

# MIND

## A QUARTERLY REVIEW

OF

## PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

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### I.—THE NATURALISM OF HUME (I.).

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“HUME’S philosophic writings are to be read with great caution. His pages, especially those of the *Treatise*, are so full of matter, he says so many different things in so many different ways and different connexions, and with so much indifference to what he said before, that it is very hard to say positively that he taught, or did not teach, this or that particular doctrine. He applies the same principles to such a great variety of subjects that it is not surprising that many verbal, and some real inconsistencies can be found in his statements. . . . This makes it easy to find all philosophies in Hume, or, by setting up one statement against another, none at all.”<sup>1</sup> The latter is, in effect, what Green has done in his *Introduction to Hume’s Treatise*. Green’s interpretation of the *Treatise* leads to the conclusion that Hume has no set of positive beliefs, and merely develops to a sceptical conclusion the principles which he inherits from Locke and Berkeley. Nothing exists but subjective mental states, organised by the brute force of association. There is no self, no external world. Hume, Green contends, is more of a subjective idealist than even Berkeley, and so thorough a sceptic that he denounces all belief in permanence, in identity, in activity, whether in the self or outside it, as fiction and illusion. All is change: change governed by no law.

This, however, is now generally recognised as being an unfair statement of Hume’s position, and as ignoring all

<sup>1</sup> Selby-Bigge, *Introduction to Hume’s Enquiries* (1894 edition), p. vii.

that is most characteristic in his teaching. In answer to Green I may quote the words of another member of the Idealist School: "It is evident that Hume was not lost in the quagmire of subjective idealism. The objective and the subjective are with him akin: the objective is the subjective, which is universal, permanent, and normal. The causal relation has, in the first instance, only a subjective necessity; but through that subjective necessity or its irresistible belief, it generates an objective world. . . . Kant's Hume is therefore a somewhat imaginary being: the product, partly of imperfect knowledge of Hume's writings, partly of prepossessions derived from a long previous training in German rationalism."<sup>1</sup> In these articles I shall try to determine how far, and in what sense, these statements, which Wallace merely makes by the way, and without attempting to justify them by a detailed account of Hume's position, may be regarded as true. My general conclusion will be, that the establishment of a purely naturalistic conception of human nature by the thorough subordination of reason to feeling and instinct is the determining factor in Hume's philosophy; and in order to bring out clearly the significance of this general principle I shall dwell only on the central aspects of his philosophy, omitting, for instance, his views on mathematical science, in which he was not really at home and in reference to which his teaching appears in its least fortunate light. I shall keep almost entirely to his theory of ordinary consciousness and to his theory of morals.

I may begin by considering whether Green is justified in asserting that Hume denies the existence of the external world and of the self. It is still the prevalent view that Hume agrees with Berkeley in the denial of a material world. Hume undoubtedly accepts Berkeley's arguments against the knowability of such a world; and to their number he himself adds another derived from his own philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Also, though he lays little stress on these

<sup>1</sup> Wallace, *Prolegomena to Hegel's Logic* (2nd edition), chap. viii., pp. 96-97.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, bk. i., part iv., § ii.; Green and Grose's edition (1874), pp. 499-500; Selby-Bigge's edition (1888), p. 212. Hereafter I shall refer to Green and Grose's edition as 'G,' and to Selby-Bigge's edition as 'S-B.' I assume—the evidence (*cf.* Selby-Bigge's *Introduction to the Enquiries*) seems fairly conclusive—that Hume's philosophy must primarily be judged by the *Treatise*. But I shall make use of the *Enquiries*, and also of the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, when they seem to support or to extend the conclusions come to in the *Treatise*. Hume's philosophy as expounded in these three works seems to me to form, on the whole, a consistent system.

arguments—they are barely mentioned in the *Treatise*—the sufficient reason is that he believes himself to have demonstrated, by his deeper analysis of sense-experience and of reason, that it is impossible by either of these, the only two sources of knowledge, to establish the existence of body. But while thus strengthening Berkeley's position, he denies its relevancy. What we may perhaps describe as the chief aim of Hume's philosophy is to prove that, save as regards those relations upon which the mathematical sciences are based, belief never rests on reason or insight, and that, on the contrary, what we may call synthetic reason is itself merely generalised belief. The assumption of the existence of body is a 'natural belief' due to the ultimate instincts or propensities that constitute our human nature. It cannot be justified by reason, but this unaccountability it shares in common with our moral and æsthetic judgments and with all those theoretical beliefs which concern matters of fact. Green, in ignoring this new doctrine of belief, certainly one of the most essential, and perhaps the most characteristic doctrine in Hume's philosophy, and in regarding Hume as attempting to generate experience out of simple impressions by the mechanism of association,<sup>1</sup> in the manner of Mill and Spencer, misrepresents both the spirit and the letter of Hume's *Treatise*. Green by his close-knit massive argument has certainly succeeded in showing that Hume in developing the line of thought of Locke and Berkeley, reveals the incapacity of their principles to account for experience. But to that general conclusion Hume would in great part agree. His predecessors were, he believed, bound to fail in the establishment of their philosophy;<sup>2</sup> and this inevitable failure he

<sup>1</sup> "The vital nerve of his philosophy lies in his treatment of the 'association of ideas' as a sort of process of spontaneous generation, by which impressions of sensation issue in such impressions of reflexion, in the shape of habitual propensities, as will account, not indeed for there being—since there really are not—but for there seeming to be those formal conceptions which Locke, to the embarrassment of his philosophy, had treated as at once real and creations of the mind" (*Introduction to the Treatise*, pp. 162-163). In opposition to such statements we must insist that Hume does not regard association as 'explaining' or 'generating' ideas or feelings, but only as stating the conditions under which, as a matter of fact, we find them to occur. The same misinterpretation of Hume's use of association appears in Green's criticism of Hume's doctrine of the disinterested passions.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Enquiry*, § xii, part i.; G., note to p. 127; S-B., note to p. 155. "Most of the writings of that very ingenious author [Berkeley] form the best lessons of scepticism, which are to be found either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted. . . . That all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are, in reality, merely sceptical, appears from this, that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction."

regards as the proof of his own. Their failure leads him, however, not to reject their view of sense—it was not rejected even by Kant—but to criticise their view of the function of reason. We cannot by means of reason explain any of the ultimate characteristics of our experience—the origin of our sensations, the true ‘secret’ nature of causal connexion, apprehension of external reality, appreciation of beauty, judgment of an action as good or bad. And the alternative is not scepticism, but the practical test of human validity. Certain beliefs or judgments (Hume makes no distinction between belief and judgment, or indeed between judgment and reasoning<sup>1</sup>) can be shown to be ‘natural,’ ‘inevitable,’ ‘indispensable,’ and are thus removed beyond the reach of our sceptical doubts. “The sceptic . . . must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, though he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity. Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteemed it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations. We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but ‘tis vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* That is a point which we must take for granted in all our reasonings.”<sup>2</sup>

Belief in causal action is equally natural and indispensable; and Hume freely recognises the existence of ‘secret’ causes, acting independently of our experience. This causal action shows itself both in the mental and in the natural world. Association is “a kind of Attraction, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to show itself in as many and as various forms. Its effects are everywhere conspicuous; but as to its causes, they are mostly unknown, and must be resolved into *original* qualities of human nature, which I pretend not to explain.”<sup>3</sup> And speaking in the Enquiry of causes in the natural world: “[The really] ultimate springs and principles [of natural operations] are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry. Elasticity, gravity, cohesion of parts, communication of motion by impulse; these are probably the ultimate causes and principles which we shall ever discover in nature; and we may esteem ourselves sufficiently happy, if, by

*tion. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism.” Italics are Hume’s own.*

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i, iii., vii.; G., note to p. 396; S-B., note to p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i, iv., ii.; G., p. 478; S-B., p. 187. Italics are Hume’s own.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i, i., iv.; G., p. 321; S-B., pp. 12-13.

accurate enquiry and reasoning, we can trace up the particular phenomena to, or near to, these general principles. The most perfect philosophy of the natural kind only staves off our ignorance a little longer: as perhaps the most perfect philosophy of the moral or metaphysical kind serves only to discover larger portions of it."<sup>1</sup>

To turn now to the self. Hume contends that we have no grounds either in experience or in reason for declaring the self to be a simple unchanging substance. Complexity and change are the most prominent characteristics of our human nature. "The identity which we ascribe to the mind of man is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies."<sup>2</sup> "In a very few years both vegetables and animals endure a total change, yet we still attribute identity to them, while their form, size, and substance are entirely alter'd. An oak that grows from a small plant to a large tree, is still the same oak; tho' there be not one particle of matter, or figure of its parts the same. An infant becomes a man, and is sometimes fat, sometimes lean, without any change in his identity."<sup>3</sup> By calling such identity 'fictitious,' Hume, as his comparison of the self with plants and animals would seem to show, does not mean to assert that strictly there is no such thing as an identical self, but only that an absolute constancy is not part of its essential nature. As he indicates in the *Treatise*, all that seems to correspond to this assumed metaphysical constancy is identity of function. In the self, as in a plant or animal, the parts of each conspire to a common end, and this end persists throughout the most radical transformations.<sup>4</sup> The complexity of the self is as obvious as its changeableness: "Nothing seems more delicate with regard to its causes than thought. . . . A difference of age, of the disposition of his body, of weather, of food, of company, of books, of passions; any of these particulars, or others more minute, are sufficient to alter the curious

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, iv., i.; G., p. 27; S-B., pp. 80-31; cf. *Treatise*, i., iii., v.; G., p. 385; S-B., p. 84: "As to those *impressions* which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind, or are deriv'd from the author of our being. Nor is such a question any way material to our present purpose. We may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses."

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., vi.; G., p. 540; S-B., p. 259; cf. *ibid.*, G., p. 535; S-B., p. 253; *Dialogues*, vii.; G., pp. 422-423.

<sup>3</sup> *Treatise*, *loc. cit.*; G., p. 538; S-B., p. 256.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*

machinery of thought, and communicate to it very different movements and operations. As far as we can judge, vegetables and animal bodies are not more delicate in their motions, nor depend upon a greater variety or more curious adjustment of springs and principles."<sup>1</sup>

Our belief, then, in the identity and unity of the self, like our belief in an external world, though determined for us by nature, cannot be justified by reason. The ultimate nature of the self cannot be known, and on theoretical grounds no abiding personality can be proved. But so far from denying the existence and reality of the self, Hume seeks—like Kant, though in a very different manner—in its ultimate constitution, in its propensities, instincts, feelings, and emotions, the explanation of all experience, whether theoretical or practical. " 'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another."<sup>2</sup> It is the capital or centre of all knowledge, and once masters of it we can extend our conquests over all those sciences which intimately concern us. "In pretending, therefore, to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose 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."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues*, part iv.; G., p. 406. It may be noted how Hume, spite of his speaking of the self as a 'bundle or collection' of distinct impressions, constantly compares it with organisms, with the unity of a plant, of an animal, of society. Cf. *Treatise*, i., iv., vi.; G., p. 542; S-B., p. 261. "I cannot compare the soul more properly to anything than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocalities of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts. And as the same individual republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation. And in this view our identity with regard to the passions serves to corroborate that with regard to the imagination, by the making our distant perceptions influence each other, and by giving us a present concern for our past or future pains or pleasures." Hume's analysis of the self is unfairly treated when contrasted only with that of Kant, and not rather, as it ought to be, with the views of Locke and Berkeley. On the fundamental point, that the self is not to be described as a simple substance, Kant is in agreement with Hume. When Hume states that the self is *for us* (the limitation is important and should always be noted) only a 'bundle or collection' of perceptions, he is overstating his position in opposition to the equally one-sided view of his opponents.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, Introduction to bk i.; G., p. 306; S-B., p. xix.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; G., p. 307; S-B., p. xi.

Many difficulties in the way of this interpretation of Hume's position will at once suggest themselves, especially as regards his frequent and very confusing use of the words 'fiction' and 'illusion' in reference to causality, and material body, but consideration of these difficulties I shall defer until I have more completely stated what I regard as being Hume's actual position. As I have already pointed out, Green seems to hold that Hume's principles are all borrowed from Locke and Berkeley, and that his philosophy may be adequately regarded as simply the consistent and thorough development of their fundamental principles. There is, however, much positive teaching in the *Treatise* which is not to be found anywhere in the writings of his predecessors; and his philosophy is throughout inspired by a new conception of knowledge which is in many respects identical with Kant's Copernican idea. This new conception of the nature of experience and of the function of reason has already been indicated, and, if explicitly formulated, would run as follows. The function of knowledge is not to supply a metaphysic, but only to afford us guidance in practical life. If we are content to regard our beliefs as the outcome of the ultimate propensities that constitute our human nature, they can be shown, in their perfect fitness to the calls which things make upon us, to be as wonderfully adapted as any of the animal instincts; but if, on the other hand, we wrongly insist on interpreting them as the conclusions of supposed inferences, they will be found to rest on a mass of contradictions and of theoretically unjustifiable assumptions. Even when philosophers reinterpret the ordinary consciousness, modifying this or that belief, so as to attain a consistent system, they merely create additional beliefs, which, while they do not stand the test of practical life, still continue to contain "all the difficulties of the vulgar system, with some others, that are peculiar to themselves".<sup>1</sup> Hume is thus no sceptic as to the powers of reason, but quite positive that its sole function is practical. The question that has primarily to be decided is not how the fundamental characteristics of experience are to be rationally explained, but what function rational insight can have in our lives. That can only be discovered by observation of the facts, and as man is essentially an active being, these are above all else those of morals. Hume therefore fitly adds as sub-title to the *Treatise* which contains his whole philosophy, that it is "an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., ii.; G., p. 499; S-B., p. 211.

moral subjects".<sup>1</sup> Reason is not the guide to action, but, quite the reverse, our ultimate and unalterable tendencies to action are the test of practical truth and falsity. Reason, he contends, is nothing distinct from our natural beliefs, and therefore cannot justify them. His attitude in ethics—that "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them"<sup>2</sup>—has its exact counterpart in his theory of knowledge. "Giving a different turn to the speculations of philosophers," Hume seeks to establish "a system or set of opinions, which if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hop'd for) [may] at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and [may] stand the test of the most critical examination."<sup>3</sup>

That this is really Hume's conception of the function of reason, and that it leads to a genuinely fresh conception of the nature and conditions of experience, will best be shown by a brief account of the main argument of the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*. But before doing so, I must state the two very distinct meanings which he ascribes to the term 'reason'. "All reasonings may be divided into two kinds, demonstrative reasoning, or that concerning relations of ideas, and moral reasoning, or that concerning matter of fact and existence."<sup>4</sup> The first kind of reasoning is analytic. Since the relations discovered are involved in the ideas compared, being such as cannot be changed without change in the ideas, their truth is guaranteed by the law of non-contradiction. The relations thus revealed are those of resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number; and as the mathematical sciences of geometry, algebra, and arithmetic, involve only such relations, they are rendered possible by such discursive analytical thinking. "That three times five is equal to the half of thirty, expresses a relation between these numbers. Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would for ever retain their

<sup>1</sup> Hume uses the term 'moral' in a very broad sense.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, ii., iii., iii.; G., p. 195; S-B., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i., iv., vii.; G., pp. 551-552; S-B., p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> *Enquiry*, iv., ii.; G., p. 31; S-B., p. 35. This broad use of the word 'moral' is explained by Hume's view of our knowledge as determined throughout by practical considerations, and as possessing no absolute metaphysical truth.

certainty and evidence.”<sup>1</sup> This logical necessity, which consists in the impossibility of conceiving the opposite, is the sole form of rational necessity known to us, and it supplies a standard in the light of which we are enabled to detect its complete absence from all our knowledge of matters of fact. When we seek by means of inference to extend our knowledge of real existence, we make use of certain non-rational synthetic principles which can only be explained as blind instinctive propensities of the human soul. And as this second, synthetic, form of reasoning embraces all knowledge outside mathematics (for even the present testimony of sense and the records of memory involve synthetic principles), it is much the more important, and Hume constantly equates it with reason in general. Reason, he roundly declares, is “nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls”: though it may justify itself by its practical uses, it can afford no standard to which objective reality must conform. “There is no room in mind for any synthetic operation. Analysis Hume admits, but not synthesis. . . . What is called Necessity of Reason, if it does not mean the impossibility because contradictoriness of the opposite (and that is only analytical), has no objective significance; it is merely the expression for a tendency in mind; it is only subjective: ‘necessity is something that exists in the mind, not in objects’.”<sup>2</sup>

So long as we move about within experience, determining the nature of our given ideas and their discoverable interrelations, analytical thinking with its absolute standard enables us to gain true and certain knowledge. Experience is, however, conditioned by what lies outside it;<sup>3</sup> and as there is no transition, by way of analytical thinking, to these external conditions, they control the mind from without by a merely brute necessity. Through feeling and instinct they determine the mind both in thought and in action. “Nature by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel.”<sup>4</sup> “All these operations [judgment as to matters of fact, appreciation of beauty, estimation of an action as good or bad] are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, iv., i.; G., pp. 21-22; S-B., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Adamson, *Development of Modern Philosophy*, i., pp. 143-144.

<sup>3</sup> This, I should hold, is Hume's implied, though not always fully expressed, point of view.

<sup>4</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., i.; G., pp. 474-475; S-B., p. 183.

prevent."<sup>1</sup> Hume has even attempted in the *Treatise* to bring the knowledge of relations into line with this account of empirical reasoning. All ideas are simple and relationless. They do not compare, but are as they are; and hence in them lie no relations. "The necessity which makes two times two equal to four, or three angles of a triangle equal to two right ones, lies only in the act of the understanding by which we consider and compare these ideas."<sup>2</sup> This view of mathematical reasoning is, however, inconsistent with Hume's previous account of arithmetical reasoning,<sup>3</sup> and its falsity is virtually admitted by him when he distinguishes between 'philosophical' and 'natural' relations. As Green has so clearly shown, it is precisely in his failure to consider what is involved in the discursive comparing activity of reason that the weakness of his system lies. Had he realised the problems which are involved in our consciousness of relations, in our apprehension of succession quite as much as in the apprehension of causality, he would never have attempted to completely separate analytic and synthetic thinking. He would have recognised that the same problems are involved in both. That he did completely separate them, and that he ascribed to analytical thinking a quite secondary rôle is, however, undoubted. He could not attempt to prove that there is no such thing as rational necessity (for consciousness of it is implied in the proof of its absence); but postulating it in a form for which he could not really account, he seeks to show that owing to the constitution of our experience it cannot be attained in any department of our knowledge of matters of fact. Natural belief takes the place of rational insight.

In the brief summary which I shall now give of Hume's main argument in the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*, my chief aim will be to state the grounds of his naturalistic view of reason, and to show how his philosophy of knowledge culminates in a new theory of belief.<sup>4</sup> I shall first take up Hume's demonstration of the practical value and theoretical irrationality of the ordinary consciousness, and his complementary proof

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, v., i.; G., p. 40; S-B., pp. 46-47.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, I., iii., xiv.; G., p. 460; S-B., p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I., iii., i.; G., p. 374; S-B., p. 71. According to this passage, in arithmetical reasoning we possess a standard of perfect precision and certainty, and in applying it we reason according to the constitution of the numbers compared. And even in geometry, though, on Hume's view, we have no such exact standard, we still reason in accordance with the given sensible appearances.

<sup>4</sup> The reader who is familiar with Hume's argument may omit the first part of the summary.

of the practical worthlessness and equal irrationality of the philosophical reinterpretation of it. Thereafter I shall try to show the close connexion between his theory of knowledge and his ethical teaching.

The fundamental assumption involved in ordinary consciousness, that there is permanence and identity in things, is an excellent example of what is in practice an indispensable belief, and yet is incapable of theoretical justification.<sup>1</sup> The vulgar regard their perceptions as the real things, and therefore as continuing to exist while unperceived, and as remaining identically the same even when they have undergone change. Now we have only to close our eyes to annihilate our perceptions, and as the perceptions that appear on opening them again are new perceptions, separated from the old by an interval, no proof can possibly be offered that they are the same and have existed throughout the interval. As we know nothing but the distinct perceptions, the assertion of their identity merely on the ground of their resemblance must be purely dogmatic.<sup>2</sup> That, however, is but one defect; there is no contradiction involved, such as we find in the further assertions that each thing is a unity and abides throughout all change. Take the classical instance of a piece of wax. The wax is for us nothing but an aggregate of distinct sensations of smell, sound, taste, touch, and sight; and yet we none the less regard it as a single thing. Also though, when placed before the fire, it in melting loses all its previous qualities, and acquires other and different attributes, we still regard it as remaining the same identical piece of wax. That is apparently the inevitable procedure of our minds, and the result is the union of absolute contradictories. For the thing, which is admittedly a compound or aggregate, is hereby asserted to be one and simple, and that which undergoes transformation to remain the same and identical.

What then, Hume asks, are the causes which make us fall into these evident contradictions? Reason (taken in the ordinary sense) cannot be the force at work, for besides that its whole aim is to avoid self-contradiction, it also demands evidence, and, as we have just seen, none can be obtained. It is here, as elsewhere, a 'blind and powerful instinct,' that, demanding no evidence, and ignoring theoretical inconsistency for the sake of practical convenience, necessitates belief.

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., ii.

<sup>2</sup> I am concerned only to state Hume's actual position and do not seek either to defend or to criticise it. His philosophy rests on the fundamental assumption that the mind can immediately experience only subjective mental states.

Take, first, the belief in identity throughout change. If we observe the gradual changes in the wax when it is put before the fire and melts, at no point is there a break, but throughout the whole process, whereby it entirely changes its outward appearance, the mind is led on through a series of such slight and imperceptible alterations, each change preparing it for a still greater change that follows, that the passage of the mind from first to last is smooth and uninterrupted. The gradual changes accordingly leave a *feeling*<sup>1</sup> of sameness or identity of function in the mind, and this subjective feeling is the sole ground we have for asserting an objective identity in the real objects. Yet owing to the mind's instinctive tendency to spread itself over external objects, and to ascribe to them any feeling they occasion, it is a ground which constrains the mind to believe in the identity of the object throughout all change. Similarly the diverse sensations constituting the wax are so closely associated, no one of them appearing in the mind without immediately dragging the others into consciousness in its train, that the feeling of their mental union inevitably gives rise to the belief in their objective unity.

The philosophers, observing these palpable contradictions, have only made bad worse by seeking rational justification for them. Finding none in what is experienced, they fall back on fiction, feigning a something which they name substance, behind the sensible qualities and distinct from them, and which they suppose to be simple and unchangeable. In this way, as they believe, the contradictions can be removed, the unity and identity being ascribed to the substance, the change and multiplicity to its states. But the evidence for this philosophical theory (and the demand for evidence cannot in this case be avoided, since it is for the satisfaction of reason that it is propounded) is no greater than what exists for the popular doctrine, namely, a subjective feeling in the mind and not any real connexion perceived to hold within or between objects.<sup>2</sup> The philosophers have simply doubled the sensible reality which alone is known, and as the second reality is purely fictitious they are perfectly free to imagine it as will best suit their purposes and cover contradictions. And the assumption of the existence of such substances, besides being incapable of proof, is also useless. As Hume shows

<sup>1</sup> Cf. note to p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Hume's detailed and very subtle proof of this statement I must omit. It is primarily directed against Locke and Berkeley, and would, from their point of view, be very difficult to meet. This whole section (bk. i., part iv., § ii.) is, as Mr. Selby-Bigge remarks, perhaps the most interesting part of the whole *Treatise*.

in reference to Locke and Berkeley, not a single one of the old difficulties is thereby solved. The problem is only pushed back, to reappear, on deeper reflexion, in an uglier form. "By this means [the feigning of occult substances] these philosophers set themselves at ease, and arrive at last, by an illusion, at the same indifference, which the people attain by their stupidity, and true philosophers by their moderate scepticism."<sup>1</sup>

Hume accounts in a similar manner for belief in the self as an abiding existence. Our ideas are so closely united one to another through the bonds of association, that the easy passage of the imagination along the ideas generates the *feeling* of identity, and this subjective feeling in the mind is again interpreted as denoting actual identity of existence. This belief in the permanence of the self performs an indispensable function in our practical life, and from it, therefore, we cannot desire to free ourselves. But this practical function is its sole function, and upon it no metaphysic of the soul can be based.

All such attempts, however, to give theoretical explanation of what can only be practically justified, rest rather on the principle of causality than on the conception of substance. For it is always this principle that is appealed to, when the right to assert an abiding substance is called in question or when its relation to the sensible is sought. As the causal relation holds between distinct and separate events, it affords another, and equally important, example of a relation that can neither be demonstrated as necessary by reason nor verified as actual in experience. Hume's familiar argument in support of this position need not, however, be stated. The one point that I need dwell upon is the determining influence which he assigns to feeling. Though we have no knowledge, rational or empirical, of causal action, we are yet, as practical life demands, firmly convinced of its existence. And here again it is a blind but powerful instinct that apart from all evidence irresistibly inclines the mind to this belief. When ideas have been constantly conjoined they become mentally associated, so that on the presentation of one the mind (through the workings of that unknown force, association) is necessitated to call up the idea of the other. This determination of the mind, this feeling of necessitated transition, is the original of our idea of necessity, causal efficacy and power.<sup>2</sup> Necessity is something that is

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., iii.; G., p. 510; S-B., p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Some critics seem to hold that Hume has no right to any such feeling. Certainly Hume cannot pretend to be able to explain *how* the feeling is

felt in the soul, not perceived to hold between objects; and it is due to that fortunately irresistible instinct which leads us to spread ourselves on external objects and to ascribe to them any internal impression which they occasion in us,<sup>1</sup> that our belief in the causal agency of objects and in the personal activity of the self is independent of reasoning and victoriously withstands all the objections that can be raised by reflexion. Only for moments, when we turn away from practical life, can we free ourselves from this belief that we directly apprehend necessary connexion and real activity; and only thus, from this detached philosophical point of view, can we recognise that their real nature can never by any possibility be discovered. The conceptually empty and unmeaning notion of causation is only of practical use within experience, never valid as an instrument for the metaphysical explanation of that experience.

But one of the most important points in Hume's criticism still remains to be stated. Even if we take the term 'cause' as signifying only the customary antecedent, no *inference* to a cause can ever, in any single case, even within experience, be theoretically justified. All that experience has revealed is conjunction in the past, and the inference to similar conjunction in future cases goes upon the assumption that the future will resemble the past. "If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion. It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past to the future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of the resem-

generated, but that does not deprive him of the right to learn from experience that it is, as a matter of fact, generated. His view of reflexion must be kept in mind. Just as we learn from experience that the idea of pain or pleasure, when it returns upon the soul, is followed by the new impression of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may therefore be called impressions of reflexion, so also experience teaches us that after events have repeatedly succeeded one another there arises in the mind a feeling of necessitated transition from the one to the other. But the generating causes of this feeling like the generating causes of our sensations, can never be discovered. Hume adds in the *Enquiry* (vii, i.; G., note to p. 56; S-B., note to p. 67) that what is called the feeling of effort, resistance, or animal *visus*, also forms part of the vulgar conception of causal activity. But since this also is pure feeling, it affords to the mind no *knowledge*, that is, *comprehension* of the nature of activity, and indeed is not, save through customary connexion, capable even of indicating its existence. All feeling is in itself blind and unilluminating, and therefore can indicate nothing.

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iii., xiv.; G., p. 461; S-B., p. 167.

blance."<sup>1</sup> No sufficient evidence existing for the inference, it must be the outcome of some unreasoning propensity, and that propensity is custom or habit. "For wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *Custom*. By employing that word, we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity. We only point out a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects."<sup>2</sup> This custom by leading us to anticipate the future in accordance with the past, and so to adjust means for the attainment of our ends, brings about the required harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas. "Those, who delight in the discovery and contemplation of *final causes*, have here ample subject to employ their wonder and admiration."<sup>3</sup>

But in this 'custom' something more must be involved than has yet come to light, for the ideas introduced by it are, as we say, 'inferences,' and not mere suggestions. "If flame or snow be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold, and to *believe* that such a quality does exist, and will discover itself upon a nearer approach."<sup>4</sup> It would, Hume remarks, be quite allowable to stop our researches at this point, taking custom as a natural propensity of the soul conditioning belief; but, as it happens, we can carry our inquiries a step further. The distinction between a fictitious idea and one that is believed cannot lie in any peculiar idea, such as that of 'reality' or 'existence,' that is annexed to the one and absent from the other.<sup>5</sup> "For as the mind has authority over all its ideas, it could voluntarily annex this particular idea to any fiction, and consequently be able to believe whatever it pleases; contrary to what we find in daily experience."<sup>6</sup> It follows, therefore, as the sole alternative, that the difference between fiction and belief lies in some sentiment or feeling that accompanies all ideas believed. And to verify that conclusion Hume suggests an experiment. "If

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, iv., ii.; G., p. 88; S-B., pp. 37-88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, v., i.; G., p. 37; S-B., p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, v., ii.; G., pp. 46-47; S-B., p. 55; cf. v., i.; G., p. 39; S-B., pp. 44-45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, v., i.; G., p. 40; S-B., p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Appendix to the *Treatise*; G., p. 555 ff.; S-B., p. 623 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Enquiry*, v., ii.; G., p. 41; S-B., pp. 47-48.

I see a billiard ball moving towards another, on a smooth table, I can easily conceive it to stop upon contact. This conception implies no contradiction ; but still it feels very differently from that conception by which I represent to myself the impulse and the communication from one ball to another."<sup>1</sup> Belief superadds nothing to the content of an idea but only changes our manner of conceiving it, rendering it more vivid, forcible and steady, and so causing it to weigh more in the thought, and to have a superior influence on the passions and imagination. All these characteristics we find in a supreme degree in our perceptions ; and since perceptions are, apart from inference or evidence, the immediate objects of belief, this view of belief, as being nothing but such vivid and steady apprehension, may be taken as proved.

Perceptions have, however, a further characteristic. As the facts show, they possess the power of conferring upon any ideas that are in any way connected with them a share of their vivacity. Memory-images carry the mind through a connected series of images direct to its present perceptions, and being enlivened by them, take stronger hold upon the mind than does the idea, say, of an enchanted castle. The picture of an absent friend enlivens our idea of him, and also every feeling which that idea occasions. For the same reason the superstitious are fond of the relics of saints and holy men. Now this quality of our perception would also seem to be the cause of belief in an effect suggested by a present perception. The perception of fire conveys to the suggested idea of heat a share of its liveliness, and the idea thereby approximating in force to an impression, the mind necessarily believes in its existence.

Inference, then, instead of being based on the relation of cause and effect and presupposing it, is itself identical with that relation. It is nothing but the custom-bred transition from an impression to an enlivened idea. Just as in his ethics Hume grounds the distinction between moral good and evil not on reason but on certain emotions and passions which are to be found in every man, and which constitute the constant element in human nature ; so here in his theory of knowledge he declares the operation of the mind, by which we infer effects from causes, to be, like that of moral judgment, so essential to the subsistence of all human creatures, that it cannot be trusted to the fallacious deductions of our reason. " It is more conformable to the ordinary wisdom of nature

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

to secure so necessary an act of mind, by some instinct or mechanical tendency, which may be infallible in its operations, may discover itself at the first appearance of life and thought, and may be independent of all the laboured deductions of the understanding."<sup>1</sup> "Nature by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel."<sup>2</sup> "All these operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to prevent."<sup>3</sup> And, as his whole philosophy is directed to prove, reason can as little explain as control them.

This new theory of belief is the indispensable complement of Hume's new view of the function of knowledge, and was all-important in determining his philosophical attitude. By his predecessors belief had been regarded as purely intellectual, dependent on insight, and therefore at the mercy of the philosophical sceptic; whereas, if Hume's teaching is true, it does not result from knowledge but precedes it, and as it is not caused by knowledge, so also is not destroyed by doubt.<sup>4</sup> By the fortunate construction of our nature, "the conviction, which arises from a subtle reasoning, diminishes in proportion to the efforts, which the imagination makes to enter into the reasoning, and to conceive it in all its parts. Belief, being a lively conception, can never be entire, where it is not founded on something natural and easy."<sup>5</sup> As the mind departs further and further from its ordinary attitude, sinking itself in ideas, "tho' the principles of judgment, and the balancing of opposite causes be the same as at the very beginning; yet their influence on the imagination, and the vigour they add to, or diminish from the thought, is by no means equal."<sup>6</sup> Thus happily, "nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time, and keeps them from having

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, v., ii.; G., p. 47; S-B., p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., i.; G., pp. 474-475; S-B., p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Enquiry*, v., i.; G., p. 40; S-B., pp. 46-47.

<sup>4</sup> "Shou'd it be here asked me . . . whether I be really one of those sceptics, who hold that all is uncertain, and that our judgment is not in any thing possess of any measure of truth and falsehood; I shou'd reply, that this question is entirely superfluous, and that neither I, nor any other person was ever sincerely and constantly of that opinion. Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel. . . . Whosoever has taken the pains to refute the cavils of this total scepticism, has really disputed without an antagonist, and endeavour'd by argument to establish a faculty, which nature has antecedently planted in the mind, and render'd unavoidable." — *Treatise*, i., iv., i.; G., pp. 474-475; S-B., p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; G., p. 477; S-B., p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*; G., p. 476; S-B., p. 185.

any considerable influence on the understanding".<sup>1</sup> They cannot overthrow our natural beliefs without totally destroying our human nature.

Further, all sceptical doubts as to the validity of our natural beliefs rest, not on the demonstration of the falsity of these beliefs, but only on the proofs of the total absence of evidence for them. It is therefore only one possibility against another, and, in our complete and necessary ignorance as to the nature of ultimate reality, all sceptical arguments against trust in these particular beliefs must equally diminish trust in our sceptical doubts. The appeals to reason for and against natural belief mutually destroy one another "till at last they both vanish away into nothing, by a regular and just diminution".<sup>2</sup>

But that does not make an end of our difficulties, for the natural beliefs which we perforce follow, themselves mislead us. And this brings us to the second stage in Hume's argument, his proof, namely, that the philosophical reinterpretation of experience is worthless in practical life, and besides containing all the contradictions of ordinary consciousness possesses in addition certain difficulties peculiar to itself. The philosophical reinterpretation that he has specially in view is the spiritualism and consequent deism of Descartes and his English successors. This line of thought I have already touched upon in stating Hume's criticism of the category of substance, and may now consider it more at length. What we call 'reason,' and oppose to our natural beliefs, is in reality nothing distinct from these beliefs; and it is just the *de facto* necessity we are under of following them, which gives rise to the philosophical or 'rational' reaction against them. The understanding is nothing but the imagination acting according to its most general and established habits or instincts;<sup>3</sup> and it is because these

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., i.; G., p. 478; S-B., p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; G., p. 478; S-B., p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i., iv., vii.; G., p. 547; S-B., p. 267; cf. i., iii., xvi.; G., p. 471; S-B., p. 179. "To consider the matter aright, reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls." The completeness with which Hume equates reason and instinct, and gives a purely naturalistic explanation of both, is well illustrated in the following passage from the *Dialogues*, vii.; G., pp. 422-423: "These words, *generation*, *reason*, mark only certain powers and energies in nature, whose effects are known, but whose essence is incomprehensible, and one of these principles, more than the other, has no privilege for being made a standard to the whole of nature. . . . In this little corner of the world alone, there are four principles, *Reason*, *Instinct*, *Generation*, *Vegetation*, which are similar to each other, and are the causes of similar effects. What a number of other principles may we naturally suppose

instincts, when theoretically developed, conflict with one another that the understanding is at variance with itself.<sup>1</sup> Our two most fundamental beliefs are, first, that the objects we perceive have an independent substantial reality, and secondly, that nothing can come into existence save through a pre-existent cause. Now in acquiescing in the first belief we fly in the face of all the inevitable consequences of the causal postulate. This Hume contends has been proved by Berkeley. When we reason from cause and effect we conclude that neither colour, sound, taste, nor smell have independent reality, and when we exclude all these nothing of all that we apprehend remains as real existence. Thus though no abstract arguments drawn from the universal application of the one belief can destroy the other, the necessity of holding both must prevent us from ever being satisfied with either.<sup>2</sup> Hume's argument is primarily directed only against the position of Locke and Berkeley, but it is the same line of thought that it so fruitfully developed in the Critical philosophy. We cannot without self-contradiction acquiesce in our natural belief in the independent reality of the world apprehended through sense-experience.

Again, it is these natural beliefs that induce idle speculation. The belief in causal connexion being instinctive is

in the immense extent and variety of the universe, could we travel from planet to planet and from system to system, in order to examine each part of this mighty fabric? . . . Reason, in its internal fabric and structure, is really as little known to us as instinct or vegetation; and perhaps even that vague, undeterminate word, *Nature*, to which the vulgar refer everything, is not at bottom more inexplicable." But though Hume in describing the understanding as nothing but the imagination acting according to its most general and established habits, certainly means to emphasise that it is in essence instinctive and contains no objective standard to which reality must conform, he must not be taken as implying that it is therefore identical with imagination in the ordinary sense, and is a source of arbitrary fictions. The imagination constitutes the deepest element in our human nature, and fulfils the same function as Kant's faculty of understanding: it creates the order of nature out of the detached impressions of sense. "In order to justify myself, I must distinguish in the imagination betwixt the principles which are permanent, irresistible, and universal; such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes: And the principles, which are changeable, weak, and irregular. . . . *The former are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that upon their removal human nature must immediately perish and go to ruin.*"—*Treatise*, i., iv., iv.; G., p. 511; S-B., p. 225. Italics are mine. Hume ascribes an equally important function to imagination in the creation of mathematical science.

<sup>1</sup> We may compare Hume's line of argument with that of 'the Prussian Hume,' 'the all-destroyer'.

<sup>2</sup> Hume's detailed proof is too lengthy to be given. Cf. *Treatise*, i., iv., iv.; *Enquiry*, xii., i.

unlimited in its pretensions, and leads us, in the pursuit of knowledge, to demand a sufficient cause for all things. But since we have no adequate conception what would be a 'sufficient' cause—Hume further develops this point in his *Dialogues*—either for the world as a whole or for any phenomenon in it, this demand can never be satisfied. In demanding, however, explanation of all things, reason also requires justification for its own demands, and as these rest on blind instinct, for which no theoretical justification can be given, it here again demands the impossible. The demand for 'sufficient' causes is itself insufficiently caused, and in thus insisting on itself it finally brings to light its purely practical function and its non-rational source.

We must, then, draw the 'sceptical' conclusion, that though our natural beliefs are our sole guides they are reliable and legitimate only in practical life. We must limit our inquiries to 'the experienced train of events'. "Nothing else can be appealed to in the field, or in the senate. Nothing else ought ever to be heard of in the school, or in the closet. The more sublime topics are to be left to the embellishment of poets and orators, or to the arts of priests and politicians." "Those who have a propensity to philosophy will still continue their researches; because they reflect, that, besides the immediate pleasure attending such an occupation, philosophical decisions are nothing but the reflexions of common life, methodised and corrected. But they will never be tempted to go beyond common life, so long as they consider the imperfection of those faculties which they employ, their narrow reach, and their inaccurate operations."<sup>1</sup>

But this is a more sceptical conclusion than is strictly demanded by Hume's philosophy. Hume in these and similar passages seems to imply that no really definite and final set of opinions can be arrived at. As he says in the *Treatise*,<sup>2</sup> we must study philosophy in a 'careless manner,' and be as diffident of our sceptical doubts as of our philosophical convictions. On his own showing, however, reason (in its synthetic form) is as necessary as natural belief. It is true that if we seek to reject natural belief in favour of reasoning we are really only rejecting belief in the independent existence of our impressions for belief in their causal dependence—a belief which leads to equally self-contradictory results. But it is also true that if we condemn all

<sup>1</sup> *Enquiry*, xii., iii.; G., p. 133; S-B., p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., vii.; G., p. 552; S-B., p. 273.

refined reasoning, that is to say, all application of the synthetic principles of imagination beyond the sphere of immediate experience, we run into the most manifest contradictions. In either case we entirely subvert the human understanding.<sup>1</sup> The more consistent conclusion would therefore be, that though reason cannot take the place of natural belief, still less overthrow it, its generalising powers are yet necessary for its interpretation and control. Only through the use of our natural beliefs as universal synthetic principles can we discover their limited range and their merely practical worth. This more positive view of the relation of reason to feeling and instinct is also more in agreement with the conclusion which, as we shall see, Hume comes to in his ethical philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

I may now, before passing to Hume's theory of morals, consider the difficulties involved in his use of the terms 'illusion,' 'fiction,' 'propensity to feign,' in reference to our notions of body and of causation.<sup>3</sup> Hume's argument rests throughout on the supposition that perishing subjective states are the only possible objects of mind, and that it is these perishing states which natural belief constrains us to

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., vii.

<sup>2</sup> Hume's view of the relation between natural belief and synthetic reason may profitably be compared with the very different, though analogous, opposition of understanding and reason in the Critical philosophy. Just as reason discovers the contradictions involved in the conceptions of understanding when universalised, so reason reveals the contradictions involved in our natural beliefs when these are regarded as theoretically true. Also, while Kant shows reason to be helpless apart from understanding, Hume proves reason to be incapable of acting apart from natural belief. And lastly, to complete the analogy, just as Kant's ideas of reason are simply the categories freed from all limitations, so reason is for Hume nothing but our natural beliefs universalised. It is because, when thus universalised, they conflict and lead to insoluble contradictions that we are forced to recognise their purely practical aim. I do not, of course, mean to imply that the views of Hume and of Kant are really akin. Each gives so different a meaning to reason that the tendencies of their systems are quite divergent. The following passage from the *Prolegomena* brings out in a striking manner Kant's agreement with Hume, but is a very inadequate statement of Kant's real position. "The principle of all genuine Idealists, from the Eleatic school to Bishop Berkeley, is contained in this formula. 'All knowledge by sense and experience is nothing but mere appearance, and truth is to be found only in the ideas of pure understanding and reason'. The principle which throughout governs and determines my Idealism is: 'All knowledge of things from pure understanding or pure reason is nothing but mere appearance, and truth is to be found only in experience'."—*Werke* (Hartenstein), iv., p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> As regards the reality of the self, I have already stated (pp. 153, 154, 161 above) all that seems necessary; but Hume's argument as to the reality of material body may be taken, *mutatis mutandis*, as also true of the self.

regard as abiding independent existences. Such belief is obviously, on the above interpretation, sheer illusion and utterly false.<sup>1</sup> It is due to a propensity to feign. Belief in the existence of body does not, however, necessarily involve this identification of the external world with the world perceived. The philosophical theory postulates the double existence of objects and perceptions; and to an objective world, thus conceived as distinct from our fleeting impressions, the terms fiction and illusion cannot be applied. For if the existence of such a world cannot be asserted, just as little can it be disproved. Philosophers, however, though they have sufficient force of genius to free themselves from the vulgar error, have not sufficient insight to keep them from seeking to justify their own theory at the bar of reason. "However philosophical this new system may be esteemed, I assert 'tis only a palliative remedy, and that it contains all the difficulties of the vulgar system, with some others, that are peculiar to itself."<sup>2</sup> Though "it pleases our reason, in allowing, that our dependent perceptions are interrupted and different; and at the same time is agreeable to the imagination, in attributing continued existence to something else, which we call objects," it presupposes the popular theory, and derives all its authority from it. Apart from that theory it can offer no grounds for itself, and therefore can never really displace natural belief by rational judgment.<sup>3</sup>

Now Green, besides ignoring Hume's doctrine of natural belief, misrepresents his position by taking the epithets which concern only the popular theory as applying also to the philosophical. As we have just seen, Hume's utterances from the one point of view are not inconsistent with those from the other. Though the popular belief is an illusion and demonstrably false, the philosophical view, in some one or other of its forms, may be true though it can never be established. And this is all that is required in order to turn the scales in favour of our natural beliefs. They may contain genuine truth though the particular form in which they

<sup>1</sup>In my account of Hume in *Studies in the Cartesian Philosophy* (chap. vi., especially pp. 247-248, 251-252), I have followed the current view more closely than I am now prepared to do. It was quite impossible for Hume to adopt the position which he suggests in the *Treatise* (I, iv., ii.; G., pp. 495-496; S-B., pp. 207-208). An interpretation of this passage, similar to that which I have given in my *Studies*, and open therefore to the objections which I have indicated above, has recently been presented in an interesting manner by Dr. Montague (*Philosophical Review*, January, 1905—"A neglected point in Hume's philosophy").

<sup>2</sup>*Treatise*, I, iv., ii.; G., p. 499; S-B., p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Here again I can only summarise Hume's argument.

exist is obviously false. The form which they take is influenced by practical convenience, and theoretical consistency is not, therefore, an indispensable condition of their practical truth. The illusions upon which they rest may the better fit them for their immediate end. And since reason is as incapable of correcting as of displacing them, we must accept them in the crude form in which they result from the instinctive equipment of the human mind. Hume candidly admits that such inquiries raise doubts even in his own mind as to the validity of those natural beliefs which he contends to be unavoidable.<sup>1</sup> But this he regards as simply one illustration of how all reflection upon ultimate questions must inevitably lead to uncertainty and doubt. Such philosophical inquiries are both useless and harmful, except in so far as they lead us to detect the inherent impossibility of all metaphysical construction and so constrain us to resign ourselves to our natural beliefs. " 'Tis impossible upon any system to defend either our understanding or senses; and we but expose them farther when we endeavour to justify them in that manner. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflexion on these subjects, it always increases, the farther we carry our reflexions, *whether in opposition or conformity to it*. . . . An hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and an internal world."<sup>2</sup>

It is, however, in reference to causation that Hume's most ambiguous statements are made. Inference, instead of being based on the relation of cause and effect, and presupposing it, is itself identical with that relation. "Necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it possible for us ever to form the most distant idea of it, consider'd as a quality in bodies."<sup>3</sup> "The efficacy or energy of Causes . . . belongs entirely to the soul. . . . 'Tis here that the real power of causes is plac'd along with their connexion and necessity."<sup>4</sup> Before commenting on these passages I may point out that Hume states as strongly as Green himself the objection to this position which at once

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iv., ii.; G., p. 504; S-B., p. 217. "I begun this subject with premising, that we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses, and that this would be the conclusion I shou'd draw from the whole of my reasoning. But to be ingenuous, I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment, and am more inclined to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination, than to place in it such implicit confidence."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; G., p. 505; S-B., p. 218. Italics are mine. Cf. *Enquiry* .xii. i.; G., p. 127; S-B., p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i., iii., xiv.; G., p. 460; S-B., pp. 165-166. <sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*

suggests itself, namely, that it entirely reverses the natural order of thought and reality, and contradicts the assumption which Hume himself inevitably makes at every turn, even in his proof that we can have no genuine conception of causal agency. "What! the efficacy of causes lie in the determination of the mind! As if causes did not operate entirely independent of the mind, and wou'd not continue their operation, even tho' there was no mind existent to contemplate them, or reason concerning them. Thought may well depend on causes for its operation, but not causes on thought. This is to reverse the order of nature, and make that secondary, which is really primary."<sup>1</sup> Hume's answer to this objection shows very clearly that he does not mean to deny the objective reality of material bodies or their mutual influence. "I can only reply to all these arguments, that the case is here much the same, as if a blind man shou'd pretend to find a great many absurdities in the supposition, that the colour of scarlet is not the same with the sound of a trumpet, nor light the same with solidity. If we have really no idea of power or efficacy in any object, or of any real connexion betwixt causes and effects, 'twill be to little purpose to prove, that an efficacy is necessary in all operations. We do not understand our own meaning in talking so, but ignorantly confound ideas, which are entirely distinct from each other. I am, indeed, ready to allow, that there may be several qualities, both in material and in immaterial objects, with which we are utterly unacquainted; and if we please to call these *power or efficacy*, 'twill be of little consequence to the world. *But when, instead of meaning these unknown qualities, we make the terms of power and efficacy signify something, of which we have a clear idea, and which is incompatible with those objects, to which we apply it*, obscurity and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy."<sup>2</sup>

In the next sentence, however, Hume states his position in an ambiguous manner that goes far to account for the common misunderstanding. He proceeds: "This is the case, when we transfer the determination of the thought of external objects, and suppose any real intelligible connexion betwixt them; *that being a quality, which can only belong to the mind that considers them*".<sup>3</sup> Unless that last sentence is carefully interpreted in the light of its context, the words which I have italicised may seem to involve a conclusion

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iii., xiv.; G., pp. 461-462; S-B., p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; G., p. 462; S-B., p. 168. Italics in last sentence are mine.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics are mine.

which there is nothing at all in Hume's argument to support, and which moreover is in flagrant contradiction with the admissions which he has just made. All that it really says is that causal connexion denotes for us merely a feeling, the feeling of necessitated transition, and that *this, quæ feeling*, can exist only in mind. This, I should contend, is the point of view from which the sentences which I have quoted above, in the beginning of the previous paragraph, must be interpreted. Reading their context this seems quite obviously to be their meaning. To take the strongest of his assertions: "The efficacy or energy of causes is neither plac'd in the causes themselves, nor in the deity, nor in the concurrence of these two principles; but belongs entirely to the soul, which considers the union of two or more objects in all past instances. 'Tis here that the real power of causes is plac'd along with their connexion and necessity."<sup>1</sup> Now what Hume has here in view is the explanation of our causal inferences. The foundation of such inference is the *de facto* transition from cause to effect, arising from repeated union. This transition is in no wise due to the objective nature of either the cause or the effect, but solely to their acquired mental connexion. "The necessity or power, which unites causes and effects, lies in the determination of the mind to pass from the one to the other."<sup>2</sup> Hume's whole meaning, therefore, is that the connexion and necessity *which ground our inferences* can only exist in us; and this does not involve the assertion that objects are incapable of influencing one another independently of mind.

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise*, i., iii., xiv.; G., p. 460; S-B., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.* This is the sentence immediately preceding that which we are now considering.

(To be continued.)