



The Philosophy of David Hume

Norman Kemp Smith

With a new introduction by Don Garrett



THE PHILOSOPHY
OF
DAVID HUME

A CRITICAL STUDY OF ITS ORIGINS
AND CENTRAL DOCTRINES

BY

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IMMANUEL KANT'S CRITIQUE
OF PURE REASON (translator)

NEW STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY
OF DESCARTES: Descartes as Pioneer

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DAVID HUME

PREFACE

THIS volume is the outcome of work done in widely separate years. In two articles, entitled 'The Naturalism of Hume', published in *Mind* in 1905, I suggested that what is central in Hume's philosophy is his contention that reason 'is and ought only to be' the servant of the 'passions'. This doctrine, I argued, is the key to the non-sceptical, realist teaching which Hume has expounded in Part iv, Book I, of the *Treatise*, and which he has carefully re-stated in the concluding section of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. Further study of the *Treatise* and *Enquiries* left me, however, with the feeling that while this reading of Hume's teaching may, as I still think, be in essentials correct, it only very partially covers the ground, and that I had not yet found a point of view from which his teaching could be shown to be self-consistent, or, failing that, could be made to yield an explanation of the conflicting positions to which he has committed himself. Why is it that in Book I of the *Treatise* the existence of an impression of the self is explicitly denied, while yet his theory of the 'indirect' passions, propounded at length in Book II, is made to rest on the assumption that we do in fact experience an impression of the self, and that this impression is ever-present to us? Again, how has it come about that Hume, in treating of the association of ideas, regards the law of causality as an independent law, distinct from that of contiguity, and — what seems even more difficult of explanation — that the instances which he gives of its operation are so invariably taken from blood and social relationships: those of parent and child, of master and servant, of owner and property? Why, too, in his first excursion into the fields of philosophy, has he executed his work on so comprehensive a scale, bringing within its range not only a new theory of knowledge — already, one would have thought, a sufficiently ambitious enterprise — but also a theory of the 'passions' and a system of ethics?

It was in 1934-5, while preparing for the press an edition of Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1935), that what, as I now believe, is the answer to these questions first occurred to me — that it was through the gateway of morals that Hume entered into his philosophy, and that, as a consequence of this, Books II and III of the *Treatise* are in date of first composition prior to the working out of the doctrines dealt with in Book I. What guided me to these conclusions was the recognition, forced upon me by a closer study of the ethical portions of the *Treatise*, that Francis Hutcheson's influence upon Hume is much more wide-reaching than has hitherto been allowed. Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* appeared in 1725, and his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations upon the Moral Sense* in 1728, i.e. in the years immediately preceding the period (1729 onwards) in which Hume discovered and was engaged in exploring his 'new Scene of Thought'. That they were the immediate occasion of Hume's awakening is one of my incidental contentions.

On looking for external evidence, in confirmation of these conclusions, I found, to my surprise, that in the most personal of all Hume's letters — the letter addressed to his physician in 1734 — he has himself informed us, in so many words, that his philosophy did actually originate in his pre-occupation with moral questions. I had read the passage a number of times previously; but fixed preconceptions, as so easily happens, had intervened to prevent me from reading his statements in a straightforward manner. There are also other clues. In the Introduction to the *Treatise*, Hume cites as having preceded him in the new tasks which he has set himself "Locke, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, etc." — a strange list, if his ethics, as has generally been assumed, is mainly the application, in a further field, of principles otherwise reached. Hume's varying treatment of the self in Books I and II, his manner of envisaging causality as an independent law of association, his description of the *Treatise* in its sub-title as 'An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects', and many other features of his teaching will also, on this

view, allow of appropriate explanation. And what is most important of all, we are in position to give what will, I trust, be found to be a not unconvincing explanation of much that has always been felt to be obscure, or at least strangely worded, in the opening sections of the *Treatise*.

The influence of Hutcheson is further shown in a portion of the *Treatise* that stands very much by itself, viz. Part ii, Book I, in which Hume treats of space and time. When due account is taken of this influence, as well as of the more obvious influence of Bayle's article on *Zeno*, Hume's attitude to the mathematical sciences appears — so at least I have sought to show — in a new and clearer light.

But it has not been my intention to lay the main emphasis on the many historical questions that can be endlessly discussed in regard to influences and origins. These, as a rule, can be answered only conjecturally, and in themselves are of minor philosophical interest. The value of my interpretation of Hume's teaching must ultimately depend upon the extent to which I may be judged to have succeeded in showing that it is genuinely of assistance in the *critical* study of Hume's central doctrines, as enabling us to understand better what these doctrines precisely are, and how far Hume's arguments in support of them can, or cannot, be allowed to be philosophically cogent.

Hume regarded his writings on political theory and on economics as an integral and important part of his philosophy; and strictly the programme of this volume required that I should have dealt with them. I can only plead, in excuse for the omission, that I am not sufficiently competent to treat of them in any helpful manner. I have also not dealt with Hume's views on religion or even with his argument against miracles. On this part of his philosophy, I have said all that I have to say in my introduction to Hume's *Dialogues*, in the edition above referred to;¹ and the positions for which I have there argued are implied in the views which I have continued to take of the character and intention of the 'mitigated' scepticism by which he supports and supplements his positive, naturalistic teaching. One day, we may hope, someone equipped with a sufficient range of interest and understanding will treat of Hume in all his

¹ And in the second edition, published by Thomas Nelson & Sons, Edinburgh, 1947.

manifold activities: as philosopher, as political theorist, as economist, as historian, and as man of letters. Hume's philosophy, as the attitude of mind which found for itself these various forms of expression, will then have been presented, adequately and in due perspective, for the first time.

To the editors of *Mind* and of the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* I am indebted for permission to draw upon my articles on Hume in these journals. I am also indebted to Dr. Meikle, Keeper of the National Library of Scotland, for much helpful advice in matters historical and bibliographical.

Professor T. E. Jessop and Dr. W. G. Maclagan have done me the friendly service of reading the work both in manuscript and in proof; and, thanks to their invaluable assistance, it is now very much less imperfect, in argument and in exposition, than it would otherwise have been. Dr. R. A. Lillie has rendered me a similar service in the reading of the final proofs.

N. K. S.

EDINBURGH

September 1940

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A complete list of books and articles bearing on Hume is given in T. E. Jessop's invaluable *Bibliography of David Hume and of Scottish Philosophy*, London and Hull, 1938.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALL page references to Hume's *Treatise* and *Enquiries* are to the Clarendon Press editions (edited by Selby-Bigge) of the years 1896 and 1894. The page reference is enclosed in brackets, in sequence to the citation of the section to which it belongs. The *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* is cited as *Enquiry I*, and the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* as *Enquiry II*.

E.g. *Treatise*, I, iv, 7 (263-5) = *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part iv, Section 7, pp. 263-5.

Enquiry I, 4 (35) = *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Section 4, p. 35.

The page references to Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* are to the Clarendon Press edition (edited by N. Kemp Smith), 1935, and in square brackets to the second edition, published by Thomas Nelson & Sons, Edinburgh, 1947.

The page references to Hume's *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature* are to the Cambridge University Press edition (edited by J. M. Keynes and P. Sraffa), 1938.

The references to Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry* are to the 2nd edition, 1726; and in the case of his *Essay on the Passions, with Illustrations upon the Moral Sense* to the 1st edition, 1728. Most of the passages cited are reprinted by Selby-Bigge in his *British Moralists*, vol. i. In those passages a second page reference is given, preceded by 'S-B'.

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INTRODUCTION

“My greatest debt is undoubtedly to the writings of Norman Kemp Smith. Every student of Hume is, or ought to be, in his debt.”—BARRY STROUD¹

“[Kemp Smith’s] study belongs among those great works of scholarship, through which our understanding of a subject is not simply increased but rather transformed.”—H. O. MOUNCE²

MACMILLAN’S publication in 1941 of Norman Kemp Smith’s *The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines* was both a landmark in the interpretation of its subject and a crowning achievement in the distinguished career of its author. That Hume has come to be so widely acknowledged as the greatest philosopher ever to write in English, and Kemp Smith so often regarded as that language’s greatest philosophical historian of modern philosophy, is due in no small measure to this remarkable book.

Although Hume’s philosophical writings are models of elegant prose and forceful argument, readers have often found it difficult to determine what philosophical stance they are ultimately intended to express, or even whether they express any consistent philosophical stance at all. They can easily seem—as it is sometimes said—to be “locally clear but globally obscure” (in contrast to Kant’s philosophical writings, which are said to be just the reverse). In the case of Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (published posthumously in 1777, but composed largely in the 1750s), the difficulty arises in part from his use of opposing characters whose relation to his own views may be variously interpreted. In the case of his youthful masterpiece, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), however, much of the difficulty concerns the role of his self-avowed scepticism. For although he promises in the Introduction to the *Treatise* to employ the “experimental method” to develop a “science of man” that will support a “complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with

any security," he declares near the end of Book I—devoted to "the understanding"—that the "intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another." Yet he then goes on to extend his "science of man" in Books II and III to the topics of "the passions" and "morals", respectively, without so much as mentioning this earlier sceptical crisis. He concludes his later "recasting" of much of Book I of the *Treatise* in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748) with a similar survey of sceptical considerations concerning human reasoning and the senses that he likewise asserts to be productive of intense doubt, yet he does so without withdrawing any of his previous claims and without allowing those doubts to have any effect on his subsequent recasting of *Treatise* Book III in *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751).

Hume's own Scottish contemporaries Thomas Reid and James Beattie interpreted him primarily as a destructive sceptic who was led to deny the possibility of human knowledge as the result of his own success in tracing the consequences of principles that he shared in common with Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and other modern philosophers. Chief among these principles, in their view, was the doctrine that the mind can only perceive its own mental contents ("perceptions" in Hume's terms). While Immanuel Kant rejected Reid's and Beattie's appeals to principles of "common sense", and effusively praised Hume's insight, he offered a similar characterisation of the final outcome of Hume's philosophy, remarking in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* that Hume ("that acute man") "ran his ship ashore, for safety's sake, landing on scepticism, there to let it lie and rot".³ Kant diagnosed the cause of this skepticism, however, in Hume's failure to anticipate the central doctrines of Kant's own transcendental idealism.

The focus on a radical and corrosive scepticism as constituting Hume's ultimate position continued through the nineteenth century. Jeremy Bentham, the nineteenth-century founder of utilitarianism, saw, in Hume's emphasis on the central role in ethics of the useful and agreeable, an anticipation of his own consequen-

tialist and hedonistic moral theory; but even such intellectual heirs of Bentham as John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain were largely critical of Hume and, while noting his use of principles of mental association (“the association of ideas”) in his science of man, preferred to trace the origins of their own associationist psychology to Hume’s contemporary David Hartley. Hume’s intellectual integrity was consistently challenged—partly on the basis of his seemingly nonchalant attitude toward his own scepticism; partly on the basis of the trajectory of his writings, from the difficult *Treatise* to the two simpler and more elegant *Enquiries* and other essays, and then to the highly popular six-volume *History of England* (1754–62); and partly on the basis of his own remark (in “My Own Life”, a brief autobiographical essay written as he was dying) that “love of literary fame” had been his “ruling passion”. When British Idealism—inspired by Hegel and exemplified in the works of such philosophers as T. H. Green, J. M. E. McTaggart, and F. H. Bradley—rose to ascendancy in the English-speaking world in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it often made a particular point of rejecting the philosophies of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume as together constituting a superceded empiricist stage in philosophy’s development (one that, they thought, had been unfortunately and unnecessarily revived, in part, by Mill). Hume, in particular, it saw as an instructive cautionary example, whose scepticism showed the bankruptcy of psychological atomism and empiricist sensationalism. Green co-edited with T. H. Grose what became the standard edition of Hume’s philosophical writings. Published in 1874–75, the edition included—lest the point be missed—lengthy and highly critical introductions by Green, which concluded as follows:

Our business, however, has not been to moralise, but to show that the philosophy based on abstraction of feeling, in regard to morals no less than to nature, was with Hume played out, and that the next step forward in speculation could only be an effort to rethink the process of nature and human action from its true beginning in thought. If this object has been in any way attained, so that the attention of Englishmen ‘under five-and-twenty’ may be diverted from the anachronistic systems hitherto prevalent among us to the study of Kant and Hegel, an irksome labour will not have been in vain.⁴

Thus, Hume's philosophy was to be studied once only in order to show that it need never be studied again.

It was against this philosophical background that Norman Duncan Smith—later to be Norman Kemp Smith—was educated. Born in 1872 in Dundee, Scotland, the son of a cabinet-maker, he was the youngest of six children and the only one to receive a university education. He graduated with first-class honours from St Andrews in 1893 and took up an assistantship at the University of Glasgow in 1894–95. After eighteen months of study at the Universities of Zürich, Berlin, and Paris, he returned to Glasgow in 1896, this time as an assistant to the Kant scholar Robert Adamson. Although he was suspicious of Hegelian conceptions of the history of philosophy as a dialectically progressive evolution of thought, Kemp Smith nevertheless viewed the solution of philosophical problems and the sound interpretation of great philosophers of the past as intimately related endeavours. His first book, *Studies in the Cartesian Philosophy*,⁵ was published in 1902, and on the basis of it St Andrews awarded him a Doctorate in Philosophy. The book included a chapter on Hume's response to Descartes, emphasising Hume's rejection of the Cartesian doctrines of the intelligibility of causal relations and the existence of mental substances. In 1905, he published a pair of important articles outlining a new interpretation of the chief elements of Hume's philosophy in the British journal *Mind*. After an opening critique of Green's unduly negative interpretation of Hume, "The Naturalism of Hume (I)"⁶ addressed central epistemological and metaphysical topics—the external world, the self, causation, and inductive reasoning—of *A Treatise of Human Nature* Book I; after an opening critique of Green's unduly hedonistic reading of Hume's psychology, "The Naturalism of Hume (II)"⁷ extended Kemp Smith's interpretation to the topics of motivation (from Book II of the *Treatise*) and morals (Book III).

Although the early decades of the twentieth century were more favourable to Hume's reputation than the final decades of the previous century had been, this was primarily the result not of Kemp Smith's articles but rather of the rise to prominence first of Bertrand Russell and then of logical positivism. Russell brought renewed attention to Hume's account of inductive reasoning, and his appeal to sense-data as the objects of immediate acquaint-

tance seemed reminiscent of Hume's account of perceptions. The logical positivists often saw in Hume a predecessor in their project of analysing concepts in terms of their empirical content—albeit a predecessor who unfortunately often confused philosophical analysis with mere psychological explanation. In an era deeply influenced by logical positivism, many philosophers were intrigued by what appeared to them to be similar doctrines in Hume: a reductionistic account of causation in terms of constant conjunction, a broadly phenomenalist treatment of the external world, a rejection of the metaphysical concept of substance as incoherent, and an emotivistic theory of moral discourse.

Kemp Smith, however, was largely unmoved by these trends. In 1906—after an interview in Edinburgh by Princeton University's then-president Woodrow Wilson—he moved to Princeton to take up the Stuart Chair of Psychology. After marrying Amy Kemp in 1910 and legally changing his name to “Norman Kemp Smith” (treating ‘Kemp Smith’ as the unhyphenated surname) he became chair of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology in 1913, and in the following year he took up the McCosh Chair of Philosophy. He had by then completed a substantial draft of a commentary on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and was working on a translation of the *Critique* itself, but in 1916 he returned to Britain to offer his services in World War I. Rejected for the Army because of his age, he served in civilian posts, first in the Intelligence Section of the Ministry of Munitions in London and then in the War Office and Admiralty. Upon the conclusion of the war, he published his important and influential *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*⁸ and became a successful candidate for the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh, succeeding the well-known philosopher A. S. Pringle-Pattison in 1919. Five years later, he published *Prolegomena to an Idealist Theory of Knowledge*;⁹ based on a series of lectures given at the University of California at Berkeley, it was his only book devoted primarily to defending his own philosophical views. His “idealism”, however, was not as metaphysically charged nor as exclusive of matter as the term might suggest: its central tenet was that values play an ultimate role in the explanation of the structure of the universe, and it was compatible with a realist theory of the objects

of sense perception. This volume was followed by a series of articles in *Mind* on "The Nature of Universals".¹⁰ His translation of *The Critique of Pure Reason*¹¹ was finally completed in 1929 and immediately became the standard English translation.

It was only in the 1930s that Kemp Smith turned his attention again to Hume. In 1935, he published what was described rather modestly as "*Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, edited with an introduction by Norman Kemp Smith".¹² It could equally well have been described as a short monograph on Hume's philosophy of religion, with a new edition of the *Dialogues* appended (and the first to indicate Hume's handwritten revisions to the original manuscript). The "introduction", equal in length to the *Dialogues* themselves, included not only a careful critical section-by-section exposition and interpretation of the *Dialogues*—arguing that Philo, the most sceptical and irreligious character, speaks for Hume—but also extensive discussions of such topics as Hume's relation to his Calvinist environment, his attitudes toward religion and "atheism" in general, his arguments concerning miracles in *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (a topic not discussed in the *Dialogues* themselves), and the bearing on Hume's philosophy of Pierre Bayle's treatment, in his 1696 *Dictionnaire critique et historique*, of the "atheism" of the ancient Greek philosopher Strato.

With his analysis of Hume's philosophy of religion thus already in print, Kemp Smith proposed to continue his study of Hume by completing a book devoted to the rest of Hume's philosophy in time for the 1939 bicentenary of the publication of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. War-related and other delays intervened, however, and *The Philosophy of David Hume* appeared two years later than originally projected, when its author was sixty-nine. The book consists of four parts. In Part I ("The Origins of Hume's Philosophy"), Kemp Smith proposes and defends his highly original theory of the development of Hume's philosophical system: namely, that from an initial interest in ethics, Hume came to his views in epistemology and metaphysics through a generalization to others topics of the "moral sense" theory of Francis Hutcheson—a generalisation conducted, however, in allegiance to the methodological doctrines of Isaac Newton as filtered, in part, through the philosophy of John Locke. Part II of

the book (“Preliminary Simplified Statement of Hume’s Central Doctrines, Taken Mainly in the Order of Their Exposition in the *Treatise* and *Enquiries*”) is largely a refinement and substantial elaboration of his two 1905 *Mind* articles on Hume’s “naturalism”. Part III (“Detailed Consideration of the Central Doctrines, Taken in What May be Presumed to Have Been the Order of Their First Discovery”) provides what was then—and in many respects remains—the most comprehensive single treatment ever offered of the main topics of Hume’s philosophy, even taking account of their general omission of the topic of religion. Part IV (“The Final Outcome”) provides an important defence of Hume’s intellectual integrity and discusses the relation between the *Treatise* and the two *Enquiries*, arguing that the latter evidence a loss of confidence on Hume’s part in many of his detailed associationist explanations (modelled broadly on Newtonian physics) of mental phenomena. It concludes with Kemp Smith’s final assessment of Hume’s philosophy, including a number of points clearly influenced by his sympathy with Kant. *The Philosophy of David Hume* was Kemp Smith’s last major publication before his retirement in 1945; but in retirement he returned again to Descartes and, in 1952, published *New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes*¹³ as well as a translation of selected Cartesian texts.¹⁴ He died in 1958, a much-admired and revered figure. In accordance with his wishes, a number of his essays were collected for publication, finally appearing in 1967 under the title *The Credibility of Divine Existence*.¹⁵

At the core of Kemp Smith’s ground-breaking interpretation of Hume is the thesis that “reason is subordinate to feeling”—what has now come to be called *the subordination thesis*. In attributing the thesis to Hume, Kemp Smith regularly quotes a passage from *Treatise* Book II, Part iii, Section 3: “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.” Hume makes this statement as the conclusion of an argument concerning the relation between reason and the passions in motivating action—the section in which it occurs is entitled “Of the influencing motives of the will”—but Kemp Smith reads the claim more broadly, stretching Hume’s term ‘passions’ to encompass sentiments and feelings of all kinds, and including within reason’s “servitude” at

least three distinct *areas* of subordination: not only motivation but also morals and belief. In the area of motivation, Kemp Smith observes, Hume argues that the passions—desire, aversion, pride, humility, love, hatred, benevolence, anger, joy, grief, hope, fear, and so on—are the essential determinants of voluntary action, with reason playing only the twin instrumental supporting roles of discovering the existence of objects that may excite the passions and determining the causal means to the attainment of ends set by the passions. In the area of morals, he explains, Hume holds that moral distinctions—such as that between virtue and vice—are made not by reasoning alone (as moral rationalists such as Samuel Clarke had held) but rather by feeling the distinctive sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation (constituting the “moral sense” of the Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson) that arise upon considering traits of character. Reason is again restricted to important but supporting roles: providing the information about typical consequences of character traits that generally serves to elicit moral sentiments (by allowing one to sympathise with those affected by those traits), and perhaps also contributing to consensus in moral evaluations by showing what moral sentiments *would* be felt from other perspectives.

In the area of belief, Kemp Smith proceeds to argue, Hume proposes a similar subordination of reason through his doctrine that belief itself is a kind of feeling characterising certain ideas: specifically, it is the liveliness or “force and vivacity” that distinguishes those ideas that are affirmed from those ideas that are merely entertained. On this account, when the human mind arrives at beliefs concerning events that are not directly observed, it does so by attributing causal relations to objects that are observed and supposing that the course of nature is uniform, even though the mind cannot discern any necessary connection between pairs of objects themselves and lacks any argument by which to justify the supposition that nature is uniform. Similarly, on this account, when the mind arrives at beliefs in external bodies having an existence that is “continued and distinct” from the mind, it does so even though the mind’s own perceptions lack this character and reasoning provides no basis for inferring the existence of objects with this character from what the mind does

perceive. These beliefs thus arise, as Kemp Smith often puts it, not through “insight” or even “weighing of logically cogent evidence”, but rather simply because the high degree of force and vivacity of the “impressions” (including sensations and the passions more narrowly construed) that constitute our experience serves to enliven some of the ideas that come naturally to be associated with those impressions—and this vivacity of ideas is belief itself, by which the ideas so enlivened have a greater effect on our thought, emotions, and will. Although what Hume calls *demonstrative* reasoning does, on Kemp Smith’s interpretation, provide rational insight allowing genuine knowledge rather than mere belief, it concerns only relations of ideas such as those involved in mathematics, and it has only a limited scope, not extending to the real existence of things corresponding to those ideas. What Hume calls *probable reasoning* (all other reasoning, which does extend to matters of real existence and constitutes the source of nearly all human beliefs beyond those arising from immediate perception, memory, or the sheer repetition of “education”), does not, on Kemp Smith’s interpretation, provide rational “insight” or “evidence” but is instead founded on the rationally unjustifiable assumption that nature is uniform, and it depends for its efficacy on the enlivening of ideas by impressions. (Accordingly, when Kemp Smith is interpreting Hume, he often places Hume’s term ‘inference’, and sometimes even his term ‘reason’, in quotation marks.) Moreover, just as belief *arises* without reason—at least in the stricter sense of rational “insight or weighing of evidence”—on this interpretation, belief also *withstands the force* of any contrary sceptical reasoning, at least when the belief is (what Kemp Smith calls) a “natural belief” produced by natural and irresistible operations of the human mind, such as the belief in an external world of continuing independent bodies or the belief in genuine causal relations among things.

Yet all this does not exhaust the force of the subordination thesis, as Kemp Smith conceives it; for reason not only “is” the slave of the passions, according to the passage from the *Treatise* that he takes as Hume’s motto; it “ought only to be” the slave of the passions. Thus, on Kemp Smith’s interpretation, Hume holds not only the factual view that reason is psychologically subordinate to feeling in the generation of action, morality, and belief; he also

holds the normative view that this subordination is proper, or as it ought to be. Kemp Smith explains this normative aspect of Hume's view, in part, by interpreting him as standing in the tradition of those who regard Nature as *providential*. Just as Nature has provided mental mechanisms to serve the needs of animals, on this view, so too it has provided human beings with mental mechanisms that allow them to cope successfully with the world; and since the "natural" beliefs in causal relations and external existences are inevitable, irresistible, and fundamental to the operations of the human mind, they cannot appropriately be called into serious question. Thus, on Kemp Smith's view, one consequence of the subordination thesis is what he calls "the primacy of vulgar [or ordinary unsophisticated] consciousness"—that is, the necessity and appropriateness of holding to those basic beliefs that are essentially involved in everyday awareness, even in the face of philosophical challenge.

The attribution to Hume of the subordination thesis and the primacy of vulgar consciousness requires, for Kemp Smith, a reassessment of the role of scepticism in Hume's philosophy. Kemp Smith poses his question near the end of Chapter V as follows:

How, we may now ask, does this naturalistic teaching [of Hume] stand related to the more sceptical attitude which Hume defines and eulogises in the closing sections of Book I of the *Treatise*? Which is the more fundamental in his thinking, the naturalism or the scepticism? And are they compatible with one another?

This famous formulation of a central interpretive question about Hume—*What is the relation between his scepticism and his naturalism?*—has resounded through the subsequent decades of Hume interpretation, and it has led to proposed answers of every possible kind: that his scepticism defeats his naturalism; that his naturalism defeats his scepticism; that Hume simply accepts both despite their incompatibility; and that they are compatible or even mutually supporting.

One reason for the many competing attempts to answer Kemp Smith's famous question lies in the indeterminacy of its two key terms. For although Hume clearly declares himself a "sceptic" at several points in his writings, there are many different species of

scepticism possible, varying in many different dimensions. For example, scepticism may differ in the topics to which it is directed, in the degrees in which it occurs, in the constancy or variability with which it is maintained, in the kinds of considerations that prompt or sustain it, and in the objects (such as knowledge, rational justification, merited belief, or conceptual understanding) at which it aims; moreover, it may consist in the statement of or assent to a theoretical doctrine, in the deployment of arguments, in the making of a recommendation, or in the undergoing of actual doubt. In light of all this potential variety, it is not easy to determine—and it is often left unspecified—what “Hume’s scepticism” encompasses. The term ‘naturalism’—which Hume himself does not use—is open to even greater disparities of interpretation. It may be taken to designate either a doctrine or a program; and while that doctrine or programme presumably excludes, in some ways or for some purposes, whatever is taken *not* to be a part or aspect of “nature”, the particular ways (descriptive, explanatory, or normative) and purposes (metaphysical, semantic, epistemological, explanatory, or practical) remain open to further specification. Even more importantly, it remains to be specified exactly what is meant to be excluded as not a part or aspect of nature. Among the excluded entities or forces may be such “supernatural” things as God or magic; or such “non-natural” things as immaterial thinking substances, non-spatio-temporal objects, Platonic universals, inherent moral qualities and obligations, intellectual or rational insight, radical freedom, or whatever cannot be explained or accommodated by science. ‘Naturalism’ may also be supposed either to be or to include such more specific doctrines as the continuity of the human species with animal species, or the centrality of irresistible and unarguable natural beliefs, or the need to invoke or presuppose the mind’s relations with the external world in order to explain the existence or possibility of experience or knowledge.¹⁶

Somewhat remarkably—given the prominence of the term in his writings—Kemp Smith himself does not define ‘naturalism’.¹⁷ As he uses the term in connection with Hume, however, he seems to mean the doctrine that “nature”—taken as excluding at least rational insight and inherent moral qualities or obligations, but including mental causal mechanisms that can be scien-

tifically investigated—is (with the exception of knowledge of “relations of ideas”) necessary and sufficient both for the *existence* and the *authority* of human beliefs, actions, and moral evaluations. While he does not discuss all of the possible dimensions of scepticism, Kemp Smith is quite clear that it consists only of the kind of “mitigated” or “Academic” scepticism that Hume describes in the final section of *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* and praises as “durable and useful”: a cautious, fallibilistic attitude toward theorising, with a resolution to avoid topics that extend beyond the reach of human experience. It is not, he argues, the intense and unqualified “excessive” or “Pyrrhonian” scepticism that Hume there contrasts with mitigated scepticism and declares to be unsustainable. Accordingly, Kemp Smith’s own answer to his famous question is that Hume’s scepticism is “an ally, but in due subordination” to his naturalism—not undermining the bases of belief, action, or morality, but offering a needed discipline in preventing the mind from pursuing “the mistaken endeavours to which its powers are ever tending to betray” it.

According to critics of Kemp Smith such as Robert Fogelin, closer examination of Hume’s crucial sceptical arguments—especially those of *Treatise*, I, iv, 1 (“Of skepticism with regard to reason” and *Treatise*, I, iv, 7 (“Conclusion of this book,” which Kemp Smith mentions only briefly)—shows that, if those arguments are successful at all, they must undercut all claims to warranted belief, including belief in the basic presuppositions (such as providentialism), principles, and experimental results of naturalism, so that Hume does and must allow that a kind of radical scepticism trumps his naturalism in theory, even if he recognizes that he cannot avoid lapsing into a merely moderate scepticism in practice.¹⁸ Others have sought to resist, in various ways, such interpretations of Hume’s survey of the sceptical considerations that he derives from his own investigations.¹⁹ But all parties to the debate recognise that Kemp Smith first posed the issue, set its terms, and remains one of its most important contributors. Indeed, it is Kemp Smith, more than any other single philosopher, who has made possible the central role that Hume plays in contemporary discussions of both scepticism and “naturalised” epistemology.

Yet the relation between scepticism and naturalism is only one of the many topics on which Kemp Smith's analysis of Hume's philosophy has been both influential and important. For example, his insistence that Hume regarded "necessary connection" as essential to the causal relation, and did not reduce causation to mere "regularity" or "constant conjunction" of types of events, anticipates in many respects the so-called "New Hume" interpretation of recent years, an interpretation according to which Hume is a thoroughgoing realist about "secret powers" and necessary causal connections in nature despite being a sceptic about our ability to properly comprehend those connections. Such leading proponents of this interpretation as Galen Strawson, Edward Craig, and John P. Wright²⁰ have, in turn, been influential not only in their interpretations of Hume's intentions but also in their criticisms of the "regularity" theory of causation itself. These "New Humeans" also often read Hume as insisting on the real existence of external objects outside the mind—another main theme of Kemp Smith's interpretation.

In the fields of action and morality, Kemp Smith's influence is equally felt. What is widely regarded as the "Humean view" that desire (or some other passion) is essential to motivating action while the role of reasoning in motivation is ultimately only instrumental is perhaps now the leading view in contemporary philosophical discussions of motivation; certainly it is the view against which other views must be measured and defended. Similarly, what is widely regarded as the "Humean view" that morality is not a matter of practical rationality alone and must involve in some way the projection of reactive attitudes is a—perhaps the—leading view about the character of morality. While the rise to prominence and popularity of these views in recent decades has many causes, the clarity with which Kemp Smith set them out in the context of Hume's philosophical project is surely among the most powerful.

Even more broadly, Kemp Smith was the first to recognise and explore the parallels between Hume's treatments of belief and sympathy (both of which are mechanisms by which ideas are enlivened, on Hume's account, one essential to science and the other to morality) and between his treatments of the perception of causal necessity and the perception of moral virtue and vice

(both of which involve an internal impression projected onto the external world). In doing so, Kemp Smith helped to raise provocative questions about the relations among philosophical questions in seemingly disparate fields.

Yet he made all of these important contributions to philosophy not by neglecting Hume's philosophical context, but by exploring it more deeply. He was the first commentator to trace the nature of Hume's influences beyond John Locke and George Berkeley to such crucial figures as Francis Hutcheson and Pierre Bayle, and he strove consistently to integrate his understanding of Hume's texts with his understanding of Hume's times. The result was a remarkably coherent and comprehensive account of a great and most comprehensive philosopher. It is thus no wonder that, in the more than sixty years since the first publication of *The Philosophy of David Hume*, it is to Kemp Smith's analysis that other commentators have consistently been most concerned to compare their own interpretations and evaluations of Hume's philosophy—whether in opposition, amendment, or agreement. We are all truly in his debt.

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NOTES

¹ *Hume* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. x.

² *Hume's Naturalism* (London and New York: 1999), p. 5.

³ *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Paul Carus translation, revised by James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), p. 262.

⁴ *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, 4 vols, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: 1882–86).

⁵ *Studies in the Cartesian Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1902); reprinted by Russell & Russell (New York: 1962).

⁶ *Mind* 14.54 (April, 1905): 149–73.

⁷ *Mind* 14.55 (July 1905): 335–47.

⁸ *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan, 1918; revised and enlarged second edition, 1923). The second edition was reprinted in 1962 (New York: Humanities Press) and 1992 (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities International Press). In 2003,

the work was republished, with a new introduction by Sebastian Gardner, by Palgrave Macmillan (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York).

⁹ *Prolegomena to an Idealist Theory of Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1924).

¹⁰ "The Nature of Universals (I)", *Mind* 36.142 (April 1927): 137-57; "The Nature of Universals (II)", *Mind* 36.143 (July 1927): 265-80; and "The Nature of Universals (III)", *Mind* 36.144 (October 1927): 393-422.

¹¹ *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929). A revised second edition, with an introduction by Howard Caygill was published in 2003 under the title *Critique of Pure Reason* by Palgrave Macmillan (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York).

¹² *Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, edited with an introduction by Norman Kemp Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935; second edition, London and New York, T. Nelson, 1947)

¹³ *New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes; Descartes as Pioneer* (London: Macmillan, 1952; reprinted New York: Russell & Russell: 1963; and New York: Garland, 1987).

¹⁴ *Descartes' Philosophical Writings*, selected and translated by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1952).

¹⁵ *The Credibility of Divine Existence: The Collected Papers of Norman Kemp Smith*; edited by A. J. D. Porteous, R. D. MacLennan and G. E. Davie (London: Macmillan, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967).

¹⁶ Thus, for Robert J. Fogelin. Hume's naturalism is simply a "program intended to offer causal explanations of mental phenomena" (*Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 2). For Terence Penelhum, it is more specifically the programme of trying to "show how human nature provides us with resources, mostly non-intellectual, which enable us to interpret and respond to our experience in ways which rationalist philosophers had vainly tried to justify by argument" (*Hume* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 17). Penelhum explicitly states that this is what Kemp Smith intended by 'Hume's naturalism'. According to H. O. Mounce, in contrast, Hume's naturalism is the doctrine that "the source of our knowledge lies not in our own experience or reasoning but in our relations to the world, which for the most part pass beyond our knowledge . . . and show themselves in capacities, attitudes and beliefs which are not derived from experience and reasoning . . . [so that] reasoning is cogent and experience intelligible only so far as they presuppose those capacities, attitudes and beliefs" (*Hume's Naturalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 8). Mounce also identifies a sense of 'naturalism' that is equivalent to *positivism*, understood as the doctrine that reality is co-extensive with what falls under the categories of physical science; and he alleges that Kemp Smith fails to distinguish these two senses.

I attempt to characterize Hume's scepticism and to answer the ques-

tion of its relation to Hume's naturalism, in Fogelin's broad sense of 'naturalism', in "A Small Tincture of Pyrrhonism": Skepticism and Naturalism in Hume's Science of Man" in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, edited by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ In a 1920 article, Kemp Smith characterises naturalism, idealism, and scepticism as the three main types of philosophy, identifying himself as an idealist. Although he does not define any of these types of philosophy, he emphasises the secular character of naturalism and its reliance on science ("The Present Situation in Philosophy", *The Philosophical Review* 29.169 (January 1920): 1–26).

¹⁸ In addition to *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature*, *op.cit.*, see also his article "Hume's Skepticism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, edited by David Fate Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ See, for example, Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); and my *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 10, as well as "A Small Tincture of Pyrrhonism", *op. cit.*

²⁰ See Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion: Causation, Realism, and David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1987); and John P. Wright, *Hume's Skeptical Realism* (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1983). See also Rupert Read and Kenneth Richman, *The New Hume Debate* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), which includes contributions from each of these authors.

PART I
THE ORIGINS OF HUME'S PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

“ Between the years 1739 and 1752 David Hume published philosophical speculations destined, by the admission of friends and foes, to form a turning point in the history of thought. His first book fell ‘ dead-born from the press ’ ; few of its successors had a much better fate. The uneducated masses were, of course, beyond his reach ; amongst the educated minority he had few readers ; and amongst the few readers still fewer who could appreciate his thoughts. The attempted answers are a sufficient proof that even the leaders of opinion were impenetrable to his logic. Men of the highest reputation completely failed to understand his importance. Warburton and Johnson were successively dictators in the literary world. Warburton attacked Hume with a superb unconsciousness of their true proportions which has now become amusing. Johnson thought that Hume’s speculations were a case of ‘ milking the bull ’—that is to say, of a morbid love of change involving a preference of new error to old truth—and imagined that he had been confuted by Beattie.

“ If Hume impressed men of mark so slightly, we are tempted to doubt whether he can have affected the main current of thought. Yet, as we study the remarkable change in the whole tone and substance of our

literature which synchronised with the appearance of Hume's writings, it is difficult to resist the impression that there is some causal relation. . . .

"The explanation of the apparent contradiction must doubtless be sought partly in the fact that Hume influenced a powerful though a small class. He appealed to a few thinkers, who might be considered as the brain of the social organism ; and the effects were gradually propagated to the extremities of the system."—LESLIE STEPHEN, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876).

"I acknowledge . . . that I never thought of calling in question the principles commonly received with regard to the human understanding, until the 'Treatise of Human Nature' was published in the year 1739."—THOMAS REID, in the Dedication to his *Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764).

"I honestly confess that my recollection of David Hume's teaching was the very thing which many years ago [probably in 1773, i.e. some thirty-four years after the publication of the *Treatise*, and three years prior to Hume's death] first interrupted my dogmatic slumber, and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction."—KANT, in his *Prolegomena* (1783).

"I well remember, no sooner had I read [at some date prior to 1776] that part of the work [Book III of Hume's *Treatise*] which touches on this subject than I felt as if scales had fallen from my eyes. I then, for the first time, learnt to call the cause of the people the cause of Virtue. . . . That the foundations of all *virtue* are laid in *utility*, is there demonstrated, after a few exceptions made, with the strongest evidence ; but I see not, any more than Helvetius saw, what need there was for the exceptions."—BENTHAM.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: THE DISTINCTIVE PRINCIPLES AND ETHICAL ORIGINS OF HUME'S PHILOSOPHY

HUME'S *Treatise of Human Nature*, as its readers soon discover, is a difficult and often puzzling work. The ardour of mind and variability of mood in which it was composed, its loose and careless terminology, and other minor defects very excusable in a first and youthful work, also even its sheer bulk, account for many of the reader's difficulties. But the root-causes lie deeper, in the arrangement of the work as a whole. It opens with an exposition of what, in the main, is Hutcheson's version of Locke's 'theory of ideas'. Hume builds it into his system, putting it to new uses, but otherwise leaving it — so at least a first reading of the opening sections would appear to suggest — in all essentials unchanged. As we shall find, our attitude towards the *Treatise* must largely be determined by the answer we give to this initial question: How does Hume's treatment of the 'doctrine of ideas' in these opening sections of the *Treatise* (Sections I to 6) stand in relation to the newer, more distinctive doctrines dealt with throughout the rest of Book I and in Books II and III?

The Reid-Beattie Interpretation of Hume's Teaching

The answer ordinarily given is the answer to which Reid, and in more popular form Beattie, first gave currency — the view, namely, that Hume's teaching is sheerly negative, being in effect little more than a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principles which Hume's predecessors, and Hume himself, have followed in their enquiries. Hume, in other words, is depicted as having done no more than deliver his successors from a bondage to which he himself remained subject. A strangely paradoxical verdict! Hume, whose genius is

analytic and critical, and whose criticism is eulogised as being so clear-sighted and thoroughgoing, is declared to have been unable to perceive what was already so patent to Reid, and even to Beattie, that the source of the trouble lay in his unconsidered acceptance of the hypothesis commonly entitled the 'theory of ideas'. Hume, who was sceptical — so it was alleged — about almost everything else, has yet been so uncritical as to erect the elaborate body of argument that constitutes the *Treatise* on a foundation which he has not been concerned to examine, and to the unreliability of which he has himself, though all unconsciously, been a chief witness !¹

This is the estimate of Hume's achievement which we find Reid presenting to Hume *as a compliment* ! He does so in the letter (18th March 1763) in which he thanks Hume for having read in manuscript portions of his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*.² Reid, it may be explained, was in his early years so convinced an adherent of the 'theory of ideas' that he adopted along with it Berkeley's denial of the material world. It was a reading of the *Treatise* shortly after its appearance — Reid was a year senior in age to Hume — that led him to look around for some other way of approach to the problems of knowledge. The passage in his letter to Hume is as follows :

¹ Cf. Reid's statements in the 'Dedication' introductory to the *Inquiry* : " I acknowledge, my Lord, that I never thought of calling in question the principles commonly received with regard to the human understanding, until the 'Treatise of Human Nature' was published in the year 1739. The ingenious author of that treatise upon the principles of Locke — who was no sceptic — hath built a system of scepticism, which leaves no ground to believe any one thing rather than its contrary. . . . For my own satisfaction, I entered into a serious examination of the principles upon which this sceptical system is built ; and was not a little surprised to find, that it leans with its whole weight upon a hypothesis, which is ancient indeed, and hath been very generally received by philosophers, but of which I could find no solid proof. The hypothesis I mean, is, that nothing is perceived but what is in the mind which perceives it. . . . I thought it unreasonable, my Lord, upon the authority of philosophers, to admit a hypothesis which, in my opinion, overturns all philosophy, all religion and virtue, and all common sense . . . and, finding that all the systems concerning the human understanding which I was acquainted with, were built upon this hypothesis, I resolved to inquire into this subject anew, without regard to any hypothesis" (*Inquiry into the Human Mind* [1764]; *Works* [1863], i, pp. 95-6).

² The manuscript was submitted to Hume through the friendly mediation of Dr Hugh Blair.

In attempting to throw some new light upon these abstruse subjects, I wish to preserve the due mean betwixt confidence and despair. . . . I have learned more from your writings in this kind than from all others put together. Your system appears to me not onely coherent in all its parts, but likeways justly deduced from principles commonly received among philosophers; principles, which I never thought of calling in question, until the conclusions you draw from them in the *Treatise of Human Nature* made me suspect them. If these principles are solid your system must stand: and whether they are or not, can better be judged after you have [i.e. now that you have] brought to light the whole system that grows out of them than when the greater part of it was wrapped in clouds and darkness. I agree with you therefore that if this system shall ever be demolished, you have a just claim to a great share of the praise, both because you have made it a distinct and determinate mark to be aimed at, and have furnished proper artillery for the purpose.¹

Reid's account of Hume's teaching in the *Inquiry* is too long to quote *in extenso*, but in summary is as follows. The 'doctrine of ideas', assumed, almost as if it were self-evident, by Descartes, Locke and Berkeley, must, Reid declares, plunge men into the abyss of scepticism.

May we not reasonably judge so from what hath happened? Des Cartes no sooner began to dig in this mine, than scepticism was ready to break in upon him. He did what he could to shut it out. Malebranche and Locke, who dug deeper, found the difficulty of keeping out this enemy still to increase. . . . Then Berkeley, who carried on the work, despairing of securing all, bethought himself of an expedient:—By giving up the material world, which he thought might be spared without loss, and even with advantage, he hoped, by an impregnable partition, to secure the world of spirits. But alas! the *Treatise of Human Nature* wantonly sapped the foundation of this partition, and drowned all in one universal deluge.²

The [author of the *Treatise*] proceeds upon the same principles [as Berkeley], but carries them to their full length; and, as the Bishop undid the whole material world, this author, upon the same grounds, undoes the world of spirits, and leaves nothing in nature but ideas and impressions, without any subject on which they may be impressed.³

By this system, three laws of association, joined to a few original feelings, explain the whole mechanism of sense, imagination, memory, belief, and of all the actions and passions of the

¹ Reid's *Works* (edited by Sir William Hamilton), i, p. 91.

² *Op. cit.* p. 103.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 102

mind. Is this the man that Nature made? I suspect it is not so easy to look behind the scenes in Nature's work. This is a puppet, surely, contrived by too bold an apprentice of Nature, to mimic her work. It shows tolerably by candle light; but, brought into clear day, and taken to pieces, it will appear to be a man made with mortar and a trowel. . . . I see myself, and the whole frame of nature, shrink into fleeting ideas, which, like Epicurus's atoms, dance about in emptiness.¹

Hume took all this in high good-humour. He suggested a small correction in Reid's English, but otherwise refused to be drawn into controversy. At the same time he has made it sufficiently clear that he was not unaware of the far from complimentary character of Reid's declaration that the principles of the *Treatise* are 'the common ones', and in being coherently developed exhibit their 'futility'.

I shall . . . not at present propose any farther difficulties to your reasonings. I shall only say, that if you have been able to clear up these abstruse and important subjects, instead of being mortified, I shall be so vain as to pretend to a share of the praise; and shall think that *my errors*, by having at least some coherence, had led you to make a more strict review of my principles, which were the *common ones*, and to perceive *their futility*.²

These are the sentiments which Reid has so naïvely taken into his own mouth, in the letter of reply and thanks above quoted.

Reid's manner of interpreting the teaching of the *Treatise* gained wider currency through Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*, published in 1770. The *Essay* went through twelve editions in the course of the following decade, and was twice translated into German before the end of the century. More than any other work, it has determined the popular conception of the character and consequences of Hume's philosophical teaching.³ So far as Beattie's comments are argued, they are those of Reid:

The substance, or at least the foundation of Berkeley's argument against the existence of matter, may be found in Locke's

¹ Reid's *Works* (edited by Sir William Hamilton), i, p. 103.

² *Letters*, i, p. 376. Italics not in text. Dated by Greig 25th February 1763.

³ Cf. Johnson, writing to Boswell (1st August 1772): "Beattie's book is, I believe, every day more liked; at least, I like it more, as I look more into it".

Essay, and in the *Principia* of Des Cartes. . . . Mr. Hume, more subtle, or less reserved, than any of his predecessors, hath gone still greater lengths in the demolition of common sense. . . . He calls this work 'A Treatise of Human Nature; being an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects'. This is, in the style of Edmund Curl, a *taking title-page*; but, alas! "Fronti nulla fides"!¹

From these, and other like criticisms, Beattie descended into invective:

Those unnatural productions, the vile effusion of a hard heart, that mistakes its own restlessness for the activity of genius, and its own captiousness for sagacity of understanding, may, like other monsters, please a while by their singularity; but the charm is soon over: and the succeeding age will be astonished to hear, that their forefathers were deluded, or amused, with such fooleries.²

Away with this passion for system-building! it is pedantry: away with this lust of paradoxes! it is presumption.³

This attitude towards Hume, though happily expressed in more respectful terms, has continued down to recent times. Until 1888 the only generally available reprint of the *Treatise* was an edition prefaced by the Introduction in which T. H. Green takes the opening sections of the *Treatise* as an adequate statement of Hume's central position, and accordingly regards a scepticism of an extreme self-destructive type as being their sole legitimate outcome.

When the *Treatise*, thanks (as would appear⁴) to Beattie's quotations from it, gave a new turn to Kant's thinking, in or about 1773, i.e. some thirty-four years after its publication and three years prior to Hume's death, it was again the sceptical consequences of Hume's argument that counted — not, however, the sceptical consequences which follow (as Reid thought) from the doctrine of ideas, but those which follow upon acceptance of Hume's criticism of the supposedly self-evident character of the causal axiom. The parallel between Reid and Kant is to this extent only partial, and may easily prove misleading. Both were awakened by Hume to the insufficiency of principles upon which they had been relying. Both also drew from Hume's teaching conclusions

¹ *Essay*, pp. 214-15.

² *Op. cit.* pp. 444-5.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 423.

⁴ Cf. *Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (1918), pp. xxviii-xxix.

opposite to those drawn by Hume himself. But in all further respects the parallel ceases to hold. Kant continued in the view that the content of knowledge comes by way of 'ideas'; it was not until much later in the course of developing his own Critical principles that he began to question the sufficiency of this part of his own and of Hume's teaching. Also, he was aware of other important lessons which he had learned from Hume; and in all his references to Hume speaks of him with profound respect as showing how, in the hands of so supreme a master, the sceptical type of philosophy can be fruitful and beneficent.

*What is truly Distinctive and Central in Hume's Teaching :
his Reversal of the Rôles hitherto ascribed to Reason and
to Feeling respectively*

Before proceeding further, let us consider why Hume's confidence in the 'theory of ideas' was so little shaken by Reid's indictment of it. Why did Hume, unlike Reid, direct his sceptical scrutiny only to Locke's use of the theory, and not to the theory itself? Hume, there can be no question, *did* hold that the theory supplies no sufficient foundation for beliefs to which he yet gave his adherence — belief in the independent existence of bodies, belief in causes, (some of which are experienced and some of which are 'secret'), belief in the existence of the self and of other selves. With these 'common-sense' beliefs he had no quarrel; he was no less ready than Reid or Beattie to agree that a philosophy stands self-condemned if it forbids us to indulge in them. Any attempt to displace them either by other beliefs or by a sheerly sceptical refusal to entertain any beliefs whatsoever is, Hume has insisted, bound to be self-defeating. If the choice be only between them and a philosophy which denies them, it is common sense that must be held to. Why, then, did Hume not agree with Reid that the obvious next step was to question the assumptions upon which the theory of ideas is based, and so to obtain a theory of a different, more satisfactory, kind? For Hume, to repeat, has succeeded in showing — this is where Reid could justly acknowledge indebtedness to him — that our fundamental common-sense

beliefs¹ cannot be justified on Locke's principles, and that both Locke and Berkeley have in this regard failed to make good the positions which they profess to have established. Their principles cannot bear the weight that is laid upon them.

A reply which Hume might have made to these questions is that proof of the *limitations* of the theory of ideas — and this is all that Hume allows as proved — affords, in itself, no sufficient reason for rejecting the theory, but only for supplementing it. When Reid points out that the theory of ideas, as formulated by Descartes, has been sceptical in tendency from the outset, he might with equal truth have added that it had never been regarded as being in and by itself a sufficient basis for a complete philosophy. Descartes, Locke and Berkeley took, each in his own way, special measures to supply a wider basis for their constructive teaching. In Descartes this took the form of a doctrine of simple ideas, purely rational and native to the mind. Locke, in turn, supplemented his doctrines of sensation and reflexion by means of what he entitled 'intuition'. Intuition, he held, is the source of our knowledge of all those *relations* upon which the rational sciences of mathematics, morals and natural theology rest. Berkeley saw more clearly than Locke that apprehension of these relations amounts to the possession of ideas *additional* to those of sensation and reflexion. But this only leads him to assign to ideas of this type the separate title 'notions', and to make an even more extensive use of them in buttressing, by their means, his own distinctive doctrines. Now the fact that Hume criticises and — save in respect of Locke's teaching — entirely rejects these methods of supplementing the theory of ideas does not preclude him from providing a supplement of his own, though it does suggest that the enterprise is not likely to be easy of achievement. Hume himself, however, was under no misapprehension as to the difficulties before him. He perceived very clearly that the theory of ideas, in being retained, would in his system have to subserve uses very different from any to which it had hitherto been put, and that it was not therefore merely in his supplement to the theory of ideas but also even in respect of his treatment of the theory itself that he must

¹ Belief in continuing, independent existents, and belief in causal dependence.

rest his philosophy on a foundation almost entirely new. Some much more radical method of eking out its scanty resources than any suggested by his predecessors would have to be devised.

Methinks I am like a man, who having struck on many shoals, and having narrowly escap'd ship-wreck in passing a small frith, has yet the temerity to put out to sea in the same leaking weather-beaten vessel, and even carries his ambition so far as to think of compassing the globe under these disadvantageous circumstances. . . . Can I be sure, that in leaving all establish'd opinions I am following truth? ¹

This was the spirit in which the youthful Hume set himself to the composition of the *Treatise*; and we are little likely to discover the key to it, unless we recognise that it was from the doctrines constituting his own distinctive supplement to the theory of ideas that the chief sources of his inspiration were drawn; and that it was from these sources also that any answer he might have given to Reid, had he thought good to set up a defence, would have been taken.² Is not Reid, Hume might have replied, illustrating in his own teaching what he is objecting to in the teaching of the *Treatise*, i.e. begging his conclusions by way of an unquestioned assumption? The theory of ideas, as employed by Locke and Berkeley, *does* rest on assumptions, any one of which may be questioned. But among these assumptions is one which operates in all parts of their philosophies, and not merely in their theory of ideas — *the assumption*, namely, *that assurance ought always to rest on direct insight, or failing direct insight, on evidence*. If, then, assumptions are to be called in question, this one, as being the most fundamental of them, ought to be the first to be examined. But not only has Reid failed to question it; he has failed to observe — his attention being directed too exclusively to the opening

¹ *Treatise*, I, iv, 7 (263-5). Cf. Hume's letter (13th February 1739) to Henry Home (*Letters*, i, p. 26): "My principles are also so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take place, they would produce almost a total alteration in philosophy: and you know, revolutions of this kind are not easily brought about".

² In a letter (26th October 1775) speaking of the 'Advertisement' in which he disowns the *Treatise* — as he had come to recognise that many of its doctrines were open to criticism — and refers to the *Enquiries* as alone authoritative, he adds: "It is a compleat Answer to Dr. Reid and to that bigotted silly Fellow, Beattie". This from the kindly-tempered Hume is indeed strong language.

sections of the *Treatise* — that this is precisely what Hume, as befits his sceptical genius, is indeed engaged in doing. This is the adventurous and difficult enterprise to which Hume had found himself committed; and its precise character we shall have to consider at length. As we shall find, it is in effect nothing less than a resolute reversing — in respect of all matters of fact, though not of ‘knowledge’ — of the rôles hitherto ascribed to reason and to feeling respectively. And this, indeed, is why he could speak of himself as “affrighted and confounded”, and of his “forlorn solitude”, “expos’d”, as he adds, “to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians.”¹

If this be a correct reading of Hume’s purposes, the conclusion to which we are brought is that what is central in his teaching is not Locke’s or Berkeley’s ‘ideal’ theory and the negative consequences, important as these are for Hume, which follow from it, but the doctrine that the determining influence in human, as in other forms of animal life, is feeling, not reason or understanding, i.e. not evidence whether *a priori* or empirical, and therefore also not ideas — at least not ‘ideas’ as hitherto understood. ‘Passion’ is Hume’s most general title for the instincts, propensities, feelings, emotions and sentiments, as well as for the passions ordinarily so called; and belief, he teaches, is a passion. Accordingly the maxim which is central in his ethics — ‘Reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions’ — is no less central in his theory of knowledge, being there the maxim: ‘Reason is and ought to be subordinate to our natural beliefs’.

Not only, therefore, is Hume unshaken in his adhesion to Locke’s doctrine of ideas by the sceptical consequences to which it leads; this is one main reason why he values the doctrine so highly, and opens the exposition of his philosophy, both in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, with an exposition of its principles. His purpose, from the start, has been to give prominence to those negative consequences, and to push them as far as they can be made to go. The more negative their character, the more

¹ *Treatise, loc. cit.*

evident must it become that 'ideas' cannot afford a sufficient basis for belief, and that belief must therefore be accounted for in some other, very different, manner.

In this connexion we may note, as a point of considerable importance, that Hume's reasons for welcoming Locke's doctrine of sensation and for welcoming his doctrine of reflexion are very different in the two cases. It was the *narrowness* of the gateways afforded by the special senses, that rendered Locke's doctrine of sensation so helpful to him. It enabled him in a quite brief and seemingly conclusive manner to dispose of the accounts given by his Cartesian predecessors of the concepts of force, necessitation and causal efficacy, as also of the concepts of substance and existence. It also enabled him so to delimit reason — confining it to the strictly quantitative sciences — that belief, when introduced later, could occupy, almost without challenge, the territories thus vacated.

His reasons for welcoming Locke's doctrine of reflexion¹ were of the directly opposite character. Here the gateway was so wide, and, in the absence of special inner senses, so ill-defined, that he had no difficulty in obtaining from this source any and every perception which his system demanded. If a perception was indispensable for his purposes and could not be obtained from sensation, it could always be treated as coming from this second source. It is thus that he obtains the idea of causation, tracing it to a 'feeling' or 'sentiment' of necessitated transition. Similarly, in the ethical field, the ideas of the morally good and the morally evil are traced to what he entitles the moral sentiments. (Belief he also speaks of as a feeling or sentiment, though with hesitations and reservations due to the difficulties that met him in his attempt to account for it in a manner consistent with the closeness of the parallelism which he supposes to exist between 'sensation' and 'reflexion'.)

That Hume, under the Influence of Hutcheson, entered into his Philosophy through the Gateway of Morals

To come now to the question of the primary sources of Hume's teaching, the thesis for which I shall argue is that it

¹ Cf. below, pp. 108-9.

was under the direct influence of Francis Hutcheson that he was led to recognise that judgments of moral approval and disapproval, and indeed judgments of *value* of whatever type, are based not on rational insight or on evidence, but solely on feeling; and that what then "open'd up to [him] a new Scene of Thought, which transported [him] beyond Measure" (giving birth in due course to the *Treatise*), was the discovery that this point of view could be carried over into the theoretical domain, and could there be employed in the solution of several of the chief problems to which Locke and Berkeley had drawn attention, but to which they had not been able to give a satisfactory answer. If knowledge be strictly limited to those relations which are derived from the contemplation of ideas, and if all other judgments (those concerning matters of fact and existence) be taken out of the field of knowledge, and treated as judgments not of knowledge but of belief; and if further it can be shown that belief, as thus distinguished from knowledge, rests always on feeling, and never in ultimate analysis on insight or evidence, the principle illustrated in morals will be strengthened and confirmed by proof of its equal applicability in these other fields. If this thesis be correct, Sections 1 to 6 of Book I of the *Treatise* are of an introductory nature, and their argument is predetermined by purposes which Hume has in view, but which are not there disclosed.

Gibson has pointed out¹ that many mythical elements have become embedded in the popular tradition as to Locke's views on the nature of the mind and its relation to experience; and he has traced these to the undue prominence which students of Locke have given to Book II of the *Essay*.

The first book of the *Essay* is not simply designed to prepare the way for an account of the temporal rise of ideas in and through experience. . . . [Locke] refers us, for the positive complement of the argument of Book I, not to his theory of the derivation of ideas from experience [in Book II], but to his account [in Book IV] of the way in which we may attain to certainty or knowledge.

Book II, though essential to Locke's purposes, does not deal with his main problems; it is only preliminary to them. Very similar statements can be made regarding the opening

¹ *Locke's Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations* (1917), p. 33.

sections of the *Treatise*. They too, while essential, are of a preliminary character ; when taken by themselves they give a very misleading impression, alike in regard to Hume's ultimate purposes and in regard to the bearing of the conclusions to which they more immediately lead.

*The External Evidence in regard to the Hutchesonian
Origins of the Treatise*

The evidence in support of this reading of the *Treatise* is partly internal and partly external. As external evidence we have the draft letter which Hume composed while in London in March or April 1734, i.e. a few months prior to his settling in France for the completion of the *Treatise*. Actually the longest, it is also in personal interest quite the most important of all Hume's extant letters. It is addressed to a physician (probably to Dr. George Cheyne ¹), and describes the course of the distemper by which Hume had been hampered in the period between September 1729 (when he was just over eighteen years of age) and the date of writing in 1734. In the course of the letter he also gives an account of the interests and studies which, through over-excitement and resulting overwork, had undermined his health. The passages which are relevant to our present purposes I shall quote at length, marking with italics the sentences to which I would draw chief attention.

As our College Education in Scotland, extending little further than the Languages, ends commonly when we are about 14 or 15 Years of Age, I was after that left to my own Choice in my Reading, and found it encline me almost equally to Books of Reasoning and Philosophy, and to Poetry and the polite Authors. Every one, who is acquainted either with the Philosophers or Critics, knows that there is nothing yet establisht in either of these two Sciences, and that they contain little more than endless Disputes, even in the most fundamental Articles. Upon Examination of these, I found a certain Boldness of Temper, growing in me, which was not enclin'd to submit to any Authority, in these subjects, but led me to seek out some new Medium, by which Truth might be establisht. *After much Study, and Reflection on this, at last, when I was about 18 Years of Age, there seem'd to be open'd up to me a new Scene of Thought, which transported me*

¹ Cf. Greig's edition of *The Letters of David Hume*, i, p. 12 n.

beyond Measure, and made me, with an Ardor natural to young men, throw up every other Pleasure or Business to apply entirely to it. . . . I was infinitely happy in this Course of Life for some Months ; till at last, about the beginning of September 1729, all my Ardor seem'd in a moment to be extinguish'd, and I cou'd no longer raise my Mind to that pitch, which formerly gave me such excessive Pleasure. . . . In this Condition I remain'd for nine Months, very uneasy to myself, as you may well imagine, but without growing any worse, which was a Miracle.

There was another particular, which contributed more than any thing, to waste my Spirits and bring on me this Distemper, which was, that *having read many books of Morality, such as Cicero, Seneca and Plutarch,* and being smit with their beautiful Representations of Virtue and Philosophy, I undertook the improvement of my Temper and Will, along with my Reason and Understanding. I was continually fortifying myself with Reflections against Death, and Poverty, and Shame, and Pain, and all the other Calamities of Life. These no doubt are exceeding useful, when join'd with an active Life ; because the Occasion being presented along with the Reflection, works it into the Soul, and makes it take a deep Impression, but in Solitude they serve to little other Purpose, than to waste the Spirits, the Force of the Mind meeting with no Resistance, but wasting itself in the Air, like our Arm when it misses its Aim. This however I did not learn but by Experience, and till I had already ruin'd my Health, tho' I was not sensible of it.¹

Taking medical advice, and putting himself under a regimen which included " an English Pint of Claret Wine every Day " and a ride of " 8 or 10 Scotch Miles ", his health sufficiently improved to allow him, from about October 1730, to study in moderation, and in the course of the winter 1730-31 " to make considerable Progress in [his] former Designs ". With ups and downs, he continued in this condition for the next three years, his " Spirits very much recruited " but sinking under him " in the higher Flights of Genius ".

Thus I have given you a full account of the Condition of my Body, and without staying to ask Pardon, as I ought to do, for so tedious a Story, shall explain to you how my Mind stood all this time, which on every Occasion, especially in this Distemper, have a very near Connexion together. *Having now Time and Leisure to cool my inflam'd Imaginations, I began to consider seriously, how I shou'd proceed in my Philosophical Enquiries.*

¹ *Letters*, i, pp. 13-14.

I found that the moral Philosophy transmitted to us by Antiquity, labor'd under the same Inconvenience that has been found in their natural Philosophy, of being entirely Hypothetical, and depending more upon Invention than Experience. Every one consulted his Fancy in erecting Schemes of Virtue and of Happiness, without regarding human Nature, upon which every moral Conclusion must depend. This therefore I resolved to make my principal Study, and the source from which I wou'd derive every Truth in Criticism, [i.e. in regard to literature and the fine arts] as well as Morality. I believe 'tis a certain Fact that most of the Philosophers who have gone before us, have been overthrown by the Greatness of their Genius, and that little more is required to make a man succeed in this Study than to throw off all Prejudices either for his own Opinions or for those of others. At least this is all I have to depend on for the Truth of my Reasonings, which I have multiply'd to such a degree, that within these three Years, I find I have scribled many a Quire of Paper, in which there is nothing contain'd but my own Inventions. . . .

[Still, however, Hume proceeds,] my Disease was a cruel Incumbrance on me. I found that I was not able to follow out any Train of Thought, by one continued Stretch of View, but by repeated Interruptions, and by refreshing my Eye from Time to Time upon other Objects. Yet with this Inconvenience I have collected the rude Materials for many Volumes ; but in reducing these to Words, when one must bring the Idea he comprehended in gross, nearer to him, so as to contemplate its minutest Parts, and keep it steddily in his Eye, so as to copy these Parts in Order, this I found impracticable for me, nor were my Spirits equal to so severe an Employment. . . .¹

Hume concludes by enquiring what he may hope for in the way of recovery. Must he long wait for it, will his recovery ever be perfect, and his spirits regain their former spring and vigour, "so as to endure the Fatigue of deep and abstruse thinking" ?

This letter, in its extant form, is a draft ; and we do not know whether the letter was ever delivered, or if delivered, what advice Hume received. What we do know is that within six months he had taken up residence in France, and that in the course of the next three years, spent mainly at La Flèche, he was able to complete a first draft of the *Treatise*, and within the eighteen months following (1737-9), while he was residing in London, to make it sufficiently satisfactory to allow of his publishing the first two volumes in 1739, and the third concluding volume in 1740.

¹ *Letters*, i, p. 16.

There are two main points which stand out in this letter, and which bear on the origins of Hume's new way of thinking. There is first Hume's claim, thrice repeated, to novelty in his teaching — a ' new Medium ', a ' new Scene of Thought ', " scribled many a Quire of Paper, in which there is nothing contain'd but my own Inventions " ¹ — recurring in the Introduction to the *Treatise* as the claim that he is establishing metaphysics " on a foundation almost entirely new ". Could these statements have been made, if his fundamental assumptions had been simply those of Locke and Berkeley ? Could Hume have written in this way, or of the ' transports ' which the ' new scene of thought ' had opened out to him, had he been engaged merely in working out the consequences of Locke's principles ? At the least he must be referring to his novel teaching in regard to the causal problems, as supplying the key to his treatment of ' inference ', viz. as not being inference at all, but a feeling in the mind, and yet a feeling that is or involves belief.

There is, secondly, the prominence given to the problems of morals. Though it be true that the term ' moral ' was used in the eighteenth century in a much wider sense than is now customary, and has been so used by Hume himself, ² it seems clear that in the letter above quoted Hume is using it mainly in its more specific sense, as referring to morals ordinarily so called. Thus far, therefore, there is nothing to prevent, and everything to favour, our holding that it was in connexion with the treatment of the problems of morals that his new philosophy first began to formulate itself in his mind ³ — provided, of course, that it can be shown that there is a main road leading from his ethical teaching to what is central and distinctive in his general philosophy.

We may note in passing that Hume, on his own showing, was in these early years also preoccupied with the problems of what he entitles ' Criticism ', i.e. the theory of the aesthetically pleasing, in the literary and the fine arts, as

¹ To be taken with his suggestion that the condition of success is the throwing off " all Prejudices either for his own Opinions or for those of others ".

² Cf. *Treatise*, I, iii, 15 (175); *Enquiry* I, 4 (35); I, 7 (60-62); I, 12 (158).

³ Could we indeed have a more explicit assertion of this than Hume has himself given in the sentence (above quoted, p. 16) beginning: " This therefore I resolved . . . "

well as with moral problems, and that in studying human nature he hoped to find in it the key to every "Truth in Criticism as well as Morality". As testimony to the strength of this interest in the arts and *belles lettres*, there are, besides Hume's essays on these subjects, his many references to them in the *Treatise* and *Enquiries*. It is also relevant to observe that Francis Hutcheson's chief work, which appeared in 1725 (i.e. three or four years prior to Hume's mental upheaval), consisted of two treatises, one *Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*, and the other *Concerning Moral Good and Evil*. As we shall find, several of Hume's central doctrines, alike in 'criticism', in morals and in general philosophy, are anticipated in these treatises, and as thus suggested to Hume were certainly a main influence, and almost certainly — this will be my contention — the *chief* influence in his awakening.¹

A further piece of evidence is Hume's reference, in the Introduction to the *Treatise*, to those who had preceded him in the enterprise to which he is setting his hand — "some late philosophers in England, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing". He enumerates them as "Mr. Locke, my Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutcheson, Dr. Butler, &c."² With the one exception of Locke, who sought to develop a rationalist ethics, and who is included

¹ It was to Hutcheson that Hume turned for criticism of the ethical part of the *Treatise*, submitting to him the MS. of the still unpublished Book III. In his letter of thanks (17th September 1739) he writes: "I am much oblig'd to you for your Reflections on my Papers. I have perus'd them with Care, and find they will be of use to me. You have mistaken my Meaning in some Passages; which upon Examination I have found to proceed from some Ambiguity or Defect in my Expression." Cf. below, p. 42 n. 1.

² *Treatise*, Introduction (xxi n.). The dates of first publication of their works may be noted. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1690. Shaftesbury, *An Inquiry concerning Virtue, or Merit*, 1699; *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 1711. Mandeville, *Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turn'd Honest*, 1705; republished with additions in 1714, and with further additions in 1723, under the title, *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Public Benefits*. Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; In two Treatises. I. Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony. II. Concerning Moral Good and Evil*, 1725; *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, 1728. Butler, *Sermons*, 1726; *Dissertation upon Virtue* (appended to the *Analogy*), 1736. The order of names, as given by Hume, it will be observed, is not one of importance, but merely chronological.

for quite other reasons, these writers, it may be noted, agree in finding a basis for morals in the specific economy of the human soul. In his method of doing this, as in other respects, Mandeville (who, possibly, was first brought to Hume's attention through Hutcheson's discussion of him) stands by himself. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Butler all agree in advocating a doctrine of moral sense, i.e. an immediate awareness of the distinction between virtue and vice, an awareness akin more to feeling than to reason.

There is another passage which is less well known. It occurs only in the 1748 and 1751 editions of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, and has not been reprinted in the Selby-Bigge edition.¹ In this passage Hume defines the precise character of his debt to Hutcheson and Butler. The reference to Hutcheson is as follows :

That Faculty, by which we discern Truth and Falsehood, and that by which we perceive Vice and Virtue had long been confounded with each other, and all Morality was suppos'd to be built on eternal and immutable Relations, which, to every intelligent Mind, were equally invariable as any Proposition concerning Quantity or Number. But a late Philosopher [Mr. Hutcheson, *added as a note*] has taught us, by the most convincing Arguments, that Morality is nothing in the abstract Nature of Things, but is entirely relative to the Sentiment or mental Taste of each particular [i.e. species of] Being ; in the same Manner as the Distinctions of sweet and bitter, hot and cold, arise from the particular feeling of each Sense or Organ. Moral Perceptions, therefore, ought not to be class'd with the Operations of the Understanding, but with the Tastes or Sentiments.²

An even more explicit piece of evidence, on the lines of this reference to Hutcheson, is a passage which occurs in a letter from Hume to Hutcheson, of the date 16th March 1740. Hume was then engaged in preparing for the press the third volume of the *Treatise* : the italics are Hume's own :

I must consult you in a Point of Prudence. I have concluded a Reasoning with these two sentences. *When you pronounce any*

¹ Another serious defect of the Selby-Bigge edition — again without notification either in the Introduction or in the main text — is the omission of what constituted no less than five-sixths of the section "Of the Association of Ideas", as first composed, and as given in all editions up to the 1770 edition. Cf. below, p. 245 n. 2.

² Cf. Green and Grose's edition of the *Enquiry*, p. 10 n.

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