" is premised on principles which stress or emphasize man in such a way as to make a science of man, in the Newtonian sense, virtually impossible! The principles appealed to in the above passage are derived, in part, from custom instead of logical necessity,[20] and more importantly, they are inferences drawn in part from Hume's initial experiences. For example, Hume's idea of our knowledge of other minds is composed of matters of fact. This idea is used throughout the History. His characterizations of historical figures exhibit that he thought of the estimations of various human qualities as facts for history. For Hume to allow these as factual considerations he must utilize principles which cover the inferences he makes in the above passage.[21] It is obvious from Hume's statements and procedure that he is not using a strict Newtonian scheme for human nature, even though he nominally suggests that he is. Such a scheme demands observation and experience in the public sense of the terms, and these are accounted for only by custom in Hume's analysis. When Hume is writing

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[20]Passmore, op. cit., p. 41. As an example, see this chapter's prefatory note which is taken from the opening page of the first volume of the History.

[21]These, in brief, take the form of "conjectures," which are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

about a period which had a scarcity of documents, his initial inferences indicate that the evidence which he used was not only the documents of the past, but his own experiences as well. The way he utilized himself, and the way this utilization is a part of his concept of "fact" or "evidence," are seen in what he refers to as "sympathy" and "resemblance."[22]

Concerning the nature of sympathy Hume states that:

> No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own.[23]

The statement I emphasize here is an example of an inference from an initial experience, wherein the notion of sympathy covers or allows the inference from similarity to dissimilarity with regard to the inclinations and sentiments of others. One might argue that history provides evidence for this inference, and if this is the case, then the scheme for human nature is not strictly speaking Newtonian; for history accounts for the variety of human actions from which one may infer further information about human nature. Is this a plausible account of Hume's reasoning? Possibly, for

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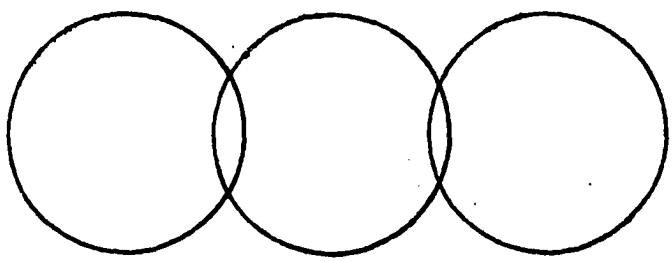
[22]Norton sees this only as prejudice and mere opinion; op. cit. This concept of evidence is one which has affinity with Collingwood's idea that the only real evidence or authority that a critical historian has is himself.

[23]Treatise, p. 316; my italics.

there is an interesting feature in Hume's use of the terms "inclinations" and "sentiments." These words are notoriously ambiguous; and the entries for these words in the Oxford English Dictionary make it quite clear that in ordinary eighteenth century usage they were likely to connote human action as well as human nature.

The overlooking of this distinction between human action and human nature has perhaps led to some of the confusions over Hume's view of human nature. Not all human actions are explained by human nature; this is attested to by a prima facie look at Hume's History. The principles which make up what we label as "human nature" are generalizations of our most common actions or experiences. By placing Nature into the scheme, we can represent the interrelationships among these ideas in the following way:



human action human nature Nature

There is only an overlapping of these domains, and not a complete identification among them. This distinction becomes important when Hume's theory of human nature is viewed mechanistically.

In the above passage from the Treatise, there is no way of deciding which connotation is implied by the use of

the terms "inclinations" and "sentiments." Whether this may be decided in the History will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, the entries in the Oxford English Dictionary for "nature" and "sympathy" indicate that these words also connote action and were used at times in a semi-technical fashion by eighteenth century writers. That these words connote action cannot be ruled out, for the phrase, "to receive by communication," in the above passage would be unintelligible if this use were prohibited. So the phrase, "quality of human nature," is ambiguous; and, at best, an inference has been drawn from it which is unaccounted for. Thus the uniformity of human nature which is couched in the standard interpretation is based upon an inference that Hume's system or model is the product of a thoroughgoing mechanistic method. For instance, Black maintains:

> If this /Hume's/ theory of knowledge is to be valid it must apply to the domain of human action as well as to nature. There must be discernible in history a uniformity and regularity of recurring phenomena similar to that observable in the natural world, and this, again, implies two important suppositions: (1) that mind of man is the scene of a uniform play of motive; and (2) that motives of men in the mass are quantitatively and qualitatively the same for all times and all countries.[24]

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[24] Op. cit., p. 95; my italics. See also pp. 96, 98, 101. Perhaps Black has been misled by the notion of validity here. Hume's theory of knowledge does not at all require that determinism apply to human actions as well as to nature. Such a demand as this is completely out of place, for Hume

To begin with, Black's use of "must" between human action and nature would hold only on a mechanistic model which is deterministic and which utilizes logical entailment among the statements in the scheme. In addition, this restrictive use of "must" is wholly unrealistic in accounting for the historian's discourse. Needless to say, Black has overstated his case. It has already been pointed out that Hume's argument rests on custom and analogical reasoning. Black has set up a criticism of Hume which enhances the former's discussion of "inconsistencies." But to assume that Hume conceived of method as being infallible is to rule out any aetiological suggestions. This would be contrary to the Humean idiom, in addition to posing standards which are foreign to Hume's empiricism and History--both of which utilize a principle of sympathy.[25] From his conviction of the importance of sympathy in his inquiry and the high number of instances of it in human affairs, Hume generalizes to make sympathy part of his criterion. Thus we find him

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is re-enforced by his distinction between moral and physical causes, which applies to the respective domains above. Human actions, and specifically moral causes, form the general subject-matter of historical discourse. Black's "similar" should mean analogous and not identical. Analogies always contain a significant disanalogy or difference; otherwise, there would be no point in calling it an analogy; but rather an identity or something of the sort.

[25]See Passmore, op. cit., chs. 2 and 3; and Antony Flew, "On the Interpretation of Hume," in Hume: A Collection of Critical Essays, V. C. Chappell, ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1966), especially, pp. 280-281.

going from a quality of human nature to a principle of human nature. In other words, Hume is attributing characteristics to human action that are not attributable to nature. The "method" for understanding human action is decidely analogical; but nature, Hume contends, is to be understood by way of the Newtonian scheme. His application of the Newtonian philosophy to moral subjects is to be found in the "experiments" and in the rules for philosophizing. Hume's distinction between moral and physical causes rests upon reasoning like that we have found thus far in the Treatise.

In a passage which has theoretical implications for history and which is contrary to Black's second supposition in the above passage, we find Hume stating:

> To this principle we ought to ascribe the great uniformity we may observe in the humours and turn of thinking of those of the same nation; and 'tis much more probable, that this resemblance arises from sympathy, than from any influence of the soil and climate, which, tho' they continue invariably the same, are not able to preserve the character of a nation the same for a century together.[26]

What Hume is asserting here is that the resemblance among the people of a nation is to be attributed to sympathy rather than to the influences of soil and climate. Hume's use of "character" in the above passage illustrates that he means a great deal more by the word "nation" than simply geographical location. In assuming social and cultural

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[26] Treatise, pp. 316-7.

connotations of historical categories, he is close to his contemporary, Voltaire. In short, what I wish to emphasize here is that in Hume's theory of knowledge, a distinction is drawn between human action and human nature, and that his conception of law-like uniformity varies according to the domain he is talking about. Because of his emphasis upon the diversity of human actions, the conception of uniformity of human nature is much less rigid than what critics have suggested. What is attributable to human actions is not always attributable to human nature and conversely.[27] Nonetheless, there is sufficient resemblance between these to make the formation of principles (and a science) possible. I stress this point, because the reasoning in the History is accountable for only on the basis of such a distinction.

Hume identifies the uniformity of "the humours and turn of thinking" with "the character of a nation." Now, we might ask, what further description can be given of sympathy? To this Hume remarks:

> To me it seems evident, that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than

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[27]As Hume says in the Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, C. W. Hendel, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1955), p. 97: "When an action, as sometimes happens, cannot be particularly accounted for, either by the person himself or by others, we know, in general, that the characters of men are to a certain degree inconstant and irregular." When this happens the historian forms conjectures (to anticipate ideas presented later in this essay).

> from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations.[28]

Although "sympathy" is essentially a primitive term in Hume's writings, the above passage indicates what he thought was involved when one makes statements about principles. Hume's historical mindedness is exhibited in the last clause, ". . . its different circumstances and situations." Only the history of man discloses appreciable differences in circumstances and situations.

This point is made clear by Hume's argument in the Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, where he says:

> The mutual dependence of men is so great in all societies that scarce any human action is entirely complete in itself or is performed without some reference to the actions of others, which are requisite to make it answer fully the intention of the agent. . . . In proportion as men extend their dealings and render their intercourse with others more complicated, they always comprehend in their schemes of life a greater variety of voluntary actions which they expect, from the proper motives, to co-operate with their own. In all these conclusions they take their measures from past experiences.[29]

When Hume adds that "men. . . are to continue in their operations the same that they have ever found them," he has in mind:

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[28] Treatise, p. xxi.

[29] Section vii, "Of Liberty and Necessity," Part I, p. 98.

> He /an artisan/ also expects that when he carries his goods to market and offers them at a reasonable price, he shall find purchasers and shall be able, by the money he acquires, to engage others to supply him with those commodities which are requisite for his subsistence.[30]

Hume does not have in mind, as many have suggested, the specific actions of the artisan in this economic-socio-political framework, such as what the artisan was thinking about along the way, why he must sell on this particular day, that he chose this market rather than that one because his relatives were there, and so on. Hume makes this perfectly clear in the following passage:

> The philosopher, if he be consistent, must apply the same reasonings to the actions and volitions of intelligent agents. The most irregular and unexpected resolutions of men may frequently be accounted for by those /i.e., historian and/or biographer/ who know every particular circumstance of their character and situation.[31]

The appearance of scientific rigor must not be overlooked when evaluating Hume's contribution to philosophical historiography and the philosophy of history. The Newtonian influence and Hume's success in employing the conceptual achievements of the "new science" in a study of man separates him from previous British historians. The "uniformity" Hume sought was one which would make of a study of man, including history, a discipline comparable to the "new science." His

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[30] Ibid., pp. 98-99; my italics.

[31] Ibid., p. 97; my italics.

early work marks a step towards laying a theoretical foundation which would implicitly make history a respectable inquiry, since the science of man has to utilize concepts and techniques which are essentially historical in character.[32] Some of the techniques which are judiciously used in the History are first perfected in the Treatise. As he concludes in his Introduction:

> We must therefore glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life /human actions/, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science /of human nature/, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension.[33]

As is evidenced in this passage, Hume's "experiments" have a historical character to them. As a basis of his psychology and epistemology these experiments also take on an analytical quality descriptive of the everyday life that Hume so admirably embraced. Furthermore, Hume's assertions about the uniformity which is in human action and which comprises the principles of human nature were based on the

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[32]There is a noticeable parallel with Francis Bacon on this point, and more recently, with Karl Popper's idea of historical sciences and the theoretical sciences in which the latter are built upon the former. See Popper's The Poverty of Historicism (2nd ed.; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), ch. IV, sec. 30.

[33]Treatise, p. xxii.

experiments that he drew from everyday life. Hume's emphasis upon uniformity can be better understood from the Introduction to the Treatise in which he argues that a science of man is not only superior to the other sciences but is also the basis for the others.[34] There is a dependence of the sciences on the science of man because the connection with human nature is "more close and intimate;" and this connection is, of course, sympathy. As Hume states in Book Two: "Every human creature resembles ourselves, and by that means has an advantage above any other object, in operating on the imagination."[35] Because of this "fact" (in the Humean sense), inquiries that have as their phenomena human action and human nature are the only ones where we can expect assurance and conviction. (This assurance and conviction is reflected in Hume's manner of presentation in the History.) Hume's expectations would be viewed today as an oversimplification of man's psychology, if not indeed a falsehood. Nonetheless, his expectations are premised on the discovery he thought he had made in finding sympathy and sensitivity as the keys to understanding man's behavior in the present and the past.[36] These ideas are reflected in his positive view of causation: "All our reasonings concerning causes and effects are derived from nothing but

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[34] Ibid., p. xix. [35] Ibid., p. 359.

[36] No doubt here, there is an unnoticed parallel between Collingwood and Hume on this point of historical epistemology.

custom; and. . . belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures."[37] He supports this stipulative definition of cause as custom by psychological and historical statements. The latter served as a basis for his generalities, and the necessities he sees among things are witnessed in such passages as the following:

> This /yielding to the solicitations of our passions/ is the reason why men so often act in contradiction to their known interest; and in particular why they prefer any trivial advantage, that is present, to the maintenance of order in society, which so much depends on the observance of justice. The consequences of every breach of equity seem to lie very remote, and are not able to counterballance any immediate advantage, that may be reap'd from it. They are, however, never the less real for being remote; and as all men are, in some degree, subject to the same weakness, it necessarily happens, that the violations of equity must become very frequent in society, and the commerce of men, by that means, be render'd very dangerous and uncertain.[38]

Before leaving the Treatise, the claims of the standard interpretation need special attention, especially to the extent that Hume held to the uniformity of human nature. I have already given some indication as to what kind of uniformity was sought and what was presupposed by the view. To the critics, Hume can speak for himself:

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[37] Treatise, p. 183. Hume's italics removed.

[38] Ibid., p. 535.

> To this I reply, that in judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects. When any phaenomena are constantly and invariably conjoined together, they acquire such a connexion in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation. But below this there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind ballances the contrary experiments, and deducting the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance, which remains. Even when these contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of cause and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgment on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case qually necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain. No union can be more constant and certain, than that of some actions with some motives and characters; and if in other cases the union is uncertain, 'tis no more than what happens in the operations of body, nor can we conclude any thing from the one irregularity, which will not follow equally from the other.[39]

In the passage above one finds, among other things, Hume's emphasis upon "uniformity." But the uniformity Hume

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[39] Ibid., pp. 403-404. Another passage which bears out this point is: "We must certainly allow, that the cohesion of the parts of matter arises from natural and necessary principles, whatever difficulty we may find in explaining them: And for a like reason we must allow, that human society is founded on like principles; and our reason in the latter case, is better than even that in the former; because we not only observe, that men always seek society, but can also explain the principles, on which this universal propensity is founded." Pp. 401-402. Hume's italics.

speaks of is not the same as the standard interpretation suggests. The claims brought against Hume blur the different meanings of the word "uniformity." If one subsumes Hume under the characteristics of the Age, one tends to overlook one of his major contributions; namely, an introduction of reasoning from probabilities. In a definite sense, then uniformities are probabilities. First of all, to exhibit the variety of meanings of the word "uniformity," one may observe the reasoning of the following passage. It is also an excellent statement of the philosophy of history that is reflected in Hume's other writings:

> The skin, pores, muscles, and nerves of a day-labourer are different from those of a man of quality: So are his sentiments, actions and manners. The different stations of life influence the whole fabric, external and internal; and these different stations arise necessarily, because uniformly, from the necessary and uniform principles of human nature. Men cannot live without society, and cannot be associated without government. Government makes a distinction of property, and establishes the different ranks of men. This produces industry, traffic, manufactures, lawsuits, war, leagues, alliances, voyages, travels, cities, fleets, ports, and all those other actions and objects, which cause such a diversity, and at the same time maintain such an uniformity in human life.[40]

A careful reading of the above passages indicates what Hume means by the uniform principle of human nature and uniformity in human action. (The only necessity is in

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[40] Ibid., p. 402; my italics.

the uniformity.) Suppose that Don talks with Charlie and he communicates. We would say that their thoughts are uniform if communication takes place. This is one sense or use of "uniform." However, this does not imply that their thoughts are identical in every respect. The sense in which the standard interpretation uses the word "uniformity" is assumed to be the Humean use. But the passages above clearly indicate that Hume makes an allowance for diversity. His belief is in the uniformity of "the whole fabric" of human life. For example, for one to understand Plato or a Greek tragedy (or indeed Hume for that matter!), there must be some uniformity between the author and reader, if one is to understand the motives of characters, ideas, etc. Now, how does Hume think it is possible for "actions and objects . . . /to/ cause such a diversity, and at the same time maintain such an uniformity in human life"? Hume's best reasoning for this assertion is in the following argument:

> I grant it possible to find some actions which seem to have no regular connection with any known motives and are exceptions to all the measures of conduct which have ever been established for the government of men. But if we could willingly know what judgment should be formed of such irregular and extraordinary actions, we may consider the sentiments commonly entertained with regard to those irregular events which appear in the course of nature and the operations of external objects. All causes are not conjoined to their usual effects with like uniformity. An artificer who handles only dead matter may be

> disappointed of his aim, as well as the politician who directs the conduct of sensible and intelligent agents.[41]

This is the context of the question that Hume raises in the Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding: "What would become of history had we not a dependence on the veracity of the historian according to the experience which we have had of mankind?"[42] To this potent rhetorical question, Hume succinctly adds:

> It seems almost impossible, therefore, to engage either in science or action of any kind without acknowledging the doctrine of necessity, and this /includes/ inference from motives to voluntary action, from characters to conduct.[43]

This statement is one which leads Hume to affirm uniformity. But his concept is markedly different from previous thinkers on this point in that the inferences he speaks of in the above passage are based upon an appeal to analogical reasoning from probabilities. Here the inference is from human action. The statement never has the certainty of an a priori statement, so that sort of uniformity is ruled out. Words in Hume's writings like "necessity," "contradiction," and "certainty" are highly misleading (if they are read in a literal way) and probably have enhanced misunderstanding. An example of this is: "This possibility is converted into

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[41] Inquiry, p. 96; my italics.

[42] Ibid., p. 99. Hume's italics.

[43] Ibid. Hume's italics.

certainty by further observation. . . ."[44] Probabilities are confirmed by observations, but possibilities are obviously not, since these are a priori modal considerations of logic. Furthermore, Hume almost always adds qualifications to his statements (such as the above) in the Treatise as he does in the Inquiry. It seems to be the case that these qualifications, like the following one, are left out in the standard interpretation:

> This /the manners of men different in different ages and countries/ affords room for many general observations concerning the gradual change of our sentiments and inclinations, and the different maxims which prevail in the different ages of human creatures.[45]

So it seems from the above passages that Hume did recognize or grasp the elements of the problem,[46] at least theoretically. Black oversteps himself when he charges Hume with seeing only similarities and overlooking important differences among people and nations.[47] Indeed, the first italics I supplied in the last passage quoted are such that if the statement were out of context, one could suppose that

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[44] Ibid., p. 96; my italics.

[45] Ibid., p. 95; my italics. The inserted clause is from Hume. Alfred Stern, Philosophy of History and the Problem of Values ('S-Gravenhage: Mouton and Co., 1962), maintains the standard interpretation, which would have to de-emphasize passages like the above. Indeed, Stern offers no explanation of the statement, "Hume maintained the thesis of an invariable human nature." P. 147. And Collingwood makes the same sort of assertions; see The Idea of History, pp. 77-78; 83-85.

[46] Supra., p. 34.

[47] Op. cit., p. 86.

a historical materialist or relativist had made the statement. In any event, Hume's insistence on uniformity in human nature is to provide a basis for history--or, for that matter, a basis for any discipline whatsoever.

The 'History' and Human Nature

Keeping in mind the claims of the critics and what has briefly been shown in the Treatise (and to some extent in the Inquiry), we may proceed to the History to see whether Hume applied his ideas concerning human nature to history. The question concerning the uniformity of human nature in the History is a complex one, and to answer the question we may continue distinguishing the senses of the word "uniformly" or "uniformity" as used in the History. We have seen what Hume takes this to mean in the Treatise. As before, there may be exhibited passages that suggest that what Hume meant by "uniformly" does not exclude contingency in human affairs. A possible counter-example of this from Hume is: "We may change the names of things; but their nature and their operation on the understanding never change."[48] The kind of uniformity to which Hume is referring here is physical (rather than moral) necessity; e.g., a chain of events which are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the existence or occurrence of an event. Hume's example makes this clear: ". . . if he throw himself

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[48] Treatise, p. 407; and Inquiry, p. 100.

out of the window and meet with no obstruction, he will not remain a moment suspended in the air." However, Hume thinks an analogous type of necessity is present in moral subjects too:

> Were a man whom I know to be honest and opulent, and. . . with whom I lived in intimate friendship, to come into my house, where I am surrounded with my servants, I rest assured that he is not to stab me before he leaves it in order to rob me of my silver standish.

Hume adds unless he be seized with a frenzy, but this is to "change the suppositions."[49] The disanalogy here is in the idea that morals change gradually.[50]

"Nature" is another misleading word in Hume's writings and has perhaps led to the adoption of the standard interpretation. However, the term not only refers to the physical necessities of man, but also to his actions within this necessity. Hume attributes "moral necessity" to such actions. It is here where Hume allows for contingency. For example, when a historian reads in a document about the execution of a prisoner who resists, the historian, through an imaginative effort of what Hume referred to as "physical necessity," can consider what that event was like for that particular individual.[51] Thus, the uniformity Hume speaks

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[49] Inquiry, p. 100; my italics.

[50] Ibid., p. 95; quoted earlier (p. 55).

[51] The role of the historian's imagination is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter (III).

of is inferred from the principles of sympathy and resemblance to statements about the uniformity of human nature. No understanding of the past would be possible without these presuppositions. Hume's example clarifies this:

> The same prisoner, when conducted to the scaffold, forsees his death as certainly from the constancy and fidelity of his guards as from the operation of the wax or wheel. His mind runs along a certain train of ideas: The refusal of the soldiers to consent to his escape, the action of the executioner; the separation of the head and body; bleeding, convulsive motions, and death.[52]

According to Hume, the historian can imagine this train of ideas and use them in his narrative as "fact" (soft data). The events are molded together by their physical (and moral) necessity. On this basis, Hume allows for the notion of fact to include imagination, but only insofar as it follows a chain such as is evidenced by nature. It is from this basis and its reasoning that we find Hume writing the History as he does and the many passages which suggest the interpretative approach. An example is the execution of Queen Anne, in which Hume uses only one secondary source, and in which the narrative follows the above pattern of reasoning and interpretation of the event:

> The queen now prepared for suffering the death to which she was sentenced. She sent her last message to the king, and acknowledged the obligations which she owed him in thus uniformly continuing his endeavour

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[52] Treatise, p. 406; and Inquiry, p. 100.

> for her advancement. From a private gentlewoman, she said, he had first made her a marchioness, then queen, and now, since he could raise her no higher in this world, he was sending her to be a saint in heaven. She then renewed the protestations of her innocence, and recommended her daughter to his care. Before the lieutenant of the Tower, and all who approached her, she made the like declarations; and continued to behave herself with her usual serenity, and even with cheerfulness. "The executioner," she said to the lieutenant, "is, I hear, very expert, and my neck is very slender:" upon which she grasped it in her hand, and smiled. When brought, however, to the scaffold, she softened her tone a little with regard to her protestations of innocence. She probably reflected that the obstinacy of Queen Catherine, and her opposition to the King's will, had much alienated him from the Lady Mary. Her own maternal concern, therefore, for Elizabeth, prevailed, in these last moments, over that indignation which the unjust sentence, by which she suffered, naturally excited in her. She said that she was come to die, as she was sentenced by the law: She would accuse none, nor say anything of the ground upon which she was judged. She prayed heartily for the king, called him a most merciful and gentle prince, and acknowledged that he had always been to her a good and gracious sovereign; and if any one should think proper to canvass for cause, she desired him to judge the best.* She was beheaded by the executioner of Calais, who was sent for as more expert than any in England. Her body was negligently thrown into a common chest of elm-tree, made to hold arrows, and was buried in the Tower.[53]

In this passage, statements like "When brought, however, to the scaffold, she softened her tone. . ." and "She

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[53] History of England (6 Vols.; New York: R. Worthington Co., 1880), III, 133-134. Hume's source in this passage, indicated by the asterisk, is Gilbert Burnet, Memoirs of. . . James and Williams, Dukes of Hamilton, I, 205.

probably reflected that the obstinacy of Queen Catherine . . ." and "Her own maternal concern. . ." are difficult to explain in terms of hard data (documents and monuments). However, according to what Hume means by physical necessity and moral evidence (and necessity) in the Treatise, there is a basis or justification for the above psychological assertions about Queen Anne. Also, there is a pragmatic element in statements like these; they make the narrative interesting and supply connections among the hard data.[54] Character analysis of historical figures is indicative of the historian's understanding of human nature; and in Hume, the above statements and ones like ". . . the unjust sentence, by which she suffered, naturally excited in her" utilize his notions of sympathy and resemblance in historical understanding. The statement "She probably reflected that the obstinacy of Queen Catherine. . ." ending with the "conclusion," "Her own maternal concern, therefore, for Elizabeth, prevailed, in these last moments. . .", is based upon two principles. One is the analogy between Queen Anne and Elizabeth which Hume draws in light of his position on the knowledge of other minds. Secondly, Hume invokes the principle of resemblance: there is the "similar station in life" between the two women. Hume utilizes this principle

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[54]The distinction between hard and soft data was one of Bertrand Russell's. See his Our Knowledge of the External World (New York: Mentor Books, 1956), pp. 60f.

to such an extent that he will premise character analyses on statements like "The method in which we find they /the nobility/ treated the king's favourites and ministers is proof of their usual way of dealing with each other."[55]

From the context one may say that this statement is a general law or methodological principle and that the particulars are subsumed under it. But there is considerable doubt whether these passages and others suggest that a belief, a methodological one at that, in the constancy of human nature entails that ". . . history is simply a repeating decimal."[56] Constancy of human nature, for Hume, is a methodological principle which makes history possible; that is, possible for there to be any consistency and credibility in what the historian says. As Collingwood says, ". . . history never repeating itself but human nature constant."[57] Apparently Black incorrectly identifies human nature with history, but this identification is not suggested by Hume. For instance, "No people could undergo a change more sudden and entire in their manners, than did the English nation during this period."[58] Hume makes statements in the History which answer Black's decimal-theory charge and come close to supporting Collingwood's interpretation:

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[55] History, II, 113.

[56] Black, p. 98.

[57] Op. cit., p. 82.

[58] History, V, 426; my italics.

> It is needless to be particular in enumerating all the cruelties practised in England during the course of three years that these persecutions lasted: the savage barbarity on the one hand, and the patient constancy on the other, are so similar in all those martyrdoms, that the narrative, little agreeable in itself, would never be relieved by any variety. Human nature appears not, on any occasion, so detestable, and at the same time so absurd, as in these religious persecutions, which sink men below infernal spirits in wickedness, and below the beasts in folly.[59]

This passage illustrates, among other things, two important ideas. First, the emphasis Hume puts on the narrative being relieved by variety shows that dissimilarity was considered important to Hume not only in the structure of a historical narrative, but also in the presentation of an adequate, well-rounded picture of the past.[60] Secondly, Hume's use of the metaphor, "which sink men below," with human nature suggests that he did not think of the notion of human nature as an absolute, unchanging one.[61] Hume's

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[59] Ibid., III, 341; my italics.

[60] The idea of "relief by variety" reminds one of Aristotle's Poetics, in which he says that some "episodes . . . relieve the uniformity of his narrative," in The Basic Works of Aristotle, Richard McKeon, ed. (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 1480.

[61] It is interesting to note that Hume has a criticism of the sort of speculation which Hegel represents: "The frailties of our nature mingle themselves with everything in which we are employed, and no human institution will ever reach perfection--the idea of an infinite mind." Quoted from a proposed preface to one of the volumes of his History. See J. H. Burton, Life and Correspondence of David Hume (2 Vols.; Edinburgh: William Tait, 1846), II,

thoughts and use of language are reflected by his manipulation of the notion of human nature. His discussion of Queen Elizabeth, which illustrates the myth of absolute constancy of human nature in history, perhaps better exhibits this point: ". . . she knew the inconstant nature of the people. . .",[62] which probably means that she knew that the behavior of people is in a sense unpredictable. Novelty in history seems to be relative to individual human action. With reference to the status of events in history, Hume says that "These events passed with such rapidity, that men had no leisure to admire sufficiently one incident, when they were surprised with a new one, equally rare and uncommon."[63]

With regard to passion and reason in human nature, Hume remarks about Mary, Queen of Scots:

> In order to form a just idea of her character, we must set aside one part of her conduct, while she abandoned herself to the guidance of a profligate man; and must consider these faults, whether we admit them to be imprudences or crimes, as the result of an inexplicable, though not uncommon, inconstancy in the human mind, of the frailty of our nature, of the violence of passion, and of the influence which situations, and sometimes momentary incidents, have on

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12-13; also cited in William Knight, Hume (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. and Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1886), p. 68.

[62] History, III, 416.

[63] Ibid, III, 461; my italics.

> persons whose principles are not thoroughly confirmed by experience and reflection.[64]

In this passage, the reference to persons and their "principles" is a methodological technique for evaluating the historical figures within his narrative. (These usually take the form of conjecture sentences.) Also, it appears from this passage that Hume would assert that what seems to be an inconstancy in human nature for one person or group may not be so for another. This is because the question of the constancy or inconstancy of human nature is couched in light of principles which are premised on the historian's understanding, or in this case, on Hume's understanding. This position, as we have seen, is consistent with the position he offers in the Treatise concerning the passions. Also, Hume's idea of historical explanation includes the inconstancy of human nature (in the relative sense) and the exceptional. The individual events are not sacrificed; rather:

> We must here, as in many other instances, lament the inconstancy of human nature, that a person endowed with so many noble virtues, generosity, sincerity, friendship, valour, eloquence, and industry, should, in the latter period of his life, have given reins to his ungovernable passions, and involved not only himself but many of his friends in utter ruin.[65]

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[64] Ibid., IV, 75; my italics.

[65] Ibid., IV, 167; my italics.

This passage is at the locus of Hume's concept of history. If there are many instances, or memorable events and characters, that lament the inconstancy of human nature, and if man is subjected to ungovernable passions which affect his life and others, then there are instances which fall outside the uniformity which Newtonian science and philosophy demand. So Collingwood is right in claiming that Hume is not scientific in the Newtonian sense. For example: "/Charles's/ attachment to France, after all the pains which we have taken, by inquiry and conjecture, to fathom it, contains still something, it must be confessed, mysterious and inexplicable."[66] Because there are instances like these (ones where not all the particulars are known), and because they are memorable to man, history is of the utmost importance to Hume. Accordingly, historians should be chall to provide an explanation of such instances. According to Humean thought, the significant contribution that is achieved by history is that it discloses the consequences or changes that affect human life. This can be seen in the following passage:

> This event /the rise and eventual political power of Sir John Savile/ is memorable, as being the first instance, perhaps, in the history of England, of any king's advancing a man on account of Parliamentary interest, and of opposition to his measures. However irregular this practice, it will be regarded

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[66] Ibid., VI, 229.

> by political reasoners as one of the most early and most infallible symptoms of a regular established liberty.[67]

If all these passages exemplify the subject-matter of history, then the principle of sympathy may be seen as the conerstone of Hume's History. For sympathy, and what Hume refers to as "conjecture" (viz. supplying the missing particulars) are the only means to an understanding of the data of history. The consulting of common experience creates the standard or criterion. Hume's slogan in the Treatise, "Consult common experience,"[68] operates as a disciplinary guide for the historian's imaginative or conjectural use of his data. In detail:

> By means of this guide /the principles of human nature/ we mount up to the knowledge of men's inclinations and motives from their actions, expressions, and even gestures, and again descend to the interpretation of their actions from our knowledge of their motives and inclinations. The general observations, treasured up by a course of experience, give us the clue of human nature and teach us to unravel all its intricacies.[69]

This passage gives a reasonable account of the activity of a critical historian who is in the process of assessing evidence. Thus we see that erudition has a minor (yet fundamental) role in Hume's concept of history.

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[67] Ibid., IV, 312-313; my italics. [68] Op. cit., p. 487.

[69] Inquiry, p. 94; my italics. This passage also supplies evidence for the interpretation I give of "human nature" in the next paragraph.

The idea of the inconstancy or diversity in human action may be seen in some of the passages in the History. At times, Hume analogically uses the phrase "human nature" to refer both to man's nature and to the actions which proceed from his nature. This analogical diversity, as a tacit historical criterion, is seen in the following passages:

> /Elizabeth/ had established her credit on such a footing, that no sovereign in Europe could more readily command any sum, which the public exigencies might at any time require. During this peaceable and uniform government, England furnishes few materials for history; and except the small part which Elizabeth took in foreign transactions, there scarcely passed any occurrence which requires a particular detail.

And:

> The great popularity which she /Elizabeth/ enjoyed proves that she did not infringe any established liberties of the people: there remains evidence sufficient to ascertain the most noted acts of her administration; and though that evidence must be drawn from a source wide of the ordinary historians, it becomes only the more authentic on that account, and serves as a stronger proof that her particular exertions of power were conceived to be nothing but the ordinary course of administration, since they were not thought remarkable enough to be recorded even by contemporary writers. If there was any difference in this particular, the people in former reigns seem rather to have been more submissive than even during the age of Elizabeth.[70]

The above passages indicate that what is most central to

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[70] History, III, 554; and IV, 185, respectively. The italics are mine.

Hume's concept of history is not the similarity among events or persons in different periods; rather, the novel, the extraordinary, or the remarkable, which record change, make up the data of history. Part of this is obviously for stylistic reasons. Utilization of the novel or the extraordinary makes the narrative more interesting to the reader and represents a more complete picture of that period of the past which is under investigation, for it approximates how we experience and comprehend the present. The latter of the above quotations illustrates a technique which Hume uses throughout the History. Whenever Hume feels that documentation is necessary to substantiate a particular fact in his narrative, he will cite as many primary and/or secondary sources as agree on that point. Hume draws the authenticity of the evidence from this consensus.[71] Hume's slogan, "consult common experience," means in the History "consult the consensus of data." This procedure also enables Hume to make inferences from the absence of such consensuses as

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[71] History, e.g., II, 416. Hume's procedure in documentation is perhaps best seen in volume one in a note at the beginning in which he discusses the difficulty of writing a history of remote ages. Hume uses the similarities and dissimilarities of language as a means of historical dating and of inferring what happened among the ancient Britons. Guided by the inferences of earlier historians, Hume says that: "We may infer from two passages in Claudian, and from one in Orosius and another in Isidore, that the chief seat of these Scots was in Ireland." This quote is from David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 116n. The italics are mine. We shall return to this interesting note in the next chapter.

he does in the above passages.[72] (Obviously such a procedure concerning contingent information is not foolproof, but then such procedures are not meant to be.) For instance, the argument from the absence of consensus is recognizable in the following synoptic remark:

> At this era, it may be proper to stop a moment, and take a general survey of the age, so far as regards manners, finances, arms, commerce, arts, and sciences. The chief use of history is, that it affords materials for disquisitions of this nature; and it seems the duty of an historian to point out the proper inferences and conclusions.[73]

The foregoing analysis of Hume on human nature has suggested conclusions which are contrary to Black's. The result of this is that Hume's view of human nature and its use in historical inquiry is more diversified and complex

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[72] G. J. Warnock, "Hume on Causation," in David Hume: A Symposium, p. 55, suggests that Hume gave no account in which the variety of items of inferences from the non-occurrences or the absence of occurrences may be cited as causes and effects. However, the passages cited thus far and Hume's idea of conjectures suggest the contrary of Warnock's claim. E.g., History, III, 569: "The very disappearance of these letters is a presumption /conjecture/ of their authenticity. That event can be accounted for no way but from the care of King James's friends, who were desirous to destroy every proof of his mother's crimes. The disappearance of Morton's narrative, and of Crawford's evidence from the Cotton library, Calig. c. 1. must have proceeded from a like cause." By "cause" here, Hume obviously means reason.

[73] History, V, 426; my italics. An example of a proper inference for a historian would be determining the origin of an event which later had significant consequences; ibid., III, 369: "This /ca. 1558/ seems to have been the first intercourse which that empire /Russia/ had with any of the western potentates of Europe."

than the commonplace conceptions have made it out to be. Any failure on Hume's part to provide an adequate conception of history and theory of historical explanation will not be found in the critical arguments just discussed. In the History we see a definite departure from the mechanistic model that most eighteenth century thinkers used; and, this characteristic of the Age is what has suggested to many the standard interpretation. With Hume's emphasis on passion and its importance in human nature, we find him working more with a functional model of human nature. What I mean by "functional" here is to be taken in a teleological sense; e.g., "The action x was (or is) a function of the passion (or end) c." This is suggested by many passages, but probably the most interesting one is his discussion of Newton in which Hume tacitly doubts that the mechanistic model can provide all the solutions:

> While Newton seemed to draw off the veil from some of the mysteries of nature, he showed at the same time the imperfections of the mechanical philosophy; and thereby restored her ultimate secrets to that obscurity in which they ever did and ever will remain.[74]

With the admission of statements like these, one wonders whether Hume is consistent when he rules out the logical possibility of miracles.[75] In his discussion of Joan of

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[74] History, VI, 329.

[75] See C. S. Lewis, Miracles (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), especially pp. 121-126 on Hume for a critical discussion, and the Treatise, pp. 118-155.

Arc Hume says:

> It is the business of history to distinguish between the miraculous and the marvellous; to reject the first in all narrations merely profane and human; to doubt the second; and when obliged by unquestionable testimony, as in the present case, to admit of something extraordinary, to receive as little of it as is consistent with the known facts and circumstances.[76]

Of course with this remark and his statement on Newton, the difference between "miraculous" and "marvellous" may be verbal. The alternative Hume chooses, "to admit of something extraordinary," is by reason of the commonality of situations or by his "common consensus" criterion. Since certain events are novel or "marvellous," they should be recorded if they are "consistent with the known facts and circumstances." Two centuries later Collingwood said the same thing:

> The web of imaginative construction /of the historian/ is something far more solid and powerful than we have hitherto realized. So far from relying for its validity upon the support of given facts, it actually serves as the touchstone by which we decide whether alleged facts are genuine. Suetonius tells me that Nero at one time intended to evacuate Britain. I reject his statement, not because any better authority flatly contradicts it, for of course none does; but because my reconstruction of Nero's policy based on Tacitus will not allow me to think that Suetonius is right. And if I am told that this is merely to say I prefer Tacitus to Suetonius, I confess that I do: but I do so just because I find

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[76] History, II, 345; the last italics are mine.

> myself able to incorporate what Tacitus tells me into a coherent and continuous picture of my own, and cannot do this for Suetonius.[77]

The common consensus criterion also explains why Hume's treatment of the ancient and medieval periods is weak; for known facts, source material and techniques for handling data were of small measure during his time, in addition to there being a certain lack of interest on Hume's part. But even this is not wholly true, for he does give an excellent, unprecedented account of the plight of the Jews in Medieval England. The next section discusses these various techniques and the way in which Hume utilized them in the History of England.

Concepts and Reasoning in the 'History'

As we have seen from the earlier sections, Hume's notion of history is a complex one with many ideas contributed from writings earlier than the History. Indeed, the subtlety and complexity are greater than his commentators have portrayed either by the standard interpretation or the Weltanschauung identification, or sometimes by both. Hume first displayed his historical-mindedness in a juvenile essay which he wrote when he was about fourteen years old. The year was approximately 1725, and he was then attending the University of Edinburgh. The essay is entitled "An

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[77] Op. cit., pp. 244-245.

Historical Essay on Modern Honour and Chivalry."[78] Hume's use of honor and chivalry as historiographical categories and as subject-matter for the essay seems to reflect an influence of Sir John Froissart's work.[79] The essay is a commentary on the Greaco-Roman and Medieval ideas of honor and chivalry, and in it Hume makes comparisons to his own time. This explanatory procedure in part shows how past ideas are prevalent in the social thinking of his time and vice versa. Furthermore, the procedure is retained by Hume in his Treatise and the History. His adept historical thinking is evident at this early age, for the essay exhibits the beginnings of the technique of comparison which he developed in the History many years later. Hence, one should be cautious in accepting Trever-Roper's remark: "Yet Hume, unlike Gibbon, became a historian almost by accident."[80]

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[78]E. C. Mossner, "David Hume's 'An Historical Essay on Chivalry and Modern Honour'," Modern Philology, XLV (1947), 54-60. This article is an annotated reprinting of the original manuscript.

[79]The Chronicles of England, France, and Spain (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1961), H. P. Dunster's condensation of the Thomas Johnes translation with an introduction by C. W. Dunn. Hume's treatment of the fourteenth century in the History shows that he was more than just casually acquainted with Froissart's Chronicles, especially as to style and quotational precision from the work. See, e.g., History, III, 565.

[80]"Hume as a Historian" in David Hume: A Symposium, p. 89.

Hume's ideas about history and his use of historical categories that are of theoretical merit are, in the main, seen in the first three volumes of the History. These were written after the volumes on the Stuarts and Tudors, the latter of which were to make up the last three volumes in the History. Many of the passages containing comments of a theoretical nature are suggestive of many sophisticated notions about history which are discussed today by philosophers of history and historians. Whether Hume was aware of their theoretical import is an unanswerable question. However, it cannot be doubted that he used them, and to that extent he must have had some awareness of their theoretical value. He obviously used such notions because his narrative is organized and structured around them, in addition to his justifying them in the Treatise and Enquiries.

The thesis of the History as a whole is perhaps best seen in the synoptic "conclusion" to volume six (the first tome written) which reflects his point of view throughout the work: "Thus have we seen, through the whole course of four reigns, a continual struggle maintained between the crown and the people: privilege and prerogative were ever at variance. . . ."[81] Most of the critics of the History emphasize Hume's use of reigns as the most important historical category and hastily conclude that by so doing he

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[81] History, VI, 316; my italics.

overlooks important aspects of history, namely, the people. However, in the lines above, the general principle which is used and which constitutes his point of view is the "continual struggle maintained between the crown and the people." It is this "variance" or "struggle" which Hume wishes to capture in his history, and which implies change as a basic assumption.[82] In a review for the Annual Register (1761), Edmund Burke used the metaphor "The idea of growth" to describe what rightfully seemed to him to be "the principle of the whole work completed by the part now published /the third volume/."[83] With the publication of the following three volumes, Burke would probably have hesitated to call the History, as he had previously done, merely a constitutional history. In the sentence following the one quoted above, Hume adds that "Governments too steady and uniform . . . abate the active powers of men; depress courage, invention, and genius; and produce an universal lethargy in the people."[84] It is the struggle between the people and

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[82]The "opposition" between the two categories, i.e., the crown and the people, interpreted by Hume as "variance" or "struggle" is conceptually the same as the diversity and inconstancy in human nature and action which were argued in the earlier sections of this chapter. This also reminds the contemporary reader of class struggle in Marxist history, and shows that the metaphors were used long before Hegel or Marx made them theoretically explicit.

[83]Printed in Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches, P. J. Stanlis, ed. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1963), p. 93; my italics.

[84]History, VI, 317.

the crown which interests Hume, and not government in itself.

In addition to government, a second historical category is couched in various linguistic forms and is suggested by phrases like "the people displeased;"[85] "satisfy the people;"[86] "a disposition of the English which in general contributed extremely to increase the queen's popularity;"[87] "Such was the disposition now beginning to prevail among the English;"[88] "the people in former reigns seem rather to have been more submissive than even during the age of Elizabeth;"[89] and so on. As can be seen from the above remarks, Hume attributes emotional (rarely is there implied the purely cognitive) states, which are ordinarily used by Hume to characterize individuals, to "the people."[90] Perhaps he thought that the emotive is a better clue to human nature than the cognitive; this is also implied by his reliamce on sympathy. Another good example of this is:

> The terror of the emperor's /Henry VIII/ greatness had extinguished the ancient animosity between the nations; and Spain,

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[85] Ibid., III, 51.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., III, 511.

[88] Ibid., IV, 158.

[89] Ibid., IV, 185.

[90] This suggests, along with his use of "character" with "nation" (which we discussed earlier), that Hume would nowadays be labeled as a methodological individualist rather than a methodological socialist, since he speaks of social concepts, such as "people," in terms of individuals and without any meta-individual characteristics.

> during more than a century, became, though a more distant power, the chief object of jealousy to the English.[91]

The personification of this category (the English) reflects the more theoretical ideas of human nature, especially of the passions. The imaginative use of this category indicates that Hume is using it at times as the object of historical explanation. Most of the examples supplied above behave linguistically as "synoptic conclusions" or as statements of summation. They bring a discussion together and act as "a grand swoop of synthesis."[92] This brings the inferences of the historian together after the detailed description of the event. Hume's use of "the people" as the object of such a process indicates a sophistication which was not seen in history until the eighteenth century, and his is probably the most effective use of the technique during the age.

To illustrate one of Hume's interpretative categories, we may observe two judgments he makes: one, concerning Elizabeth and another, concerning the Puritans. The latter

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[91] Ibid.; III, 60; my italics.

[92] See L. O. Mink, "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding," in Philosophical Analysis and History, W. H. Dray, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), especially pp. 185f. I am also indebted to this essay for the useful word "synoptic" which has aided in describing historical narration. The idea of summation as a class of historical sentences was first observed by Patrick H. Nowell-Smith, "Are Historical Events Unique?" Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, LVII (1956/7), sec. IV, pp. 123ff.

example also brings the other interpretative category, religion, into play in the narration:

> It will be curious also to observe the faint dawn of the spirit of liberty among the English, the jealousy with which that spirit was repressed by the sovereign, the imperious conduct which was maintained in opposition to it, and the ease with which it was subdued by this arbitrary princess;

and:

> So absolute, indeed was the authority of the crown, that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled, and was preserved, by the puritans alone; and it was to this sect, whose principles appear so frivolous, and habits so ridiculous, that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.[93]

In concluding this chapter we may say that Hume has received his due--perhaps more than his due--as a moral philosopher or as an epistemologist. As a philosophical historian and as a philosopher of history less than justice has been done to him. In a sense, it is difficult to explain why this is so, for he spent as much time and thought (and perhaps more) on history and historical problems as on theory of knowledge or ethics. Indeed, his writings show a progressive search for data and its justification, and his thoughts were couched in language which is essentially historical. In this chapter, I have attempted a brief textual exposition to show that the above is the case, while liberating Hume from the Weltanschauung identification and the

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[93] History, III, 511 and 520, respectively.

standard interpretation. This will enable us to work more freely with Hume in the subsequent chapters. If one supports these suspect points of view, then the greatest contributions of the man are lost and swept out amongst the generalities. Passmore remarks that "He /Hume/ is preeminently a breaker of new ground: a philosopher who opens up new lines of thought, who suggests to us an endless variety of philosophical explorations."[94] Hume broke new ground by providing a theoretical foundation for history at a time when it was greatly needed. And his extension of the techniques of philosophy into history and of history into philosophy were indicative of his new lines of thought. To say that "Hume did very little to improve the methods of historical research"[95] is to miss what I have discussed in this chapter, if not in the remaining chapters as well.

In the History Hume explored a variety of avenues in history; historians, like Fox and Mackintosh, had to follow where Hume led.[96] However, these achievements were quickly overshadowed in the philosophy of history by the dominance of Hegelian thought. Perhaps the propensity or association of this type of thought with the area is what has impared the philosopher from treating Hume as a philosophical historian or as a philosopher of history. This is unfortunate

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[94] Op. cit., p. 159. [95] Collingwood, p. 77.

[96] Trevor-Roper, p. 99.

because Hume is an excellent figure for the philosophy of history. Like Collingwood, he is one of the very few accomplished philosophers who was also an accomplished historian. And with the emphasis today on analysis, the philosopher has a great deal of room for conceptual and linguistic inquiry in Hume's writings, especially in the History. The philosopher of history needs to follow where Hume leads us in history. As W. H. Walsh once rightfully remarked in a review, "It seems to me that Dray has set out to discuss the theory of history without enought attention to the history of history."[97] The same sentiments are expressed by Stephen Toulmin in other subjects such as political philosophy, ethics, and philosophy (-ies) of religion and science. However, he would equally agree with Walsh's comment on philosophy of history:

> Even /in/ the philosophy of . . . /history/, more attention needs to be paid, both to the actual state of the substantive subject at the present time, and to the course of its historical development.[98]

The intent of this chapter is to contribute to the latter end.

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[97]"Review Essay of William H. Dray's Philosophy of History," History and Theory, V.2 (1966), 190. Walsh includes himself in this group.

[98]The Uses of Argument (Cambridge: The University Press, 1964), p. 259.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL NARRATION AND HUME

> Every historical narrative is dependent upon explanation, interpretation, appreciation.
>
> Pieter Geyl

Statement of the Problem

I can well imagine a historian legitimately asking a philosopher: "Why has there been a preoccupation with historical narration among philosophers in the past ten years?"; or, "What could there possibly be of philosophical interest about the historian's use of narration?" I have already said that the contemporary philosopher of history is interested in the historian's language and writing as clues to the concepts which are characteristic of the historian's activity. And with this preoccupation with language in general, the philosopher who looks at history naturally becomes interested in historical narration, since this is the predominant form of writing that historians use. The philosopher's interest is evoked when he considers items such as the structure and elements of narrative *form* and the seriousness with which we are to attend to it, especially with regard to other questions (e.g., the nature

of historical explanation).[1] The form of writing is what provides the linguistic unity of the historian's sentences. The fundamental problem underlying the topic of historical narration is one of determining the type and characteristics of the unity which historical sentences display. As Danto has remarked, "the chief difficulty. . . has to do with the concept of unity."[2]

Perhaps at this early stage of our inquiry, the easiest way to characterize historical unities is by noticing their assumed presence in the sentence-narrative distinction. Sentences are the constituent parts of a unified collection, which is labeled a narrative. But what is distinctive about that unified collection is not identifiable with any given sentence in the narrative. Hence, the observance of the distinction. Nonetheless, that which unifies the collection is attributed to or identified with a particular set or class of sentences or terms. The formal characteristics observable of a narrative (but not of its sentences individually) then act as clues to what this set or class of sentences must be like. It was a common mistake of earlier philosophers and historians to

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[1]Another philosophical question distinguished by its preoccupation with "form" is one raised by William Dray, Philosophy of History (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 5: "When historians do claim understanding, what form do their explanations take?" The latter italics are mine.

[2]Analytical Philosophy of History, p. 248.

construct analyses by the reverse method, viz., attributing sentential characteristics, like truth, to narratives. This led to insurmountable difficulties, distortions, and confusions.[3] More recent philosophers (some more consciously than others) who have attempted to analyze historical unities by working with narrative form are in the following list. Some of these analyses (like Hempel's) are not deliberate attempts to analyze from the narrative form itself, but can be interpreted as such proposed analyses:

Collingwood's "interpolation,"
Danto's "narrative sentences,"
Dray's "calculation,"
Hempel's "general laws,"
Hume's "design/point of view,"
Mink's "synoptic judgment,"
Nowell-Smith's "summaries,"
Scriven's "diagnostic judgment,"
Walsh's "colligation."

Other questions, some of which are raised in this essay, concerning the historian's activity can be viewed as dovetailing into that of narration, if we interpret the latter as a question of unity. Before going on I should like to consider an objection that could be made against my last statement. It might be said, "Of course, what you say may very well be true, but not all history takes the form of a narrative. There are 'analytical histories' besides

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[3]See Morton White's exposure of some of these problems in his "New Horizons in Philosophy," Adventures of the Mind /Second Series/, R. Thruelsen and J. Kobler, eds. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), pp. 593-602. The attribution of truth to a narrative, in other words, amounts to attributing a predicate of a member to its class, which is to commit the fallacy of composition.

narrative histories. So, assuming the correctness of what you say here it is applicable to only a portion of history." This objection does not in the least bother me, for "analytical histories," like Robert Fawtier's The Capetian Kings of France,[4] do exhibit a unity, and it is precisely this that I am interested in analyzing. The difference, which warrants the distinction between analytical and descriptive histories, is to be found in the way the material is handled, and (as Fawtier suggests) not in totally different historical unities. The handling of the material does not markedly affect the presence or absence of a unity --not methodologically. The unity is determined prior to the writing in research and training. Presumably, if the criterion for narrative unity is the same as that for historical unity (which is, I think, a fairly reasonable demand), then "analytical unity" would have to satisfy the same criterion. Hence, on this level, the distinction is not in order. Also, the meaning of "narrative" is much more narrow when such a distinction is made than its use here.

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[4]Trans., Lionel Butler and R. J. Adam (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960). Fawtier himself labels his work and makes essentially the same point I make below about historical unities: "That the Capetians did this /i.e., have a policy/ is a fair deduction from the present study, not a deceptive product of the analytical layout of the work; other accounts of Capetian history, strictly chronological in their arrangement, would yield the same conclusion." P. 227; my italics. Hence, Fawtier's notion of "policy" would be an instance of what I take historical unities to be. My argument here is a brief reply to C. B. McCullagh, "Narrative and Explanation in History," Mind, LXXVIII (1969), 256-261, who argues for the difference between narrative and analytical histories.

Both "types" of histories have stories to tell and what allows them to be classified together as histories is that they both do exhibit historical unities. It is this broader, more fundamental question which interests me.

Following is a list of what I conceive to be instances of historical unities (in addition to Fawtier's "policy"):

The Ancient World,
The Medieval Mind,
The Italian Renaissance,
The French Revolution,
Europe in the Seventeenth Century,
The American Civil War,
The Thirty Years War,
The Industrial Revolution,
The Fall of the Russian Monarchy,
England under the Tudors,
The Great Plains,
The Napoleonic Wars.

These sorts of expressions are numerous and usually appear as course and/or book titles. This occurrence is not incidental to the understanding of historical reasoning. The function of these expressions in historical discourse is extremely complex, and displays some interesting features of historical epistemology. Expressions like "The French Revolution" can characterize historical narratives and reasoning. These narratives and reasoning can in turn be analyzed by means of the concept of historical unities. Narrative unities are specific attempts to characterize historical unities.

The problem of historical narration reduces to the question of the kind of unity which is exhibited by a

narrative. Subsidiary questions pertaining to historical unities are ones of coherence, consistency, significance, etc. A sample of other questions is: How does the historian achieve this? By what kinds of statements in the narrative, if any, is unity accomplished? What is the role of narration in historical explanation? Typically, these questions show that an inquiry such as this one deals with the nature of historical reasoning.

The problem of historical unities has been a subject of much philosophical debate. Broadly speaking, the whole tradition of speculative or substantive philosophy of history has interpreted "unity" as a question of the meaning or pattern of the entire past. The speculative philosopher asks the questions: Does the world have a unity? or Does the entire past have a unity? But the sort of question an analytic philosopher asks (one I am asking) is whether or not historical writing or discourse has a unity which plays a decisive role in historical epistemology. The analytical question differs only in temperament and scope; that is, analytical philosophers of history interpret the question as one which deals not with the past, but with historical writing or narratives. Also, as was suggested above, "meaning" is construed as a question of logic or reasoning, viz. the argumentative aspect of historical discourse.[5]

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[5]For more on the distinction between speculative or substantive and critical or analytical philosophy of

I wish to make clear that my interpretation is not to be identified with the Oakeshottean principle of "unity or continuity" of history.[6] There is, of course, a similarity in the fact that he was attempting to investigate the same aspect of writing that I am. But the similarity ends there, for his principle takes "unity" to be self-evident, and is used in such a way as to suggest that a complete account of historical change is an alternative to an account of historical causation. If this is what is implied by Oakeshott's principle,[7] then my treatment of historical unities is markedly different; for it is not offered as an alternative to the notion of cause. Rather, the latter will be seen as an instance of the former. It is with such instances that I attempt to make clear what is meant by "historical unities." My preoccupation with "historical unities" has been stimulated by Danto's and Hume's treatments of the conception, the latter of whose ideas on the subject will be considered next.

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history, see Walsh, Philosophy of History: An Introduction, ch. 1; and Danto, ch. I.

[6]See Michael Oakeshott, Experience and Its Modes (Cambridge: The University Press, 1933), pp. 142ff. Critically cited in Walsh, p. 194. For a more detailed discussion of Oakeshott, see J. W. Meiland, Scepticism and Historical Knowledge (New York: Random House, 1965), ch. 2.

[7]I suspect that critics have been a bit unfair with him here, and are exceedingly generous in their inferences without careful license from Oakeshott's own reasoning.

Hume's Principle and Its Argument

The whole problem of historical narration is, according to Hume, centered around the question of what constitutes "a sufficient unity in the subject."[8] The major principle which governs the model of historical narration is:

P.: a sufficient unity in the subject.

Hume's general reasoning behind this principle involves two premises; one concerns the nature of man (and was discussed in some detail in the second chapter), and the other deals with the nature of writing. These claims are sufficiently interesting and informative that we look at their details. They shall also be treated as criteria for historical and narrative unity, respectively. The first reads:

> As man is a reasonable being and is continually in pursuit of happiness, which he hopes to find in the gratification of some passion or affection, he seldom acts speaks or thinks without a purpose and intention. He has still some object in view; and however improper the means may sometimes be which he chooses for the attainment of his end, he never loses view of an end, nor will he so much as throw away his

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[8] Inquiry, p. 38. The major portion of the section from which this statement (and many others) is taken is section iii, "Of the Association of Ideas," which appeared originally in only three editions and is not usually reprinted. This is perhaps a reason why no one has appreciatively observed or analyzed Hume's models of historical discourse. The historical question as to why this part of this section was left out in the later editions I shall not attempt to answer, and does in no way affect what I say here.

> thoughts or reflections where he hopes not to reap any satisfaction from them.[9]

In a word, according to Hume, this is the concept of man as presupposed by historical studies,[10] and this statement is of utmost importance in understanding the Humean model of historical narration. What does this have to do with narration? A plausible answer would be that since this is the case (that man seldom loses view of an end), then all writing which deals with man must reflect this if it is to accurately depict the human predicament. One only has to take a glance at historical writing to find that the concept of man presupposed is that of an animal who has purposes, desires, intentions, plans, etc., and that the major part of history is devoted to determining, examining, attributing, and relating these characteristics of human (individual and/or social) behavior in men of the past. Numerous examples of this can be seen from Hume's own historical writing. For instance, in discussing Charles II (ca. 1677), Hume narrates:

> It is certain that this was the critical moment when the king both might with ease have preserved the balance of power in Europe, which it has since cost this island

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[9] Ibid., p. 33; my italics. Most, if not all, of the passages from the History cited in the second chapter of this essay illustrate this conception.

[10] Patrick Gardiner has given us a useful phrase, "the concept of man as presupposed by historical studies," by the title of a Royal Institute of Philosophy lecture, dated 27 February 1970. Cited in Philosophy, XLIV (1969), 263, 360.

> a great expense of blood and treasure to restore, and might by preserverance have at last regained, in some tolerable measure, after all past errors, the confidence of his people. This opportunity being neglected, the wound became incurable; and notwithstanding his momentary appearances of vigour against France and popery, and their momentary inclinations to rely on his faith; he was still believed to be at bottom engaged in the same interest, and they soon relapsed into distrust and jealousy. The secret memoirs of this reign, which have since been published,* prove, beyond a doubt, that the king had, at this time, concerted measures with France, and had no intention to enter into a war in favour of the allies. He had entertained no view, therefore, even when he pawned his ROYAL WORD to his people, than to procure a grant of money; and he trusted that, while he eluded their expectations, he could not afterwards want pretences for palliating his conduct.[11]

In this passage we find Hume talking about Charles' trust, pretences, interests and beliefs, and his subjects' inclinations, distrust, confidence, jealousy and expectations. In short, Hume's discussion of Charles reflects his statement about man in the first premise. One of the historian's

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[11] History, VI, 80. The italics are Hume's. His reference to the secret memoirs of the reign is documented by the following footnote:

*"Such as the letters, which passed betwixt Danby and Montague, the king's ambassador at Paris: Temple's Memoirs, and his Letters. In these last, we see that the king never made any proposals of terms but what were advantageous to France, and the Prince of Orange believed them to have always been concerted with the French ambassador. Vol. i, p. 439.

In Sir John Dalrymple's Appendix, p. 103, it appears that the king had signed himself, without the participation of his ministers, a secret treaty with France, and had obtained a pension on the promise of his neutrality: a fact which renders his royal word, solemnly given to his subjects, one of the most dishonourable and most scandalous acts that ever proceeded from a throne."

tasks is, then, to determine the unity or design which lies behind seemingly diverse human behavior.

Hume's second premise in arguing for the principle of narration or unity reads as follows:

> In all compositions of genius, therefore, it is requisite that the writer have some plan or object; and though he may be hurried from this plan by the vehemence of thought, as in an ode, or drop it carelessly, as in an epistle or essay, there must appear some aim or intention in his first setting out, if not in the composition of the whole work. A production without a design would resemble more the ravings of a madman than the sober efforts of genius and learning.[12]

Hume becomes more specific about narrative compositions and voices the fundamental problem of historical narration:

> As this rule /design/ admits of no exception, it follows that in narrative compositions the events or actions which the writer relates must be connected together by some bond or tie: They must be related to each other in the imagination, and form a kind of unity which may bring them under one plan or view, and which may be the object or end of the writer in his first undertaking.[13]

Now, according to Hume's premises, it would be reasonable to infer that for his discussion of Charles to be truly historical, "the object/s/ or end/s/ of the writer /i.e., a historian/ in his first undertaking" need be the same object(s) or end(s) that the individuals had or exhibited --either consciously or not--in the events under consideration by that historian. If there is no correlation, then

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[12] Inquiry, p. 33. [13] Ibid. Hume's italics.

the work is fiction. (This criterion for distinguishing history and fiction will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.) What Hume is asserting in these two premises is a teleological view of the explanatory narrative in history, and has, in fact, made points similar, in a rudimentary form, to those of Professor W. H. Walsh. However, Hume's statements are in need of qualification, as with any straightforward teleological view.

If one looks upon history as merely a series of deliberate movements, he is confronted with an overly rationalistic and absurd theory, for he is faced with a flood of counter-examples. But in rejecting this extreme view, we should not also overlook the truth that men do sometimes pursue coherent policies and ideals. As Philip Bagby puts it: "Most, if not all, human action is motivated and we shall be seriously limiting our possibilities of understanding it if we disregard this fact."[14] An interesting example of a teleological explanation in Hume's History is seen in the following note, where he denies event-oriented explanations as opposed to action-oriented explanations:

> /The Earl of/ Murray could have no motive to commit that crime. The king, indeed, bore him some ill will; but the king himself was become so despicable, both from his own ill conduct, and the queen's aversion to him, that he could neither do good nor harm to anybody.

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[14] Culture and History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 62.

> To judge by the event in any case /in history by a nonteleological procedure/ is always absurd, especially in the present. The king's murder, indeed, procured Murray the regency: but much more Mary's ill conduct and imprudence, which he could not possibly foresee, and which never would have happened had she been entirely innocent.[15]

The minimal interpretation I wish to give Hume's first premise, that man seldom acts without purpose or intent, is such a recognition of Bagby's observation. Walsh illustrates this important point with the following example. "The Nazis did, after all, plan to conquer Europe, and no history of the years from 1933 to 1945 could fail to mention their plan."[16] From the strength of this example, he infers "A straightforward teleological explanation is thus entirely justified for some historical events."[17]

An anti-teleologist might object by citing A. J. P. Taylor's The Origins of the Second World War as a counter-example by which to refute Walsh's conclusion. For instance, our anti-teleologist might offer the following passage:

> When war broke out in 1939, Germany had 1,450 modern fighter planes and 800 bombers. Great Britain and France had 950 fighters and 1,300 bombers. The Germans had 3,500 tanks; Great Britain and France had 3,850. In each case Allied intelligence estimated German strength at more than twice the true figure. As usual,

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[15] History, III, 570; and David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 191n. The italics are mine.

[16] Op. cit., p. 61. [17] Ibid.

> Hitler was thought to have planned and prepared for a great war. In fact, he had not.[18]

But this will plainly not function as a counter-example. For the teleological terminology is present in Taylor's thesis: "Pretending to prepare for a great war and not in fact doing it was an essential part of Hitler's political strategy."[19] Taylor is still looking at plans and policies; and to characterize philosophically his reasoning, he is assessing to what extent these were deliberate. From the standpoint of teleological explanation there is no essential difference between preparing and pretending to prepare: both verbs involve an assessment of intentions and ends. Both designate acts which are characteristically teleological, and are what Danto labels as "project verbs."[20] It should be added that most anti-teleologists today are, as B. T. Wilkins says, "usually hostile not to the concept of ends (conceived as objects of human desires and intentions) but to the concept of ends apart from human purposes and desires."[21] The latter concept is conspicuously absent in

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[18] The Origins of the Second World War (Harmondsworth, U. K.: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1963), p. 19.

[19] Ibid., p. 18; my italics. [20] Op. cit., pp. 161ff.

[21] "Teleology in Kant's Philosophy of History," History and Theory, V.2 (1966), 183. My italics. This exceptive idea is an old one which goes back at least as far as Francis Bacon: "The final cause rather corrupts than advances the sciences, except such as have to do with human action," Second Book of Aphorisms, sec. ii, of The Great Instauration (1620), reprinted in The Philosophy of

Hume's writings.[22]

Let us suppose that our anti-teleologist is not entirely satisfied with the above argument. And, further, let us suppose that even *if* this example from Taylor could not be treated in a straightforward teleological manner, a "quasi-teleological" view or procedure could be taken--indeed, would have to be taken if we are to account for historical unities, e.g., the origins of World War II. Walsh's observation helps explain this necessity:

> The very fact that historians try to group historical events together under movements and general tendencies shows that they hanker after some substitute for it /a teleological explanation/. If they cannot think in plain teleological terms, they still use a procedure which is semi-teleological.[23]

Bagby makes substantially the same point:

> Human actions and their products. . . we regard habitually in the light of their *intended* effects. We even classify them in terms of these intentions rather than in terms of their observable sensory qualities. /For example/

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the 16th and 17th Centuries, R. H. Popkin, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 106. R. S. Peters echoes today the same claim in *The Concept of Motivation* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), p. 8: "Indeed to claim that we are confronted with an action is *ipso facto* to rule out . . . mechanical explanations."

[22]For an explicit argument against such anthropormorphism of nature and the concept of extra-human ends, see Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, H. D. Aiken, ed. (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1948), Parts XI and XII. For a discussion of this aspect of Hume's thought, see T. P. M. Solon and S. K. Wertz, "Hume's Argument from Evil," *The Personalist*, L.3 (1969), 383-392.

[23]*Op. cit.*

> A knife is something to cut with and a chair is something to sit in.[24]

A case in point is Taylor. He himself tells us the "form" or manner by which he groups events into general tendencies. "My book has really little to do with Hitler. The vital question, it seems to me, concerns Great Britain and France,"[25] i.e., their over-estimations, reactions, and blunders. But by inference, Taylor's book does have a great deal to do with Hitler; it dispels many popular, accepted views or myths which blame Hitler for everything. This line of reasoning illustrates how the first premise concerning the nature of man is depicted in the second premise which characterizes historical writing. Hume's idea of "design" is seen in Taylor's unifying questions.

Allow me again to quote some lines from Taylor, this time from his "conclusion," to show how historical and narrative unity are achieved. Then we shall examine the attempts to explain and analyze these. Taylor concludes his narrative with the following statements:

> Such were the origins of the second World war, or rather of the war between the three Western Powers over the settlement of Versailles; a war which had been <u>implicit</u> since the moment when the first war ended. . . . Though Hitler blundered in supposing that the two Western Powers would not go to war at all, his expectation that they would not go to war seriously turned out to be correct. Great Britain and France did nothing to help the Poles, and little

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[24] <u>Op. cit.</u>; Bagby's italics. [25] <u>Op. cit.</u>, p. 9.

> to help themselves. . . . His /Hitler's/ success depended on the isolation of Europe from the rest of the world. He gratuitously destroyed the source of this success. In 1941 he attacked Soviet Russia and declared war on the United States, two World Powers who asked only to be left alone. In this way a real world war began.[26]

I emphasized "implicit" in Taylor's first statement above because it seems to exhibit the quasi-teleological procedure typical of historians. But just what this procedure consists of is debatable. Below I shall consider Hume's analysis of this procedure and its contemporary analogues.

Characterization of Historical Unities

In the last section we saw Hume's principle and the line of argument used to support it. These were admittedly teleological in character. This interpretation of Hume is further supported and illuminated by tracing his influences. Perhaps the most obvious influence upon Hume's reasoning is Aristotle. Hume acknowledges that the teleological notion of unity of action is derived from Aristotle.[27] But it should not be supposed that Hume adopted this notion uncritically. Contrary to Antony Flew's opinion, Hume is not simply attempting to apply his theory of the association of ideas to literary criticism.[28] Rather, I find Hume doing

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[26] Op. cit., p. 336; my italics.

[27] Inquiry, p. 34.

[28] Hume's Philosophy of Belief: A Study of His First 'Inquiry' (New York: The Humanities Press, 1961), p. 4.

two things. First, he is considerably extending Aristotle's notion of unity of action in conjunction with applying his theory of the association of ideas to history. Secondly, in this application he is attempting to distinguish history from fiction. I shall argue below that in doing these two things, Hume has in principle accomplished what Collingwood calls the constructive theory of history (which involves interpolation), and that he precedes Bradley in seeing that "the historian brings with him to the study of his authorities a criterion of his own by reference to which the authorities themselves are judges."[29]

Let us look at my first claim concerning Hume's extension of Aristotle. One of Hume's remarks that is in agreement with Aristotle on the principle of unity reads:

> This connecting principle among the several events which form the subject of a poem or history may be very different according to the different designs of the poet or historian.[30]

In the Rhetoric we find Aristotle characterizing narration as consisting of two parts. One part is not provided by the historian's craft, and that is the actions themselves, of which the historian is in no sense author. Aristotle makes essentially the same point linguistically: "Nobody

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[29]The Idea of History, p. 240; Collingwood contends that "It remains to be seen whether sixty years later, his /Bradley's/ problem, which in the meantime I believe no English-speaking philosopher has discussed in print, can be advanced beyond the point at which he left it."

[30]Inquiry, p. 33.

can 'narrate' what has not yet happened. If there is narration at all, it will be of past events."[31] And the second part or characteristic

> . . . is provided by his art, namely, the proof (where proof is needed) that the actions were done, the description of their quality or their extent, or even all these three things together.[32]

Hume's statement above is an affirmation of this characteristic; namely, that the historian designs or supplies the argument. For both Hume and Aristotle, unity implies structure and order. That the historian supplies this we have witnessed from Hume's second premise and his statement above. For instance, it is Taylor--not Hitler--who saw where the latter's blunders and successes lay, and Taylor finds that Hitler's expectation was an accurate appraisal of the times. These sorts of statements are ones which provide unity, narratively speaking. They are part of the historian's "design." With regard to Taylor, they specifically aid in his argument that the second war had been implicit from the ending of the first war and his description of how the second one began.

On the other hand, a historian uses these sorts of expressions for more than merely to provide narrative unity.

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[31] The Basic Works of Aristotle, p. 1445. This sense of narration parallels Hume's use of the term; see, e.g., Treatise, p. 430.

[32] The Basic Works of Aristotle, p. 1442.

There is the claim that echoes Aristotle's first characteristic; namely that historians are not the authors of the actions, but that they are finding out what was the case or what actually happened. Hume's rephrasing of Aristotle's "unity of action" to "a sufficient unity in the subject" makes this clear. His choice of the preposition "in" emphasizes linguistically this second claim. Taylor is trying to show (prove) that the unity of his thesis reflects the way events actually transpired.

One modern attempt to explain the relationship between these two characteristics (Hume's two premises) is Walsh's embodiment theory or metaphor. The way in which the historian (Taylor, in this case) is able to determine successes or failures, etc. of plans or policies is that the events that passed between the years 1933 and 1945 are written about and explained by "pointing to ideas which they /the events/ embody."[33] In addition to this type of explanation, the historian cites other events with which these ideas are connected:

> . . . Even though they know that many of the agents concerned had little if any conscious awareness of the ideas in question. And their justification for doing this is the fact, already noted, that ideas can exert an influence on people's conduct even when they are not continuously before the minds of the persons who act on them.[34]

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[33] Walsh, p. 61.

[34] Ibid. A good example of this is cited in Danto (ch. XII), p. 263: "The battle-cry shouted by soldiers at White

Now then, how are these ideas exhibited or demonstrated in historical writing? Walsh's proposal of how this is accomplished is as follows:

> For it seems to me that in historical work of all kinds there is a single overriding aim: to build up an intelligible picture of the human past as a concrete whole, so that it comes alive for us in the same way as the lives of ourselves and our contemporaries. Different types of history contribute to this fundamental design in different ways, but I think that all historians do have it in mind.[35]

The rudiments of this idea can be found in Hume, and it comprises one of the major features of his model of historical narration. We find Hume claiming that:

> Not only in any limited portion of life a man's actions have a dependence on each other, but also during the whole period of his duration from the cradle to the grave; nor is it possible to strike off one link, however minute, in this regular chain without affecting the whole series of events which follow. The unity of action, therefore, which is to be found in biography or history differs from that of epic poetry, not in kind, but in degree.[36]

Perhaps there is only a difference in degree between history and literature because they both have the "single overriding aim" mentioned by Walsh above. Hume himself suggests that

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Hill was 'Sancta Maria!' The battle-cry shouted, later, at Nordlingen, was 'Viva España'. Those who might have witnessed these two battles would almost certainly not have seen the significance of these shouts. For the significance lies in the contrast between them, a contrast which is significant to an historian who sees in them signs that 'insensibly and rapidly, the Cross gave way to the flag'." My italics.

[35] Op. cit., p. 64; my italics. [36] Inquiry, pp. 34-5.

periodization is one way in history by which a single overriding aim is accomplished. In his review of Robert Henry's History of Great Britain (1773), he remarks:

> By this delicate and well fancied method /of periodization/, the thread of the narration is preserved unbroken, and some degree of unity and order introduced into a portion of the history of Great Britain, which has perplexed the acuteness of our most philosophical and accomplished historians.[37]

I take Hume's remarks here to be good evidence that he is consciously extending Aristotle, since he seems to be using the idea of a unity of action as an organizing principle for his association-of-ideas theory. He is obviously parting company with Aristotle when he acknowledges the analogy between history and literature. For in the Poetics, Aristotle makes a denial of Hume's assertion:

> The construction of its /poetry's/ stories should clearly be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action, one that

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[37] David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 379. T. R. Tholfsen, a recent historian of history, suggests that the period concept was developed in Hume's time. Indeed, what he says of Robertson is somewhat similar to my analysis of Hume: "Soon this new insight /treating political phenomena in the context of a larger social whole/ came to be applied in the writing of history. . . . In his History of England (1754), David Hume interrupts his narrative at several points to include systematic descriptions of the constitution, laws, and customs. William Robertson's famous account of medieval Europe, in the introduction to his History of Charles V (1769), assumes the existence of an all-embracing civilization in the period, characterized by an identifiable unity, common to all its components. Thus, out of the fusion between the new sense of diversity and the concept of civilization came the period concept, so fundamental to historical thinking." In Historical Thinking: An Introduction (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 98-99; my italics.

> is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature. Nor should one suppose that there is anything like them in our usual histories. A history has to deal not with one action, but with one period and all that happened in that to one or more persons, however disconnected the several events may have been. Just as two events may take place at the same time, e.g. the sea-fight of Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily, without converging to the same end, so too of two consecutive events one may sometimes come after the other with no one end as their common issue.[38]

That Aristotle thought that history needed no such order and unity is perhaps not surprising since history had its substantial beginning about the time he was writing. And perhaps with the lapse of two thousand years and the attendant development of history, Hume saw grounds for disagreeing with Aristotle on this point. As we noticed in the last two statements quoted from Hume, he felt that connections are essential to historical writing and that Aristotle's admission of disconnected events should be rejected. Hume seems to be contending that there needs to be some common issue or end for a narrative to be suitable as history. To take an example from Aristotle,[39] it may perhaps be true that Homer did not attempt to deal with the Trojan war in its entirety, even though it had a definite beginning and end, for it was too long or complicated a

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[38] Op. cit., p. 1480.

[39] Ibid.

story to be taken under one view. Hume seems to be insisting that this may be permissible for a poet like Homer, but will not do for a historian, in that the latter must attempt to deal with the Trojan War in its entirety and explain it under one view. This is partially achieved by periodization; Hume sees unity of actions in a period, as is clear from his review. We also find Hume saying that:

> An annalist or historian who should undertake to write the history of Europe during any century would be influenced by the connection of contiguity in time or place. All events which happened in that portion of space and period of time are comprehended in his design, though in other respects different and unconnected. They have still a species of unity amidst all their diversity.[40]

So one of the essential characteristics of periodization is that of the connection of contiguity in time and space (place). Nor is this all; later in the same section Hume remarks that:

> We may conclude from the foregoing reasonings that as a certain unity is requisite in all productions, it cannot be wanting to history more than any other; that in history the connection among several events which unites them into one body is the relation of cause and effect.[41]

Thus the Aristotelian notion of unity which Hume borrows is made precise by his association of ideas; that is to say "the three connecting principles of all ideas are the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and causation."[42]

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[40] Inquiry, p. 34. [41] Ibid., p. 38.
[42] Ibid., p. 39; Hume's italics.

Unfortunately, Hume's model is not as tidy as this. He attributes the relation of cause and effect to literary compositions, which blurs any distinction history may have from literature. The major difficulty is one Hume shares with anyone who utilizes the analogy between literature and history; the negative features of the analogy need to be strong enough to allow for a criterion for distinguishing the two. Collingwood's major objection to the use of Aristotle in a discussion of this sort is that if the latter's criterion of what is admissible in poetry is used as the only criterion, then "It does not serve to discriminate history from fiction."[43] This point is well taken, for with just this criterion and no other, Collingwood is absolutely right in his criticism of Bradley. Bradley's application of Aristotle to history is different from Hume's. We have seen that Hume is interested in the notion of unity, whereas Bradley concentrates on admissibility. However, this does not exempt Hume from Collingwood's criticisms of Bradley, for what is considered admissible can be seen as part of what is meant by historical unities. Let us look at Bradley's problem and his solution briefly, and then see if this applies to Hume.

Collingwood labels the sort of theory of history that Bradley holds to as "the common-sense theory."[44]

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[43] Op. cit., p. 239. [44] Ibid., pp. 234-242.

Historical truth, under this theory, is the agreement of the historian's statements with those he finds in his authorities. So in a sense the historian is a believer; and the believed is a person whom he accepts as an authority. To know something historically, this person must be acquainted with an event and remember it. Hence, memory plays an important role along side that of authority. The historian believes what his authority remembers. To this degree truths in history come ready-made, and the historian simply accepts them. He is obliged not to tamper with them, mutilate them, add to them, or contradict them. With the acceptance of this theory, Bradley faces the question of how it is possible for a historian to contradict an authority by admitting "This is what he records, but what really happened was this and not that." Bradley's solution to this problem is briefly:

> . . . That our experience of the world teaches us that some kinds /types/ of things happen and others do not; this experience, then, is the criterion which the historian brings to bear on the statements of his authorities.[45]

In other words, if his authorities tell him that something did happen which does not or could not happen according to his experience, then the historian is obliged to discredit or disbelieve the authorities. And conversely, if what

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[45] Ibid., p. 239; my italics. For further details, see F. H. Bradley, The Presuppositions of Critical History, Lionel Rubinoff, ed. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 77-147

they say can happen or does happen within the bounds of the historian's experience, then the authorities' remarks are acceptable, but are obviously not known to be true purely on that account.

We find obvious similarities between Bradley and Hume on this point when we look at the latter's essay "Of Miracles." "A wise man," (e.g., a good historian) says Hume, "proportions his belief to the evidence."[46] Hume's estimation of our notion of evidence has a certain ring of the common-sense theory of history and an affinity to Bradley's proposed solution of the problem. For instance:

> The evidence, derived from witnesses and human testimony, is founded on past experience, so it varies with the experience, and is regarded either as a _proof_ or a _probability_, accordingly as the conjunction between any particular _kind_ /_type_/ of object has been found to be constant or variable /_in human experience_/.[47]

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[46] _Inquiry_, Section X, Part I, p. 118; and _David Hume: Philosophical Historian_, p. 56.

[47] _Inquiry_, p. 120; and _David Hume: Philosophical Historian_, p. 57. The latter pair of italics are mine. Traces in Hume's thinking of the common-sense theory of history are seen in a letter concerning the poems of Ossian where he speaks of the ground for historical assertions: "There proofs must not be arguments, but testimonies" in _David Hume: Philosophical Historian_, p. 409. An excellent example of Hume's use of an admissibility criterion is seen in his essay on the poems: "I derive a new argument against the antiquity of these poems, from the general tenor of the narrative. Where manners are represented in them, probability, or even possibility, are totally disregarded: but in all other respects, the events are within the course of nature; no giants, no monsters, no magic, no incredible feats of strength or activity. Every transaction is conformable to familiar experience." _Ibid._, p. 393.

From this typical passage we find that although he makes a different explicit use of Aristotle, the Aristotelian criterion of what is admissible in poetry is tacitly used by Hume. Now, since this is the case, we are faced with Collingwood's objections to Bradley and must examine the charge that the criterion will not serve to discriminate history from fiction. First, some concessions need to be made. Collingwood is undoubtedly correct in saying that it is a negative criterion. It can never tell us what actually did happen; we learn only that event *a* is a member of *A*, but nothing specific about *a*. Any prowess that the criterion can boast of is in telling us what is not to be accepted; namely, not *a* if not *A*. But what we want is "not *a* because it was *b*." This much of Collingwood's argument must be accepted. However, the unqualified converse need not be accepted, for it does not follow from the criterion. Collingwood's converse of the criterion is:

> We are left to rely for that /what did happen/ on the sheer authority of our informant. We undertake, when we apply it, to believe *everything* our informant tells us so long as it satisfies the merely negative criterion of being possible. This is not to turn the tables on our authorities; it is blindly to accept what they tell us. The critical attitude has not been achieved.[48]

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[48] *Op. cit.*, p. 329; my italics. The foregoing remarks on Collingwood are based upon section 2, "The Historical Imagination," of the Epilegomena (Part V).

The correct inference to be drawn from the criterion is what Aristotle called "converse by limitation." In short, we can be bound by what can or could happen, but this does not imply that we indiscriminately accept everything that our authority tells us did happen. We do not accept anything that cannot or could not happen. But the fact that our authority does not violate the criterion is a good reason to accept some of what he said did happen, even though the determination of the ones which are to be accepted must come through additional criteria. Collingwood's own example of the unacceptability of Suetonius because of Tacitus acknowledges this.[49] However, it must be granted that if this were the only criterion used, then Collingwood would be absolutely right in asserting that the statements of a historical novelist would just as well satisfy the criterion as the statements of a historian, for further discrimination is needed between historical and fictional sentences.

But before we go into this, I want to make good my claim concerning Hume's anticipation of Collingwood's constructionist theory of history. As I said earlier, Hume lapses into the common-sense theory of history and suffers its deficiencies. However, he seems to be aware of these and is attempting to go beyond them. And I think that in

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[49] Ibid., pp. 244-245. Cited in Chapter II of this essay.

large measure he achieves this. Collingwood thinks that there are two ways to go beyond what the historian's authorities tell him: the critical and constructive ways. He attributes the critical to Bradley, and above I tried to show briefly that Hume attempted a similar solution. However both solutions are inadequate, for they can still be posed from the standpoint of the common-sense theory of history, and they are not the only alternatives for explaining how a historian can go beyond his authorities. With this recognition, Collingwood adds his constructionist thesis.

Conjecture Sentences

A constructive history, Collingwood describes, is one where interpolation between the borrowed authoritative statements and statements implied by them is used. For example, suppose our authorities tell us that on a certain day Hitler was in Berlin and then on a later day in Munich. But those same authorities, for example two letters, neglect to tell us anything of his journey from place to place. We may, nonetheless, legitimately infer or interpolate that such a journey did take place.[50] Such an inference could be used, say, to refute a claim that during a certain month, Hitler stayed in Berlin without leaving.

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[50]A more subtle instance of interpolation would be the Danto example I cited earlier in this chapter (n34).

The fact that he left might in turn have other important consequences which would all be based on such an interpolation. Collingwood makes two points about this aspect of historical reasoning. One is that interpolation is in no way arbitrary or merely fanciful. If we filled a narration of Hitler's doings with fanciful details such as the names of persons he met on the way and the conversations he had with them, then the narrative construction would be arbitrary. In fact, it would be the kind of construction which we find in historical novels. For in such a construction there is nothing necessitated by the evidence. Secondly, what is interpolated or inferred is essentially something imagined. In short, we find ourselves obliged to imagine Hitler as having traveled from Berlin to Munich when we learn from the letters that he was at different places at successive times. Before turning to Hume, I want for a moment to examine this point about imagination.

We observed earlier that Collingwood's major objection to Bradley (which would apply equally well to Hume) was his use of an admissibility criterion which allows for not only what did happen but also what can or could have happened. In a sense, Collingwood's interpolation thesis, which is an imaginative process of thinking, is but an instance of reasoning from what could have happened to what did happen. We know with almost <u>a priori</u> certainty that Hitler must have <u>traveled</u> from Berlin to Munich if we have

a letter written from each city. By what other way can we account for the letters? My point here is that given a certain kind or type of evidence, one can draw associated inferences from the type of the instance. In this case, successive times and different places provide a license for associating travel. So in a sense this aspect of Collingwood's criterion utilizes a notion used by Bradley and Hume, and one to which he himself objected. Be this as it may, it is not my primary interest here.

Having discussed Collingwood's notion of interpolation in constructive history, we have a context to show how Hume anticipated this idea and how it makes his extension of Aristotle seem more feasible in the area of history. Hume states that:

> The most usual species of connection among the different events which enter into any narrative composition is that of cause and effect; while the historian traces the series of actions according to their natural order, remounts to their secret springs and principles, and delineates their most remote consequences. He chooses for his subject a certain portion of that great chain of events which compose the history of mankind: each link in this chain he endeavors to touch in his narration; sometimes unavoidable ignorance renders all his attempts fruitless; sometimes he supplies by conjecture what is wanting in knowledge; and always he is sensible that the more unbroken the chain is which he presents to his readers, the more perfect is his production. He sees that the knowledge of causes is not only the most satisfactory, this relation or connection being the strongest of all others, but also the most instructive; since it is by this

> knowledge alone we are enabled to control events and govern futurity.[51]

There are many points I wish to make concerning the contents of this passage, but the major item I would like to stress here is the notion of conjecture and its analogue to Collingwood's idea of interpolation. The following example from the first volume of his History should make Hume's sense of "conjecture" clear and establish the analogue:

> It appears more than probable, from the similitude of language and manners, that Britain either was originally people, or was subdued, by the migration of inhabitants from Gaul, and Ireland from Britain: the position of the several countries, is an additional reason that favours this conclusion. It appears also probable, that the migrations of that colony of Gauls or Celts, who peopled or subdued Ireland, was originally made from the northwest parts of Britain; and this conjecture (if it do not merit a higher name) is founded both on the Irish language, which is a very different dialect from the Welsh and from the language anciently spoken in South Britain, and on the vicinity of Lancashire, Cumberland, Galloway, and Argyleshire, to that island. These events, as they passed long before the age of history and records, must be known by reasoning alone, which in this case seems to be pretty satisfactory: Caesar and Tacitus, not to mention a multitude of other Greek and Roman authors, were guided by like inferences. . . . We may infer from two passages in Claudian, and from one in Orosius and another in Isidore, that the chief seat of these Scots was in Ireland. That some part of the Irish freebooters migrated back to the north-west parts of Britain, whence their ancestors had probably been derived in a more remote age, is positively asserted by Bede, and implied in Gildas; though

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[51] Inquiry, p. 34. In the following discussion I shall refer to this quoted paragraph as "the Inquiry passage."

> neither of these authors explain whether the Irish Scots made their settlements by force or consent, or by a mixture of both. I grant that neither Bede nor Gildas are Caesars or Tacituses; but such as they are, they remain the sole testimony on the subject, and therefore must be relied on for want of better. . . . And in a word, it is clear, from the language of the two countries, that the Highlanders and the Irish are the same people.[52]

To understand the necessity for conjectures or interpolations, it is important that we appreciate the historian's inquisitive or interrogative procedure. It is not misleading to use Francis Bacon's slogan "put nature to question" to characterize the historian's activity--to put the past to question.[53] A great many questions that interest historians are ones that demand inferences from and reasoning about the available evidence. Hume is a case in point. The History note is in response to the questions concerning

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[52]David Hume: Philosophical Historian, pp. 116n-117n. The italics are mine. In my discussion below I shall refer to this passage as "the History note." The uses of conjectures are numerous; see, e.g., ibid., pp. 96, 104, 111, 126, 157, 177, 187-8, 191.

[53]Collingwood also makes use of Bacon's remark, although my use is in a slightly different context; op. cit., p. 237. An excellent example of the historian's interrogative procedure is Taylor's history; for instance, he tells us that "It was perfectly obvious that Germany would seek to become a Great Power again; obvious after 1933 that her domination would be of a peculiarly barbaric sort. Why did the victors not resist her? There are various answers: timidity; blindness; moral doubts; desire perhaps to turn German strength against Soviet Russia. But whatever the answers, this seems to me the important question, and my book revolves round it, though also of course round the other question: why did they resist in the end?" Op. cit., p. 9. Needless to say, these remarks are a form of "conjectures."

the origin(s) of the ancient British inhabitants; to provide any suitable answer the historian is forced to interpolate or conjecture.

Another example (somewhat different from the above) of conjectures in the form of questions which shows the importance of the historian's imagination in reasoning is seen in a note to volume five of the History:

> What can be imagined to be the king's /Charles I's/ projects: To raise the Irish to arms, I suppose, and bring them over to England for his assistance. But is it not plain, that the king never intended to raise war in England? Had that been his intention, would he have rendered the parliament perpetual? Does it not appear by the whole train of events, that the parliament forced him into the war?[54]

A notable historian is one who makes conjectures with caution, i.e., one who stays within the limits of empirical possibilities in the form of inferences from the available evidence. The italicized phrase in Hume's last argumentative or leading question illustrates these limits, viz. probabilities and consistency. In short, the primary function of imagination in historical discourse is in the use of conjecture sentences.

One of the roles of the historical imagination in conjectures is to provide contrast, which brings out the significance or importance of information or a sequence of events. This can be observed in the following passage in

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[54] History, V, 526; and David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 351n. The italics are mine.

which Hume is discussing the plight of the Jews in Medieval England:

> It is easy to imagine how precarious their state must have been under an indigent prince, somewhat restrained in his tyranny over his native subjects, but who possessed an unlimited authority over the Jews, the sole proprietors money in the kingdom, and hated on account of their riches, their religion, and their usury; yet will our ideas scarcely come up to the extortions which in fact we find to have been practised upon them. In the year 1241, twenty thousand marks were exacted from them,* two years after, money was again extorted; and one Jew alone, Aaron of York, was obliged to pay above four thousand marks:* in 1250, Henry /III/ renewed his oppressions; and the same Aaron was condemned to pay him thirty thousand marks upon an accusation of forgery:* the high penalty imposed upon him, and which, it seems, he was thought able to pay, is rather a presumption of his innocence than of his guilt. In 1255, the king demanded eight thousand marks from the Jews, and threatened to hang them if they refused compliance.[55]

Hume's idea of historical reasoning as comparison is perhaps best seen in passages like this one. It is through comparison that a historian comes to appreciate differences that may otherwise be missed, and which may, in turn, lead to interpretations and explanations. If these differences are seen to affect human life, they become significant enough to narrate, to be remembered. Hume obviously thought this to be the case with the Jews in Medieval England. However, what is of utmost interest to us is the method of

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[55] David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 122; my italics. Hume's documentation (indicated by asterisks) is from Matthew of Paris, Chronica Majora. For other instances like this one, see pp. 124 and 127.

comparison and contrast in historical reasoning that is exhibited in this passage. It is another instance of the diverse use of conjecture sentences in history. In fact, this is the whole point; the comparison is conjectural or imaginative. This use of conjecture sentences demands a pattern from the reader rather than an explicit statement of one from the historian himself. The intelligibility and significance is supplied in part by the reader. Hume asks the reader to place himself in the position of the Jew and to imagine what it must have been like. This imagined and no doubt understated identification becomes the basis for the comparison with the facts which are far more shocking than ordinarily one would imagine. (Thus the effect of the comparison.) This use of imagination in history by way of conjectures in effect creates a much more realistic understanding than would be possible without it.

As Meiland suggests, the fact that a historian uses his imagination in the way that Hume does in no way dictates that his work is to be immediately classified as historical fiction. It would be a non sequitur to conclude that those "histories" which contain dialogues or even imaginary conversations are to be classified as historical fiction rather than as histories simply because most histories do not contain them. A historian can obviously use such devices to aid in conveying his interpretation of a historical figure or period. (In the second chapter of this essay, we saw

another example of this in Hume's discussion of the execution of Queen Anne.) However, Hume's narration differs from historical fiction by being largely if not entirely based on evidence (documents), whereas, accourding to Meiland's criterion, much of historical fiction has no basis at all in the evidence.[56] Contrary to Meiland, historical fiction is based on general evidence (i.e., dates, events, general situations), but it may intentionally deviate from evidence for the purpose of being more interesting fiction. History and fiction perhaps have in common the technique of conjecture sentences. Historical conjectures, however, are distinguished by their reliance on historical documents. These documents provide inferential control, whereas in fiction this kind of control is absent.

But this in itself will not do either. The primary mode of a history is not dialogue, whereas in a work like Truman Capote's In Cold Blood the primary mode is characterization and dialogue. This is Capote's way of presenting the facts. This further distinction needs to be made, for Capote's work is an example in which documentation does not, by itself, serve to distinguish the two, as Meiland

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[56]Meiland, p. 197. Meiland cites the Melian dialogue in Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War as an example of a historian's use of dialogue. This points out that there is a long tradition behind this type of history. Hume would obviously fit into this tradition. Indeed, he even says "The Peloponnesian war is a proper subject for history," in the Inquiry, p. 38.

says it can. But neither can history and literature be distinguished strictly in terms of their form, for in many cases they share the same form (i.e., narration). Since they can share the same form, which may include a dialogue, they cannot be distinguished on that basis alone. They are to be distinguished materially rather than formally. And this requires us to look at each work or history separately. In short, such decisions as these are a posteriori and not a priori.

In addition to the variety of applications of the idea of conjecture to history (like that of contrast and comparison), the sense in which Hume uses the term "conjecture" makes it clear that he has in mind something akin to Collingwood's "interpolation." His parenthetical remark in the History note, "if it /"conjecture"/ do not merit a higher name," clearly suggests that we cannot attribute today's generally accepted usage of the term to Hume. For historians generally do not conjecture in the sense of merely guessing or of inferring from defective evidence. "Conjectures," in this sense, would not lead to a probability or to a probable statement of what happened. What Hume means by his parenthetical remark is, rather, that conjectures are inferences from established, legitimate evidence as opposed to defective or questionable evidence. Perhaps we can clarify this more if we use one of Hume's distinctions.

The distinction itself is explicitly used in his History, and is perhaps best made in a note in the Inquiry;

> To conform our language more to common use, we ought to divide arguments into demonstrations, proofs, and probabilities; by proofs meaning such arguments from experience as leave no room for doubt or opposition.[57]

Hume's sense of "proof" is reflected in his use of "prove" from the passage (quoted earlier) that discusses Charles II:

> The secret memoirs of this reign, which have since been published, prove, beyond a doubt, that the king had, at this time, concerted measures with France, and had no intention to enter into a war in favour of the allies.

And from the History note, we find several uses of "probable" in the context of his idea of conjecture in history. This use implies that for Hume conjecture was more than mere guessing or fantasizing. Indeed, the class of conjecture sentences in historical discourse has as a distinguishing characteristic probabilities as opposed to proofs.

However, the most significant mark seems to lie in inference or reasoning from the common background of knowledge which is presupposed by the evidence and/or the period. For example, in the History note Hume uses "linguistics" as a basis to establish his historical inferences

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[57] Op. cit., p. 69n. Hume's italics. By "demonstrations" he is, of course, referring to deductive arguments. By "proof" Hume is suggesting that these "arguments" (at times he refers to them as testimonies) are not immediately open to a further judgment or examination, whereas "probabilities" are, because they are liable to error.

where no explicit evidence can be brought forth to answer a historian's probing question. (See also the note above on the projects of Charles I for an example of "chain /or train-type/ inference.") Collingwood would fully agree with Hume's remark in volume five of the History in which he suggests that "it seems the duty of an historian to point out the proper inferences and conclusions" from his materials.[58] These inferences are in response to historical questions. But their function includes more than this; they legitimately fill the gaps in the hard data, and they comprise the soft data. With these two sorts of data we are now in the position to make the notion of narrative unity clearer.

In the Inquiry passage, one notices that the notion of unity lies beneath Hume's notion of conjecture:

> Sometimes he /the historian/ supplies by conjecture what is wanting in knowledge; and always he is sensible that the more unbroken the /causal/ chain is which he presents to his readers, the more perfect is his production.

Gaps presuppose a unity. How could he speak of there being gaps without having reference to some sort of unity? This is the assumption behind Hume's link-chain metaphor for historical causation. With the idea of conjecture or "soft data" we have, along with the hard data, an explanation of the wherewithal of narrative unity.

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[58] History, V, 426. It is fairly safe for us to read "proper" as "probable" (or at least as part of its meaning) in this statement.

It is interesting to note here that Hume was not alone during the eighteenth century in seeing the importance of conjecture sentences in history. Kant had the main idea behind conjectures, although he did not develop the idea to account for a type (aspect) of historical discourse as Hume did. In a short essay entitled "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" (1786), Kant begins his discussion with these pregnant remarks:

> It is surely permissible to insert here and there conjectures into the progression of an historical account, in order to fill gaps in the record. For what precedes the gaps (the remote cause) and what follows them (the effect) give a fairly reliable clue to the discovery of the intermediate causes, which are to make the transition intelligible. But to originate an historical account from conjectures alone would seem to be not much better than to draft a novel. Indeed, this could not be called a conjectural history but rather a mere piece of fiction.[59]

Kant's distinction is one similar to that found in Hume's account of conjectures. There are "pure or irresponsible conjectures" which parallel the sense we mentioned earlier as denoting falsely contrived conclusions from defective evidence. Or in the case of fiction they are imagined, along with the evidence. The writer is the author of the actions, in the sense that the account originates from his conjectures. On the other hand, responsible conjectures are causally connected or are those which are in a causal

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[59] Immanuel Kant on History, L. W. Beck, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 53. Kant's italics.

context. Like Kant, Hume suggests that not any gap can be filled in this manner, but only those which satisfy the connecting principles of the association of ideas (viz., resemblance, contiguity, and causation). As Kant phrases it:

> If I were to attempt to fill this gap--which presumably encompasses a great space of time --there might be for the reader too many conjectures and too few probabilities.[60]

In Hume's idiom, the principle of contiguity would be violated, and hence, the conjecture would be unacceptable. One cannot accurately conjecture whole segments in a chain; only the links. In other words, actions are conjectured, but large-scale events (e.g., American Civil War) and periods are not. Conjectures on a Toynbeean level of history (history of civilizations or universal histories) would be deemed inappropriate. These sorts of conjectures, as Kant would say, "cannot make too high a claim on one's assent."[61] Those which are suitable for history are those in which the intermediate causes (as Kant refers to them) are implied from the remote cause and the effect. Conjectures have, then, a dyadic or polar relation to evidence. Kant's language, however, suggests more of a linear progression than does Hume's.

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[60] Ibid., p. 54.

[61] Ibid., p. 53.

Logical form: (evidence---conjecture---evidence) → unity

Kant's idiom: (remote cause)→(intermediate cause)→(effect)

Hume's idiom: (proof) ⟷ (probability) ⟷ (proof)

I have here graphically represented a mutually dependent relation in Hume's idiom from suggestions in some of his remarks. For instance, ". . . all /diverse actions are/ engaged in one common scene, and each action is strongly connected with the whole."[62]

So in those cases in which we have some evidence, but lack that evidence which from our own experience we know must have been, we conjecture the missing link in the chain. As Passmore suggests:

> Hume would reply /to the sample-producing criterion/ that we are entitled to refer to unexperienced entities--even to logically unexperienced entities--if they are causally connected with what we do in fact experience.[63]

The reasoning behind Hume's inference license is his theory

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[62] Inquiry, p. 36; my italics. The immediate context of this remark is in reference to literature; however, with the strong analogy between history and literature, it would equally apply to histories. This is further evidenced by our previous discussion.

[63] John Passmore, Philosophical Reasoning (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 88. The demand for a sample of something inferred is the criterion that Passmore is referring to, i.e., the idea that a demand of samples is a substitute for argument. He is arguing for "causal extrapolations" which has an obvious affinity to Collingwood's interpolations and to Hume's conjectures. However, I would question Passmore's comment that Hume allows logically unexperienced entities, for Hume does hold to a consistency criterion of experience. (Although I must admit that I am not at all sure what Passmore means by a "logically unexperienced entity.")

of conjectures. In fact, this is one of the many procedures that Hume used in writing the History of England. Furthermore, it was probably the researching and writing of the History that led to such a theory for history in the first place.

Unities Reconsidered

The idea of conjecture helps us to see what narrative unity consists of, and what the relationship is between an unbroken causal chain and a narrative completeness. What has been said about unities thus far will be reconsidered in light of conjectures. When Hume says in the History note that:

> These events, as they passed long before the age of history and records, must be known by reasoning alone, which in this case seems to be pretty satisfactory: Caesar and Tacitus, not to mention a multitude of other Greek and Roman authors, were guided by like inferences,

he is suggesting that this is done by the majority of historians. Indeed, Collingwood may be seen as generalizing Hume's claim about conjectures to all historians, and has identified this process of reasoning as essential to history.[64] However, Hume does not think that this process is peculiar to history, but that it is embedded in human reasoning or practical reasoning itself. Although Hume does not mention conjecture, it is clear that this idea is

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[64] Op. cit., e.g., p. 241.

tacitly employed in those sections of the Inquiry in which he discusses the nature of inference and reasoning. For instance:

> All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses. If you were to ask a man why he believes any matter of fact which is absent, for instance, that his friend is in the country or in France, he would give you a reason, and this reason would be some other fact: as a letter received from him or knowledge of his former resolutions and promises. A man finding a watch or any other machine in a desert island would conclude that there had once been men in that island. All our reasonings concerning fact are of the same nature. And here it is constantly supposed that there is a connection between the present fact and that which is inferred from it. Were there nothing to bind them together, the inference would be entirely precarious. The hearing of an articulate voice and rational discourse in the dark assures us of the presence of some person. Why? Because these are the effects of the human make and fabric, and closely connected with it.[65]

Hume is saying that these connections or associations which we contribute to the situation from our background of common knowledge form unities, and from these we make sense out of disparate or isolated events. The historian who fills the gaps in his narrative account by conjecture sentences is employing the same process of reasoning as the practical man who reasons from present, available evidence

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[65] Op. cit., p. 41. The first two italicized words are Hume's. This argument is another example of causal reasoning from absence; see my criticism of Warnock in Chapter II.

to what is now absent. The conjectures are of the same type whether they are of a person or an entire civilization. Hume's example of a man finding a man-made object like a watch on an island and concluding that there had once been men on that island is an excellent illustration of historical inference or reasoning.

Right in line with Hume's characterization of inference and reasoning is Collingwood's example:

> If we look out over the sea and perceive a ship, and five minutes later look again and perceive it in a different place, we find ourselves obliged to imagine it as having occupied intermediate positions when we were not looking.[66]

My point here is that we have a part-whole or instance-type inference. We presuppose a uniformity of events, actions or behavior which makes such an inference possible. When Hume says that "the Irish Scots made their settlements by force or consent, or by a mixture of both" in the History note, these alternatives are imagined (in Collingwood's sense) empirical possibilities by which evidence is to be grouped. The answer to Hume's historical inquiry about the Irish Scots would have to be one of these three alternatives. And this is admittedly reasoning from types or wholes. The upshot of this is that Collingwood's analysis of historical imagination uses an admissibility criterion of empirical possibilities which is akin to Hume's. To clarify this let me give further examples.

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[66] Op. cit.

> A commander's dispatches may claim a victory; the historian, reading them in a critical spirit, will ask: "If it was a victory, why was it not followed up in this or that way?"[67]

Here we have an appeal to meaning; our understanding of what a victory consists of leads us to think along certain lines of thought, viz. "in this or that way." Robert Fawtier's idea of "policy" functions much the same way in his narrative.[68] An association of meanings are built up and reasoned from, and these usually take the form of temporal wholes or historical unities. It is generally thought that empiricism, and Hume's empiricism in particular, does not account for this dimension of human experience and reasoning.[69] However if we ask the typical Humean question of the origin of our idea of unity, we find some interesting remarks in the Treatise that are along this line. For example, the passage below partially explains Hume's idea of the components of historical construction and imagination. And we could equally substitute

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[67] Collingwood, op. cit., p. 237; my italics.

[68] The Capetian Kings of France, Epilogue.

[69] E.g., William James, "On Some Hegelians," in The Will to Believe and Other Essays on Popular Philosophy, p. 278. More recently, Peter Winch has made a similar claim in The Idea of a Social Science (New York: Humanities Press, 1958), p. 124: "Hume overlooked the fact that 'the idea we form of an object' does not just consist of elements drawn from our observation of that object in isolation, but includes the idea of connections between it and other objects." In addition to our account of Hume's reasoning thus far, the passage below from the Treatise on concept-formation makes the verity of Winch's statement rather doubtful.

"England" for "Rome" to get some idea of Hume's own theory of concept-formation in history, which was probably utilized in his History of England.

> 'Tis this latter principle /judgment/ which peoples the world, and bring us acquainted with such existences, as by their removal in time and place, lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory. By means of it I paint the universe /whole or unity/ in my imagination, and fix my attention on any part of it I please. I form an idea of ROME, which I neither see nor remember; but which is connected with such impressions as I remember to have received from the conversation and books of travellers and historians. This idea of ROME I place in a certain situation on the idea of any object, which I call the globe. I join to it the conception of a particular government, and religion, and manners. I look backward and consider its first foundation; its several revolutions, successes, and misfortunes. All this, and every thing else, which I believe, are nothing but ideas; tho' by their force and settled order, arising from custom and the relation of cause and effect, they distinguish themselves from the other ideas which are merely the offspring of the imagination.[70]

Admittedly there is an element of the common-sense theory of history voiced by Hume here. However, the rudiments of an interesting epistemological position concerning history can be observed. Hume is breaking further away from the common-sense theory of history when he says that the formation of a historical idea, like Rome, is neither seen nor remembered. But such an idea is connected with data from other historians. At this point Hume sounds much

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[70] Treatise, p. 108; my italics. Hereafter I shall refer to this passage as "the Treatise passage."

like Collingwood, who in qualifying the bankruptcy of the common-sense theory says:

> Yet the common-sense theory may claim a qualified and relative truth. The historian, generally speaking, works at a subject which others have studied before him. In proportion as he is more of a novice, either in this particular subject or in history as a whole, his forerunners are, relatively to his incompetence, authoritative; . . . As he becomes more and more master of his craft and his subject, they become less and less his authorities.[71]

It seems to me that this is the most plausible answer to the Humean question concerning the origin of historical unities. Namely, that this is how historical unities are formed by historians and non-historians alike; that a conception or idea of a period or event is a cumulative one. It is one that is built up over generations of historians. Their ideas have an important role in historical epistemology in that one historian judges the work of another from just such a conception as he himself works from.[72] William Dray comes the closest to voicing this idea--the idea of the role of cumulative unitary conceptions in history. In speaking of G. M. Young's Victorian England: Portrait of an Age, he says:

> Its subject is defined by reference to the reign of Queen Victoria. It is quite possible, of course, that Young decided to write his

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[71]Collingwood, op. cit., p. 238.

[72]E.g., Pieter Geyl, Debates with Historians (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), ch. IX: "The National State and the Writers of Netherlands History," is a good example of this.

> history because he saw some kind of unity in the period. But having selected this subject, he is bound to convey to us only as much of this unity as a balanced "portrait" of the period warrants. The point is even clearer in the case of /Carlton/ Hayes. For in his case, the very title of his book, A Generation of Materialism may arouse the expectation that his history will have a thematic unity, as the exploration of the manifestations of a certain frame of mind or outlook. To think, however, that Hayes begins with the topic, "The Materialistic Generation of the Nineteenth Century," is to get the logical force of what he is telling us all wrong. "A Generation of Materialism" is not the specification of the subject of his enquiry; it is his considered description-cum-assessment of it in a nutshell. He does not begin by setting himself the problem of describing something which stands out as a social unity. He begins, rather, by looking for unity in his period.[73]

Both Hume and Dray make important points on unitary conceptions. On the one hand, Hume's idea that unitary conceptions are cumulative in nature is essentially a correct description of concept formation, although the details are rather crude. On the other hand, Dray has emphasized that a historian looks for these in his research with no guarantee of finding them, instead of beginning his research with them topically. Rather, they emerge from the historian's research. Hume's account supplements Dray's in suggesting that one must know how to look for them. In other words, the attitude of the historian, that of "looking for," is one which is developed from other historians.

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[73] "The Historian's Problem of Selection," reprinted in Ideas of History, R. H. Nash, ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1969), II, 223-224. Dray's italics.

These conceptions, also, have an explanatory character to them. There is the historian's belief that in finding a unitary conception he has found an explanation or a means of formulating one. There is an idea of completeness in the notion of explanation--historical or otherwise.[74] Fawtier's "policy," which we looked at earlier, exemplifies the idea of a cumulative, unitary conception in history. As Dray tacitly suggests, the balance of a narrative stems from the unity and from what the period itself warrants, in that the period indicates a prior establishment of evidence. And as Hume suggests, the role of the historian's imagination in this process is in the selecting, placing, joining, and/or connecting of that evidence. The History note and the Treatise passage suggest that Hume would have fully agreed with Collingwood when the latter says of the imagination:

> It is this activity which, bridging the gaps between what our authorities tell us, gives the historical narrative or description its continuity.[75]

The notion of continuity in history does not appear in Hume's writings under that name, but is observed in other locutions besides the obvious one, "unity." In Hume's idiom, we find that expressions like "invariableness" and

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[74]For a recent discussion of this, see Nicholas Rescher, Scientific Explanation (New York: The Free Press, 1970), Part I, sec. 9.

[75]Op. cit., p. 241.

"uninterruptedness" convey the idea of continuity. For instance, in the History we notice Hume's use of the concept:

> We come now to mention some English Affairs which we left behind us, that we might not interrupt our narrative of the events in Scotland, which form so material a part of the present reign.[76]

Here the notion of uninterruptedness is explicitly used in reference to historical narratives. And perhaps the Humean terminology has its best application to historical narratives. For example, the success or fruitfulness of these ideas and the Humean idiom is seen in a recent discussion of history as narrative by A. R. Louch:

> His /the historian's/ object is to lay out a continuum of events related in such a way as to meet the condition of narrative smoothness. These connections are not causal or statistical. The condition is met instead when one sees a narrative constructed out of adjacent descriptions which closely resemble one another, and when one is entitled to assume that there is some persisting thing or process /referent for Hume's "object" and unity/ to which this sequence of closely resembling descriptions applies.
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> It can also be seen why it has often been claimed that the historian must deal in the unique and the unrepeated. The historian is seeking to discover a chain of similarities /Hume's link-chain metaphor as unity/ that will exhibit the evolution of an historical feature or process; he is not presuming similarities (e.g., all revolution-type events) in order to discover other factors constantly associated with them.[77]

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[76] History, III, 490; my italics.

[77] "History as Narrative," History and Theory, VIII.1 (1969), 57; my italics. Louch's point is similar to Dray's on unity.

To see how this idiom actually functions, we need to do some interpolating or conjecturing ourselves, for Hume's account is incomplete and consists mainly of suggestions. By supplementing Hume's remarks on historical reasoning and concepts with parts of his discussion of the concept of mind, we can construct what I shall call Hume's "bundle theory of historical events."

To do this, one of the first things we need to do is to make the link-chain metaphor (which appears so frequently in Hume's writings) explicit. Here we find Professor A. R. Hall's discussion of the metaphor helpful as a starting point. He comments that:

> The chain-linking, or if you prefer it thematic, plan of history has great attractions, but because it is impossible at the same time to pursue sufficient lateral or cross-sectional studies it must remain liable to the danger of Whiggism, that is to say the writing of history as the story of an ascent to a splendid and virtuous climax. How can you construct a chain without appealing to the idea of continuity? But then how does the historian determine what enters into the continuum, if not by its evident contribution to the climax whither the chain leads?[78]

These questions, stating "the historian's dilemma," make up a rhetorical defense of a <u>limited</u> use of the thematic or chain-linking plan of history. One of the possible objections to Hume's use of the link-chain metaphor in

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[78]"Can the History of Science be History?," <u>British Journal of the History of Science</u>, IV.15 (1969), 216-217.

talking about unity and causality in history is that the links in a chain are equally important; there is no one link more important than the others. Hume sometimes tends to talk this way. However, such an interpretation of the causal metaphor is to read it too literally. For such a reading would overlook the order of the links. And as we have already seen, Hume thinks that the historian, as well as the continuum of events, contributes to this end. In detail:

> We always follow the succession of time in placing our ideas, and from the consideration of any object pass more easily to that, which follows immediately after it, than to that which went before it. We may learn this, among other instances, from the order, which is always observed in historical narrations. /My italics./Nothing but an absolute necessity can oblige an historian to break the order of time, and in his narration give the precedence to an event, which was in reality posterior to another.[79]

So as a partial answer to the question as to which links go where in the chain, Hume says that they must follow a temporal order; that is to say they must be chronological in some sense.

Another possible objection to or weakness in the link-chain metaphor is stated by Hall: "A more refined historical examination will sometimes divide and distinguish where simple historical chains bind and unite."[80] Hall is thinking of only one chain; but multiple chains, which take the

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[79] Treatise, p. 430. [80] Op. cit., p. 216.

form of historical movements, are possible. In this case, Hall's claims for the impossibility of lateral and longitudinal studies and necessary liability collapse, for they hold logically only under a single chain. However, as is seen in the following passage, Hume takes into account a procedure such as Hall describes:

> On the other hand, we may trace the succession of time by a like succession of ideas, and conceiving first one moment, along with the object then existent, imagine afterwards a change in the time without any variation or interruption in the object; in which case it gives us the idea of unity.[81]

As Hume says, "one single object /e.g.,"The Great Plains"/ conveys the idea of unity," and this is the case, according to his argument, because of

> . . . The invariableness and uninterruptedness of any object, thro' a suppos'd variation of time, by which the mind can trace it in the different periods of its existence, without any break of the view, and without being oblig'd to form the idea of multiplicity or number.[82]

The historian's dilemma that Hall cited can be seen in Hume's idea of proportion or in what Dray referred to as a "balance" in the historian's portrait. On the one hand, "we must measure the greatness /significance/ of the part /link/, not absolutely, but by its proportion to the

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[81] Treatise, p. 201; Hume's italics.

[82] Treatise, pp. 200-201, respectively. The reference to point of view by Hume in the last passage will be discussed in the next chapter (IV).

whole /chain/." And, on the other hand, he adds the converse of this on the same page: to ". . . break or interrupt the continuity of its /an object's/ actions not according to their real /i.e., absolute/ greatness, but according to their proportion to each other /the links/."[83] As Hall observes, in practice this procedure as conveyed by the metaphor can be dangerous, for "chains also divide what should be united."[84] But Hume qualifies his last statement, and we can see some allowance for Hall's criticism in the following remark:

> We may induce the imagination to advance a step further; and that is, by producing a reference of the parts to each other, and a combination to some common end or purpose. A ship, of which a considerable part has been chang'd by frequent reparations, is still consider'd as the same.[85]

Analogously, this would probably be Hume's view of historical figures and events; of the former, he would say, "Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation."[86] Of those historical events which have no common end or causal relation, Hume has little to say:

> All the disputes /historical disagreements perhaps?/ concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union.[87]

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[83] Ibid., p. 261; Hume's italics. [84] Op. cit.

[85] Treatise, p. 257. [86] Ibid., p. 261.

[87] Ibid., p. 262; my italics.

Hume's exceptive clause is important, since it seems to make some allowance for theories in history. This imaginary principle of union forms a theory or a chain, and when viewed

> in this respect, I cannot compare the soul ["mind"] more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation.[88]

It is revealing that Hume's analysis here is based on an analogy of the concept of mind to that of historical treatments of social individuals--for example, a republic. This, in effect, shows that our conjecture here about historical events and Hume's theory of mind are appropriate to each other.

With these remarks from the Treatise and ones we discussed from the Inquiry earlier in this chapter, we are now in the position to determine roughly what the Humean analysis of historical entities consists of. To explain is to resort to the event under consideration. If an explanation of an event is given, the event becomes a string

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[88] Ibid., p. 261.

or a chain of (lessor-scale) events. Some of these chains of events make up what we regard as a history of one (larger-scale) event: e.g., chains would be the manners, religion, politics, etc. of a people. The unity of an event is a unity of history. (Hume's own historical writings testify to this besides his philosophy.) To use Bertrand Russell's analogy:

> . . . It is like the unity of a tune, which takes time to play, and does not exist whole in any one moment;

and,

> If a tune takes five minutes to play, we do not conceive of it as a single thing which exists throughout that time, but as a series of notes, so related as to form a unity.[89]

In the case of a tune, the unity is aesthetic, but in the case of a historical event, it is causal. The causal relation is a relation of order for Hume, and to talk about relations one needs relata or objects of the relation. (Obviously, there must be relations of something; there are not merely relations.) Hume's idea of links /relata/ in a chain /relation/ metaphorically conveys this; perceptions and/or objects "are link'd together by the relation of cause and effect."[90]

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[89] An Outline of Philosophy (New York: Meridian Books, 1927), p. 116 and p. 118 respectively. I am indebted to Russell's discussion of unity and its relationship to physical events in developing my own discussion here. Russell's own analysis (which he labels as "Humean") follows Hume's point for point except that Russell does not generalize to historical events.

[90] Treatise, p. 261; my italics.

In history we refer to given events within periods as relata. Russell calls them the "neighborhood" of the given event.[91] That those events have some relationship to another specified by a historian is what Russell means by saying that they are neighboring events. Neighboring events for Hume are those which satisfy directly or indirectly the relations of causation, resemblance, and contiguity. Causation as the unity for history lies in some observed law of succession from one event to the next. An event at one moment is succeeded by an event at a neighboring moment, which can be proved or conjectured from the earlier event. This enables the historian to construct a string or a chain of events, each growing out of a slightly earlier event to an "intrinsic law" (meaning isolatable among the events themselves). Outside influences are considered and thought of as affecting these events only because they form a part of the neighborhood. Hence a string or chain of events connected in this way by an approximate intrinsic law of development is a historical event, period or figure. This is what is meant by saying that the unity of a historical event is causal. A chain for Hume is a sequence which is causal and contiguous in place and time, and it is "unity" to which the chain metaphor refers. Hence, Hume's principle, "a sufficient unity in the

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[91] Op. cit., p. 116. Its meaning here loosely parallels its use in graph theory.

subject," exists when there are given enough links for a chain to be possible, and when conjectures fill the gaps between links to complete the chain. For the reader of Hume, this sounds familiar; for mind likewise yields to a similar analysis and resolves into a series of events. The bundle theory portrays a historical event as nothing but a collection of (lessor) events to which we give a special name (e.g., "French Revolution") because they are found together. What is characteristic of a collection is, as we have seen, an association of ideas. So a thematic plan in history is a chain of similarities that are determined by the association of ideas. Hume's search for the appropriate conception of unity for historical discourse was facilitated by the link-chain metaphor.

Conjectures are, above all, inferences to unifying grounds;[92] for example, a nation (England for Hume), a war (Peolponnesian War for Thucydides and World War II for Taylor), a man (Hitler for Taylor and Henry VIII, e.g., for Hume), etc. Periods also function in this way. All that falls within the same strecth of time (Hume's resemblance and contiguity principles) constitutes a period.

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[92]Paul Weiss is one of the few philosophers who has appreciated the importance of this type of inference in historical reasoning, and I am indebted to some of his suggestive remarks in my discussion here. However, his presentation of historical unities is markedly different from mine. See his History: Written and Lived (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), pp. 77, 88, 106-109, 147-148.

What is relevant or significant to both the beginning and end of a period or a chain is its common factor. The common factor is the unity of the period; for example, in Fawtier's history, the Capetian Kings' "policy" constitutes a chain of similar links.

We find Hume's chain metaphor also employed in conjunction with his theory of conjectures; for instance:

> Having once acquired this notion of causation from the memory, we can extend the same chain of causes, and consequently the identity of our persons beyond our memory, and can comprehend times, and circumstances, and actions, which we have entirely forgot, but suppose /conjecture/ in general to have existed.[93]

A historical figure, for example, is constructed on incomplete evidence. Historians, like most writers, want if at possible a unified man. We know from our own experience that Henry VIII was a man who lived and breathed like we do, who had a personality, a somewhat consistent behavior, etc. These conceptions are formed, according to Hume, in the same way that we form an idea of Rome.[94] One tries to harmonize diverse elements into what is fundamental to a man, period, or war. This is where the idea of a common factor comes into the picture. Hume saw that some sort of unity must be methodologically presupposed, if there are

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[93] Treatise, p. 262; my italics. This is perhaps the best summational statement of his theory of historical discourse.

[94] Ibid., p. 108. Cited earlier in this chapter.

to be gaps of which it is the purpose of conjecture sentences in historical discourse to fill. The real cause of an event or the real Hitler, etc., needs to be conjectured because our idea of what constitutes a real war or a real man is unitary or unified, i.e., a single conception. But we do not have available such a conception. This idea of unified conceptions comes, as Walsh suggests, from our experience of the present as a "concrete whole."[95] For instance, the meaning I have in mind here is something like: "It is easy to dismiss the false Hitler, but the true one can only be conjectured." In other words, Hume in his theory of conjectures is breaking away from the common-sense theory of history in which truth comes ready-made from an authority and is simply accepted. This theory is inherently weak, for something or someone's account has to become authoritative, or be established as reliable, before it can be an authority. (The question of why something or someone is considered authoritative has no suitable answer.) Truths in history are then conjectures or inferences; the historian, so to speak, makes truths; he does not just find them. They are fashioned by conjecture.

It may be tempting to label Hume's approach as "Whiggish" (Hall's term), but such a temptation should be resisted. Nonetheless, the charge of Whiggism is perhaps

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[95] Op. cit., p. 64.

the crucial objection to Hume's model of historical narration. That is to say, history is represented as leading up to a grand and virtuous climax, as the Whig historians were accused of doing.[96] For example, there is the historical illustration that all the events, say, of England were leading to constitutional monarchy, the perfect form of government. (Hume has been sometimes accused of being guilty of this in the History.) This aspect of grandness or splendidness is central to Whiggism; as Bagby puts it:

> /A/ way in which the artistic preoccupation of historians distort their subject-matter is due to the necessity which most of them feel of giving a sort of dramatic unity to the incidents with which they deal. A historian will usually organize his work around some compelling theme, the conflict between two leaders, two nations, two factions or two opposing systems of thought. His choice of what facts are relevant is very largely determined by this need for unity; it is expressed in a thousand diverse modes of shading and emphasis.[97]

There can be no doubt that this was done by past historians and is still done by present ones. But the tendency to identify all thematic histories or the thematic mode of writing in history as Whiggish is mistaken, for Whiggism is an extreme form of thematic history. Just because a history is thematic, we cannot a priori label it as

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[96] See Walsh, p. 199; Hall, p. 216; and Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1931).

[97] Op. cit., p. 45.

Whiggish. We do distinguish between selection and distortion, appropriate themes and compelling ones, a conclusion and a virtuous climax. For example, Taylor's account obviously leads up to a certain result or climax, viz. the outbreak of the Second World War. Likewise, Fawtier's account leads to a certain result--the full legal and political expression of policies by the Capetian Kings. Surely we do not label these histories as Whiggish; at least not for these reasons. These are legitimate historical procedures, and like most procedures, they can be misapplied or misused. The difference here between Whiggish and thematic histories is material rather than formal. Both display unities, but one is illustrating a thesis which becomes a dramatic unity, whereas the other is tracing and developing argumentatively the emergence of some trend or movement. It may very well be the case that the events in England were leading to constitutional monarchy. Many historians do agree with this and write in this fashion. A thesis such as this becomes Whiggish when the value judgment is conjoined and is reflected in the writing to the point that a historian would say: "Constitutional monarchy is the perfect form of government and the English have achieved perfection in the realm of politics." The histories which fall into these categories can be determined without much difficulty. To rule out all thematic histories as Whiggish is to overlook the important teleological dimension of

of historical writing and that history which is represented as a series of problems confronted by the various agents concerned can be a constructive tool in providing historical explanations.[98]

In short, there is no doubt that a model for thematic histories, such as Hume's, can lead to a distortion of facts, but it does not, as Bagby suggests, necessarily lead to such a distortion.[99] Thematic histories do not imply or entail Whiggism, although Whiggism certainly implies a thematic history. Hume's emphasis upon and treatment of unity is not simply dramatic or literary; for, as we have argued, one of the central features of his argument is that historical figures and periods display unity. His model is an argument that there are such things as themes and movements. This is the minimal interpretation that I wish to defend. Indeed, it was the bankruptcy of English historical writing that led Hume to rewrite English history.[100]

One of Hume's points is that <u>any history</u> will exhibit a unity by displaying causal, similar, and temporal

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[98] See Walsh's Appendix B on historical causation.

[99] <u>Op. cit.</u>

[100] See, e.g., <u>Letters of David Hume to William Strahan</u>, G. B. Hill, ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888), <u>passim</u>; and for a recent study, see Leo Braudy, <u>Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding, and Gibbon</u> (Princeton: The University Press, 1970) who has covered historiography from a literary perspective, and has made some interesting points about Hume's <u>History</u>.

connections, and by periodization references. The coherence of a historical narrative is thought of in terms of these unifying principles. Conjecture sentences contribute, as we have seen, to this end also. So Hume goes far beyond the Aristotelian identification of the dramatic with unity. He finds unity displayed on many levels, notably in teleological human behavior and in reasoning as the grounds for various connecting principles. Hume's model shows that he obviously thought that thematic history was superior to descriptive histories for these reasons. But "unity" as a historical theme is in need of a qualification. If some such unity were not found, this would not imply that the historian has lost a grip on his subject,[101] but that his work is descriptive rather than thematic.

What I have tried to show in this chapter is that Hume's model of historical narration displays some important features of historical writing and the reasoning behind it (some of it admittedly hypothetical), and that some notable histories can be analyzed in terms of this model. There are some notable deficiencies in his model and I have not dwelled on these for obvious reasons. What is worthwhile about Hume's model is that it does, in principle, achieve a constructionist theory of history and has some remarkable parallels with some of the details of Collingwood's idea of history.

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[101]Dray, op. cit., p. 224.

For us to explore more fully what the order, plan, or unity of historical reasoning and writing are conceptually, we must turn to the notion of point of view in history. This will be our preoccupation in the next chapter (IV).

CHAPTER IV

POINT OF VIEW IN HISTORY AND HUME

> A comprehension of the United States to-day, an understanding of the rise and progress of the forces which have made it what it is, demands that we should rework our history from the new points of view afforded by the present.
>
> Frederick Jackson Turner

Introductory Remarks

In his Napoleon: For and Against, Pieter Geyl makes use of the notion of point of view in these statements:

> From the point of view which I indicated, too, even though one can accept his /Lefebvre's/ presentation most of the time, there will still be a good deal to say about his appreciation and his interpretation;

and,

> I say this /i.e., that history can reach no unchallegeable conclusions on so many-sided a character/ with some emphasis, for Professor Romein, in his inaugural lecture at Amsterdam, did take precisely this point of view. . . /The historian's/ point of view. . . is determined by the circumstances of his time and by his own preconceptions. . . . In other words we cannot see the past in a single, communicable picture except from a point of view, which implies a choice, a personal perspective.[1]

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[1] Olive Renier, trans. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 449, and p. 15, respectively.

The use of the notion of point of view is not restricted to Geyl. The phrase "point of view" and its abbreviated form, "view," appears frequently in historical writing. For example, Arthur Schlesinger has entitled one of his books New Viewpoints in American History and Jesse Lemisch's "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up" suggests something indicative of point of view in its title. Lemisch, for instance, says: "/S. E./ Morison admired the 'codfish aristocracy,' and he looked at colonial Massachusetts largely from their point of view."[2] When historians like these talk about "point of view," what do they have in mind? What role is played by the notion of point of view in historical epistemology? What is the/a historical point of view, or the/a historian's point of view? These are but a few questions which arise from reflecting on statements such as the above. And to answer these questions it will be helpful to look at what philosophers have had to say about the notion.

Point of view is an idea which has received quite a bit of attention from contemporary philosophers. For instance, in the field of ethics Kurt Baier, Paul Taylor,

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[2]In Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History, Barton J. Bernstein, ed. (Vintage Books ed.; New York: Random House, 1967), p. 4. Bernstein's Introduction contains numerous instances of the notion of point of view in addition to most of the other essays in this volume. I am indebted to Bernstein for the Turner and Schlesinger references to point of view.

and G. J. Warnock have suggested some accounts of it. Jon Moline has recently given a general analysis of the concept. But it is principally W. H. Walsh and Karl Popper who have discussed it at some length in reference to history. We shall look at the specific discussions of these men in a moment, but first let us direct our attention to Hume. For it is primarily his model in which we are presently interested.

Hume's Model

To my knowledge, Hume was the first major writer to explicitly utilize the notion of point of view to any great extent, and much of what he says hinges upon the idea. In his essay "Of the Study of History," he offers the following definition for classifying history with other human endeavors: "History. . . places the objects in their true point of view."[3] This statement suggests that the notion of point of view is of central importance to the understanding of history. However, most instances of the concept's use in the context of history do not directly utilize the phrase "point of view." This can lead to problems in properly identifying Hume's use. Fortunately, there are other locutions for the same notion which are reasonably clear in Hume's writings. For instance, the word "light" is clearly used to mean point of view, as may

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[3]David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 39; my italics. The meaning of "true" in Hume's definition is discussed in the next section.

be seen in the following passage from the History:

> The great increase of monasteries, if matters be considered in a political light, will appear the radical inconvenience of the Catholic religion; and every other disadvantage attending that communion seems to have an inseparable connexion with these religious institutions.[4]

The reasoning here is conditioned by the point of view. If the conditional clause were absent from Hume's statement, the assertion would be taken from context and thereby be considered false--if not absurd; for the increase of monasteries does (or did) not appear as a "radical" inconvenience to Catholicism. So the clause seems to act as a context-indicator. Other passages suggest this analysis of its use. For instance in his essay "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," Hume says:

> The question, therefore, concerning the populousness of ancient and modern times, being allowed of great importance, it will be requisite, if we would bring it to some determination, to compare both the domestic and political situation of these two periods, in order to judge of the facts by their moral causes; which is the first VIEW in which we proposed to consider them.[5]

Considering something implies a viewpoint. The same idea of viewpoint is attributed to others by Hume, under the locution "light," as is seen later in the same essay:

> There are commonly compensations in every human condition: and though these compensations be not always perfectly equal, yet they

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[4]History, III, 122; my italics.

[5]David Hume: Philosophical Historian, p. 81. Hume's italics and my capitalization.

> serve, at least, to restrain the prevailing principle. To compare them and estimate their influence, is indeed difficult, even where they take place in the same age, and in neighbouring countries: But where several ages have intervened, and only scattered lights are afforded us by ancient authors; what can we do but amuse ourselves by talking pro and con, on an interesting subject, and thereby correcting all hasty and violent determinations?[6]

We also find "light" and "view" used by Hume to mean "point of view" in the second Enquiry where he remarks that:

> The more we vary our views of human life, and the newer and more unusual the lights are in which we survey it, the origin here assigned for the virtue of justice is real and satisfactory.[7]

There are a great many more uses of the notion in Hume, but these examples suffice to show that he uses the concept in discussing various subjects, and that it is central to the Humean idiom. His use of point of view in characterizing history is not accidental, but is an idea which he frequently employs.

Now, if this is the case, what does Hume mean by "point of view?" In other words, to what extent does he understand the notion? Is it a piece of technical jargon or just a convenient expression? Does he provide some sort of analysis

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[6] Ibid., p. 90. The last pair of italics are Hume's. The idea of "neighborhood," as we saw in the last chapter (III), is of central importance to the notion of historical comparison. Perhaps, part of the meaning of "true point of view" in Hume's characterization of history is a viewpoint which takes into account an event's "neighborhood," i.e., the contiguous context.

[7] Op. cit., p. 23; my italics.

of its meaning? If not, are we able to construct an analysis from the hints and details he gives us? Fortunately, Hume himself does provide us with some answers to these questions, which in turn should shed some light on his use of the notion in connection with history. In the second Enquiry, we find the following description of "the taking of a point of view."

> When a man denominates another his enemy, his rival, his antagonist, his adversary, he is understood to speak the language of self-love, and to express sentiments, peculiar to himself, and arising from his particular circumstances and situation. But when he bestows on any man the epithets of vicious or odious or depraved, he then speaks another language, and expresses sentiments, in which he expects all his audience are to concur with him. He must here, therefore, depart from his private and particular situation, and must choose a point of view, common to him with others; he must move some universal principle of the human frame, and touch a string to which all mankind have an accord and symphony.[8]

From the substance of this observation about the difference in language, can we suppose that this would be true of histories? Geyl said that a historian's point of view implies a choice, a personal perspective. Does Geyl have in mind more than just the psychological truism that a personal perspective is analytically necessary because a historian is a person? This question is unanswerable in terms of what Geyl has left us to work with, but I think there is more

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[8] Ibid., pp. 110-111.

involved than a truism.[9] I think this because Hume's above account of a point of view in terms of language (or of what is reflected in one's language) suggests something more than truisms, i.e., an analytical approach to the notion of point of view. A contemporary historian who has clearly appreciated this is Bernard Bailyn: "Much could be said about this question of word-choices as they relate to the historian's stance: the distance he assumes from the reader and from his subject."[10] In detail:

> The choice of words is crucial if only because it affects the way in which the historian handles the problem of distance. . . . His effort is to keep the reader's mind constantly and evenly focused on the historical situation, not on his own; and his success in this can depend to a considerable extent on the kinds of words he chooses. An excessively subjective or connotative word can suddenly dislocate the author in relation to his reader and his subject by injecting the author's personality and forcing the reader to jump from one world to another. This, for example, explains the jarring effect of the single word A. L. Rowse uses to modify the final noun in this characteristic sentence about the English Puritans: "Leicester was on their

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[9] In his treatment of point of view, Walsh at times seems to suggest no more than a truism; see pp. 97ff. For an extended, detailed treatment of Walsh's application of the idea of point of view to history, see my Reasoning and Disagreement in History (unpublished M. A. thesis; Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1966). Some of the material in this chapter was first worked out in that thesis; however, what is presented here is markedly different from its earlier form.

[10] "The Problems of the Working Historian: A Comment," Philosophy and History: A Symposium, Sidney Hook, ed. (New York: The University Press, 1963), p. 100; my italics.

> side, and kept in with them, and spoke their somewhat nauseating language."[11]

Professor Bailyn's point is well taken; and in instances such as the one he cited, his observation is undebatable. But if this rule is generalized, there may be exceptions. Under the Humean model, the exceptions are those instances in which the significance of an event or a series of events is disclosed only by reference to the reader's general knowledge, to the present, or to some later event(s). For example, there is Hume's discussion of the Jews in Medieval England which I cited and discussed in Chapter III. Is it not part of the historian's task in presentation to absorb or involve the reader in the world of the past? Surely this involvement or absorption is not one of isolation from the present, or at least not completely. Part of what is meant by saying that a history is <u>meaningful</u> is that it has some relationship to the present. That is to say, some aspect of our present world is accounted for historically--we understand how it arose historically from its origins and how it developed. Bailyn's historiographical rule is, of course, in reference to excessive instances. However, for the sake of argument it is instructive to take his rule unequivocally. For example, this rule might be applied to some of Professor J. H. Plumb's sentences in his <u>England in the Eighteenth Century</u> in which

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[11] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 99-100; Bailyn's italics.

he makes such statements as:

> /John/ Wesley's superstitions were those of his uneducated audiences. He produced a little book on physic which was on sale at all meeting-houses. It is an absurd, fantastic compilation of uncritical folk-lore.[12]

On the one hand, "absurd" and "fantastic" are subjective words in that they connote personal judgments in the same way that "nauseating" does in Rowse's sentence. On the other hand, Plumb's sentence (like Hume's example about the plight of the Jews in Medieval England) is not exclusively subjective in that there are objective standards which are applicable to the usage of his words. The adjectives modifying "compilation" can, in some sense, be verified or proven appropriate by evidence found in the compilation. But "nauseating" is exclusively a subjective word in the sense that its job is to refer to inner states which are unverifiable and not amenable to objective criteria. The observation of the difference between these two classes of words is important, for they could be blurred in the application of Bailyn's rule. Its unrestricted employment would or could lead to rather uninteresting histories. My point here about the historian's language is that Hume's description of point of view coincides with the minimal objective referring capacity necessary for terms in a historical narrative. The overt, excessive or exclusively subjective

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[12](Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, Inc., 1950), p. 96; my italics.

reference of words is one element that we would (along with Bailyn) supposedly find absent in the/a historical point of view. We find in a further characterization of point of view by Hume this absence of the exclusively subjective:

> It is necessary for us, in our calm judgements and discourse concerning the characters of men, to neglect all these /personal or subjective/ differences, and render our sentiments more public and social. Besides, that we ourselves often change our situation in this particular, we every day meet with persons who are in a situation different from us, and who could never converse with us were we to remain constantly in that position and point of view, which is peculiar to ourselves. The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general unalterable standard by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners.[13]

The suggestion I see in Hume's emphasis upon language in discussing point of view is that those subjectively referring terms do in fact, as Geyl says, imply a choice, a personal perspective, but they also imply some connection to the evidence. The class of historical terms we have been discussing reflects a double aspect in its referential capacity. This important point is perhaps most admirably put by Professor Walsh:

> Nor need this admission /a Geylian one/ lead to the conclusion that all history is irretrievably biased; the proper inference is only that it is all written from a particular point of

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[13] Enquiry, p. 64. Perhaps what Hume means by "unalterable" in the last sentence is "enough unchangeableness to allow for consistency by whatever standard is used." What else minimally could be meant by "standard" in the sense of a criterion? See my discussion of such terms as "constancy" in Chapter II of this essay.

> view. The point of view colours the account the historian gives, or if you like slants it, but it does not (or should not) decide its details. Given that what really matters in history is the fate of the common man, there can still be true and false answers to the question how the common man fared at particular times.[14]

Hume's choice of "true" in his characterization of history as the placing of "the objects in their true point of view" makes it clear that more is implied by the notion of point of view than prejudice or irretrievable bias. In fact, what Hume probably had in mind by "true" can perhaps be best understood in lieu of his discussion of prejudice in "Of the Standard of Taste" where he makes further use of the notion of point of view. He says:

> To enable a critic /e.g., a historian/ the more fully to execute this undertaking /i.e., critical assessment or appraisal/, he must preserve his mind free from all prejudice, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination. We may observe, that every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view, and cannot be fully relished by persons whose situation, real or imaginary, is not conformable to that which is required by the performance. . . . In like manner, when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this situation, and, considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being, and my peculiar circumstances. A person influenced by prejudice complies not with this condition, but obstinately maintains his natural position, without placing himself in

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[14] "Historical Causation," in his Philosophy of History: An Introduction, p. 195; Walsh's italics.

> that point of view which the performance supposes. If the work be addressed to persons of a different age or nation, he makes no allowance for their peculiar views and prejudices; but, full of the manners of his own age and country, rashly condemns what seemed admirable in the eyes of those for whom alone the discourse was calculated. If the work be executed for the public, he never sufficiently enlarges his comprehension, or forgets his interest as a friend or enemy, as a rival or commentator. By this means his sentiments are perverted.[15]

Hume is suggesting in this passage that the purpose of point of view is to remove prejudice--not to produce it. Placing oneself in that point of view which the action or the event supposes is a condition for true assessments or appraisals of evidence or of another's work, i.e., objectivity. Moreover, Hume's idea of audience--"when any work is addressed to the public"--has an important corollary with the first passage from the second Enquiry which I cited earlier. That is, as Walsh says:

> . . . each historian approaches his task of reconstituting and comprehending the past with his own ideas about what sorts of things in it are intrinsically important, ideas with which he must presume some sympathy in his readers.[16]

Also, one might add to this statement that there is a background of common knowledge presupposed and appealed to by the historian. He presumes that his reader's sympathy is

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[15] Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays, J. W. Lenz, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), pp. 14-15; Hume's italics.

[16] Op. cit., pp. 194-195.

directed toward this common knowledge as well as toward his value judgments or judgments of importance. These types of judgments in history are tied to point of view; as Teggart puts it:

> The contemporary historian does not include every detail which may have come to his knowledge; he presents only such matters as, from his point of view, are of importance.[17]

Point of view supplies the connections among events; it makes importance possible in history.

In Hume's model, then, historical terms take on their objective referring capacity when the historian's personal idiosyncrasies are suspended and his judgment becomes more general or comprehensive. In other words, his judgment must represent a "span," just as the events are represented by a temporal span or chain. This becomes obvious when we pose the question: How are chains constructed or where do they come from?--From the historian's point of view. The chains are an expression of the point of view. Hume's stipulation in the second Enquiry that the contents of point of view move "some universal principle of the human frame" is akin to Walsh's idea that sympathy must be involved. This meaning of "sympathy" is semi-technical, though, in the sense that it involves a methodological commitment to a shared or common background of knowledge. Part of the content of a historian's point of view is this

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[17] Theory and Processes of History, pp. 18-19.

presumed knowledge and affinity with his readers. And the historian's narrative implies a point of view. As Hume says, "every kind of composition. . . is nothing but a chain of propositions and reasonings."[18] The "chain" is Hume's metaphor for point of view. He thought that design or point of view was essential and valuable not only to history, but to all reasoning. As he said in the first Inquiry:

> In all abstract reasonings there is one point of view which, if we can happily hit, we shall go further toward illustrating the subject than by all the eloquence and copious expression in the world. This point of view we should endeavor to reach, and reserve the flowers of rhetoric for subjects which are more adapted to them.[19]

To make the notion of point of view and Hume's model of it more precise, we need to turn to the contemporary discussion of it. The next section will be concerned with this.

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[18] Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays, p. 16.

[19] Op. cit., p. 89. In his Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, George Berkeley provides a good explanation as to why Hume thought history is abstract reasoning: "Unity, I know, some will have to be a simple or uncompounded idea, accompanying all other ideas into the mind. That I have any such idea answering the word 'unity' I do not find; and if I had, methinks I could not miss finding it: on the contrary, it should be the most familiar to my understanding, since it is said to accompany all other ideas, and to be perceived by all the ways of sensation and reflection. To say no more, it is an abstract idea." Sec. 13; Berkeley's italics. Reprinted in 18th-Century Philosophy, L. W. Beck, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 67.

Corollaries and Analogues

Some interesting implications in Hume's model can be drawn out if we examine an idea which is held central to the analysis of the concept--that of an arbitrator. For instance, Kurt Baier, who first developed the idea of a point of view in ethics during this century, observed that "by 'the moral point of view' we mean a point of view which furnishes a court of arbitration for conflicts of interests."[20] Paul Taylor further developed the notion of a point of view by characterizing it as a cross-cultural concept and spelling out what "court of arbitration" means:

> Taking a certain point of view is nothing but adopting certain canons of reasoning /rules of relevance and inference/ as the framework within which value judgments are to be justified; the canons of reasoning define the point of view.[21]

Jon Moline has supplied further precision in analyzing what the content of Taylor's "framework" consists of.

Professor Moline's paper,[22] along with the material just cited, is consistent with Hume's rudimentary model.

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[20] The Moral Point of View (Abridged ed.; New York: Random House, 1965), p. 96; his italics. Baier first developed (more than likely independently of Hume) the concept of the moral point of view in "The Point of View of Morality," Australasian Journal of Philosophy, XXXIII (1954), 104-135.

[21] Normative Discourse (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 109.

[22] "On Points of View," American Philosophical Quarterly, V.3 (1968), 191-198. I am much indebted to Moline's analysis in my discussion of the concept of point of view in this section.

In my discussion these papers serve the function of making Hume's model more definite. For instance, the remarks by Baier and Taylor make it possible for us to see why Hume thought that a general framework or standard was needed to rationally converse; for a point of view allows for the initial agreement which later enables one to dis-agree. Moline, following Taylor, identifies "point of view" with canons of reasoning, i.e., rules of inference and relevance, in that three principal types of claims are made in using the expression "point of view." The first type is what Moline calls "comprehension claims." These are generally made in explanatory contexts and constantly appear in historical discourse. Simple understanding of what another is saying is involved in claims of this type, and Hume's characterization of "point of view" in the second Enquiry covers uses of this sort. An example of this type is illustrated by Hume's remark about monasteries in which he added the conditional clause, that "from a political light" the monasteries appeared as an inconvenience.

Moline labels the second type of claims as "size claims." These claims involve the breadth or narrowness of the scope of the point of view. It is here where we begin to speak of "point of view" as rules of inference. When we speak of selective historical narratives, or of a historian's point of view as being selective, we begin to make size claims. For instance, when a Marxist historian asserts

that "all history is the history of class struggle," his claim is one of size or is a comment on selection. Since it is a remark on selection, it is a historical interpretation. As we noticed with Walsh, these points of view and their respective claims are not of themselves true or false. But whether particular events are class struggles can be pronounced as true or false. Karl Popper's discussion of "point of view" covers mainly those uses involving size claims. However, his analysis contains additional elements which are in need of clarification. He says:

> For undoubtedly there can be no history without a point of view; like the natural sciences, history must be selective unless it is to be choked by a flood of poor and unrelated material. The attempt to follow causal chains into the remote past would not help in the least, for every concrete effect with which we might start has a great number of different partial causes; that is to say, initial conditions are very complex, and most of them have little interest for us.[23]

Popper's point about selectivity makes it obvious that he is talking about size claims. However, his remark about "causal chains" is not the proper inference from his initial point or statement. For a much stronger inference follows concerning the relationship between causal chains and points of view. How are causal chains constructed? Where do they come from? They derive from the point of view that is presupposed when a principle, such as a

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[23]"Situational Logic in History," in The Poverty of Historicism, p. 150. Popper's italics.

causal one, is used. Under the Humean model, causal efficacy is an abstraction, a connection supplied by reasoning; it is not given as the events are given, for example, in a chronology. The attempt to follow a "causal chain" would be fruitless, for point of view, as we have seen from Moline, is also a comprehension claim. To follow is to understand the connections argued for among events. Causal chains imply the use--either tacitly or overtly--of a point of view. As Popper says, points of view are "centres of interest" or foci of the historian. They are not subject to validation as is that which falls under their radius.[24] To use Wittgenstein's graphic depiction of the situation, it would be like the eye trying to see itself or to place itself in its visual field.[25]



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[24] Ibid., pp. 150-151. Moline also capitalizes on the notion of foci; op. cit., p. 195: "Taking a point of view, then, is like picking up and looking through a lens constructed for a particular purpose and having a particular focal length and field of vision. Some objects will be in focus (relevant) and others will simply be excluded from view (irrelevant)." As we shall see below, just as laws of optics govern whether or not a particular purpose and field are achieved, there are, as Taylor says, rules which govern relevance and irrelevance.

[25] See his Notebooks, 1914-1916, G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, eds. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 80.

The eye is, so to speak, the historian's point of view. It is what makes possible the connections and inferences from the data. To see the data is an achievement, where looking at it is not.[26] For a historian to focus his interests towards data is an achievement in the sense that he is doing something; that is, he is interpreting. For instance, when Turner says that "we should rework our history from the new points of view afforded by the present" he is probably making not only comprehension and size claims, but also "irrelevance claims" (Moline's term).

The irrelevance claims which stem from point of view are in some ways the most important and debatable, for historical controversies seem to revolve around these. A good example of an irrelevant claim in history comes from a chapter in the history of American history. For numerous years, the English Navigation Laws were cited as one of the causes for the American Revolution. The reasoning behind this causal assertion was that the laws were severe restrictions on colonial trade. It seemed quite plausible to men of an age of freer trade that the colonial Americans revolted to break out of these restrictions. Finally after such notable historians as Louis Hacker and George Bancroft had embraced this conjecture, O. M. Dickerson, in

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[26]This distinction is from Gilbert Ryle's The Concept of Mind (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1949), pp. 130f., passim.

The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution (1951), showed that there were virtually no objections to the laws in the colonial literature. Benjamin Franklin had even suggested that the colonial legislatures endorse the laws as a show of loyalty.[27] In short, Dickerson showed that the Navigation Acts were irrelevant to the causal assessment of the American Revolution.

To talk adequately about point of view, we need to add a corollary to Moline's classification--that is, "relevance claims." These are akin to the comprehension claims in that coming to understand something from a point of view is to see some things as relevant. An instance of this is Collingwood's example of a critical historian assessing whether or not a battle was a victory.[28] From our understanding of what a victory is, we know that such-and-such or that this-and-that was the case. The disjunction of alternatives here constitutes the relevant claims, if the event was indeed a victory. As Paul Taylor said, the point of view defines the rules of relevance in addition to the rules of inference. The former rules enforce the relevance claims that the historian makes in his narrative.

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[27]This example is taken from C. N. Degler's contribution, "Do Historians Use Covering Laws?" in Philosophy and History: A Symposium, pp. 207-208. The context of his example is the subject of general laws, which I shall discuss in the next chapter (V).

[28]Op. cit., p. 237. This example was discussed in Chapter III.

Revising Moline's criterion of relevance[29] for claims, we have this (near-tautological) characteristic: given a consideration C, it is relevant from a point of view P only to the extent that ignoring C leads selectivity to become distortion under P, since C is held to be characteristic of P. The other claims presented can be phrased in terms of C and P also. However, criteria such as this one can only specify comprehension, size, relevance, and irrelevance in general terms, since they are formulated on the basis of concepts. More specific analysis must be done empirically or in terms of individual cases. This is perhaps best left to the historian rather than to the philosopher, since a thorough knowledge of history is needed to assess the details.

One of the things that our investigation of point of view thus far makes clear is that when Hume speaks of a "point of view common. . . with others" he is drawing to our attention the idea that point of view is a standard. That is to say, point of view enables the historian to perform certain tasks by referring to certain authorities or established evidence. But it is also like making assumptions in an argument, from which one can generate conclusions. (The analogy here between deductive arguments and the role of point of view in historical discourse will be discussed in Chapter V.) The historian's assumptions are

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[29] Op. cit., pp. 196-197.

generally located in the concept of "point of view"; and it is this that makes conjecture sentences and cumulative ideas in history possible, and shows how vital they are in historical knowledge. A historian assumes that if another historian agrees or shares his point of view, then he is expected to have and pursue similar aims, to use only certain criteria for evaluating evidence to reach those aims, to share the same idea of relevance and importance, and to make similar factual assumptions. Also, the converse of this is true: if one historian shares or has these characteristics in common with other historians, then we expect him to share or have the same point of view. This may very well be the content of Hume's notion of sympathy; that is, if we share the same point of view, the above characteristics tend to be present and vice versa. As Moline puts it:

> Adopting or taking the same point of view will in fact consist in adopting and sharing the same assumptions, criteria, interests, goals, and judgments of relevance and irrelevance. To say that two people have the same point of view is to say that they tend to share these.[30]

In the Humean idiom and its respective model, this tendency or disposition to share reciprocally point of view and its characteristics is known as sympathy. So when Walsh says that the historian must presume that his readers have some sympathy with the ideas which he uses,[31] we would interpret

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[30] Ibid., p. 195.

[31] Op. cit., p. 195.

this under the present model as the taking or sharing of the same point of view, and this would entail the above characteristics.

Some examples and analogies may perhaps make this somewhat clearer. An example which Moline uses is that of a detective. This brings to mind Collingwood's parallel between a detective's reasoning and that of a historian. When a detective adopts a criminal's point of view, this tacitly useful intellectual exercise of a question-answer sort is usually designed to uncover weaknesses in a criminal's offenses and the victim's defenses. Like the historian, the detective asks, "Now if I were a criminal who wanted to do such-and-such and not be caught, how would I do X?" In this sort of interrogative procedure one takes the standpoint of the agent. And Hume's classification of history as a discipline which places past objects in their true point of view seems to show that he had such a procedure and role in mind for point of view in history. A quick glance at the History of England shows that the majority of sentences in Hume's narrative are of this sort when he is dealing specifically with human actions. So, to achieve or to place "the objects /under investigation/ in their true point of view" is to see what factual assumptions are made, what standards were in force at the time, etc., and to take these into account when assessing a man, event, or a period. In short, a historical world of the

kind Bailyn was talking about is created by the historian by considering, assessing, and presenting these sorts of things. Rarely, if ever, are the historian's own standards and assumptions the same as those with which he is dealing, and this is the reason for "a more common point of view." If it is shown that a historian relies too much on his own perspective, his work is thought of as "bad history" exemplifying the use of a non-historical procedure. (See Hume's remarks on prejudice.) An example of this is the reasoning behind the causal primacy of the English Navigation Laws for explaining the conditions which led to the outbreak of the American Revolution. Another example is, at times, Hume's own History. (A possible exception here, of course, is contemporary history which has its own special problems.)

Possibly one of the things that Geyl meant by saying that historical narratives are dependent upon interpretation and appreciation is that the point of view is embedded in the historian's language and it, the point of view, must be understood, if the narrative as a whole is to be fully understood. An explicit point of view makes the morphological rules which govern the narrative apparent, and hence, the connections or associations (as Hume calls them) are made clear. Then what we look for is the confirmation of the structure or point of view by the data from within and without the narrative. The better histories written today are ones that anticipate confirmation and objections,

and arguemntatively build these into the narrative.[32] This may have the sound of a deductive procedure to it, but as Passmore says, this is unavoidable, for "in the completed book. . . I lay all my cards on the table." So, "all the passages are quoted as if they had equal confirmatory value. That explains why the interpretation has an ad hoc air." And:

> Yet at the same time my inquiry, as I conduct it, is not ad hoc. Why? Because what happens is something like this: an interpretation is suggested by certain passages /say/ in Hume; that interpretation is then confirmed by passages I had not previously so much as noticed, which the proposed interpretation serves to illuminate. Or I discover that passages which I previously could not understand now make sense.[33]

What we have operating here, which is probably at the source of the confusion, are two "orders" of knowing. The formation of an interpretation is an approximation of the order of learning. Yet when the interpretation is written, a narrative reflects the order of understanding,[34]

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[32]For example, William Carroll Bark, Origins of the Medieval World (Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday and Co., 1958), see chs. 1, 2, and 5. The idea of anticipation is a common one used by philosophers of history; for example, see Dray, Hempel, and McCullagh.

[33]"The Objectivity of History," in Philosophical Analysis and History, p. 87.

[34]I am indebted to Professor Carlton Berenda for bringing this distinction to my attention. It is seen on the first page in Aristotle's Physics, and in our own time Ernest Nagel has frequently used it in his writings on the philosophy of science.

by the way in which the material is presented. It is here where Hume is particularly helpful in understanding concept-formation in history. His models are predominant ones that reflect the order of learning, or the historian in the process of coming to know. This distinction is of particular importance in the model we are here discussing. The role of the notion of point of view in historical epistemology is one of the order of understanding. When a historian displays his point of view, this no doubt has a deductive *a priori* flair to it. But this appears so only from the order of learning. From the order of understanding, the point of view exhibited furnishes the idea of deductive completeness which is essential to the logical structure of explanation.

Passmore has made an important analogical point which bears repeating in this context. And that is that historical problems and procedures are more like a certain type of problem or procedure in applied science than in pure science (e.g., physics).[35] The historian typically asks: "Why did *that* particular monarchy collapse?" in wanting to know what the situation was on a particular occasion; just as an engineer typically asks: "Why did *that* particular bridge collapse?" (One could also ask how a particular bridge or monarchy was built.) Both the

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[35]"The Objectivity of History," pp. 85-86. The example which follows is adopted from Passmore's discussion.

engineer and the historian solve their problems by constructing models. The engineer builds a scale model in which the structures and details are isomorphic; the model represents the original in every detail, the only difference, being, of course, its size. Then the model is tested in the type of environment the original was in. Approximate stresses and strains are provided to see if the weight and force of winds overloaded the structure causing its collapse. Now, what makes historical problems analogous to this one is that they are typically applied ones. That is to say, the point of view is applied in the case of the historian's problem. Obviously the historian does not build scale models, for he has neither all the evidence nor an identity or isomorphism between himself and the past. But there is a sense of "model" which makes the analogy suitable for our purposes. That is, the models that historians construct--narratives--are analogue models.

The crucial difference between a scale model and an analogue model is that the latter's construction is guided by the more abstract aim of reproducing the structure of the original.[36] The structure is suggested by the present state of the art and data available. The selection of data for the narrative by the historian completes the structure. This parallels Hume's idea of design in the

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[36]See the literature on models cited in Chapter I (n9); especially, Black, p. 222.

Inquiry which was discussed in Chapter III. The historian is faced with the problem of presentation. He solves his original problem, i.e., the historical one, by constructing a model or a narrative. He hopes to show that together the structure and the data he selects are (and were) sufficient to show the collapse of the monarchy in France--a model which draws attention to the stresses and strains which are relevant to that collapse.

The question which naturally arises at this point, and one which Passmore raises, is that of the testability of historical narratives. Are there tests for these? Passmore says no. His reasoning goes something like this: if we admit the idea of model for narrative, then the significant disanalogy is that there are no such tests as there are for the engineer's model. However, if we draw a distinction between scale and analogue models, we can see that history in some sense shares characteristics of both of these models. The hard data of a narrative seems to approximate the identity in detail which is necessary for scale models. And the identification of structure by point of view tries to capture the same detail that the scale model exhibits by conjectures. Hence, the use of soft data or conjectures seems to approximate what we call an analogue model. It is at this point where I think there is a "test" in some sense; that is, one of falsifiability. But to answer adequately the question of testability of

historical "models" or narratives by way of falsifiability, we must first turn to the analogy between deductive arguments and historical discourse which will be the subject of the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

> The sole end of Logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty.
>
> David Hume

> It would seem the height of presumption to rule . . . /X/ out a priori just in order to make historical explanations conform to modus ponens.
>
> P. J. Dietl

The Analogy between Logic and History

In this concluding chapter, I shall systematically relate the results of the preceding chapters by exploring an analogy between deductive arguments and historical discourse. Using logic in this way will enable us to see more clearly the interrelationships among the models and to integrate them into a general theory. The beginnings of the analogy are clearly seen in Carl Hempel's "The Function of General Laws in History." Hempel tacitly used (and later explicitly used)[1] the modus ponens argument as a model for the mode of inference for causal explanations.

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[1]See, e.g., his "Reasons and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation," in Philosophy and History: A Symposium, pp. 143-163, especially p. 144.

There were and are many who follow in Hempel's footsteps. However, it was principally Professor Arthur Danto who made considerable advance in extending and in arguing for the credibility of logic as an appropriate analogy for historical discourse.[2] Since this is the case, it may well be advisable to look at some of the motivations behind such an analysis as this before I begin mine.

Danto has faced the very same problem that Hume faced in the first Inquiry over specifying what we mean by a unified collection of parts. Danto suggests, as Hume does, that a characteristic of history is that it organizes the past into temporal wholes, e.g., periods and major events or figures. The difficulty in specifying what these wholes or unities are and in trying to provide a suitable analysis of this characteristic of history has to do with the concept of unity. Danto has seen this, and in Chapter III we observed Hume struggling with the notion of unity both in the Treatise and in the first Inquiry. The motivation behind Danto's analysis is, then, to find a suitable way of talking about how the concept of unity applies to narration. He writes:

> It seems to me we can make a beginning towards specifying a criterion of narrative unity by taking seriously the suggestion that a narrative

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[2] Analytical Philosophy of History, pp. 248-256. See also pp. 203, 208-209, 213, 219, and 226 for other uses of the analogy. I am greatly indebted to Danto's analysis which has served as a stimulus for me to explore this new ground.

> and a deductive argument might constitute alternative forms of explanation.[3]

Upon this insight is based a number of corollaries. First, certain formal fallacies in deduction might have analogues in narratives. This means that we might be able to find a number of conditions that an argument would fail to satisfy which would render the narrative "invalid." Secondly, these conditions would, then, be the necessary conditions for a valid argument, and by analogy, these necessary conditions would constitute the criteria (or a part of them) for a "valid" narrative. Danto is obviously much more interested in the negative components of the analogy than in its positive ones, for he wants to argue for alternative forms of explanation. I have no quarrel with this; in fact, I have taken this as a suggestion to look into deductive arguments other than modus ponens for the purpose of finding alternatives to it. We will look at Danto's specific complaints about the model in a moment.

Unity is partially achieved in history, as elsewhere, by the fact that there are regularities in human experience and events. These regularities in the human domain are a set of dispositions (actions) which make up the principles of human nature. These principles, in turn, are the determinations needed for explanations of human actions. So explanations rest upon the notion of general law. All this

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[3] Ibid., p. 248; Danto's italics.

we have seen in Chapter II. The rudiments of Hume's model here are clearly present in Hempel's discussion, and he himself sees that his analysis is a Humean one.[4] The mode of inference represented in logic by the modus ponens argument is commonly used to display the order of inferences discussed just above. It is:

(1) $(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$,

(2) Fa,

(3) Ga.

Line (1) represents an expression of some general law, e.g., "(influential) ideas travel along trade routes," either tacitly or overtly stated. Line (2) paraphrases the initial conditions, and line (3) is a statement that an event (a) of a kind G will ensue, if there is the conjunction (simultaneiously) of lines (1) and (2). In a sense, we predict Ga in reading a historical narrative if we encounter $/\overline{(x)\ (Fx \supset Gx)}/$ & Fa; or, if you like, we anticipate Ga. Following Hempel, Professor Danto further develops the analogy by using the same model for interpretation; he extends the modus ponens argument to narratives (as I illustrated in the sentence immediately above). Hempel's analysis is restricted to sentences--most of which need to be treated elliptically if the model is to work. Hempel can only talk about unity by treating certain statements

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[4] "The Function of General Laws in History," see especially section 7.4.

elliptically, and these statements would form, under his use of the modus ponens model, narrative unity. So for Hempel, we have the following criterion: those sentences in a historian's narrative that are explanatory ones must conform to the causal interpretation of the modus ponens model if it is to be a "valid" narrative. I shall call this "Hempel-valid." In short, Hempel's notion of validity supplies what he would call "a sufficient unity in the subject." Here we have one contemporary formal interpretation of Hume's principle (P) which I discussed in its initial form in Chapter III.

There is an interesting point that can be made about the anti-Humean and anti-Hempelian theorists. This is that, according to them, these models are far too rigorous and out of place in discussions of history. For we can see from Hempel's formulations of "validity" that what counts as sufficient for the achievement of unity is really not too demanding at all on narratives. The only logical demands are those placed on a set of given sentences within the narrative, and these are minimal usually in number. Danto's dissatisfaction with the Hempel-valid interpretation of the modus ponens argument is that Ga follows by logic alone from (x) $fx \supset Gx$ and Fa, whereas Fa-Ga is a change, and it is this change that we want an explanation for. In detail, "these changes are not always covered by general laws, although the connection between these changes

and some assigned cause for the change typically is covered by general law."[5] It is here where Danto spots a weakness in the analogy. The significant negative analogy is that the Hempel-valid interpretation cannot account for historical change. Also, it is easily seen that the notion of narrative under this interpretation suffers greatly from the over-emphasis upon sentence structure. So Danto scraps this interpretation of validity and replaces it with one that has narratives specifically in mind. This constitutes a subtle shift in the modus ponens morphology.

Danto's analogy is based upon the following interpretations.[6] Suppose that we replace Fa with Fb. This would be a violation of one of the rules in natural deduction, and the entailment relation between the premises and the conclusion Ga would no longer be present. Likewise, if we replace Ga with Gb our new conclusion would no longer be entailed by (x) Fx ⊃ Gx and Fa. Furthermore, if we replace Fa and Ga with Fb and Gb, then we would surely have logical entailment between the premises and the conclusion. But we would also have the paraphrasing of a different historical change (assuming, for the moment, that one can account for historical change under the Hempel-valid interpretation). Logically speaking, we want the same

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[5] Ibid., p. 249; Danto's italics.

[6] Ibid. The following discussion is based upon pp. 249-251.

bound variables to be replaced by the same individual constants throughout. Danto speaks of the narrative analogue as the unity of subject. So from a logical point of view, a narrative requires one object or a continuous subject. This parallels Hume's idea in the Treatise that: "One single object conveys the idea of unity."[7]

A second feature in Danto's analogy explains why only a few things have been selected for narrative explanation. That is, we do not explain events as such, but rather events under a certain restriction. Once the description is chosen, the event must be thoroughly explained relative to or under that description. This parallels a situation in logical theory with respect to predicates. That is to say, no predicate which is not antecedently contained in the premises can appear in the conclusion of a deductive argument. For example, let us suppose that our conclusion is Ga & Ha. In this case, the conclusion satisfies the necessary condition that a narrative have a unity of subject, but it also contains an extra piece of information, i.e., Ha. In history, if we run across a "conclusion" that expresses Ha without having appeared earlier in the narrative, it would be quite natural for us to feel that there is a gap in the story or account for which there is no explanation. Here we would have the flaw of both

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[7] Op. cit., p. 200.

narrative completeness and deductive completeness for explanation. It is just as important in history as in logic that once we choose a description or a set of premises, we explain the event in terms of that description or prove an argument on the basis of the sequential merit of those premises.

A corollary to this last feature is that we reverse the situation. That is, instead of adding a predicate to the conclusion, we add an additional premise Ea. The situation is somewhat different now in that a valid deduction can still be made, the only difference being that Ea would not contribute to the logical work. As Danto says, it would be "deductively inert." However, if we make elegance a rule of deduction as Danto does, then we can tidy up our analogy by requiring that a valid deduction should contain only those sentences required for inferring the conclusion. The narrative analogue would be this: an "invalid" narrative is one which contains events or episodes which fail to contribute to the action or the explanation. It should be emphasized that we are talking about the explanatory aspect of narratives at this point. Danto sums up his discussion of the analogy between deductive arguments and historical narratives in the following way:

> On the basis of these analogies, then, we can, I think, state some of the necessary conditions for narrative unity. Thus, if N is a narrative, then N lacks unity unless (A) N is about the same subject, (B) N adequately explains

> the change in that subject which is covered by the explanandum, and (C) N contains only so much information as is required by (B) and no more. I do not say these are the only criteria for unity, and there may be other criteria for a satisfactory piece of historical writing which may even conflict with some of these, for instance, (C).[8]

So here in capsule form we have a notion of valid as applied to narratives in history which I shall call "Danto-valid." Thus far we are able to see that Danto-valid narratives imply Hempel-valid ones for the following reasons. First, he uses the modus ponens model to make his three "logico-aesthetic" points. Second, his interpretation applies only to the explanatory aspect of narratives. Both of these notions of validity presuppose Hume's principle (P). But his model of a valid narrative (as we shall see later) differs in certain respects. However, Danto's conception of historical validity goes considerably beyond Hempel's in that the negative analogies begin to play a decisive role in the analogy between deductive arguments and history. I shall now present these and then try to develop the analogy in ways to show that in principle the analogy with suitable models can be a more powerful tool for philosophy of history than hitherto suggested.

The analogues just given are the positive analogies in Danto's analysis. Narratives which satisfy these necessary conditions, he calls "atomic narratives." One of the

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[8] Ibid., p. 251.

negative analogies we have already seen: no account of historical change. A second one is that the individual constant "a" may have gone through a sequence of changes, and these need to be noted to account for the larger change. Danto labels accounts that explain changes within changes as "molecular narratives." A student of logic is quick to notice that Danto's choice of words for the distinction parallels the two basic kinds of sentences in the sentential calculus. And it is within this sentence-oriented morphology that possible replies can be forthcoming. Up to this point, the above, in summary, is the present state of the analogy. However, from what Morton White and others have said about the sentence-narrative distinction, it is only natural that we talk about valid narratives, since truth is only applicable to sentences.[9] And sentences have a relationship to the narrative as does truth to validity. With this in mind, some refinements can be made of the model.

My first suggestion in making the analogy more credible is to change the model to the respective complexity of the subject to which the analogy is applied. This can be done essentially in two ways: first, move from a simple argument form to an actual argument instance; and secondly, to provide another interpretation of its basic components.

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[9]See the first section of Chapter III.

The modus ponens model expanded to one which uses additional modes of inference is seen in the following schemata:

1. $(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$
2. Fa
3. $Fa \supset Ga$
4. Ga
5. $Fa\ \&\ Ga$
6. $(\exists x)\ Fx\ \&\ Gx$

There are several advantages in this extended model. For instance, line 3 has an interpretation which handles Danto's main complaint that Fa-Ga is a change. All universally quantified statements in a given narrative are expressions either overtly or tacitly of general laws. If a given law is suggested to the historian to explain an event or a series of events, then this law must be expressed in terms of the subject-matter. For example, there may be some general law about revolutions; namely, "in any given situation, if there is political discontent and economic distress coupled with poverty and injustice, a revolution will occur." This would be an expression of $(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$. $Fa \supset Ga$ in line 3 would be applied to a specific event, a, and become something of a "historical law." That is, the change that occurs from Fa to Ga is accounted for by $Fa \supset Ga$. It is a commonplace in quantification theory that any given quantified expression must be instantiated before the rules of inference in propositional logic can be applied to it. So

actually from the way in which Danto has set up the modus ponens model his simplified version would not work! Hence, if the model is to be further used, this additional line needs to be included. And the Hempel model survives Danto's first criticism.

Now, what about lines 5 and 6? Doubtless there are numerous interpretations that can be given to these, and I shall suggest various avenues of interpretation. However, one in particular which I am interested in making in connection with Danto's other objection is as follows: We can interpret the connector "&" as the linear ordering or presentation of that change which occurs from lines 2 to 4. This is also trivially suggested by the alphabetical ordering of the predicate symbols "F" and "G". Given this interpretation of line 5, it is not difficult to come up with the interpretation needed for line 6. Professor Morton White's idea of every historical narration having an implied chronology[10] works nicely here. In other words, for a narrative to be a historical one the sentences contained within it are usually arranged in a chronological fashion, as is represented by Fa & Ga. There must be some implied chronology for those events which are narrated. The analogue in quantification theory is that the statement in line 5 must be generalized in respect to a bound variable

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[10] Foundations of Historical Knowledge, ch. VI.

in order to be a proposition or an assertion, and not simply a propositional function. In short, the statement must be quantified. At this point in our interpretation we can see that Danto's use of the analogy does not need to lead to alternative forms of explanation, but that these forms can be complimentary ones if we broaden our outlook to include more in the historian's reasoning than the narrative. That is, we can include the notion of point of view in history to overcome some of the cited weaknesses in the analogy. It is here that I think if we are to find a notion of validity in history, it will be in the relation between point of view and the narrative. With this in mind, we can make the following reinterpretations of the modus ponens part of the model.

Line 1, $(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$, we might say is an expression of the historian's point of view. The point of view which generally is an expression of a general law is to be included both for the sake of deductive completeness, which is demanded of explanations, and of "narrative completeness" which is characteristic of historical explanations. Essentially what I take the expression "narrative completeness" to mean is the substance of Hume's governing principle for his models of historical discourse; that is, a sufficient unity in the subject. For our present model in the analogy to have deductive completeness, there needs to be some generalization with respect to any instantiation within the

model. Also, our closures of (x) and ($\exists$ x) help complete our interpretation by representing that characteristic of history which Hume and Danto noticed of historians organizing their data within temporal wholes to form historical wholes or unities. The closure property of "(x)" of a quantifier can be interpreted as a period, and the respective predicates within the scope of the quantifier would denote the point of view. The "($\exists$ x)" and its closure effect denote an implied chronology within the domain of the (x), of which the narrative is a part.

Another possible interpretation of this analogy is that in logic we know with what we are starting--the premises--and where we want to arrive--the conclusion--and that there is a given set of rules for constructing a derivation. Once several lines in a proof are started, one can anticipate further developments, such as a crucial use of the distribution rule, or of the addition rule. Likewise, notable historical narratives are generally ones in which we are able, as intelligent and sympathetic readers, to <u>anticipate</u> a major outcome or lessor outcomes from the way in which the historian has developed his material. That is, given what the historian has said thus far, it was quite likely to happen this way. In other words, for the narrative to be complete or have a sufficient unity, it must describe a sufficient number of conditions which the reader's general knowledge of the period tells him must

have existed for the particular change being described to have taken place as it did.[11]

Having developed the analogy this far, we should see how credible A. J. P. Taylor's The Origins of The Second World War looks in logical form. In line 1, (x) Fx ⊃ Gx, we have a point of view about wars which contains the following general law: "wars pursued from a victor-defeated policy and settlements based upon this type of thinking lead to other wars." Line 2, Fa, denotes the given data with which the historian has to work. These will become the conditions for Ga. That is, "a" is a specific war which did happen and "F" is the property of "a" which diplomats and negotiators definitely pursued indicated by Fx. Line 3, Fa ⊃ Ga, is an expression of Taylor's synoptic judgment: "The Second World War was implicit in the First World War." Line 4, Ga, represents the outbreak of the Second World War. Line 5, Fa & Ga, is the narrated chronology of events which shows that lines 2 through 4 are indeed the case. Line 6, (∃ x) Fx & Gx, is the quantified paraphrase of the implicit or implied chronology of the narrative (5). From this interpretative model, there are some other remarks on historical methodology that can be made on behalf of the analogy. Line 3, Fa ⊃ Ga, asserts

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[11]McCullagh, p. 260. The same identical point is made in Danto; see pp. 251, 254, and 255, which McCullagh accuses Danto of not making.

the connection between Fa-Ga and records the historical change that Danto was looking for in Hempel's model. Lines 5 and 6 which express chain-inferences are the justification for the asserted connection in line 3; they are the sequential merits or the fertility of the hypothesis of line 3, Fa ⊃ Ga. So in a sense the justification of line 3 by lines 5 and 6 is not covered by a general law. These represent chronological and temporal ordering. Professor Alan Donagan has made a remark about scientifically acceptable general statements which is particularly helpful in my reformulation of the modus ponens model.[12] All scientifically acceptable general statements are those which go beyond personal or particular conditions. This is obviously taking into account intervening variables and permitting intersubjective verifiability of the cognitive content of those statements. So looking at lines 1 through 3, we see that this is why (x) Fx ⊃ Gx is needed along with Fa ⊃ Ga; Fa ⊃ Ga is not adequate by itself. For the quantified expression of it is desired both in logical theory and in scientific methodology (which includes history). Also, (x) Fx ⊃ Gx and Fa ⊃ Ga, together handle the semi-teleological or colligating type procedures of the historian. They are expressions of organizational concepts for the events or data, Fa and Ga, with which the historians have to work.

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[12]"The Popper-Hempel Theory Reconsidered," in Philosophical Analysis and History, p. 153.

Turning to Danto's second objection to the Hempel-valid interpretation, which is his notion of a molecular narrative, we find the following criticism:

> To begin with, it may be argued that, just as we must refer to several changes, and hence several causes, in order to account for a large 'molecular' change, so, in a deductive argument, we may need <u>several</u> distinct premises in order to derive a conclusion, no single one of which by itself entails the conclusion. Thus, thinking of condition (B) above, we could not, for example, deduce Ha from just the two premises Fa and (x) (Fx ⊃ Gx). But by <u>adding</u> a further premiss, we can complete the argument validly. According to Hempel's model the added premiss must either be a general law or a statement of another required initial condition or both. Now suppose we add the general law (x) (Gx ⊃ Hx). This would do the trick, but the fact is we can in such a case eliminate the <u>two</u> general laws in favour of another one, for since we can validly derive p ⊃ r from p ⊃ q and q ⊃ r, the two laws collapse into one--(x) (Fx ⊃ Hx). But such an elimination cannot obviously be made in every valid narrative.[13]

Danto's point about elimination in valid narratives is not obvious when we consider the class of sentences which express synoptic conclusions. For one of the roles of a synoptic conclusion in a valid historical narrative is to assert that there exists a connection between beginning and end. So in a sense we can analogously think of synoptic conclusions as expressions of an elimination procedure. The collapsing of the two laws by Hypothetical Syllogism into one, (x) Fx ⊃ Hx, can be a valid <u>elimination</u> only if

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[13] <u>Op. cit.</u>, p. 253; Danto's italics.

we know the premises that allow for it or lead to it. "(x) Fx ⊃ Hx" by itself would obviously not suggest anything. But if it appears in a valid narrative, it would violate the principle of unity unless it were a sub-conclusion or a part of a given sequence. The whole chain of inferences which led to such an expression as (x) Gx ⊃ Hx would be the sequence of changes. Also Danto entertains another possibility in connection with molecular narratives. This is that we add additional sufficient conditions and initial conditions to an argument. We would have expressions which look like (x) /(Fx & Gx) ⊃ Hx/ and the additional premise Ga. Here we have neither Fa nor Ga alone which would entail the conclusion. The general law would require their conjunction, and as Danto sees it, this would be analogous to the case of a narrative that would require more than one cause to account for a large-scale change. Indeed, such a formulation as this of a general law or a point of view would perhaps be the best representation of most historical narratives, in that the conjunction of the antecedent would represent the chronological and temporal ordering of events, which would be thought of as conditions only by the presence of a synoptic judgment.

Before turning specifically to Hume in terms of this model, one further comment needs to be made on point of view. As we have seen in the last two chapters (III and

IV) points of view are very similar to deductive procedures. They serve as a kind of inference-license and are not themselves true or false, but are more like a propositional function in that they allow for initial ordering of data. The narrative form for presentation, as Passmore has reminded us, has an ad hoc, deductive flair to it. So actually, the analogy to deductive arguments and history, upon analysis, is more credible and suitable for philosophical discussions of history than we would first think. (This will become even more obvious in the next section.) Summing up, we see that the deficiencies that Danto sees in the analogy are mainly due to an essentially incomplete argument form as a model. Some of the crucial deficiencies can be overcome by extending the argument and the scope of the interpretation beyond its present employment.

The models that I have discussed in the preceding chapters of this essay that can be found in Hume's writings in varying detail are particularly amenable to an analysis such as the ones given by the aid of the analogy. The Humean notion of "validity" for narration would be his principle: a sufficient unity in the subject. The various necessary conditions listed below constitute the criteria or general theory for a valid, explanatory narrative in history. The general theory is:

(a) sufficient unity in the subject;

(b) teleological explanations of human actions (events);

(c) conjecture sentences, that is, probabilistic statements inferred from "proofs" (Hume's term for well-established evidence);

(d) "design" or point of view by the historian embedded in the narrative by way of (b) and (c) to achieve (a).

The Humean idea of history is the set (a) through (d) as is discussed in Chapter II. The concept of (d) is analyzed in Chapter IV. Criteria (a) through (c) are discussed in Chapter III. Under the present interpretative scheme of the analogy, we find a teleological explanation of Fa provided both by (x) $Fx \supset Gx$ and $Fa \supset Ga$. The justification of Ga from the preceding lines in the proof is by (c). Furthermore, the conjunction of Fa & Ga has its justification by (c) and (b), which form the basis for Hume's causal link-chain metaphor. Hume's association of ideas--the principles of resemblance, contiguity and causation--are the "rules of inference" for lines 3 through 5 from lines 1 and 2 which are given as premises. This was discussed in Chapter III. The principles of human nature are interpreted in Chapter II as empirical generalizations from everyday life and the sciences which make up line 1. These principles are essential to any form of explanation, according to the Humean stance (scheme). A "valid" but not necessarily "sound" narrative is conceived of as one that satisfies all the lines in the revised model,

and not just the modus ponens part of the model which the Hempel and Danto interpretations suggest.

What support is there for interpreting Hume this way? First, the appellations, "proofs" and "conjectures" show that Hume was interpreting history from an analogy with the logic of his own day. Second, the idea of design or point of view and the causal link-chain metaphor suggest that Hume thought of historical comparison as essentially a definite line of reasoning exemplified by a series of propositions. The role of the type of regularities and generalization in history provide a mode of inference which is essential to history. There, too, is Hume's realization that inductive arguments are invalid for history, since one begins with a set of regularities which is his point of view, and the whole question of confirmation evolves around point of view and data. In other words, the relationship between point of view and data is not one indicative of the generalizing which takes place in inductive arguments. Points of view which are from common experience and which are formed inductively do not have the same role. Viewpoints are more akin to characteristics of deductive arguments (e.g., assumptions to infer conclusions with, rules of inference and relevance) which define the canons of reasoning, etc. Hume's own language suggests that he had in mind by "embellishing" and "illustrating" something other than inductive arguments

and historical discourse than to other possible logical assimilations.

Hume's position as illustrated by the analogy in this section is not without its difficulties. His emphasis upon the role of point of view in historical epistemology can lead to the complete untestability of historical narratives if its role is pushed to extremes. For as Karl Popper warns us about Hume's repetitive thesis:

> For any given finite group or set of things, however variously they may be chosen, we can, with a little ingenuity, find always points of view such that all the things belonging to that set are similar (or partially equal) if considered from one of these points of view; which means that anything can be said to be a 'repetition' of anything, if only we adopt the appropriate point of view. This shows how naive it is to look upon repetition as something ultimate, or given.[14]

Popper's point here is an excellent one, and Hume's doctrine of the primacy of repetitions is perhaps the major instructive error in his argument. In addition to Hume's emphasis upon temporal and psychological primacy of repetitions in experience, he was probably impressed with continuities in history. The latter is the corollary of Hume's error with which we are interested here. The historian's search for continuities has always been a virtue

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[14]From appendix *x in The Logic of Scientific Discovery (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 422. In the discussion of Popper which follows, I confine myself to the argument he puts forth in this appendix.

and a vice.[15] As Popper writes: "Generally, similarity, and with it repetition, always presuppose the adoption of a point of view."[16] And the historian who looks for features or structures has a point of view which controls much of his investigation in addition to his presentation, whether or not he is aware of it.

Is there anything that can be said on behalf of Hume in response to Popper's argument? I think so. First, the context and direction of Popper's argument is physical theory. So when he says that one can always find points of view with a little ingenuity, he is mainly talking about ad hoc auxiliary hypotheses in natural science, and not about history. If Popper is talking about this set of hypotheses, then Hume and the historians would be the first to agree. Second, to look upon repetition as something ultimate or given can only be done from those structural properties of the world which are themselves given in points of view. And that points of view in this sense can be generated "with a little ingenuity" is based upon the assumption that there is a sufficient amount of intelligence, rather than just capacity, displayed to generate and see these structural properties. Popper's argument about

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[15]For more on continuities as the main danger in the method of the historian, see, e.g., Passmore, "The Idea of a History of Philosophy," pp. 25ff.

[16]Op. cit., p. 421; Popper's italics.

which comes first, the point of view or the repetitive experience, is based upon a confusion of the order of understanding with the order of learning. His reductio ad absurdum argument below has its respective counter-argument by distinguishing the "orders" which he collapses to develop the paradox:

> If similarity and repetition presuppose the adoption of a point of view, or an interest, or an expectation, it is logically necessary that points of view, or interests, or expectations, are logically prior, as well as temporally (or causally or psychologically) prior, to repetition. But this result destroys both the doctrines of the logical and of the temporal primacy of repetitions.[17]

Popper's argument is based upon an equivocation of the word "prior." The "logically prior" refers to the order of understanding, and from my analysis in the last chapter (IV), the logical priority is the only priority which is to be assigned to it. However, the temporal priority is another matter. In history, this would be tantamount to "prejudice" (in Hume's sense of the term). One does not have just $(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$ given, but $/\overline{(x)\ (Fx \supset Gx)\ \&\ Fa}/$ given. The consideration of data, Fa, leads us to decide whether or not we need to instantiate a general law in the point of view to supply the necessary connections for Fa-Ga. That could conceivably be done with any number of general laws, and their logical form need not conform to "___ ⊃ ___."

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[17] Ibid., p. 422; my italics.

Besides equivalences to this form, there are others equally fruitful, as we shall see in the next section. Expectation of Ga demands two lines under the revised model; one needs both (x) Fx ⊃ Gx and Fa ⊃ Ga, the latter of which is not just suggested by point of view, but also by Fa. What specifically does this have to do with the historian and philosophy of history? I think a great deal, for the repetitive problem is the generalized problem of historical continuity. As I see it Hume's major contribution was dealing with historical continuity. All of the models I have discussed in this essay were designed with this in mind. It is a problem to which philosophers of history should pay more attention than they have. Many other questions, such as historical truth and objectivity, depend upon answers to this problem. It is here that our analogy weakens and logic becomes bare. Here Hume resists the logical outcome of his model by Hempel and Danto. As Morton White succinctly puts it:

> What I have opposed is the idea that there is some clear inner logical core of the notion of explanation which may be analyzed without attention to what are sometimes dismissed as merely psychological or merely pragmatic overtones, and I have also opposed the even more questionable idea that we must give up our ordinary linguistic habits, allegedly because they are remnants of stone-age thinking. In a sense I have adopted a quasi-Humean approach to the problem, arguing that reference to more than law is required when we come to analyze an explanatory deductive argument and a singular explanatory statement, and that that extra something may well be <u>custom</u>. But

> it should be noticed that because custom may lead us to call some laws explanatory and others not, we need to know the way in which custom works--in other words, why it dignifies some laws by calling them explanatory. Moreover, if it is custom that decides, custom may decide differently in different cultures.[18]

As we have seen from Chapters II through IV, these pragmatic elements are in Hume's models, so much of what anti-Humean theorists call for is there. The general law "disappears" in the model as the lines in the proof progress downward towards the implied chronology. The "extra something called custom" (as White says) is the set of the rules of inference and relevance from the point of view. The notion of point of view in the Humean general theory is what adds the pragmatic dimension to his idea of history. The question as to what grounds can be regarded as a generalization or as a general law that is explanatory cannot be, as White says, answered by focusing on the logical syntax. It is semantics, if anything, that will supply our answers. This type of inquiry leads us to pragmatic considerations--into sociology and anthropology--to the point where Hume ended and rested his foundations for history. That is, to distinguish the explanatory and non-explanatory leads us finally to the questions: "To whom is X explanatory?" In a sense, all explanatory narratives in history are ad hominem arguments in that they ultimately

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[18] Op. cit., p. 77; White's italics.

appeal to questions of this sort, if we want definite answers--empirical answers. So with Popper's warning and my logico-pragmatism, we can make this final comment on the modus ponens model.

Any point of view used in history for explanatory purposes in the form of $(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$ must have its corresponding, implied chronology $(\exists x)\ Fx\ \&\ Gx$. The priority question raised by Popper is based upon restrictions running both ways in the model. The pragmatic dimension is seen in the existential quantifier, $(\exists x)$. When one questions these grounds, then it is Hume's and White's approach that needs to be taken. My final solution on semantic and syntactical levels to Popper's criticism as applied to history will be the subject of the next section.

Another Function of General Laws in History

Almost thirty years after the appearance of Professor Hempel's influential article, "The Function of General Laws in History," most of the discussion of general laws has centered around the positive, overt use of them in historical writing. This use is set up normally by employing the modus ponens argument as an aid, which we explored in the last section:

$(x)\ Fx \supset Gx$

Fa

Ga

Danto and many others follow this procedure using modus ponens as the guide. The anti-Hempelians have at times taken the line of argument that there exists a class of historical narratives which do not exhibit this logical structure for general laws. In this section, I shall show that we can make both concessions. That is to say, we can agree with the anti-Hempelians that there are such histories. And at the same time, we can agree with the Hempelians that there is (and has to be) some function of general laws for there to be an explanation, viz. a logical structure for the mode of inference. How? Change the logical model of the covering laws debate. By using the modus tollens argument as the model, we can have the best of all possible worlds (at least within the restrictions of this long controversy). Let us look at an example.

Carl N. Degler, a practicing historian, at the New York University Symposium of Philosophy and History in 1962, argued against Hempel's thesis by producing a counter-example; and concluded that,at best, general laws were only used part of the time--that some historical writing does not use them.[19] Hence, Hempel has a limited thesis, and, by implication, general laws are not essential to explanation in history. Degler's counter-example is this. There are such notable historians as Lewis Hacker and George

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[19]Hook, ed., op. cit.

Bancroft who have used general laws (as Degler calls them) such as "the English Navigation Laws led the colonial Americans to their revolution in order to break away from these restrictions." This general law was challenged by O. M. Dickerson who showed that there were virtually no objections to the laws in colonial literature. However, Degler and other anti-Hempelians are mistaken to think that there is not a function of general laws here. Logically, there is a very important function; that of falsifiability. Schematically, we have this model:

$$/\overline{(t \supset p)\ \&\ -p}/\supset -t$$

Following Karl Popper's scheme for the falsifying mode of inference as the <u>modus tollens</u> of classical logic, we can set up the following model for a class of historical narratives.[20] Let p be an inference (conclusion) from some general law, t. We may then symbolize the relation of derivability of p from t by "$t \supset p$" which may be read: "p (an instance) follows from t." Given the relation of derivability and the assumption -p, we can infer -t; that is, we regard t as falsified. So we have an expression of the sort "if p is derivable from t, and if p is false, then t also is false." Historical narratives which satisfy this model I call "Popper-valid."

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[20] <u>Op. cit.</u>, p. 76.

Now Degler admits that historians like Bancroft use general laws of the form which we noticed earlier concerning the Navigation Laws. However, Degler is mistaken in thinking that they are not used in the case of Dickerson. Dickerson's conclusion, -t, is that the particular general law used does not follow from the premises, this is elliptical in Dickerson's narrative. He simply shows the conjunction $(t \supset p) \ \& \ -p$, and lets the reader infer the obvious conclusion. But this means only that t will not work. He is trying to refute t, so general laws are used to that extent. As Marc Bloch suggested, this is a legitimate type of historical narrative in that what is not the case is easier to decide in history than what is the case or truth.[21] So the Hempelians can admit the class of histories like these that the anti-Hempelians insist upon, and the anti-Hempelians will have to admit the Hempelian's point that the historian's model(s) of inference are amenable to logical structure, and consequently, to logical analysis.

My point is that the class of histories that are used to counter the modus ponens model of general laws will not lead to the conclusion that there are no general laws or no use of them. Rather, these are amenable to the same

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[21] The Historian's Craft, Peter Putnam, trans. (New York: Random House, 1953); see also H. S. Hughes, History as Art and as Science (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 16ff.

requirements that Hempelians place on the other model. So from the approach and the results in this chapter we see that there are at least two basic classes of historical narratives: modus ponens histories and modus tollens histories. The function of many of the modus tollens histories is to make explicit the assumed general regularities that are either tacitly or overtly stated in modus ponens histories (such as Dickerson has done) in order to refute them. Looking at Hume's History of England we find numerous examples of each type of historical procedure that exhibits the logical structure of asserting and falsifying modes of inference.

Also, the falsifying mode of inference represented by modus tollens gives the historian a limited procedure for testing points of view and expressions of general laws. In a way, Hume's adaption of the Aristotelian admissibility criterion (which Bradley and Collingwood also used) is an early anticipation and expression of the falsifiability criterion as a testing procedure of historical theses and narratives.

There has been very little exploration of the analogy between deductive arguments and history and it is hoped that this chapter has contributed some to its development. It seems to me that before philosophers of history throw the analogy overboard, it needs to be worked out in more detail and from a more detached perspective. Perhaps my

suggestions in this chapter will help achieve that end and direct the attention of philosophers of history to a classification of the various modes of inferences which are used in history. It should also be evident from my examination of Hume that he is an excellent source to begin with.

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