

DAVID HUME'S NOTION OF BELIEF AND ITS RELATION TO MATTERS OF FACT

by

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The thesis concentrates upon two major works of Hume: 'A Treatise of Human Nature' and 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding' concerned to show, in the first instance, that by means of an exhaustive and doctrinaire dichotomy Hume divides all knowledge claims into Certitude and Belief. The Introduction shows how Hume, influenced by the precision and exactitude of Newton's method in investigating physical phenomena, endeavoured to build an analogous system in our enquiries concerning mental activities. It also shows how he retraced a path set by the Rationalists, and logically culminated a line of thought begun by Locke and continued by Berkeley.

The key and starting point to the problem is found in that section of the Introduction entitled 'Situating Belief' and 'Developing the Problem'. Since all our ideas are copies of impressions of sensation or reflection we find that having accepted this criterion we are forced to accept its skeptical conclusions. If, for example, every idea is in fact a copy of an antecedent impression there can be no abstract ideas. Similarly, since I have no impression of any causal power or force by which one event brings another into existence I have no valid idea of causation. My ideas of Self, Time, Mind, and Substance also fail to meet the rigor of the criterion, and finally my

ideas concerning material objects, which the thesis establishes as matters of fact, succumb to the test. Here is the beginnings of the problematic of the thesis. Since all men believe that they perceive external objects, and since philosophy convinces us that we perceive nothing but perceptions which we suppose to refer to external objects, we must investigate the causes which induce us to believe in these external objects. In the first instance Hume's primary concern is to show us how we acquire beliefs. The type of belief that he deals with, however, is the belief that concerns itself with the vividness of what is thought, and arises naturally from a disposition and propensity of the mind to relate or group impressions together. It is inward looking and answers internal questions only giving no reply as to why we believe in the permanent existence of external objects. But the statements concerning these objects are matter of fact statements, and we are therefore confronted with the problem as to how we come to believe in any matter of fact. The grounds of this belief Hume finds in a certain constancy and coherence in our impressions concerning these objects, and the constancy and coherence of these impressions so enlivens my ideas concerning external objects that I believe in their permanent and continued existence.

This, however, is only part of the story. Having established that all statements concerning the external existence of objects are statements concerning matters of fact, and having likewise

established the grounds for such beliefs we are then faced with the problem of investigating whether there is a relation between the belief and the believed matter of fact, and if there is what is the nature of this relation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO HUME'S THOUGHT AND METHODOLOGY

THE INFLUENCE OF NEWTON'S SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURE

Hume influenced by the scientific achievements of Newton was determined to set philosophy upon a new path by applying similar experimental methods to the world of our mental experience. It is, indeed, interesting to observe the parallels between the four rules proposed by Newton in his 'Principia Mathematica' with nearly analogous principles by Hume in 'A Treatise of Human Nature' and 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding'. According to Newton there are four basic rules to be observed in any scientific enquiry;

1. We are to admit no more causes to natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances.
2. To the same natural effects we must as far as possible assign the same causes.
3. The quality of bodies which admit neither intensification nor remission of degrees and which are found to belong to all bodies within reach of our experiments are to be esteemed the universal qualities of all bodies whatsoever.
4. In experimental philosophy we are to look upon propositions inferred by

general induction from phaenomena
as accurately or very nearly true,
notwithstanding any contrary hypothesis
that may be imagined, till such time
as other phaenomena occur by which
they may either be, made more accurate,
or liable to exception.¹

Besides these four rules Newton also rejected the use of
any hypothesis that was unverifiable or metaphysical;

Hitherto we have explained the phaenomena
of heavens and of our sea by the power of
gravity, but have not yet assigned the cause
of this power. This is certain, that it must
proceed from a cause that penetrates to
the very centres of the sun and planets,
without suffering the least diminution of
its force; that operates not according to
the quantity of the surfaces of the particles
upon which it acts (as mechanical causes used
to do), but according to the quantity of the
solid matter which they contain, and propagates
its vurtue on all sides to immense distances,
decreasing always in the duplicate proportion
of the distance.....
But hitherto I have not been able to discover
the cause of those properties of gravity from
phaenomena, and I frame no hypotheses
(hypotheses non fingo); for whatever is not
deduced from the phaenomena is to be called
an hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether
metaphysical or physical, whether of occult
qualities or mechanical, have no place in
experimental philosophy. In this philosophy
particular propositions are inferred from the
phaenomena, and afterwards rendered general
by induction.²

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1. F. Cajori, Newton's Principia, a revision of Motte's translation (University of California Press, 1934) pp. 398-400. Hereafter cited as Principia.
 2. Principia, V. 2, pp. 313-4.

A similar view to this is expressed by Hume when establishing a criterion of meaningfulness or verification for the objects of thought;

When we entertain any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without meaning or ideas (as is too frequent) we need but enquire from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it is impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas into so clear a light we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute, which may arise, concerning their nature and reality.³

We may also compare the following passages selected from the 'Treatise' and 'Understanding' with Newton's four basic rules of scientific investigation outlined on (p. 1).

1. Nothing is more requisite for a true philosopher, than to restrain the intemperate desire of searching into causes, and having established any doctrine upon a significant number of experiments, rest contented with that, when he sees further examination would lead him into obscure and uncertain speculation.⁴

3. David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding" in an Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding and an Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, ed. and with an introduction by L.A. Selby-Bigge (2d ed; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), p. 20. Hereafter cited as "Understanding".
4. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 13. Hereafter cited as Treatise.

2. like causes produce like effects; in the same manner as the mutual action of the elements and powers of nature.⁵
3. There are some causes which are entirely uniform and constant in producing a particular effect; and no instance has yet ever been found of any failure or irregularity in their operation. Fire has always burned and water suffocated every human creature. The production of motion by impulse and gravity is an universal law, which has hitherto admitted of no exception.⁶
4. We must therefore glean up experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs and in their pleasure. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in its certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension.⁷

Hume was indeed anxious to establish mental operations, as nearly as possible, in conformity with those rules propounded by Newton.

5. Treatise, p. 401

6. Understanding, p. 57

7. Treatise, Introduction, p. xxiii

INTRODUCTION

II. The Rationalists-Acception and Rejection-

If Newton's scientific method was to influence Hume in his formulation of an experimental science of human nature; it was the Rationalists that caught his critical mind. These philosophers arguing deductively in the manner of Euclid sought to demonstrate the existence of God, and also to demonstrate that he (God) was the cause of the universe. Hume robbed causality of any external applicability by making it a principle of the imagination, thereby setting about refuting all previously held arguments concerning it. Descartes who was unable to find any intelligible connection between the ideas of the mind and their supposed external causes invoked the veracity of God to assure him of the certitude of this causality. Malebranche, on the other hand, found God to be the cause of all power in the universe; while Leibniz supposed the universe to consist of souls whose thoughts unveiled in some pre-established harmony with each other to present the appearance of a material world in space and time.

Hume effectively destroyed all these theories. Firstly he reduced God's existence to a matter of fact thereby denying that we could have any certitude of his existence or prove such existence demonstratively. The existence of God thus became

a matter of belief and probability. He further denied any hidden power or force in the relation between things proclaiming that experience was analyzable.

His attitude towards the Rationalists, however, was not altogether negative. Like Descartes and Malebranche he was particularly interested in the limitations of the human mind, and was to research this problem thoroughly, finally turning to Malebranche who had found, as he thought, the solution to the limitation of the senses through the imagination. Hume was to use this insight of Malebranche's in the formulation of his doctrine of belief;

Through the writings of Malebranche a new field of enquiry appeared. Hume had found out, on his own account, that the inferring of causes or effects is a process of mind for which no reason can be given. He could not believe so important an act of thought is utterly arbitrary on the part of the whole human race. Then he saw many analogies for it in those different studies on the human understanding made by Montaigne, Hobbes, and particularly Malebranche.⁷

Malebranche had come to the conclusion that the temporal events of the world of external existence was separate and unconnected not effecting each other directly or indirectly. Hume agreed with this, and like Malebranche was faced with the problem of reconciling our belief that every event has a cause with the fact that the sequence of events in nature do not cause each

7. Charles W. Hendel, Studies in the Philosophy of David Hume. Revised edition. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, Library of Liberal Arts, 1963), pp. 85-6. Hereafter cited as Studies.

other. Malebranche solved the problem by finding the principle of connection in the workings of the imagination. Hume also found the connecting principle here, but whereas Malebranche in his final analysis was able to attribute the ultimate source and cause of such connections to God, Hume was to conclude that the ultimate cause of such connections were unknown.

III. Locke and Berkeley - The Foundations of a System

Here then is the only expedient from which we can hope for success in our philosophical researches, to leave the tedious lingering method which we have hitherto followed and instead of taking now and then a castle or village, to march up directly to the capital or centre of these sciences, to human nature itself, which being once masters of, we may everywhere else hope for an easy victory. From this station we may extend our conquests over all those sciences which more intimately concern human life and may afterwards proceed at leisure to discover more fully those which are the subjects of pure curiosity. There is no question of importance whose decision is not comprised in the science of man; and there is none which can be decided with any certainty before we become acquainted with that science. In pretending, therefore, to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security. And as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation.....

For 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 from careful and exact experiments and the observation of those particular effects which result from its different circumstances and situations. And though we must endeavour to render all our principles as universal as possible by tracing up our experiments to the utmost and explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes, it is still certain we cannot go beyond experience; and any hypothesis that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature ought at first to be rejected as presumptive and chimerical.⁸

The principles here enunciated by Hume might be regarded as analogous to Locke in sentiment and Newton in experiment. Locke in his 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding' - In the preface 'Epistle to the reader' - tells us;

I shall not at present meddle with the physical consideration of the mind, or trouble myself to examine wherein its essence consists, or by what motions of our spirits, or alterations of our bodies, we come to have any sensations by our organs, or any ideas in our understandings; and whether those ideas do, in their formation, any or all of them, depend on matter or no; these are speculations which, however curious and entertaining, I shall decline, as lying out of my way, in the design I am now upon. It shall suffice to my present purpose, to consider the discerning faculties of man, as they are employed about the objects which they have to do with.⁹

8. Treatise, Introduction. cf. Principia, V.2, pp. 313-4 (cited in part in this thesis p. 5).

9. M.V. Cousin, Course of the History of Modern Philosophy, translated by O.W. Wright in Two volumes (London; Hamilton, Adams, 1852) p. 154.

Locke, as was Hume after him, is convinced that this is the only useful and successful means of philosophical research, and he reduces, as does Hume, his enquiry into the 'nature of human understanding' into fundamental principles of inference and operation. These may be summarised as follows;

1. The only immediate objects of knowledge are ideas.
2. All ideas are acquired, i.e. they are not innate.
3. Knowledge is the synthesization of ideas; the perception of the agreement or disagreement of them in their comparison and relation.

Ideas, for Locke, were distinct from things and from the mind; they had an intermediary existence between the mind and its objects. The origins of all knowledge was experience, and this source of experience was twofold; 'sensation' - involving the ideas of the external world, and 'reflection' - the perception of the operations of our mind in reasoning, willing, and believing. The ideas derived by means of these operations either singularly or together were either simple or complex.

Berkeley questioned this distinction of Locke's between ideas and things maintaining that if knowledge was concerned primarily and immediately with ideas - in their relations and comparisons - and if we can never go beyond such ideas to the things that they represent; the distinction between ideas and

things becomes unintelligible;

But say you, although the ideas themselves do not exist without the mind, there may be things like them whereof they are copies of resemblances, which things exist without the mind in an "unthinking" substance. I answer an idea can be like nothing but an idea, a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure. If we look but ever so little into our thoughts we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness, except only between our ideas. Again I ask whether those supposed "originals" or external things of which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceivable or no? If they are then they are ideas, and we have gained our point, but if you say they are not, I appeal to anyone whether it be sense, to assert a colour is like something which is invisible.¹⁰

Knowledge according to Berkeley is concerned immediately with objects and not ideas as proclaimed by Locke, and if knowledge is a perception of objects and their relations, objects are as they are in perception; there esse is percipii.

Hume was impressed by this argument of Berkeley's and used it to attack Locke not as Berkeley had done on the distinction between ideas and things, but between his distinction of ideas and the mind. Hume maintained that the only thing that we are given in perception is that which is perceived - perceptions - The mind distinct from perceptions is not given, that is, the

10. G. Berkeley, The Principles of Human Knowledge, with other writings, ed. and with an introduction by G.J. Warnock (London: Collins; 1962) p. 68.

mind is not a datum of experience, it is nothing but a 'bundle of perceptions'. If we push Locke's argument to its logical conclusions we must admit that what is immediately given in perception is the content of perceptions - impressions - and these are the only immediate objects of knowledge, and knowledge, as such, is only able to deal with the relations between these impressions. To pass beyond this point either to objects which impressions represent or to the mind which perceives them is to go beyond experience. Knowledge is thus limited to the immediate data of experience - impressions.

Hume thus used Berkeley's argument against Locke to arrive at - by a principle of rigorous reduction - the immediate source of all knowledge; the original data of experience - perceptions.

By the term impression, I mean all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And impressions are distinguished from ideas, which are the less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of these sensations or movements above mentioned.¹¹

And since all our ideas are derived from impressions, we are from this fact able to establish a rule or criterion of meaning;

¹¹. Understanding, p. 17

When we entertain any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is too frequent) we need but enquire from which impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas into so clear a light we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute which may arise, concerning their nature and reality.¹²

Hume originally obtained this insight from Berkeley, and he now proceeds to use it against Berkeley by maintaining that since all knowledge comes through the senses, and as we have no sense knowledge of God; Berkeley's claim that the external world is maintained in its order and continuity by the fact that it is perceived by God is unintelligible; since we have no sense impression of God we can never be certain of his actual existence and any enquiry into his existence extends the bounds of human understanding.

In conclusion we may say that Hume's philosophy could be regarded as an attempt to use the scientific tools of Newton in the field of human enquiry, and that his philosophical thought was the culmination of a line of thinking originated by Locke.

IV. Situating Belief - Ordinary and Natural Belief

We must take account and endeavour to reconcile two belief statements in Hume;

12. Ibid. p. 20.

1. Ordinary belief.
2. Philosophical or Natural belief.

Ordinary belief is concerned with the vividness of what is thought, and is an expression of and an answer to internal questions; philosophical or natural belief, on the other hand, is an attitude of the believer, and an expression of and an answer to external questions. The distinction between the two may be reduced ultimately to a distinction between how we come to acquire beliefs and how we come to believe. Belief in both instances is the direct consequence of the application of Hume's new method.

In applying Hume's method we call before the court of enquiry all our claims to knowledge, analyse these claims, "turn them on all sides" in order to find the impression which produced their ideas. The system is clear and straight forward: first reduce the ideas contained in the knowledge claim to their constituent simple ideas, and if after this there remain any obscurity about them produce the impression from which they are derived. To this test he subjects such notions as space, time, cause, necessary connection, substance, self and mind. In each case in turn he is unable to find any single distinct sense impression as the source of these ideas;

.....I desire those philosophers, who pretend that we have the idea of the substance

of our minds, to point out the impression that produces it, and tell distinctly after what manner that impression operates, and from what object it is derived.¹³

Similarly, he declares that we have no idea of self since there is no impression of certainty and invariability as the self is claimed to be;

If an impression gives rise to an idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same: thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable.¹⁴

Speaking of causal connection he denies that such a connection is either sensed or apprehended by reason;

.....in no single instance the ultimate connection of any objects is discoverable, either by our senses or reason.¹⁵

Nor is the idea of necessary connection derived from any distinct sense impression or from any necessary connection among our impressions, but rather from the "customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant".¹⁶

13. Treatise, p. 233.

14. Treatise, p. 251.

15. Ibid. p. 400.

16. Ibid. p. 165.

The idea of cause similarly escapes the senses, and is to be understood in terms of a persistent habit of human nature to expect similar events to be followed by similar experiences;

Their constant conjunction in past instances has produced such a habit in the mind, that it always conjoins them in its thoughts, and infers the existence of the one from that of its usual attendant.¹⁷

At first glance it would appear that our quest for the impression from which all of these ideas are derived should be abandoned, and the ideas in accordance with the principle;

where we cannot find an impression, we can be certain that there is no idea.¹⁸

be cast into the oblivion of meaninglessness. But such a conclusion would be hasty judgment indeed since an immense number of our ideas cannot be directly referred to a distinct sense impression, but may be indirectly referred back to impressions of reflection;

Impressions may be divided into two kinds, those of sensation and those of reflexion. The first kind arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes. The second is derived in a great measure from our ideas, and that in the following order. An impression first strikes upon the senses and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind which remains

17. Ibid. p. 128; cf. p. 100; Understanding, p. 82.

18. Understanding, p. 78.

after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impression of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion because derived from it.¹⁹

or may be causally dependent upon impressions as are the ideas of space and time. The idea of space for instance is said to arise from the manner or order of visual and tactual impressions;

.....space is convey'd to the mind by two senses, the sight and the touch.....²⁰

And the idea of time;

.....is not derived from a particular impression mixed up with others, and plainly distinguished from them; but arises altogether from the manner, in which impressions appear to the mind.²¹

Consequently, we may say that although we have no single distinct sense impression from which many of our ideas are derived, we do nevertheless refer them to impressions either by defining them in terms of impressions, or by grouping individual impressions into a unified whole, or by reflection, or by the transition of one impression or idea to another. Thus Substance, for example is;

19. Treatise, p. 7.

20. Ibid. p. 36.

21. Treatise, p. 38.

is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection.²²

Self; is nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions.²³

Necessity;arises from some impression. There is no impression convey'd by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be derived from an impression of reflection.²⁴

The source of this impression of reflection from which our idea of necessity is obtained is sometimes said to be the 'customary transition' of our thought between causes and effects, or the disposition or 'propensity' of the mind to make this transition.²⁵ It is an essential part of causation, as is evidenced from the following definition;

a cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other.²⁶

It is by this means that Hume reduces all knowledge claims to impressions and relations. Since we perceive no substance,

22. Ibid. p. 15.

23. Ibid. p. 252.

24. Ibid. p. 165.

25. Treatise, p. 165.

26. Ibid. p. 170.

no mind etc., but only impressions and ideas derived from them, we must interpret mind, substance, necessary connection, and the rest in terms of impressions and ideas. By interpreting them in this way Hume robs them of any external applicability, that is to say, they are no longer principles applicable to things, but become principles for the grouping and association of ideas. The result of all of this is that the only things we are immediately aware of are our impressions, and thus what we know are impressions or ideas corresponding to impressions. Our minds so absorbed with impressions, immediately aware of nothing but impressions, gives assent to the ideas that these impressions represent. It is determined to such assent by the liveliness and vivacity of the idea itself. Belief in and of itself is, therefore, nothing but;

A lively idea related to or associated with a present impression. My hypothesis is, that belief is only a strong and steady conception of any idea, and such as approaches to an immediate impression. An idea assented to feels different from a fictitious idea. This different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior force or vivacity, or solidity, or firmness, or steadiness. Ideas to which we assent are more strong, firm, and vivid than the loose reveries of a castle builder. Belief only changes our manner of conceiving the idea, and renders it more strong and lively. There enters nothing into this operation of the mind but a present impression, a lively idea, and a relation or association in the fancy between the impression

and the idea; so that there can be no suspicion of a mistake. Belief is a more vivid and intense conception of an idea, proceeding from its relation to a present impression. Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation.²⁷

This particular characteristic of the idea causing us to believe in it is derived from the associated link with a present impression; the impression, by definition, more lively than an idea has the peculiar quality of transmitting some of its strength and vivacity to the idea associated with it. Belief under these circumstances is not an attitude of the believer, although the believer is determined to believe what is presented; it is essentially a property of vividness attached to what is thought. What Hume has done here and what he claims to have done, is to show that all knowledge is ultimately reduced to our immediate experience-impressions-and try as we may there can be no knowledge of anything else;

Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible. Let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe. We never really advance a step beyond ourselves. Nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appeared in that narrow compass. This is the universe of imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produced.²⁸

27. Treatise, p. 67.

28. Treatise, p. 67.

Consequently we are enclosed completely within ourselves, nor does there appear any way of breaking this solipsism; reason is unable to help us since reason deals only with ideas and not with the matters of fact of external existence; causality, likewise, is unable to help us since there is no law of causality by which we are able to infer one thing from another since causality can only be known as a feeling attending frequent and regular association. Cause like any other idea is a copy of an impression; it is not a power apprehended in things, but rather the power and vivacity of an impression of reflection; a feeling due to custom.

Perhaps at this stage we should briefly reflect and look closely at what Hume has done, and alternatively what he has not done. First of all he has claimed to have shown that there can be no knowledge of anything other than our immediate experience, and that belief is a property of an idea. What he has not claimed to have shown is that the (1) events of the external world of existence are causally related; (2) that it is false that the events of the external world of existence are related in the future as they were in the past. These two statements were a matter of belief for Hume - an attitude of mind - He firmly believed both of them just as everybody else does if they wish to live a normal practical life. These are natural beliefs, ineradicable dictates of human nature. What

Hume has shown is that these beliefs cannot be obtained by means of any empirical observation or reason, intuitive or inferential. The evidence for them escapes us. Reflection, as we have seen, is unable to produce this evidence, but nevertheless we are determined to believe in them. Hume does not deny our belief in these matters but rather the evidence for them. The only objects of which we have evidence are the immediate objects of consciousness - impressions - and any attempt to argue from these to a continuing external existence outside the mind is futile; sensations are the only objects of knowledge, and although we have a natural belief in an external extra mental world;

Whatever may be the readers opinion at the
present moment.....an hour hence
he will be persuaded there is both an
external and internal world.....29.

there is no theory or principle that can justify such a belief - it is an attitude of mind-common to both the 'vulgar' and 'philosopher' alike-indispensable to normal living, but nevertheless unverifiable. The best that we can do is give some psychological explanation of this type of belief just as we did for necessity and causality;

29. Treatise, p. 218.

When we infer the existence of an object from that of others, some object must always be present either to the memory or senses in order to be the foundation of our reasoning since the mind cannot run up with its inferences in infinitum. Reason can never satisfy us that the existence of any one object does ever imply that of another, so that when we pass from the impression of one to the idea or belief of another, we are not determined by reason, but by custom or a principle of association.³⁰

What then is the nature of this association with regards to our belief in the permanent external existence of bodies outside the mind. Our impressions we are told have a certain coherence and constancy i.e. they come together and recur in the same order and priority. The imagination by customs and habit carries on this order and constancy, and thereby attributes more regularity to the objects of perception than they actually possess. In this way we come to believe in a world of permanent objects outside the mind. In so doing, we reconcile what reason tells us about the interrupted and perishing existence of perceptions with what the imagination tells us about their regularity by a philosophical belief as opposed to a vulgar belief in a world of permanent continuing external existence. Despite this, however, a permanent opposition between reason and the imagination still prevails. Although we may think of objects

30. Treatise, p. 96.

as bundles of perceptions we do not believe them to be so. Hume must account for this belief. He can find no justification for it apart from the psychological tendency we have to suppose the world to be permanently existing, and he therefore grounds belief in this supposition. The grounds of the supposition are to be found in the constancy and coherence of some of our impressions, and it is presumed or supposed that a like constancy prevails in nature otherwise we would not have this idea of regularity and the continued existence of external objects.

It is the recurrence of constancy and coherence in our ideas of external reality that gives force and vivacity to the supposition thereby raising it to the status of belief in the external reality which it supposes to exist.

V. Developing the Problem - The Two World Views

Hume's rigorous reduction seems to have limited him to an impressionistic view of reality apparently leaving no room for distinction between the objective world of matter of fact and the subjective world of ideas. Indeed, it does appear that there are not two worlds at all, but only one - the world of impressions;

'Tis certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greater part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence. 'Tis also certain, that this very perception or object is supposed to have a continued uninterrupted being, and neither to be annihilated by our absence, nor to be brought into existence by our presence. When we are absent from it, we say it still exists, but that we do not feel, we do not see it. When we are present, we say we feel or see it.³¹

It must be understood, however, that Hume is here accounting for the beliefs of the 'vulgar';

That I may avoid all ambiguity and confusion on this head, I shall observe, that I here account for the opinions and beliefs of the vulgar with regard to the existence of body;..³²

31. Treatise, p. 206.

32. Ibid. p. 202; cf. p. 209.

Hume continues to present the arguments of the 'vulgar' who believe that we are aware of perceptions only, and that some of these perceptions - primary and secondary qualities - have permanent existence;

.....we may observe that there are three different kinds of impressions convey'd by the senses. The first are those of figure, bulk, motion, and solidity of bodies. The second those of colour, tastes, smells, sounds, heat and cold. The third are the pains and pleasures that arise from the application of objects to our bodies as by the cutting of our flesh with steel and such like. Both philosophers and the vulgar suppose the first of these to have a distinct continued existence. The vulgar only regard the second as on the same footing. Both philosophers and the vulgar, again, esteem the third to be merely perceptions and consequently interrupted and dependent existences. Now, it is evident that whatever may be our philosophical opinion; colour, sounds, heat and cold, as far as appears to the senses exists after the same manner with motions and solidity, and that the difference we make betwixt them, in this respect, arises from the mere perceptions. So strong is the prejudice for distinct continued existence of the former qualities that when the contrary opinion is advanced by modern philosophers, people imagine they can almost refute it from their feeling and experience and that their senses contradict this philosophy. It is also evident that colours, sounds etc. are originally on the same footing with the pain that arises from steel and the pleasure that proceeds from a fire, and that the difference betwixt them is founded neither on perception nor reason but in the imagination..... Upon the whole, then, we may conclude that as far as the senses are judges, all perceptions are the same in the manner of their existence.³³

33. Treatise, pp. 192-3.

The view here expressed by Hume is an important one. It states clearly and distinctly that all our impressions are alike in that they are internal perishing existences, and thus an appeal to our sense impressions is never able to give us a knowledge of the distinct and continued existence of a world of objects nor indeed are we able to arrive at such a knowledge by means of reason;

.....We can contribute a distinct continued existence to objects without ever consulting reason or weighing our opinions by any philosophical principles, indeed, whatever convincing arguments philosophers may fancy they can produce to establish the belief of objects independent of mind, it is obvious these arguments are known to very few and that it is not by them that children, peasants and the greatest part of mankind are induced to attribute objects to some impressions and deny them to others.³⁴

There are, therefore, some impressions to which we do attribute a continued objective existence, and in this respect the 'vulgar' are correct, but they;

.....confound perceptions and objects and attribute a distinct continued existence to the very things they feel or see. This sentiment, then, as it is entirely unreasonable, must proceed from some other faculty than the understanding. To which we may add that as long as we take our perceptions and objects to be the same, we can never infer the existence of the one from that of the other nor from any argument from the relation of cause and effect, which is the only one that can assure us of matter of fact.³⁵

34. Treatise, p. 193.

35. Loc.cit. p. 193.

Hume continues his argument by declaring that the 'vulgar' opinion in so far as it does not distinguish between perceptions and objects must be rejected;

The natural consequence of this reasoning shou'd be, that our perceptions have no more a continu'd than an independent existence; and indeed philosophers have so far run into this opinion, that they change their systems, and distinguish, (as we shall do for the future) betwixt perceptions and objects.³⁶

Hume is thus prepared to distinguish as philosophers do, between two types of existences; objects and perceptions. He is concerned to tell us that this doctrine of double existence of perceptions and objects;

has no primary recommendation, either to reason or the imagination.³⁷

But the distinction is useful because it is agreeable to both the reason and the imagination;

this hypothesis is the philosophical one of the double existence of perceptions and objects; which pleases our reason, in allowing, that our dependent perceptions are interrupted and different; and at the same time is agreeable to the imagination, in attributing a continued existence to something else, which we call objects.³⁸

Despite any arguments to the contrary Hume admits that he and the reader will continue to believe the philosophical

36. Treatise, p. 211.

37. Ibid. p. 212.

38. Ibid. p. 215.

doctrine of double existence;

.....Whatever may be the readers opinion
at this present moment, that an hour hence
he will be persuaded there is an external
and internal world.....³⁹

Upon what side of this argument between the views of the vulgar and the philosopher, we may ask, does Hume come out in favor of? It is obvious that Hume rejects the vulgar system and assents to the philosophical system in one basis aspect only, and that is, that real independent continued existences are not the objects of our immediate consciousness, they are no more than internal perishing existences;

Hume dissents from the vulgar system, and agrees with the philosophical system, in one fundamental respect, namely, in holding that real independent existences are not the objects of immediate consciousness. The objects of immediate consciousness are, he holds, in all cases the internal and perishing existences. As to this, there can, he maintains, be no reasonable doubt; the testimony of experience suffices to prove it beyond all question.⁴⁰

In retrospect we could say that Hume has presented us with two world views; the impressionistic representative world which we know, and the objective continuing world of reality which we

39. Treatise, p. 218.

40. N. Kemp Smith, The Philosophy of David Hume; A Critical Study of Its Origins and Central Doctrines (New York; MacMillan; 1960) p. 451. Hereafter cited as Kemp Smith.

believe. The two pictures tell different stories. If, for example, we were to ask; is the world of continued external existence subject to causal laws? The impressionistic world picture would answer no; since we do not perceive any causal laws. The world of belief, on the other hand, would say yes; every event follows a unique and definite invariable pattern from a preceeding event. If, for example, I hit a billard ball, it will move; if I drop a glass it will continue to fall and eventually break; when I see the billard ball moving towards the other not only do I think of it hitting and moving the other, but I expect this to happen and believe that it will happen; when I see the glass falling, I do not only think that it will break but expect and believe it to do so. In each of these cases there is a cause producing an effect. Similarly, the impressionistic picture tells us that the world of objectivity is fragmentary and perishing in its existence because we can have no direct impression of continuity and substantiality. Belief, on the other hand, tells us that it is substantial and continuous in its existence. Still further; belief tells us that things happen in space and time, but the impressionistic world cannot represent things in space and time as it has no distinct impression of these. It seems that we are engaged in a cognitive conflict. What do we do in such a conflict? We appeal to the world of matter of fact via scientific procedure. But we can never be sure of any matter

of fact since it may always be thought to be otherwise without contradiction;

That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, that the affirmation, that it will rise.⁴¹

we must therefore search for a method other than certitude to resolve the conflict. The method that suggests itself is probability. We believe in the continued existence of an external world because it is more probable that it is continually existing than not so. That is to say, we suppose it more likely that the world is continually existing than fragmentary and perishing.

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution; he weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: To that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation, and when at last he fixes his judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability. All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. A hundred instances or experiments on the one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation

⁴¹. Understanding, p. 26.

of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance. In all cases, we must balance the opposite experiments where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence.⁴²

Hume, as we have observed, starts from those things of which we are immediately aware and certain - our impressions - These impressions come to us through the organs of sensation - the antennas attached to the external world - the most important of these is sight. When we perceive we see things in a particular order, located in a particular space in time. We relate these representations to our ordinary day life; thus, space and time have meaning in the ordinary sense; they are interpreted by the ordinary man - the vulgar - as the space in which he dines, greets his family and friends; locates things. There are, of course, some things which do not appear to have this constancy and coherence, but from those observations which are consistent and coherent we infer - causally infer - the existence of certain permanent origins which we describe as 'matters of fact or original existences', and this generates a belief - again causally - in the existence of a world of material continuous entities existing in space and time. Obviously this material world of belief in the first instance has been nothing more than a mental image and may in fact

⁴². Ibid. p. 154.

have no existence outside the mind. But when we go to sleep, for example, or leave the fire, we find upon awaking or return to our 'chamber' a bundle of new sensations which we can reasonably identify, and which appear to resemble the old. My 'chamber' after awaking in the morning is the same as it was the night before; the fire which I left for an hour still continues to burn. I therefore presume, all philosophical arguments to the contrary, that these things have been in existence all the time. The moon, the planets, the stars, the sea, my home; all of which I left behind in my unconscious state of sleep are upon awaking in the same condition and position as they were during my waking hours. We therefore conclude with a high degree of probability that such events together with their space time configurations must be continuous existents. The evidence boards on the doorstep of certainty and the supposition reaches the status of belief;

.....we always suppose an external universe which depends not on our perceptions, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated.....⁴³

Such an account of a believed external world is not without difficulty. Three problems (discussed in the body of the thesis) immediately come to mind;

1. Is the believed world identical to the belief of its existence?

⁴³. Understanding, p. 151.

The answer to this question is no; having answered it in the negative, a further question is raised;

2. If there is no relation of identity
between the belief and the believed -
is there any relation at all?

The answer to this question is yes; and having answered it in the affirmative, a further problem arises;

3. 'If there is a relation between the
belief and the believed matter of fact;
what is the nature of this relation?

CHAPTER 11METHODS: DIFFERENTIATION AND REDUCTION- KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF1. EXPLANATORY NOTE.

There are two methodological dichotomies evidenced in Hume's work; which may be described as epistemological principles of Differentiation and Reduction; the mind, Hume tells us, in its operations works in two ways:

1. It infers
2. It compares

When it infers it infers matters of fact, and this operation is called 'Moral Reasoning'; when it compares it compares ideas, and this operation is called 'Demonstrative Reasoning'. Associated with these two operations are what may be termed their operational objects:

1. Matters of fact
2. Matters of logic

By means of this exhaustive dichotomy Hume is able at one and the same time to differentiate and reduce the objects of human enquiry. This is in essence the root of Hume's empiricism, and the foundation of his new method. The system may be reduced to two propositions, which to my mind, brings out clearly the

importance of the two principles. Firstly, with regard to ideas; ideas for Hume are all derived from the impressions of sense or inner feelings;

An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impression of desire and aversions, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection because derived from it.¹

Ideas thus become the immediate objects of our awareness, in the sense that they are derived from impressions and representations of these impressions, and we are unable to conceive of anything different from them.

Hume's empiricism, however, requires other premises besides impressions if his system is to be called a "science of human nature" founded on experiment, experience, and observation. He requires premises derived or inferred from extra mental experience. These premises are the matters of fact of external existence. Such matters of fact can never be proved by reasonings a priori. They are discovered in or inferred from experience. We must note here a peculiarity of Hume which could cause some confusion.

1. Treatise, p. 7.

This inferring of matters of fact is not a formal inference or demonstration. The matters of fact themselves, as will be shown later, are the objects of external existence distinguished from our knowledge or inferences concerning them, on the one hand, and our knowledge of the relation of ideas, on the other. Our knowledge of matters of fact refer to temporal position, and are thus causally dependent upon our observation or perspective experience, and thereby require at least one premise which refers to the present or the past. When, for example, we experience two objects to have been constantly conjoined in our past history, we infer upon the recurrence of the one the other. What Hume means here is that when we perceive the one we expect and believe the other. He adamantly denies any formal inference or demonstration;

All reasonings concerning matters of fact are founded on the relation of cause and effect, and we can never infer the existence of one object from another, unless they be connected together, either mediately or immediately.²

There are two things of importance in the above statement;

1. Matters of fact are non demonstrable.
2. Matters of fact depend upon the relation of cause and effect and not upon the relation of ideas.

2. Understanding, p. 76.

But perhaps, this relation itself is discovered by inference, i.e. demonstration; if it were, matters of fact would then be demonstrable and one existence could be inferred from another. Hume is well aware of this argument and categorically rejects it by affirming that the power by which one object produces another is never discovered from their ideas;

Now nothing is more evident, than that the human mind cannot form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them, or comprehend distinctly that power or efficacy, by which they are united.³

Consequently all objects appear to us separable and distinct;

.....upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connexion which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another: but we can never observe any tie between them.⁴

Thus, there are no facts about the world of external existence that can be obtained by 'Demonstrative Reasoning' and any facts that do inform us of external existence are established in and on experience;

.....experience only teaches us how one event constantly follows another; without instructing us in the secret connexion, which binds them together, and renders them inseparable.⁵

3. Treatise, p. 161; cf. p. 162.

4. Understanding, p. 74.

5. Ibid. p. 66

With these explanatory remarks Hume's dichotomy should now be clear. In summary form it may be reduced to two propositions;

1. All our ideas are derived from impressions of sense or inner feelings.
2. Matters of fact are discovered in or inferred from experience; they are non demonstrable and therefore cannot be proved by reasonings a priori.

II. Matters of Logic - Demonstrative Knowledge

The distinction between 'Matters of Logic' and 'Matters of fact' is made both in the 'Treatise' (Pt. 111; Sect. 1) and the 'Enquiry' (Pt. 1; Sect. IV), but with a difference in terminology. In the 'Treatise' Hume makes it a distinction between 'knowledge' and 'probability' whereas in the 'Enquiry' it becomes a distinction between the 'Relation of ideas' and 'Matters of fact'. Both distinctions, however, have the same consequences. There parallels in other fields of philosophy are 'analytic' and 'synthetic' propositions. 'Knowledge' and 'Relation of ideas' would correspond to analytic statements, and 'Matters of fact' and 'Probability' would refer to synthetic statements.

The epistemological consequences of the distinction, as will become clear, is a differentiation between 'knowledge' and 'belief'. Knowledge statements state relations between ideas; the propositions of the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic, and "every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain" (6) belong to this class. We are given some examples of such propositions;

that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides, is a proposition which expresses a relation between these figures.⁷

6. Understanding, p. 25.

7. Ibid. p. 25.

And

three times five is equal to half of thirty, expresses a relation between these numbers.⁸

Such propositions as these Hume declares are discovered by;

the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there were never a triangle or circle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would forever retain their certainty and evidence.⁹

The certitude of these statements is 'dependent entirely on the ideas', and is 'invariable so long as the ideas remain the same' and is 'unalterable so long as the ideas continue the same', and is discoverable from the 'mere ideas' themselves.¹⁰ This discovery from the 'mere ideas' is done in two ways; either by 'intuition' or 'demonstration'. Those relations which come under intuition rather than demonstration are said to be, Resemblance, Contrariety, and degrees of quality;

Three of these relations are discoverable at first sight and fall more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration. When any objects resemble each other, the resemblance will at first strike the eye, or rather the mind, and seldom requires a second examination. The same is the case with contrariety and with the degrees of quality. No one can doubt but existence and non existence destroy each other and are perfectly incompatible and contrary. And though it be impossible to judge exactly of the degree of any quality, such as colour, taste, heat, cold,

8. Understanding, p. 25.

9. Ibid. p. 25.

10. Treatise, pp. 69, 74, 89.

when the difference betwixt them is very small, yet it is easy to decide that any of them is superior or inferior to another when their difference is considerable. And this decision we always pronounce at first sight, without any enquiry or reasoning.¹¹

The propositions of quantity or number, however, are relations by which we have demonstrative knowledge. Algebra and Arithmetic certainly come under this heading. Hume originally placed Geometry in this category but seemed to have some doubts afterwards. Without going into the reasons for this doubt, it becomes evident that 'Matters of Logic' and 'Relations of Ideas' give us certainty because their denial involves contradiction. Consequently, certitude is that which does not involve contradiction, and that which does not involve contradiction is knowledge;

the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas.¹²

III. Kinds of Existences - Objects and Perceptions

Frequently it is considered that when Hume refers to matters of fact he is referring to objects, and alternatively when referring to objects he is referring to perceptions. The immediate and obvious conclusion from this simple analysis is that matters of fact are perceptions. The situation, however,

11. Treatise, p. 70.

12. Treatise, p. 124.

is not as simple as this and cannot be accepted without investigation into Hume's use of the word object. Often his use of the word 'object' conveys little meaning concerning the nature of objects as is evidenced from the following examples;

Reason can never show us the connection
of one object with another.....¹³

And

.....the understanding never observes any
real connexion among objects.....¹⁴

Further, there are times when he considers that 'objects have no discoverable connexion together'.¹⁵ Turning to the Appendix to the 'Treatise of Human Nature' we find similar remarks, as the above, made concerning existences, and also similarly we find the nature of the existence not always spelt out;

.....no connexion among distinct existences
are ever discovered by human understanding.¹⁶

He also declares here that every perception is a distinct existence;

that all our distinct perceptions are
distinct existences and that the mind
never perceives any real connexion among
distinct existences.¹⁷

¹³. Treatise, p. 32.

¹⁴. Ibid. p. 259.

¹⁵. Ibid. p. 111

¹⁶. Treatise, p. 635.

¹⁷. Ibid. p. 636.

Taking these remarks concerning objects and existences together we could conclude that it does appear to be the case that there are objects which may be considered to be existences, and that there are perceptions which likewise are existences. We cannot conclude from this, however, that objects are perceptions. There is, nevertheless, one case and one case only where Hume definitively describes objects as perceptions, and this occurs in that section of the 'Treatise' entitled 'Of Scepticism with regard to the Senses'. After telling us that there is no absurdity in isolating any perception from that 'bundle of perceptions' called the mind, he continues to say;

If the name of perception renders not this separation from a mind absurd and contradictory, the name object standing for the very same thing, can never render their conjunction impossible.¹⁸

This one occasion whereby Hume makes object synonymous with perception occurs in that part where for purposes of preciseness he has chosen to speak in terms of the 'vulgar' by identifying objects with perceptions;

Tis certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greater part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence.¹⁹

18. Treatise, p. 207.

19. Ibid. p. 206.

He expressly tells us here that he has purposely chosen to speak this way to account only for the beliefs of the vulgar;

In order, therefore, to accommodate myself to their notions, I shall at first suppose; that there is only a single existence, which I shall call indifferently object or perception, according as it shall best seem to suit my purpose - I shall be sure to give warning, when I return to a more philosophical way of speaking and thinking.²⁰

Concluding his exposition Hume tells us he has finished speaking as a member of the 'vulgar' and is returning to the philosophical expression of a distinction between objects and perceptions;

The natural consequences of this reason should be, that our perceptions have no more a continued than an independent existence; and indeed philosophers have so far run into this opinion, that they change their system, and distinguish, (as we shall do for the future) betwixt perceptions and objects.....²¹

Obviously Hume has here committed himself to a distinction between objects and perceptions, and we can rightly say that there are at least two classes of existences; objects and perceptions, and it is to objects, as we see in the following quotation, that we attribute a continued existence;

This hypothesis is the philosophical one of double existence of perceptions and objects; which pleases our reason,

20. Treatise, p. 202.

21. Ibid. p. 211.

in allowing, that our dependent perceptions are interrupted and different; and at the same time is agreeable to the imagination, in attributing a continu'd existence to something else, which we call objects....²²

This distinction between the order of objects and the order of perceptions is similarly made in the 'Enquiries';

.....and no man who reflects, ever doubted that the existences, which we consider, when we say, this house and that tree, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent.²³

There is a section in the 'Treatise' where Hume maintains that objects contribute to producing impressions;

Original impressions or impressions of sensation are such as without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs.²⁴

And these objects which are applied to the external organs are indeed external objects as becomes clear from Hume's explanation of the sensation of taste;

The palate must be excited by an external object, in order to produce any relish.....²⁵

22. Ibid. p. 215.

23. Understanding, p. 152.

24. Treatise, p. 275.

25. Ibid. p. 287.

And these external objects are extended bodies;

....'tis upon the application of the
extended body to our senses we perceive
its particular taste and smell.....²⁶

Once we see that there is a difference between objects
and perceptions, we likewise see that only perceptions are truly
present to the mind and directly known; external objects being
known only indirectly through perceptions;

We may observe, that 'tis universally
allow'd by philosophers, and is besides
pretty obvious of itself, that nothing
is ever really present with the mind but
its perceptions or impressions and ideas,
and that external objects become known
to us only by those perceptions they
occasion.²⁷

It follows from the above that external objects are known
mediately by means of perceptions which are copies of these
objects;

The most vulgar philosophy informs us,
that no external object can make itself
known to the mind immediately, and without
the inter-position of an image or perception.
That table which now appears to me is only
a perception.....²⁸

26. Ibid. p. 237.

27. Treatise, p. 67.

28. Ibid. p. 239.

It does appear from our discussion so far that a distinction can rightly be made between perceptions and objects, and that a separate and distinct existence attributed to both of them since;

.....whatever objects are separable
are also distinguishable, and that
whatever objects are distinguishable
are also different.²⁹

There are, nevertheless, passages in which perceptions do appear to be synonymous with objects;

Ideas always represent the objects or
impressions from which they are deriv'd,
and can never without a fiction represent
or be apply'd to any other.³⁰

And Ideas always represent their objects or
impressions and vice versa, there are
some objects necessary to give rise to
every idea.³¹

The previous statements suggest that Hume understands objects and perceptions or objects and impressions to be synonymous. But is this really so? In the examples quoted

29. Ibid. p. 18.

30. Ibid. p. 37.

31. Ibid. p. 157.

above we must look very closely at Hume's use of the word object in these sentences. It appears to me that when Hume is talking about objects in these cases it is his understanding that since ideas are the exact copies or representations of the impressions from which they are derived impressions are thus the original objects of ideas. This is not an unusual use of object for Hume;

For what is the memory but a faculty,
by which we raise up the image of past
perceptions? And as an image necessarily
resembles its objects.....³²

And when speaking of sentiments and affections which are impressions of reflection we find that these also are the objects of ideas which appear in the memory;

When we reflect on our past sentiments
and affections, our thought is a faithful
mirror, and copies its objects truly.....³³

It is my conclusion that when Hume is using object as synonymous with impression he is using it in the indicative sense of an idea as a copy an impression which is its original source. Our mental activity is able to choose its objects of attention and these may be external things or internal perceptions. Whatever, then, becomes our primary consideration likewise becomes our objects of attention, and these objects are either internal or external;

³². Treatise, p. 260.

³³. Understanding, pp. 17-18.

As we conclude from the distinction and separability of their ideas, that external objects have a separate existence from each other; so when we make these ideas themselves our objects, we must draw the same conclusion concerning them, according to the precedent reasoning.³⁴

In the above statement Hume is specifically referring to external objects and to our ideas concerning these external objects which thereby become intentional objects. We here have if further proof were required a categorical distinction between the objects of external existence and our ideas concerning these objects.

From the preceeding analysis we can see that Hume has at least three uses of the word object;

1. He distinguishes objects as external from internal perceptions.
2. He speaks of objects in the intentional order as the original source of ideas.
3. He speaks of object as that to which the mind primarily gives its attention. In this sense objects are either external or our perceptions of external objects depending upon our prime concern.

³⁴. Treatise, p. 245.

These three uses of the word object may be reduced to two orders of existence: the order of intentionality and the order of externality; there is no evidence, in my opinion to support that the one is in any sense the same as the other. We are now in a position, I believe, to investigate our claim that matters of fact are external objects.

IV. Matters of Fact - External Objects of Belief

We have already dealt with one side of Hume's dichotomy; that which concerns itself with knowledge; the relation of ideas and their demonstrative proofs. But there is another class of relations described as those which "may be changed without any change of ideas" which "depend on a hundred different accidents, which cannot be foreseen by the mind" and "never discovered merely from ideas"³⁵ These relations are identity, the situations in time and place, and causation. But as we only reason about relations that are not discoverable at first sight, and since;

.....we ought not to receive as reasoning any of the observations we make concerning identity, and the relations of time and place, since in none of them the mind can go beyond what is immediately present to the senses, either to discover the real existence or the relation of objects.³⁶

35. Treatise, p. 69.

36. Ibid. p. 73.

the only member, consequently, of this class of relations which takes us beyond the here and now, and is thus the subject of reasoning, is causation;

the only one that can be traced beyond
our senses and inform us of existence
and objects, which we do not feel or see,
is causation.³⁷

This non demonstrative relation is the foundation of "all our reasonings concerning matters of fact". By investigating this relation and by investigating the distinction between relation of ideas and matters of fact we should be able to come to some conclusions about matters of fact themselves. The first distinction that we may make between the relation of ideas and matters of fact is that in the former the conclusions are always "demonstratively and intuitively certain", and their foundations are independent of existence;

propositions of this sort are discoverable
by the mere operation of thought without
dependence on what is anywhere existent
in the universe.³⁸

An example of the meaning of this declaration is found in the triangle;

'Tis from the idea of triagle, that we
discover the relation of equality, which
its three angles bear to two right ones;

37. Ibid. p. 73.

38. Understanding, p. 26.

and this relation is invariable, as long as our ideas remain the same.³⁹

If, per chance, I endeavour to conceive of a triangle whose internal angles are together equal to more than two right angles I am involved in a contradiction, and thereby thinking of something that is not a triangle. The propositions concerning matters of fact, however, may be denied without implying such a contradiction since the contrary of every matter of fact is always possible;

That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation that it will rise.⁴⁰

The contrast is further clarified if we recall that the foundations of all matter of fact reasoning is based on cause and effect, and since we have no knowledge either of a power in a cause or any necessary connection between one existence and another, we cannot demonstrate, therefore, that one object necessarily follows another;

Such a connexion wou'd amount to a demonstration, and wou'd imply the absolute impossibility for the one object not to follow, or to be conceived not to follow upon the other: Which kind of connexion has already been rejected in all cases.⁴¹

39. Treatise, p. 69.

40. Understanding, p. 26.

41. Treatise, p. 161.

It is now necessary to find the origin of causation. We can do this if we ask ourselves, what do we do when we think causally? A fair answer to this question, I think, is that we connect certain phenomena directly experienced or derived from direct experience;

.....suppose that in all past experience we have found two objects to have been always conjoined together, tis evident upon the appearance of one of these objects in an impression, we must from custom make an easy transition to the idea of that object which usually attends it.....⁴²

But the connection between the phenomena which we observe is never conceived by the mind;

Now nothing is more evident, that that the human mind cannot form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them, or comprehend distinctly that power or efficacy, by which they are united.⁴³

And

.....upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connexion which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them.⁴⁴

But although we never conceive any connection between objects we do, nevertheless, upon the observation of one event

⁴². Ibid. p. 115.

⁴³. Understanding, p. 46.

⁴⁴. Understanding, p. 74.

or object that has been frequently conjoined with another expect and believe that upon the renewed presence of the one that the other will follow, and this expectation is due to a custom or habit acquired from the frequent conjunction of these objects or the perceptions of them;

.....having found, in many instances, that any two kinds of objects - flame and heat, snow and cold - have always been conjoined together; if flame or heat be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold, and to believe that such a quality does exist, and will discover itself upon a nearer approach.⁴⁵

It is this expectation of the usual attendant associated with certain phenomena that provides us with the idea of cause and effect;

The idea of cause and effect is deriv'd from experience, which informs us, that such particular objects, in all past instances, have been constantly conjoin'd with each other.....⁴⁶

Reflecting on what has been said so far we find that experience and observation provides us with the regular conjunction of objects, and this regular conjunction engenders within the mind an association so that upon the presence of the one event we are determined to expect and believe that its usual attendant will follow;

45. Ibid. p. 46.

46. Ibid. p. 89.

After a frequent repetition, I find, that upon the appearance of one of the objects, the mind is determined by custom to consider its usual attendant, and to consider it in a stronger light upon its relation to the first object; 'Tis this impression, then, which affords me the idea of necessity.⁴⁷

Necessary connection, therefore, is derived from the habitual transition we frequently make from the object perceived to the object expected;

This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.⁴⁸

Having derived this power or necessary connection from the frequent and repeated conjunction of certain objects we predict upon the appearance of one the existence of the other. This is the futuristic element in the theory. If, for example, there has been a 'B' event always followed by an 'A' event in my past history; B^s become necessarily connected with A^s, so that upon the presence of a new 'A' event we predict a 'B' event to follow simultaneously or some time afterwards. This predictive inference is made on the bases that the regularity that has occurred in the past will continue to occur.

⁴⁷. Treatise, p. 156.

⁴⁸. Understanding, p. 75.

The predictive nature of causality has as its ingredients two important characteristics;

1. Association of ideas.
2. Belief.

In the first instance the conditions necessary for it to be true that if X has an 'A' perception now he has a 'B' perception simultaneously or shortly thereafter is that 'A' perceptions have been regularly associated with 'B' perceptions in X's past history. The initial foundations of the association being that 'A' events have been always followed by 'B' events thus conditioning and disposing the mind to associate A with B. Translating this into the language of ideas we could say that an 'A' impression produces a lively 'B' idea;

When an impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity.⁴⁹

Combining this theory of the association of ideas with Hume's explanation of belief;

As belief does nothing but vary the manner, in which we conceive any object, it can only bestow on our ideas an additional force and vivacity. An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defin'd; A lively idea related to or associated with a present impression.⁵⁰

⁴⁹. Treatise, p. 98.

⁵⁰. Ibid. p. 96.

we find that if it is the case that an 'A' perception has always in my experience been followed by a 'B' perception, and that here and now I have an 'A' impression it thereby follows by virtue of the association principle that I will have either simultaneously or shortly thereafterwards a lively 'B' idea, and this according to the foregoing explanation of belief is in fact the same as having a belief.

The difficulty here, of course, as will be explained in our later chapters on Belief, is that we are locked in the order of intentionality. The belief as here described does not take us beyond our immediately experienced states i.e. it does not directly relate to the world of external existence. It is inward looking and predictive, more concerned with the acquiring of beliefs than what we believe. That is to say that our beliefs concerning matters of fact seem to be justified by our inner states;

All beliefs of matter of fact or real existence is deriv'd from some object, present to the memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object.⁵¹

This, however, to my mind is not what Hume wholly intended his causal analysis of belief concerning matters of fact to be. It is part of it but not the total answer since it does not cover the beliefs of external reality of which we have no

⁵¹. Understanding, p. 38.

present or memory perception. Hume, well aware of this limitation, was forced to consider those reasons which induce us to believe in the independent existence of external objects of which we have no perception or impression. But we must leave this discussion also to our later chapters on belief.

We are now in a position to investigate more closely, I think, our contention that matters of fact are the objects of external reality. There are three things which we must bear in mind in this discussion, all of which have been so far covered in this thesis;

1. Hume's dichotomy of the relation of ideas and matters of fact.
2. His use of object as intentional and extensional.
3. His notion of cause and effect.

Firstly with regard to the dichotomy. We have already given much time to the difference between matters of fact and the relation of ideas and concluded that the difference may be reduced to a distinction between knowledge and belief. That is to say that the class of all statements which claim to entail knowledge statements are those which contain analytic truths. While the class of all statements which claim to entail matters of fact are objective synthetic statements. We have further concluded that Hume used object in the double sense of external

and internal existence. An order of intentionality and extensionality. It is at this point, I think, that we can really get down to business. What we must decide firstly is whether Hume in speaking of matters of fact is making statements concerning our inner mental states or making statements concerning external reality. That is; whether the matters of fact themselves are objective or subjective entities. The only way by which we can come to some conclusion concerning this is to look at the examples and explanations which Hume uses in discussing these matters and decide by verification on which side of the dichotomy they lie. We must, therefore, ask ourselves what are the conditions necessary and sufficient to verify any statement concerning the relation of ideas - analytic statements, - and what are the conditions necessary and sufficient to verify statements concerning matters of fact. In doing this we shall use as far as possible Humean examples. When I say, for example, that figures with three sides are triangles or that all blue things are coloured or that a rainy day is a wet day and that $2 + 2 = 4$, I am not giving you any useful information about triangles, or colour, rainy days or number. I am merely telling you how we have decided to relate ideas. 'That all blue things are coloured' gives you no more information than the fact that blue entails coloured. Similarly, 'That figures with three sides are triangles' is

simply a definition of triangle. The truth of these statements is never verified in experience but rather by their conforming to certain logical rules or alternatively rules of language. That triangles have four sides, that blue things are not coloured are self contradictory since they break the rules of logic and language. Finally, they give us no information about the external world or sense experience. Their truth is independent of experience depending upon established sets of rules and following logically from man made definitions.

We must now move on to matters of fact. We have said earlier in this chapter that the class of all statements entailing matters of fact are objective synthetic statements. It should be further stated, however, that objective in this sense refers to extensional existence rather than intentional. This means that synthetical propositions are empirical statements which give information about the world of external existence. The point to be kept in mind here is that although it is true that all propositions which assert the external existence of some object are synthetical, it is not true that all synthetical propositions are existential. Hume uses synthetical propositions in both senses, but when he uses the non-existential form it is only to bring out the clear cut distinction that he has made in his dichotomy, and this tends to strengthen rather than lessen the force of his distinction. When, for example, he

says;

That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation that it will rise.⁵²

he is concerned to show us that the distinguishing factor between the relation of ideas and matters of fact is that no matter of fact statement is true by virtue of its meaning or logic nor is it necessarily false for logical reasons: there is nothing logically strange about 'the sun not rising tomorrow', although it would be very odd and curious if it did not, but not logically odd nor logically curious. It is not impossible for this to occur whereas the statement 'All blue things are coloured' is necessarily true because we have defined coloured in such a way that it would be self contradictory to deny the proposition.

If it is true that statements concerning matters of fact are statements referring to the extensional existence of objects; their truth or falsity will be verified by experiments or tests relating to our experience. That is to say, by observation, experiment, and sense experience, and not by logic or meaning. And if they are so verified the matter of fact statements are empirical statements and the matters of fact themselves consequently are external existing objects.

⁵². Understanding, p. 26.

Hume tells us that our beliefs and reasonings concerning matters of fact;

.....seem to be found on the relation of cause and effect. By means of that relation alone can we go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses.⁵³

Here, I think, is the starting point and the beginnings of our solution to the problem. Firstly, what is it that is 'beyond the evidence of our memory and senses'? Clearly it is something not justified by our present perceptions and memory;

If you were to ask a man why he believes any matter of fact, which is absent, 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 receiv'd from him.....⁵⁴

it is as Hume describes above, an 'absent matter of fact'; and what is this 'absent matter of fact'? it is 'a friend in the country', an external existent; and how do we verify this matter of fact? By another external fact such as a 'letter receiv'd'; all of which are experiential data.

If we look now at the relation of cause and effect itself concentrating upon its origins we find that;

The idea of cause and effect is deriv'd from experience, which informs us, that such particular objects, in all past instances, have been constantly conjoined with each other.⁵⁵

53. Understanding, p. 22.

54. Understanding, p. 22.

55. Treatise, pp. 89-90.

its origins are experience. But what is the nature of this experience? And what is the mode of existence of the objects?

Here is a billiard ball lying on the table, and another ball moving towards it rapidly. They strike, and the ball which was formerly at rest acquires a motion. This is as perfect an instance of cause and effect as any which we know, either by sensation or reflexion.⁵⁶

Surely we are not awry here in maintaining that the nature of the experience is empirical, and that the mode of existence of the objects is external. The conclusion is beyond refutation, but does it hold for all cause effect relations. The answer is a firm and categorical yes;

'tis evident, that all reasonings concerning matters of fact are founded on the relation of cause and effect..... In order therefore to understand these reasonings, we must be acquainted with the idea of cause, and in order to do that, we must look about us to find something that is the cause of another.⁵⁷

Where do we look to find this 'something' which 'is the cause of another'; inwardly or outwardly;

.....having found, in many instances, that two kinds of objects - flame and heat, snow and cold - have always been conjoin'd together; if flame or snow be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold, and to believe that

56. Appendix, Understanding.

57. Appendix, Understanding.

such a quality does exist, and will discover itself upon a nearer approach.⁵⁸

And

.....when uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event; we then begin to entertain the notion of cause and connexion.⁵⁹

Thus, in establishing a relationship of cause and effect we look outwardly. That is to say that cause and effect is a relation holding between objects. It is objects that are said to be causally related and not our reasonings concerning objects nor the propositions describing them, but only the objects or events themselves;

We may define a cause to be, an object followed by another, and when all the objects similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the second, or in other words where if object one had not been, the second never had existed. The appearance of a cause always conveys the mind, by customary transition, to the idea of the effect. Of this we also have experience. We may, therefore, suitable to this experience, form another definition of cause, and call it, an object followed by another, whose appearance always conveys the thought of that other.⁶⁰

Here Hume makes an important distinction between what may be called event or objective criteria and mind criteria. In the examples and explanations previously cited it is clear that

59. Ibid. p. 78.

60. Understanding, p. 84.

the event criteria described by Hume as objects are external objects, and since "all reasonings concerning matters of fact are founded on the relation of cause and effect", and as cause and effect is defined as "one object followed by another", it follows that reasonings concerning matters of fact are reasonings concerning objects or objects followed by objects, and if reasonings concerning matters of fact are objects followed by objects; matters of fact themselves are objects. The mental criteria is the idea of necessary connection which does not hold between the objects which we consider to be causally related, but is derived from the regular and repeated conjunction of these objects;

This connexion, therefore, which we find in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.⁶¹

By means of a question and answer analysis we may recapitulate the conclusions we have reached concerning matters of fact. What is the nature of the evidence that assures us of any matter of fact? Cause and effect. How do we discover cause and effect relations? By experience. What is the nature of this experience? Observation and sense experience. All of this being true we may therefore conclude that since the nature of the evidence that assures us of any matter of fact is cause

61. Ibid. p. 75.

and effect, and since cause and effect is discovered in experience. Matters of fact themselves are discovered in experience, and consequently the statements or reasonings concerning matters of fact are empirical statements.

Against this thesis of matters of fact being the objects of the external world we have many objectors. Most follow T.H. Green in his interpretation that Hume was totally committed to an impressionistic view of reality denying any constancy or endurability to external objects. This view, of course, is false. Not only did Hume attribute constancy and coherence to some of our impressions, but likewise to external reality. This inaccurate view of Hume by Green was partially accepted by John Laird⁶² and totally accepted by Rudolf Metz who maintained that Hume's whole philosophy was a;

.....complete atomising of the entire life of the spirit, the breaking of the continuity of the stream of experience into discrete parts.⁶³

Hume's philosophy interpreted by these early traditionalists commentators was thereby reduced to a psychological atomism denying the possibility of any truth beyond sense impressions. What is missing in these interpretations is any attempt to come to serious grips with the question of matters of fact.

62. John Laird, Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature (London: Methuen, 1932).

63. Rudolf Metz, David Hume, Leben und Philosophie (Struttgard, 1939) p. 143.

It is true that there is an atomism in Hume, but it is also true that it is not total;

Does not every first-year undergraduate know that Hume's psychology was atomistic?.... But.....it is not at all clear what the word "atomistic" means. I suspect that whatever it may once have meant it is now for the most part a term of abuse, and for the rest a muddle. Sometimes an "atomist" seems to be a man who denies that we ever apprehend necessary connexions between particulars. Let us call this sense 1. But sometimes he is a man who denies that we ever apprehend sensible continuity. Let us call this sense 2.....This "short way with Hume" is altogether too easy....But.....there is no reason to think that Hume accepted it (atomism in sense 2) If he did, why did he explicitly assert the existence of complex impressions? It is true that he also asserted that there are minima visibilia. But the two assertions are perfectly consistent.....As for atomism in sense 1...no doubt Hume was an atomist in this sense. But may it not be that Atomism in this sense is a very good thing.⁶⁴

John Passmore is similarly inclined to an atomistic view although he describes it as phenomenological;

'Reality' indeed is nothing but our name for a particular organisation of vivid perceptions. This is the side of Hume's theory which inclines us to label him phenomenalist.⁶⁵

64. H.H. Price, Hume's Theory of the External World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940) pp. 73-4.

65. John Passmore, Hume's Intentions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1952) p. 96.

More recently we have Alexander Sesonske and Noel Fleming arguing in support of matters of fact being interpreted in terms of external objects:

But perhaps our knowledge of matters of fact is somehow reducible to our acquaintance with impressions? It is difficult to see how it can be, though of course it presupposes such acquaintance. Necessary conclusions, whether of the causal sort or the concomitance sort, are not apprehended by the senses, as colors or sounds are, or as relations like 'above' and 'to the right of' are. It might perhaps be thought that material objects are apprehended by sensation. But are they? When I make a statement about an observed material object, I am not merely recording sense impressions actually sensed by myself or other people, even though this is part of what I am doing. By a 'cat' or any other material object phrase I mean the entity which is a three dimensional spatial whole, which persists continuously through a long period of time, which remains in being even when observed by no one, which possesses permanent causal properties, and is public to an indefinitely large number of observers. Whereas our sense impressions are fragmentary, discontinuous in time, spatially incomplete (for they lack back and sides) and moreover, it is commonly supposed that each of them is private to the mind which senses it. Thus, though the impressions which I sense might perhaps be constituents of the cat, they cannot possibly be its sole constituents. They are altogether too few and too fragmentary. And we think that there are many material objects which are never observed at all. Clearly they cannot be composed of sense impressions.⁶⁶

66. A. Sesonske & N. Fleming, Human Understanding; Studies in the Philosophy of David Hume (California: Wadsworth Publishing Co. 1965) p. 9.

These are the two sides of the question concerning matters of fact. The one side which I call the traditionalists reduces them to impressions, and the other side which I call the naturalists maintains that they are existing material objects. This thesis is in sympathy with the latter interpretation. Besides what has already been said about this matter, if we look closely at the examples that Hume himself gives concerning matters of fact, we find they all relate to external objects;

All reasonings concerning matters of fact seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. By means of that relation alone can we 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, 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 receiv'd from him, or a knowledge of his former resolutions. A man finding a watch or any other machine in a desert island, would conclude that there had been a man in that island. All our reasonings concerning fact are of the same kind.⁶⁷

And

No man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existence which we consider, when we say, this house, and that tree, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent.⁶⁸

67. Understanding, p. 159.

68. Ibid. p. 152.

Finally there is Hume's definitive and clear statement spelling out unequivocally what in fact are matters of fact;

.....all reasonings from causes or effects terminate in conclusions, concerning matter of fact; that is, concerning the existence of objects or of their qualities.⁶⁹

His meaning is further clarified when he is distinguishing between the two kinds of truth;

Truth is of two kinds, consisting either in the discovery of the proportions of ideas, consider'd as such, or in the conformity of our ideas to their real existence.⁷⁰

The above quotations further suggest that Hume wishes 'real existence' to apply only to objects and not to ideas, but as we have already seen matters of fact and real existence are synonymous, therefore, matters of fact are real existent objects.

In conclusion and by way of summary, I think, the following is the case with regard matters of fact; when I make a material object statement I am making a statement of material content

69. Treatise, p. 94.

70. Ibid. p. 448.

with reference to temporal position, causally dependent upon experience, involving a reference to the present or the past. If, for example, I observe 'the cat on the mat', and I assert that 'the cat is on the mat', this is a statement of material content, referring to a visible entity, which can be justified by experience. This is the very nature of all matters of fact, present or predictive, they are dependent on experience, that is, justified by experience, and most importantly they are material entities. In extension, however, they are not as broad as the factual statements based upon them i.e. the descriptions or misdescriptions of them. I can, for example, carry on an extensive but uninteresting conversation about 'the cat on the mat', the food it likes, its colour, habits, mischievousness, age, etc: all these facts are related to the original matter of fact, but far more extensive than the matter of fact, less definite than the matter of fact, and less certain than the matter of fact. It is this uncertainty concerning the reasonings or descriptions of matters of fact that makes them objects of belief. All matters of fact are unrelated separate existences which have been observed to be constantly conjoined in experience, but never necessarily so. This constant recurrence of regularly conjoined objects cultivates a habit in our minds that since they have in the past been regularly conjoined they will always continue to do so. The

result of this is that when I see the one, remember the one, I expect the other. This feeling of expectation gives rise to a sentiment of belief that the other will occur. I can have no certainty about this, all that I can say is that it will probably happen; it is always possible for it not to happen. Thus, there is always some uncertainty about matters of fact; they are fallible. This being so it follows that some element of belief must be present for us to say that such and such is or will occur. If there were no such element of belief we would be in a perpetual state of suspended judgment. Obviously the principle of differentiation by which Hume distinguishes relations of ideas from matters of fact makes belief a necessity. It also distinguishes belief from knowledge.

V. Reduction Necessitates Belief.

All our mental states may be reduced to impressions, and any mental state that cannot be so reduced is meaningless. This being so, the only things that we are immediately aware of are our own impressions or ideas that are representations of impressions. It follows, therefore, that we can never validly connect our fragments of experience since all our impressions are perishing existences. But since we do connect our experiences, Hume must account for how we do. When, for example, I

talk about 'the throwing of the stone' causing 'the breaking of the window', the only sensations that can be truly said to be given by experience are the observable phaenomena of the stone being thrown, and the sight and sound of the window breaking, and the time lapse between the series of events. What is important in this example is what we do not see or hear, but do nevertheless infer, that is, the necessary connection between the throwing of the stone and the breaking of the window. That we do in fact express such a connection is evidenced by our declaring that the stone caused the window to break. Hume agrees with this, but he says;

It appears that, in single instances of the operation of bodies, we can never by our utmost scrutiny, discover anything but one event following another, without being able to comprehend any force or power by which the cause operates.⁷¹

There are, however, times when the following of one event by another is evidence that the prior event did cause the latter, but not always. In the particular example given we would agree that the throwing of the stone (the prior event) did cause the latter event (the breaking of the window), but we would not say, for example, that day caused night from the fact that we perceive a regular sequence of day following night. The point and an important one in the understanding of Hume is that we do make

⁷¹. Understanding, pp. 73-4.

a distinction between post hoc and propter hoc connections. Although we make these distinctions we have no logical reason, as we have seen previously, for doing so, because the occurrences, events or objects that we select as cause and effect are separate bodies or objects, and by virtue of the fact that they are separate existents they cannot thereby be connected;

....every effect is a distinct event from the cause. It could not, therefore, be discovered in the cause.⁷²

From this it follows that if an effect were discoverable in the cause, the effect would not really be distinct from the cause, and if cause and effect were not distinct they would not be separate and different existences, but rather a single instance, and if there were a necessary relationship between cause and effect, given the cause we would always be able to infer the effect. All this being so, why then do we give a causal relationship to some series of events. We do so according to Hume because of a certain determination of the mind. The foundations of this determination being in the observer and not the observed. When, for example, a certain event X has always been accompanied by a certain other event Y, so that everytime I have experienced X, I have at some time later

72. Understanding, p. 30.

experienced Y; after many such like occurrences a mental habit is formed associating X with Y, and consequently everytime I see X I believe Y will follow. In this example X is the matter of fact, the original existent first present to the mind, and the object of this experience is the believed inferred Y. Y it must be noticed is the believed and not the belief. The belief is the sentiment arising from the impression of the original existent X. It is to be distinguished from the feeling of determination. The determination transports the mind from the idea of the cause to that of the effect, from the impression of the cause to the 'lively idea' of a belief in the effect.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF BELIEF

I. Ordinary Beliefs - Acquiring Beliefs

We have already seen that by differentiating matters of logic from matters of fact, Hume is required to provide an explanation for the conviction and assurance we have regarding any matter of logic and any matter of fact. In matters of logic which are essentially a priori arguments offering infallible demonstrations, all doubt is eradicated, and our assurance and conviction compelled by the relationships of the ideas themselves;

Wherein consists the difference betwixt believing and disbelieving any proposition? The answer is easy with regard to propositions, that are proved by intuition and demonstration. In that case the person, who assents, not only conceives the ideas according to the propositions, but is necessarily determined to conceive them in that particular manner, either immediately or by the interposition of other ideas. Whatever is absurd is unintelligible; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive anything contrary to a demonstration.⁷³

But all inferences concerning matters of fact are founded on experience, and experiential reasonings are founded on the repeated conjunction of like objects, and the repeated con-

73. Treatise, p. 95.

junction of like objects cultivates a habit of mind, the work of the imagination, to connect the things of our experience by an associative principle of Resemblance, Contiguity, and Cause and Effect. These principles reduce to habits of thought acquired from experience and the operations of the mind. They are ultimately reduced to principles of the mind and thereby robbed of any external applicability, being founded in the observer rather than the observed. How then do we distinguish true associations from false ones? We have already seen that the fragments of experience are connected by the associative principles of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. We have further seen that they are mental rather than extra-mental principles. And finally that they are the work of the imagination; but the imagination is wild;

it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision. It can feign a train of events, with all the appearance of reality, ascribe to them a particular time and place, conceive them as existent and point them out to itself with every circumstance, that belongs to any historical fact, which it believes with the greatest certainty. Wherein, therefore, consists the difference between such a fiction and belief.⁷⁴

Hume concludes that the difference between fiction and belief lies in the manner of conception, that is, in the way in which we conceive the idea of an object;

⁷⁴. Understanding, p. 47; cf. Treatise, pp. 623-4.

But as 'tis certain there is a great difference betwixt the simple conception of an object, and the belief of it, and as this difference lies not in the parts or comparison of the idea, which we conceive; it follows that it must lie in the manner, in which we conceive it.⁷⁵

What then, is the difference between 'the simple conception of an object' and the 'belief in it'? It is definite that the difference does not lie in composition; the composition of the believed idea is the same as the composition of the conceived object; this being so, the idea of an object is an essential characteristic of the belief of it. But the 'belief' of the object is not the same as the conception of it; the conception is different, the difference being the way in which it is conceived. Can we say then that there is some idea added to a believed idea - an idea of belief - Hume maintains that there is no such distinct idea;

.....I likewise maintain, that the belief of the existence joins no new idea to those, which compose the idea of the object. When I think of God, when I think of him as existent, and when I believe him to be existent, my idea of him neither increases nor diminishes.⁷⁶

Consequently any assertion that I make about the existence of an object does not combine an idea of belief with the idea of the existence of the object. If it did Hume maintains, I could

75. Treatise, p. 94.

76. Ibid. p. 94.

believe whatever I pleased;

the mind has control over all its ideas, and can separate, unite, mix, and vary them, as it pleases; so that if belief consisted merely in a new idea, annexed to the conception, it would be in man's power to believe what he pleased.⁷⁷

Since the manner of conception cannot consist in the addition of a distinct idea of belief, such as an idea of existence, Hume concludes that:

as belief does nothing but vary the manner in which we conceive any object, it can only bestow on our ideas an additional force and vivacity.⁷⁸

We are now in a position to return to the question which inspired this discussion; how do we distinguish true associations from false ones? It would appear that the difference between a true association and a false one, such as a fiction, lies in the greater force and vivacity of the former and the lack of such force and vivacity in the latter. The associations which produce belief thus have a permanency and regularity. If, for example, we find contiguities, resemblances, and constant conjunctions consistently repeated, custom and habit compels us to accept the ideas resulting from these habits, and to continue

77. Treatise, pp. 623-4.

78. Ibid. p. 96.

to accept them. In this way the ideas gain a force and vivacity proportionate to that of the sense impression from which they originate, and thus create a belief in what they present.

C.W. Hendel remarks regarding this matter that he is at a loss to explain Hume's use of manner with regard to belief and suggests that;

Belief is due to the way the mind is naturally disposed, and not simply to the mechanism of association.⁷⁹

It is my suggestion that belief is due to both i.e. the 'disposition of the mind' and 'the mechanism of association'. The 'disposition of the mind' is due to and conditioned by the regular and permanent association of similar events, that is, what makes us believe is the constant and repeated association of these events, and what we believe are the ideas which these constant repeated associations produce. Further, we anticipate that these repeated associations will continue so that whenever they are presented to us anew the same ideas are produced. In the case of fictions, the mind is not so conditioned, and has no reason to expect the relations of fiction in the order as they were first presented because such relations are not customarily found in nature. From this it would follow that not all associations of lively ideas with a present impression

⁷⁹. Studies, p. 420.

are beliefs, but only those associations which are regular and habit forming. If they are so forming they impart a vivacity and force to the ideas they produce thereby making them beliefs. This would explain the difference in manner between belief and mere conception, and the difference between belief and fiction as a proportion of force and vivacity; a greater degree of force and vivacity in the belief and less in the fiction and mere conception.

Applying this analysis to our reasonings concerning matters of fact, the following would occur. If, for example, experience has shown that X has been constantly followed by Y, the idea of Y is thus associated with X in a more lively and forcible manner than any other idea, so that when the idea of X occurs anew, the mind is 'determined' by a natural transition to pass to the idea Y, and whenever the impression X is presented, the mind is not only determined to form the idea of Y but is also determined to transfer a degree of the force and vivacity of that impression X to Y;

.....when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity.⁸⁰

80. Treatise, p. 98.

Hume is now able to define belief as;

.....a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression.⁸¹

If then, we have regularly observed X to be frequently followed by Y, that is, the matter of fact X to be followed by the matter of fact Y, we are upon the reappearance of X transported to the lively idea Y. It is now perfectly clear that the inference with regard to matters of fact is not an inference of reason, but rather a transition from the impression X to the lively idea Y, and the lively idea Y associated with the present impression X is the belief in Y, and the sentiment or feeling that we have, the determination to pass from the idea of Y, or from the impression of X to the belief in Y occasions our idea of necessary connection;

.....observation of repeated sequence generates - causally generates - in the mind a custom or habit. This custom or habit, in turn, itself generates - again in a causal manner - the feeling of necessitated transition; and it is upon the pattern of this impression that the idea of causal connexion has come to be modified.⁸²

This account of belief, however, restricts itself to impressions, ideas, and associations. Kemp Smith maintains

81. Ibid. p. 96.

82. Kemp Smith, p. 373.

that in so limiting the discussion on belief;

Hume.....is able to describe belief as consisting simply in the enlivening of ideas, and so to deal with it on lines of strict analogy with his doctrine of sympathy. The only difference between sense perception and ideas, he would seem to be maintaining, is a difference of force and liveliness. All that is necessary for belief, and what constitutes it, is that ideas should through relations to impressions receive the required increment of vivacity. When, however, in Part IV, sense perception is dealt with on its own account, as a type of process in which the mind is carried beyond its immediately experienced states, and has assurance of an independently existing real world, Hume is constrained to recognise that there is here, in the act of belief, something for which his doctrine of sympathy affords no analogy, and which therefore calls for independent treatment.⁸³

There are two interesting things about this statement; the first is that it lends support to our claim of a double theory of existence in Hume. Secondly, such a theory (double existence) requires a double or parallel theory of belief since;

1. What makes us believe is distinct from what we believe
- and
2. Belief itself is distinct from the idea of that which we believe and the believed.

83. Ibid. p. 443.

Looked at in this way, belief has both formal and material foundations. The material foundations are the independently continuing existent objects, and the belief in them 'must arise from certain determinate causes and principles, of which we are not masters'.⁸⁴ The formal foundations are the relations by which these continuing existent objects are connected, that is, the three modes of association. These relations, as previously pointed out, are in the observer not the observed, and they are relations between the observed objects and not relations between our ideas of these objects. There is an obvious difficulty in this account of belief; if belief is to be described as a manner by which certain things come to be conceived or apprehended, the distinction between a believed idea and an impression becomes well nigh impossible to make. If we look at the ordinary way by which things come to be apprehended, we find that it is by that way peculiar to every impression, and a 'greater force and vivacity in the impression naturally conveys a greater force to the related idea'.⁸⁵ The only difference between an impression and an idea is in its force and vivacity;

84. Treatise, p. 624.

85. Ibid. p. 143.

.....when the mind is once enliven'd
by a present impression, it proceeds
to form a more lively idea of the related
objects, by a natural transition of the
disposition from one to the other.⁸⁶

But just what degree of force and vivacity is required
in order that we have belief, Hume does not make clear;

Wherever we can make an idea approach
the impression in force and vivacity,
it will likewise imitate them in its
influence on the mind; and vice versa,
where it imitates them in that influ-
ence.....this must proceed
from its approaching them in force and
vivacity.⁸⁷

It seems that the degree of force and vivacity required
for a believed idea is in some way proportionate to that of
an impression, but as the only distinction that we are given
between an idea and an impression is its force and vivacity,
a believed idea thus becomes indistinguishable from an
impression.

Another difficulty is, that since belief is a 'lively
idea associated with or related to a present impression', we
may say that to believe any idea is to have it vividly present
to our consciousness. But if this is so, the idea would then
be the cause of belief rather than the object of belief. John
Passmore makes this point and I think that he is correct.

86. Ibid. p. 99.

87. Treatise, p. 119.

Passmore's view is that the role of belief is in part a psychological expedient for Hume, used at whim to give meaning to

1. non-demonstrative facts.
2. as a principle of justification for some of our ideas.
3. to attempt to ground our reasonings concerning matters of fact.

.....what set out to be a theory of belief, in something like the ordinary sense of the word, has become with no explicit knowledge of that fact, a theory of what it is rational to believe.⁸⁸

In fairness to Hume it should be explained that Passmore's account of belief is not an overall view, but rather a piecemeal account endeavouring to square content with definition. He successfully shows that Hume's overall theory of belief lacks continuity;

Hume is not perturbed by the fact that there is a class of beliefs which although they are vivid, are not associated with an impression; his concern now is with those 'beliefs' which philosophers are prepared to approve.⁸⁹

but having successfully applied the 'microscope' and the 'fork' in true Humean fashion, he makes no serious attempt to reconcile

88. John Passmore, Hume's Intentions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952) pp. 61-4.

89. Loc. cit.

Hume's notions of belief, and leaves the reader firmly convinced that Hume had no developed theory on this subject. This, I think, with due respect to the excellent work, is a disadvantage. Hume was well aware of the disjunction of his thoughts on belief and did attempt a serious reconciliation of his various notions as well as a synthesis.

II. Natural Belief

In our analysis of belief so far we have observed four important characteristics;

1. It is concerned with beliefs of present existents; 'lively ideas associated with present impressions'.
2. The constituents of such beliefs are, impressions, ideas, expectation and natural relations.
3. The grounds of such beliefs are habitual dispositions.
4. It does not deal with our beliefs in things as such, but only with our ideas of things.

Hume finds this analysis of belief unsatisfactory for explaining beliefs in external existents. The reason for this is that his account so far has concerned itself only with the second order question of intentionality, and matters of fact are first order question; questions concerning real existence.

Hume, however, is not prepared to relinquish the ultimate end to which his methodology has taken him; he persistently maintains the double order of existence i.e. the existence of perceptions independent of the existence of objects. Unlike Berkeley he does not regard the world of objects as a world of ideas, but says that we are not immediately aware of objects, the only things that we are immediately aware of are our impressions of objects. Human nature, however, Hume declares, tells us that there is a world of independently real bodies apart from our perception of them. No one can deny this, it's rejection;

has been peculiar to a few extravagant sceptics; who after all maintained that opinion in word only, and were never able to bring themselves sincerely to believe it.¹

Even the strongest skeptical arguments cannot refute the force of human nature;

Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses.²

1. "Understanding", p. 155.

2. Treatise, p. 269; cf. "Understanding", p. 160.

Human nature and external reality are the leveler by which any scepticism regarding external existence is eradicated;

as soon as they leave the shade, and by the presence of real objects, which actuate our passions and sentiments, are put in opposition to the more powerful principles of our nature, they vanish like smoke, and leave the most determined skeptic in the same condition as other mortals.³

Man and the animals alike believe in the existence of an external world of objects, and require no reason to arrive at this belief;

It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural instinct or disposition, to repose faith in their senses; and that, without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated. Even the animal creation are governed by a like opinion, and preserve this belief of external objects.⁴

Obviously human nature imposes upon us a belief in the existence of an external world of objects, but by what means is this achieved. There is no doubt that Hume believes in this world of extra mentality, but he has created his own world, a world of impressions. Further, he has imprisoned himself within this world, and belief destined to release him from it

3. "Understanding" p. 159.

4. David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. and with an introduction by Henry D. Aiken (New York: Hafner Library of Classics, Hafner Publishing Company, 1948) p. 28. Hereafter cited as *Dialogues*.

has instead isolated him still more from the reality to which he knows he belongs.

A brief look at the logical conclusions to which his analysis of belief has led us will make this clear. The conclusions may be summarised thus;

1. That which makes us believe is not that which we do believe.
2. That which we do believe is not the believed.

Hume is forced to these two conclusions by his insistence that our belief in cause and effect relations has, formally speaking, nothing to do with matters of fact themselves, but all to do with our mode of consciousness. This mode of consciousness being an attitude of mind which associates its impressions and ideas of reality in such a way that the force of their effect produces belief - a strong feeling that what it apprehends is true;

Since therefore belief implies a conception, and yet is something more: and since it adds no new idea to the conception; it follows, that it is a different manner of conceiving an object; something that is distinguishable to the feeling, and depends not upon our will, as all our ideas do. My mind runs by habit from the visible object of one ball moving towards another, to the usual effect of motion in the second ball. It not only conceives that motion, but feels something different in the conception of it from a mere reverie of the imagination. The presence of this visible object, and the constant conjunction of that

particular effect, render the ideas different to the feeling from those loose ideas, which come from the mind without any introduction.⁵

From this it follows that if X believes that the first billiard ball will hit the second, and that which makes him believe this is that custom and habit have conditioned him to do so due to the past associations of these similar events; we may, therefore, correctly say that what he is in fact believing is the effects of these past associations, but these past associations are not the believed i.e. the billiard ball 'A' will as a matter of fact hit billiard ball 'B'. This believed matter of fact is an actuality, a spatio-temporal reality - a change in the motion of 'A' to motion in 'B'. My idea of this fact i.e. what I believe, lacks such actuality because it is presumptive of that effect, and immaterial to that effect. It does, however, have a special characteristic in relation to this believed matter of fact in that it indicates this believed. Looked at in this way, belief has two aspects;

1. Subjective or psychological - the state or attitude of mind of the person.
2. Objective - the matter of fact indicated by (1).

5. Treatise, pp. 623-4.

This is Hume's analysis of belief as so far presented taken to its ultimate conclusions, and it will be agreed it is evidently and basically subjective, prescind from the objective believed. It is at this stage to my mind that Hume's methodology changes. Previously he has been concerned with the question - what is belief? He now reformulates that question to read; what are the conditions necessary if it is true that X believes 'that p' where 'that p' is a real object - an external continuing existent. The conditions necessary cannot be found in the objects themselves, because we do not know the objects themselves; we are only mediately aware of such objects. This being so - somehow the conditions necessary for belief in the reality of external objects must be found in our impressions of these objects. Hume finds a certain constancy and coherence in our impressions of objects.-

Those mountains, and houses, and trees, which lie at present under my eye, have always appeared to me in the same order, and when I lose sight of them by shutting my eyes or turning my head, I soon after find them return upon me without the least alteration. My bed and table, my books and papers, present themselves in the same uniform manner and change not upon account of any interruption in my seeing or perceiving them. This is a case with all the impressions, whose objects are supposed to have an external existence; and is the case with no other impressions; whether gentle or violent, voluntary or involuntary.⁶

6. Treatise, p. 194-5.

It is this constancy and coherence which enlivens our ideas of such objects. It is to quote Kemp Smith;

a peculiar constancy.....which when it admits of change preserves throughout the changes a certain type of coherence, namely that type of coherence in which the changes are dependent on each other in a regular manner, and serve as a foundation for causal inference.⁷

But although objects do change in appearance and order, I am not thereby determined to change my belief in their existence;

When I return to my chamber after an hour's absence, I find not my fire in the same situation in which I left it; but then I am accustomed in other instances to see a like alteration produced in a like time, whether I am present or absent, near or remote. This coherence, therefore, in their changes is one of the characteristics of external objects, as well as their constancy.⁸

If, for example, I sit and watch the fire, I will observe it to slowly die, unless I feed it with more fuel. Presuming that I don't do this, I get an uninterrupted series of changing impressions. If, per chance, I should have to leave the room and the fire, I would have had an interrupted series of impressions, but the uninterrupted squares with the interrupted, that is, the unobserved instances are the same as the observed.

7. Kemp Smith, p. 470.

8. Treatise, p. 195.

It therefore follows that I suppose what I have not in fact perceived, and by associating the unperceived with that which I have regularly perceived about the fire, I get a vivid impression of, and consequently, a belief in its continuous existence;

I am here seated in my chamber with my face to the fire; and all the objects, that strike my senses, are contained in a few yards around me. My memory, indeed, informs me of the existence of many objects; but then this information extends not beyond their past existence, nor do either my senses or memory give any testimony to the continuance of their being. When therefore I am thus seated, and revolve over these thoughts, I hear on a sudden a noise as of a door turning upon its hinges; and a little after see a porter, who advances towards me. This gives occasion to my reflexions and reasonings. First, I never have observed, that this noise could proceed from anything but the motion of a door; and therefore conclude, that the present phenomenon is a contradiction to all past experience, unless the door, which I remember on the other side of the chamber, be still in being. Again I have always found, that a human body was possessed of a quality, which I call gravity, and which hinders it from mounting in the air, as this porter must have done to arrive at my chamber, unless the stairs I remember be not annihilated by my absence. But this is not all. I receive a letter, which upon opening it I perceive by the handwriting and subscription to have come from a friend, who says he is two hundred leagues distant. 'Tis evident I can never account for this phenomenon, comfortable to my experience in other instances, without spreading out in my mind the whole sea and continent between us,

and supposing the effects and continued existence of posts and ferries, according to my memory and observation. To consider these phenomena of the porter and letter in a certain light, they are contradictions to common experience, and may be regarded as objections to those maxims, which we form concerning the connections of causes and effects. I am accustomed to hear such a sound, and see such an object in motion (the door) at the same time. I have not received in this particular instance both these perceptions. These observations are contrary (to experience), unless I suppose that the door still remains, and that it was opened without my perceiving it; and this supposition, which was at first entirely arbitrary and hypothetical, acquires a force and evidence by its being the only one, upon which I can reconcile these contradictions. There is scarce a moment in my life, wherein there is not a similar instance presented to me, and I have not occasion to suppose the continued existence of objects in order to connect their past and present appearances, and give them such an union with each other, as I have found by experience to be suitable to their particular natures and circumstances. Here then I am naturally led to regard the world, as something real and durable, and as preserving its existence, even when it is no longer present to my perception.⁹

Thus, the conditions necessary that it be true that X believes 'that p' where 'p' is an actual existing external object is the constancy and coherence of our impression of 'p'. But what is the source of this supposition, this presumptive act of our consciousness? An act whereby we are loosened from the

9. Treatise, p. 196-7.

chains of our solipsism to a belief in matters of fact. The foundation of such a belief is the imagination. Observation has shown us that things occur and reoccur with regularity and order. That unobserved instances follow the pattern of observed. The memory stores such impressions, and upon the appearance of the one is forced by a natural propensity to link it with the other; the effect of such combination gives rise to a belief in the continued existence of objects. In this way the imagination gives continuity to our interrupted impressions of the external world. This continuity is similar to and conforms with the actual continuity, coherence, and consistency of the objects themselves. But what we may ask of our perceptions of singular instances of which we have had no previous memory? Kemp Smith poses this question, and also answers it;

An object altogether new to us, and of which we can therefore have no memories, may yet be believed to be a continuing existence. Why? Throughout the oblique operation of custom. The manner of our experiencing it resembles that of constant and coherent objects and this resemblance is 'a source of reasoning and analogy'¹⁰

10. Kemp Smith, p. 484.

III. Epistemological Conclusions Concerning Belief

In Hume's account of belief as a feeling generated by the associative principle of causality, belief becomes a disposition or attitude of the mind due to the permanent and regular occurrence of events. In this account we are conditioned to observe things in relation; some we observe as having regular and constant conjunction, and the mind remembers these more so than those that we observe differently. If we observe things causally related consistently, a mental habit is formed, and the ideas supplied by this habit have a force and vivacity indistinguishable from the sense impression from which they originated, thereby giving rise to a belief - a feeling - and this feeling determines us to believe the attendant idea. The determination transports the mind from the idea of the cause to that of the effect, and from the impression of the cause to the lively idea of - the belief in - the effect. Looked at in this way the feeling of determination is different from the feeling of belief.

There are, however, other associations besides causal associations; those of resemblance and contiguity. Can we say that these associations also produce belief? Hume would say no. Kemp Smith would say yes. It is interesting to look at the comments of both of these authors on this point and see how they square with the facts. Kemp Smith remarks;

Causality is one of the three natural relations of association. Why is it that it alone leads to belief? The other two relations are equally natural, and they tend to lead the mind from some given impression to an idea. Whence, then, the difference between the beliefs due to causal associations and mere suggestions due to association by contiguity and resemblance? This is an objection that Hume himself discusses. Hume says, 'that contiguity and resemblance, in bringing ideas into connexion with impressions, has some effect in enlivening ideas'. But instead of meeting the objection, as an objection, he proceeds to treat it as an argument in support of his main contention that belief is nothing but an enlivened idea. For surely, he argues, 'if mere contiguity and resemblance can have this type of effect, it is not surprising that it should operate more forcibly in the case of a relation which is invariable, and in which the element of caprice can therefore play no part', he therefore suggests, so far from being inconsistent with his main argument, it is an additional support to it.¹¹

Hendel usually inclined to agree with Kemp Smith thinks differently;

It is a fact, indeed, that a picture of some absent friend will recall him to our mind with great vividness, or that something from our neighbourhood will make 'home' more present to our thoughts. The relations of resemblance and contiguity are clearly bound up with our added interest in these distant realities. They are discoverable in every such situation when our mind passes in thought from an immediate object to one quite distinct from it but somehow recognised with it.

¹¹. Kemp Smith, p. 379.

that distance diminishes the force of every idea, and that, upon our approach to any object; though it does not discover itself to our senses: it operates upon the mind with an influence, which imitates an immediate impression. The thinking of any object readily transports the mind to what is contiguous: but it is only the actual presence of an object, that transports it with a superior vivacity. When I am a few miles from home whatever relates to it touches me more nearly than when I am two hundred leagues distant: though even at that distance the reflecting of anything in the neighbourhood of my friends or family produces the idea of them. But in this latter case, both the objects of the mind are ideas: notwithstanding there is an easy transition between them: that transition alone is not able to give a superior vivacity to any of the ideas, for want of some immediate impression.¹²

With the above statement in mind it seems apparent, to me, that contiguity and resemblance are also causes of belief, but only in the case of present existences; they are not able to transport us beyond the here and now.

There are two important conclusions to be reached from Hume's developed theory of belief;

1. He had connected the internal temporary existence of the impressions of the external world of matters of fact with the external continued existence of these impressions.

12. "Understanding", pp. 54-5.

2. He has reconciled his two analysis of belief
by reducing them to a common core.

In (1) nature has imposed upon us a conviction that there
is a world of objects;

We may well ask, What causes induce us
to believe in the existence of body? But
'tis in vain to ask, Whether there be a body
or not? That is a point, which we must take
for granted in all our reasonings.¹³

It is this conviction produced by a natural faculty or
instinct, reinforced by regular and permanent associations,
that transports the mind beyond its immediately experienced
objects to a belief in the reality of these objects. Belief thus
synthesises the two worlds. In (2) Hume achieves his reconcili-
ation by reducing his two notions of belief to principles
founded in the imagination. The principles themselves are
correlated, that is to say, that in both cases belief corresponds
to the mode of consciousness in which the object is constructed.
In the case of our ideas of matters of fact, this mode of
consciousness is the associative principles of resemblance,
contiguity, causation. With regard to the matters of fact
themselves - the objects of the external world - it is the
principles of constancy and coherence; these principles are
related to the former in the sense, that in order for our in-
ternal impressions of matters of fact to signify something other
than their own internal perishing existence, it is necessary

13. Treatise, p. 187.

that they be reinforced in their Resemblance, and Contiguity by Constancy and Coherence. That is to say, that the constancy of these three principles and their recurrence in like parts and like order - their coherence - takes hold of the memory with the vivacity of an impression so that when things present themselves in a 'manner' conforming to these principles, the mind is disposed to believe that they actually exist. In this way the constancy and coherence of the immediately conceived carries the mind beyond its mental states to the real existence of those mental states. It is the absence of such constancy and coherence in some of our impressions that is the cause of their temporary and fragmentary existence. Thus, the original disposition of the mind to believe its associations is reinforced by an additional regular and permanent association. In both cases the associations are habit forming and produce belief. The synthesis complete, we can truly declare with Hume;

Here, then, is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas; and though the power and forces, by which the former is governed, be wholly unknown to us; yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with the works of nature.¹⁴

14. Understanding, p. 54.

CHAPTER IVTHE RELATION OF BELIEF TO MATTERS OF FACTI. The Dyadic Nature of Belief and what the Relation is not

Belief for Hume is an attitude of mind, a feeling that we have akin to a passion of love, hatred or revenge. It is peculiar to the sensitive rather than the cognitive side of our nature;

We may therefore conclude that belief consists merely in a certain feeling or sentiment, in something that depends not on the will but must arise from certain determinate causes and principles of which we are not masters.¹

This feeling, however, is generally indicative of something i.e. it directs the mind towards something. In the case of beliefs concerning matters of fact it indicates objects. In the proposition, for example, X believes 'that p', where, 'that p' is an externally existing object, there are two important factors to be taken into account;

1. The subjective element.
2. The objective element.

1. Treatise, p. 624.

The subjective element involves the attitude of mind of X, and the reasons for this attitude. The objective element involves the matter of fact. Let us, for convenience, call the subjective element 'q'. The question that we are now concerned with may be satisfactorily translated into the form; what is the relation between the belief 'that q' and the matter of fact 'that p'. Hume would deny that there is any logical relation since matters of logic are, as we have seen, matters of certitude, which we are necessarily determined to accept. I have only to understand the ideas involved in the propositions of matters of logic and their relations to each other to know whether they are true or false. True if these relations involve no contradiction; false if they do. In each case I have knowledge, an a priori knowledge, essentially concerned with the relation of ideas. Such knowledge is definite and certain. This, however, is not the case with matters of fact. Knowledge of matters of fact lacks this certitude because the objects of this knowledge are matters of belief, and what we believe may very well be false since the contrary of every matter of fact is always possible. When one truly knows something, as is the case, in matters of logic, he cannot be mistaken about what he knows, if he were, he would not know it. Certitude is, therefore, the natural predication of matters of logic; if X knows 'that p' he is certain of 'that p'. This is the essential

distinction for Hume between knowledge and belief. It therefore follows that if X believes 'that p', he cannot be said to know 'that p'. If, per chance, he believes 'that p' and it is, as a matter of fact, 'not p' but something else, there is no contradiction involved. The same cannot be said for knowledge in the Humean sense. Further, since the belief of X in p is due to a certain feeling of conviction it cannot be claimed that because of 'such a conviction what he claims to be the case is, in fact, the case. I can be firmly convinced, a conviction of certitude, that there are men on Mars, but it does not follow logically that because of my conviction concerning this fact that there are in fact men on Mars. This being so, the state of mind of X about p is in no way an assurance of the truth of p. If, for example, X believes that 'the dog is on the tucker-box', it is not his feeling of conviction that 'the dog is on the tucker-box' that justifies his claim that 'the dog (as a matter of fact) is on the tucker-box, but rather the existential matter of fact that 'the dog is (in fact) on the tucker-box'. Therefore, if X believes 'that p' because of a feeling of conviction, we can rightly say that his feeling of conviction about 'that p' does not justify his claim 'that p'. Also, in strict accordance with Hume's notion of belief, we cannot claim that 'that p' is a reason for believing 'that p'. This follows from my distinction previously made;

1. That which makes us believe is not that which we do believe.
2. That which we do believe is not the believed.

It must be understood at this point of the discussion that I am concerned only at the present with our mental state in the act of believing i.e. I am concerned primarily with (1) above; the relation between the feeling - that which makes us believe - and that which I do believe. We have for the moment purposely prescind from the believed - the existential matter of fact - we are speaking at the purely intentional level, the subjective side of belief. The believed, as previously pointed out, is different to what I believe. If there were no difference between the two, the way for me to find out whether 'the dog is on the tucker-box' or whether 'it was snowing last night or not' would be to consult my psychological or mental state about these matters, that is, to investigate whether I did in fact believe that 'it snowed last night' or whether I did believe that 'the dog is on the tucker-box'. This, of course, is never what we do. The justification of my belief is not the belief itself, but rather the matter of fact indicated by that belief - the believed.

We are now in a position to look at the relationship between what I believe, and that which makes me believe i.e. the relation between 'feeling' and 'belief'. Let us first of

all investigate whether there is a logical relation between the two. For the sake of argument let us presume that there is such a relation, and if there is we can say - using Hume's definition of logical relation - that feeling so and so is an analytically necessary condition for believing so and so. An example will illustrate the truth or falsity of this statement: Because I feel afraid I believe the house is haunted. If feeling afraid is an analytically necessary condition for my believing something to be haunted, believing something to be haunted would necessarily follow from feeling afraid, and 'haunted' would be logically equivalent to 'being afraid'; the one entailing the other. Obviously this is not the case, and therefore feeling afraid is in no way identical to believing the house to be haunted, it is distinguished from the latter as an emotion, and as such, its relation to belief can only be psychological, causal, or both i.e. psychological - causal. Logical relations according to Hume involve necessary connections;

.....wherein consists the difference betwixt believing and disbelieving any proposition? The answer is easy with regard to propositions that are proved by intuition or demonstration. In that case, the person who assents, not only conceives the ideas according to the propositions, but is necessarily determined to conceive them in that particular manner.....²

2. Treatise, p. 95.

There is, as we have just seen, no logical relation between my feeling afraid and believing the house to be haunted. You could give me good reasons that could persuade me and, indeed, does persuade me that the house is not haunted, but I could still feel afraid. The relationship, as suggested above, is causal. What I believe is a causal instance of what I feel, it may more properly be said that what I believe is a descriptive statement about my psychological state. Truth or falsity cannot be predicated of this state, such a predication belongs to the believed - the matter of fact indicated by the belief.

We must now look at the relation between the belief and the believed, and ask ourselves if there is, per chance, a logical relation here. If there is such a relation the following translation would be an adequate description of it;

X believes 'that p' is 'q'

implies

'p' is 'q'

Before continuing with this analysis it would be profitable, at this stage, to briefly recall to mind some important principles of Hume regarding matters of logic and matters of fact. Firstly, by the principle of differentiation matters of logic have become intentional objects concerned with the relation of ideas. Further force is given to this differentiating principle by a double existence theory whereby original existences -

matters of fact - are given a separate existence from their descriptions or misdescriptions. It is only ideas that have logical relations such relations holding only by virtue of their analyticity. Hume is concerned only with one set of statements concerning ideas - analytic statements - he has thus excluded by definition and example synthetic statements, but most of our ideas about the external world are expressed in synthetic statements. It would appear then, that if these cannot be reduced to analytic statements they cannot bear logical relations. If we further extend this sort of logic to the matters of fact themselves - not the synthetic statements concerning their descriptions or misdescriptions - we would find that, if they did have logical relations, we could infer one object from another, thereby necessarily connecting the one with the other. This Hume adamantly rejects;

.....matters of fact and existence.....
 are evidently incapable of demonstration.
 Whatever is may not be. No negation of a
 fact can involve a contradiction. The
 non existence of any being, without exception,
 is as clear and distinct an idea as its
 existence.³

Consequently there are no logical relations between the matters of fact themselves, and it is clear that there can be no logical relations between our ideas of matters of fact, our

3. "Understanding", p. 163.

descriptions or misdescriptions of matters of fact, unless such ideas, descriptions or misdescriptions can be reduced, in some way, to analytic statements. But what about our beliefs concerning matters of fact and the matters of fact themselves. This brings us back to our original question as to whether there is a logical relation between;

(a) X believes 'that p' is 'q'

and

(b) 'p' is 'q'

There are two important things to notice here. If we abide strictly by Hume's dichotomy that logical relations hold only between the ideas and statements about things, and not the things themselves, we are forced to the conclusion - bearing in mind that the rules of inferences are analytic - that if a logical relation did exist between (a) and (b);

1. (a) would imply (b)

and

2. Matters of fact would be analytic propositions or statements concerning matters of fact and not objects.

Firstly with regard to (1) - if the belief statement X believes 'that p' is 'q' were logically related to 'p' is 'q'; 'p' is 'q' could be derived from X believes 'that p' is 'q', and the necessary condition for this relation to exist would be

that 'p' is 'q' were true, and that X believes 'that p' is 'q' is also true. If all this were true, belief would cease to be belief, and would become certitude - a knowledge claim guaranteeing the believed and thus contrary to Hume's definition that matters of fact can always be thought to be otherwise. Further strength is given to this argument by Hume's theory of double existence;

As we conclude from the distinction and separability of their ideas, that external objects have a separate existence from each other; so when we make these ideas themselves our objects, we must draw the same conclusions concerning them, according to the precedent reasoning.⁴

It would follow from this that our beliefs about matters of fact are distinct and separable from the matters of fact themselves; the former being the order of intentionality, the latter the order of original existence. This being so, "the logical truism that if two states of affairs are distinct, a statement which refers to only one of them does not entail anything about the other"⁵ must apply; thus (a) cannot imply (b); (a) is a descriptive statement of my attitude of mind or feeling, and as such it has a distinct mental existence, and my

4. Treatise, p. 245.

5. A.J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (Penguin Books Ltd. London, 1956) p. 29.

assertion of its existence in the form of a belief statement does not in any way assert the real existence of (b) which is also a distinct existent of a different order;

when two objects are distinct, they are distinct; and consequently that to assert the existence of either one of them is not necessarily to assert the existence of the other.⁶

Looked at in this way the class of statements of beliefs are logically distinct from the class of statements of matters of fact, and neither one of them logically entail the other. There cannot be, therefore, a logical relation between (a) and (b). It follows that if there were such a relation matters of fact would have to be of the same order as beliefs i.e. mental rather than original existences, and if they were of this order, the class of statements describing them would of necessity have to be analytic, and the beliefs concerning them would likewise be analytic. This conclusion, I believe, has been overlooked by those who speak of matters of fact, in Hume, as though they were mental images. If it were true it would reduce Hume's philosophy to an absurdity since the only matters of fact that we could claim to know would be those that could be formulated in terms of analytic propositions, and such matters of fact are very few indeed.

6. Ibid. p. 29.

II. Establishing a Relation

If there is no logical relation can we claim that there is any relation at all. It seems, to me, that if we are to find a relationship we must look at those constituents in the idea believed that take us beyond this mental state to the objects indicated by this mental state; the world of original existences. Hume has told us that these constituents are constancy and coherence. Surely if the constituents of the believed idea, constancy and coherence are the elements which bridge the gap between the order of intentionality and the order of reality, we should expect to find some similarity between the two orders. It might be profitable, then, to order our investigation along these lines. The first thing to be established in such an investigation is whether there is any similarity between our mental states and the objects which those mental states indicate. That there is a distinction between the two states is clear;

.....and no man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existence, which we consider, when we say this house and that tree, are nothing but perceptions of the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences which remain uniform and independent.⁷

7. Understanding, p. 152.

It seems from this that not only are objects independent of our perceptions of them, but that these very perceptions are representations of these objects. What then, we may ask, is the nature of this representation? Is it, for example, an exact similitude or otherwise?

The table, which we see, seems to diminish as we move farther from it; but the real table, which exists independent to us, suffers no alteration; it was, therefore, nothing but its image, which was present to the mind.⁸

There is good reason here to proclaim that there is some similarity between our perception of objects and those objects themselves, but the similarity is not identical i.e. the copy does not exactly represent the original existent. We are thus faced with the following problem; our internal ideas of objects represent those objects, but the representation is not an exact representation. Wherein then consists the similitude? Hume, I think, gives us the answer. We must remember that it is only believed ideas that give us contact with reality. Our other ideas are perishing and fragmentary. The elements of a believed idea, as previously mentioned, are constancy and coherence;

After a little examination, we shall find that all those objects to which we attribute a continued existence have a peculiar constancy

8. Understanding, p. 152.

which distinguishes them from the impressions whose existence depends upon our perception. Those mountains, and houses and trees which lie at present under my eye have always appeared to me in the same order: and when I lose sight of them by shutting my eyes or turning my head, I soon after find them return upon me without the least alteration. My bed and table, my books and papers, present themselves in the same uniform manner and change not upon account of any interruption in my seeing or perceiving them: This is the same with all the impressions whose objects are supposed to have an external existence and is the case with no other impressions, whether gentle or violent, voluntary or involuntary.⁹

Hume further suggests that the objects themselves have this degree of constancy and coherence;

Objects have a certain coherence even as they appear to our senses, but this coherence is much greater and more uniform if we suppose the objects to have a continued existence; and as the mind is once in the train of observing a uniformity among objects, it naturally continues till it renders the uniformity as complete as possible. The simple supposition of their continued existence suffices for this purpose and gives us a notion of a much greater regularity among objects than what they have when we look no further than our senses. But whatever force we may ascribe to this principle, I am afraid it is too weak to support alone so vast an edifice as is that of the continued existence of all external bodies, and we must join the constancy of their appearance to the coherence in order to give a satisfactory account of that opinion.¹⁰

9. Treatise, pp. 194-5.

10. Ibid. p. 199.

It would appear from this that the constancy and coherence of our believed ideas is derived from the constancy and coherence in nature, and that our believed ideas in some way resemble their objects in this uniformity;

.....as every idea is deriv'd from a preceding perception, 'til impossible our idea of a perception, and that of an object or external existence can ever represent what are specifically different from one another.¹¹

The resemblance or representation, however, is not identical but it does seem to be Hume's understanding that there is a correspondence between what we believe and the believed matter of fact; a harmony between the order of nature and the order of thought;

Here, then, is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas; and though the powers and forces, by which the former is governed, be wholly unknown to us; yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with the other works of nature.¹²

Obviously this correspondence between what we believe and the believed matter of fact occurs only when the belief is true. If, for example X believes 'that p' is 'q' is true, the order and constancy of the elements of this belief - p and q - correspond with the order and constancy of the external reality 'p and q'. The epistemological consequences of this relation

11. Ibid. p. 241.

12. Understanding, pp. 54-5.

of correspondence is, as already stated, that it establishes truth conditions for the verification of any matter of fact belief. A belief is true when and only when it corresponds to a matter of fact, and is consequently false when there is no corresponding fact. Truth, under these circumstances, is not predicated of our belief, but the objects indicated by this belief; the mind creates the belief, but what makes it true is the actual existence of the matter of fact indicated by this belief.

Conclusion

We have established that when X believes 'that p is q', the object of this belief is the matter of fact 'p is q'. We have further established a relationship between the constituents of the belief and the believed. The essence of this relationship is a correspondence between the order and constancy of the belief with the order and constancy of the believed. Therefore, in the example above, when X believes 'that p is q', the order and constancy of the elements of this belief i.e. 'p and q' corresponds with the order and constancy of the existential reality 'p and q'. The epistemological consequences of this relation of correspondence is that it establishes truth conditions in accordance with the principle of differentiation;

Truth is of two kinds, consisting either in the discovery of the propositions of ideas, considered as such, or in the conformity of our ideas to their real existence.¹³

Here we add further weight not only to our relationship of correspondence between belief and its objects, but also to our thesis that these objects are existential matters of fact. By way of conclusion I wish to point out that this thesis has in affect established a dyadic relation in the notion of belief. Firstly there is the subjective side; the relation between the feeling produced by custom and the expression of this feeling which is the belief proper. Between these two we found that there was no logical relation, but a relation of psychological - causality. Secondly we dealt with the objects indicated by this belief; the external world of matters of fact. Here we were faced with the difficulty of uniting in some way the two orders; the intentional order of belief with its existential objects. The relation between the two we found to be one of correspondence; a correspondence not totally or identically representative of the constituents of both orders, but only of those representative elements of constancy and coherence. To this extent there is a relation between belief and matters of fact.

There is, of course, something very unsatisfactory about all this, and it is worth reflecting upon the reasons why. The

13. Treatise, p. 448.

prime reason is to be found in Hume's exhaustive and doctrinaire dichotomy of differentiation and reduction. Having accepted this dichotomy we find ourselves also having to accept its skeptical conclusions. If, for example, every idea is, in fact, a copy of an impression, we have no idea of universals such as man, society, democracy, justice and the like. Likewise since we have no impression of any physical thing distinct from our impression of it; 'Spiritual Substances' and 'Corporeal Substances' are meaningless. Even our beliefs in the unperceived existents of the external world are thrown into oblivion since being unperceived we can have no impression of them. But the failure to find an impression of something is certainly no evidence that that something does not exist. Obviously the premises upon which Hume founds his new science are too narrow. What is missing and is required is a developed theory of perception incorporating a cognitive rather than a sensitive theory of belief. The transition between entertaining an idea and believing it is for Hume a matter of feeling whereas it should be one of meaning, i.e. a state or attitude of mind that gives meaning to the presented phenomena and meaning to the belief in it. The lack of such premises places Hume in the strange position of having to find a way of incorporating into a single notion of belief; belief in the sense of believing, and belief in the sense of what is believed. But there is no word, impression or

expression that succeeds in doing this. We see this especially evidenced in Hume's first notion of belief;

As belief does nothing but vary the manner in which we conceive any object, it can only bestow on our ideas an additional force and vivacity. An opinion therefore, or belief may be most accurately defin'd; A lively idea related to or associated with a present impression.¹⁴

As it stands this explanation of belief gives us no information about the external world and makes very little sense apart from the fact that it tells us that our belief in something is no more than a description about what ideas we have and how we acquire them. Taken to its logical conclusion, however, it implies that there is no real difference between my having a belief that X is warm and my entertaining the idea that X is very hot or between believing that Paris is burning and entertaining the idea that it is burning. The difference between the two is nothing more than a more or less lively idea of Paris burning. But does this really make sense? Can we, in fact, talk about one perception being more lively than another. Surely a perception is a perception and that is the end of the matter. And why, we may ask, is an impression any more a foundation for belief than a whim or fancy which may be equally as forceful as any impression. And what of our many beliefs that are not

¹⁴. Treatise, p. 96.

associated with any impression? There are many things in the world of external existence of which we have no impression, but of which we speak intelligently and significantly. Why, for example, do I believe in the permanent and continued existence of mountains, streams, stars and planets when they are not being perceived. The answer according to Hume, as we have seen, is that my interrupted perceptions of these events are alike upon each interrupted perception, and this constant similarity upon each repeated but interrupted perception produces a feeling to the mind akin to uninterrupted perceptions so that I come to think of them eventually as continuous objects. When, however, I do come to notice the interruption of my perceptions I resolve the contradiction by supposing unperceived perceptions to bridge the gap in the series. These ideas enlivened by the association with the impression which I already have give rise to a belief in the continuous and permanent existence of external objects independent of my interrupted perceptions. What Hume has expressed here or maintained that he has expressed is that the class of all our impressions endowed with constancy and coherence are those impressions and those impressions only which refer to external existence. But the interesting thing about the account is that all the examples that Hume quotes, 'the porter and the door', the 'mountains', 'the sea and continent', do not

portray the constancy and coherence of impression, but rather reinforce our belief in the constancy and coherence of external objects. In other words we approach reality already convinced of the permanent and continuous existence of external objects, and the similarity of our interrupted with our uninterrupted impressions reinforces this belief. Instead, therefore, of the constancy and coherence of some of our impressions enlivening our ideas of the external world and producing belief, the constancy and coherence of the objects of the external world reinforce a belief that we had already accepted. This certainly makes more sense to me than Hume's account of some of our impressions being endowed with constancy and coherence especially since it is a direct contradiction to his established theory that all impressions are fragmentary and perishing. Why then should our impressions concerning external existence be any different to our impressions concerning anything else. Hume does not explain this, but obviously it exposes a flaw in his methodology or more accurately an inconsistency; an inexcusable one to my mind which further evidences my original criticism that what is wrong with his epistemology is that it lacks a developed theory of perception incorporating a cognitive rather than a sensitive theory of belief. Be this as it may, Hume has established the premises

and we must work within this framework as consistently as possible. In its final analysis this framework, if accepted, leads us to the conclusion that the only justification that we have for our beliefs in the matters of fact - the external existence of objects - is our natural instincts, natural habits of speech and customary expectations. In so far as these correspond to what is actually so, we can be assured but never certain that it is so.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is concerned to show that there is a relation between Belief and Matters of Fact in Hume's philosophy. In endeavouring to establish this relation concentration has centered upon 'The Treatise of Human Nature' and 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding' only.

The Introduction (1, 11, 111) shows the influences at work in the development of Hume's thought and methodology. Hume is doctrinaire in the presentation of his newly discovered experimental method, beginning with an exhaustive dichotomy between impressions and ideas, knowledge and belief. The Introduction provides the background material for distinguishing between the grounds of Hume's explanations and the explanations themselves, thereby avoiding the confusion of one with the other. Much of the ground work of Hume's philosophy is to be found in the thought of others, particularly Newton, Locke, Berkeley and Malebranche. Newton's four basic rules to be observed in any scientific enquiry are compared with similarly analogous principles found in the 'Treatise' and 'Enquiry'. The Rationalists are shown to have provided Hume with data for applying the tools of his method. He applies them to their demonstrative proofs of the existence of God, and their idea of God as cause of

the universe. His attitude towards the Rationalists, however, is not altogether negative. Like Descartes and Malebranche he was interested in the limitations of the human mind, and finally found in Malebranche a solution to his problem of reconciling our belief that every event has a cause with the fact that the sequence of events in nature do not cause each other. Malebranche had solved the problem by finding the connecting principle in the imagination. Hume did likewise.

Turning to Locke and Berkeley we find the foundations of Hume's system. Like Locke, Hume is convinced that 'the proper study of mankind is man' that one must study the capabilities and limitations of the human mind before one studies the world in which he lives. By using the ideas of both Locke and Berkeley, Hume is able to arrive at the immediate source of all our knowledge; the original data of experience-perceptions.

In the fourth part of the Introduction attention is focused on belief; concerned to show how it naturally arises as a consequence of Hume's rigorous reduction of all knowledge claims to impressions; belief as the property of an idea is distinguished from belief as an attitude of mind.

In part five - Developing the Problem - we observe how Hume imprisoned in an order of intentionality of his own making endeavours to escape from this intense subjectivism to the real

world of which every man, even philosophers, believes to exist. The grounds of the cognitive conflict; the view of the philosopher and the view of the vulgar is laid and the key to the solution of the problematic of the thesis established.

In Chapter II the epistemological consequences of Hume's methodological premises - differentiation and reduction - is explained, showing how the dichotomy gives rise to a distinction between knowledge and belief. In the second part of this same chapter Matters of Logic are explained as knowledge claims that are certain and demonstrative, whereas matters of fact are objects of probability and belief; uncertain and non demonstrative. The third section of this chapter deals with Hume's two orders of existence - objects and perceptions - object is shown to have an extensional and an intentional existence, but distinct from perceptions. In part four of this chapter matters of fact are shown by example, inference, and explanation to be external existing objects, while part five shows that the reduction of all our mental states to impressions makes it impossible to validly connect our fragments of experience, but since we do connect them Hume must account for how we do. The explanation shows how the reduction leads to belief.

Chapter three takes up the question of how we acquire beliefs, its origins, causal grounds, and dyadic nature; it

also shows how the causal explanation of belief does not make contact with the world of external reality. In the second part of this chapter Hume's dissatisfaction with the previous notion of belief is cited, and an exposition of natural belief follows, endeavouring to reconcile this with the previous causal notion. The third section of this chapter gives the epistemological conclusions concerning belief showing how Resemblance and Contiguity also generate belief.

Chapter four has two sections. In the first part of this chapter an analysis of the problems in establishing a relation between belief and the external world of matters of fact is shown; it brings out the dyadic nature of belief, and shows how the relation, if there is one, cannot be considered as one of identity or logic. In the second part of the chapter the relation is finally established as one of correspondence giving the reasons and grounds for this relation.

The summary and conclusion to the thesis is a brief retrospective view of Hume's methodology and its consequences, inadequacies, and inconsistencies as related to the thesis topic. It pays especially attention to the narrow premises upon which Hume builds his science, and shows how they are unsuited to the task of explanation they are destined to perform.