The Problem of the External World in David Hume

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THE PROBLEM OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

IN DAVID HUME

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .............................................................. 1

The significance of the philosophy of David Hume-
The problem of this thesis-

CHAPTER I  AN ACCOUNT OF HUME'S POSITION ................. 4

The purpose of Hume's philosophy-
Hume's first principle of philosophy-
The place of perceptions in his system-
The procedure in the development of Hume's philosophy-
An analysis of impressions and ideas-
The four major doctrines in Hume's system-
Hume's analysis of reason-
The meaning of belief-
An analysis of knowledge-
Knowledge in comparison of ideas-
Knowledge reduced to probability-
The place of the imagination in Hume's system-
Hume's description of the imagination-

CHAPTER II  HUME'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM
OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD ................................... 22

Two questions involved in the problem of the external world-
An analysis of the senses in relation to the world of existence-
Reasons for the insufficiency of sense knowledge-
A further analysis of reason in relation to the external world-
The inadequacy of reason to give knowledge of the external world-
Hume's description of reason-
The analysis of the imagination in David Hume-
The operation of the imagination-
The two principles in the imagination-
Hume's explanation of constancy and coherence in accounting for the external world-
The four main arguments for Hume's position-
The principle of individuation-
Why resemblance of broken and interrupted perceptions induce us to attribute identity to them-
The propensity to belief in external world-
Explanation of force and vivacity of conception arising from propensity-
CHAPTER III  THE REASONS FOR HUME'S POSITION

Hume's claim to originality-
Other philosophers who generally influenced Hume-
Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutcheson,
Dr. Butler - John Newton, Father Malebranche-
Cicero, Thomas Hobbes, Francis Bacon-
Most direct and definite philosophical influence-
John Locke and his influence upon Hume-
George Berkeley's influence upon Hume's thought-
Hume's own contribution in his system-

CHAPTER IV  AN EVALUATION OF HUME'S POSITION

Hume's first principle stated and analyzed-
The inadequacy of his first principle in relation
to reality - to knowledge - to the senses -
to reason - to self and personal identity -
to substance and the soul -
The procedure of Hume's philosophy on the basis
of his first principle -
His analysis of the imagination - its inadequacy
in description, in its two principles -
in its contrary principles which Hume admits
are inaccurate - its breakdown -
Hume's analysis of the external world -
Solution in belief of the external world -
Hume's final analysis - scepticism -
other sceptical conclusions from his system -
The problem of universals - causation -
The collapse of Hume's system due to his
first principle which need not be accepted -
Alternative solution - the first principle of being -
Hume's final weakness - choice of a part of
reality for the whole - thought instead of being
as his first principle -
INTRODUCTION

The significance of the philosophy of David Hume is two-fold. First, his work marks the end of an important cycle in the history of philosophy. Gilson has rightly termed this period as "the Cartesian cycle." Hume's thought also had a great influence upon Immanuel Kant. In fact Kant confesses that it was David Hume who aroused him from his dogmatic slumber, and started him in a new direction in his philosophic thought. Kant, we know, was confronted with the problem of the relationship of the phenomenal to the noumenal world. David Hume likewise faced the problem of the external world. What is the relationship between thought and things, and between the individual and the external world?

This study will consider and evaluate Hume's solution to this problem, based principally on Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, as well as his Inquiry Concerning the Human Understanding. Particularly important in this


2 Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic. translated by H.P. Mahaffy and J.H. Bernard, Macmillan Co., New York, 1889. In the Introduction Kant says: "I honestly confess the suggestion of David Hume....first interrupted my dogmatic slumber, and gave my investigation in the field of speculative philosophy quite a new direction."
study are the following parts of the Treatise:

Book I, IV, 1. Of Scepticism with Regard to Reason
Book I, IV, 2. Of Scepticism with Regard to the Senses
Book I, IV, 4. Of Modern Philosophy
Book I, IV, 5. Of the Immateriality of the Soul

Hume also briefly treats of this subject in his Inquiry Concerning the Human Understanding, in Section XII, I, entitled, Of the Academic or Sceptical Philosophy. The treatment of this study is as follows:

CHAPTER I  AN ACCOUNT OF HUME'S POSITION

An account of Hume's position, which determines his conclusion concerning the external world, by showing his purpose, first principle, procedure, and the fundamentals of his theory of knowledge appropriate to our problem.

CHAPTER II  AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

Hume's analysis of the origin of our belief in the external world, which is not from the senses, nor from reason, but from the imagination.

CHAPTER III  THE REASONS FROM HUME'S POSITION

A consideration of Hume's theory of knowledge in its relationship to Locke and Berkeley,
and the consequent originality in the problem of the external world.

CHAPTER IV  AN EVALUATION OF HUME'S POSITION

A two part critical estimate of Hume's problem and its solution; the principle of immanence creates a pseudo-problem; Hume's procedure involves inadequacies and inconsistencies.
CHAPTER I

AN ACCOUNT OF HUME'S POSITION

Let us consider, first, the purpose of Hume's philosophy. He states it for us in the Introduction to his Treatise. He is certain that all the sciences are related in a greater or lesser degree to human nature, and that no matter how far they may seem to be from human nature, they must still return by one passage or another. Thus, Hume continues, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion are in some degree, at least, dependent upon man. If this be true of these sciences, how much more is it true of the other sciences so intimately related to man, such as Logic, Morals, Criticism and Politics. He therefore feels that the only hope for success in our philosophical researches, is to leave behind what Hume terms in the Introduction, "the tedious lingering method," which has been followed in the past, and instead of taking one castle or village or frontier, it is now in order to march right to the center and capital of all these sciences, to human nature itself, which if once mastered, it is hoped, will lead everyone else to easy victory.

Starting from this anthropocentric position, Hume maintains that the only foundation for the study of man is experience and observation.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
Just as the only foundation for all the sciences is the solid foundation of the science of man, so likewise the only solid foundation for the science of man is and must be in experience and observation. By experience Hume means what he himself terms as "experimental philosophy," which he illustrates thus:

When I am at a loss to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation, I need only put them in that situation, and observe what results from it.4

This experimental method becomes then, one of the important factors in his whole philosophy, and is the key to his whole position. A summary of the implications of this statement as well as the position itself is well expressed by N.K. Smith:

Experiment is, Hume teaches us, the final court of appeal in respect to all matters of fact. But it can supply only particulars, and even these only in different circumstances and situations appropriate to them.5

Hume further holds that the essence of both mind and external bodies is unknown. His own words are the best evidence of his thought:

For to me it seems evident, that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments.6

4 Ibid.
6 Hume, Introduction.
If the mind by experiments can only know particulars, as Hume has already indicated, it is certain it can never know essences. This leads Hume to two further significant statements: (1) Ultimate and universal principles are impossible, and (2) any hypothesis pretending to discover ultimate qualities of human nature ought at first to be rejected as presumptuous and chimerical.

From this account of his purpose we turn directly to his first principle, which is the basis of his whole philosophy.

The first principles of Hume's whole philosophic structure is that "no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions." Furthermore these perceptions are the only existences of which we are certain, which being immediately present to our consciousness, command our strongest agreement and thus are the first foundation of all of our conclusions.

Hume includes in the term perception, all the actions of sight, hearing, judging, loving and hating, as well as thinking. In the opening statement of his Treatise, he states that all that enters the mind in any form is a perception.

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two kinds, which I call impressions and ideas.

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., I, IV, 2.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., Introduction.
Concerning this opening statement in the Treatise, Hendel in his Studies in the Philosophy of Hume states that in the opening part of the Treatise there is contained new terminology and distinctions, so that all that exists as far as the mind is concerned are these perceptions.  

The question arises, how does Hume develop this first principle? This is our next consideration, the procedure in the development of Hume's philosophy, which includes the description of both impressions and ideas, the distinction between them, as well as a description of the mind.

First, Hume presents his definition of both impressions and ideas. By impressions he understands all of our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they enter the soul. These enter the soul with most force and violence. Hume describes them thus:

Those perceptions which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions; and under this name, I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul.

He defines and describes ideas as follows:

By ideas, I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning; such as for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse, excepting only those which arise from the sight and touch.

He does not believe it further necessary to use words in the explanation of the difference between impressions and ideas. He feels that everyone


12 Hume, I, I, I.

13 Ibid.
will personally readily perceive the difference between feeling and thinking. The ordinary degrees of these are easily distinguished; although Hume admits it is not impossible in particular instances that they may easily and nearly approach each other.

He points out, for example, how in sleep, or in fever, or in madness, or in any other violent emotion of the soul, our ideas may approach our impressions, or, on the other hand, it sometimes happens that our impressions are so faint and low, that we cannot distinguish them from our ideas.14

Hume still further divides impressions and ideas into simple and complex. By simple perceptions, that is impressions and ideas, he means such which allow of no distinction or separation, while the complex are contrary to the simple, and may be distinguished into parts. Hume illustrates what he has in mind. In an apple, a particular color, taste, and smell are qualities united together in the apple, "though it is easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other."15

However, to understand more clearly Hume's analysis, it is necessary to consider the division of the impressions. These impressions may be divided into two kinds, impressions of sensation, and those of reflection. Impressions of sensation arise in the soul, from causes unknown, while impressions from reflection are derived at least in a great measure, from our ideas, in the following way.

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
An impression strikes first upon the senses, and makes us perceive either heat or cold, hunger or thirst, pleasure or pain. Of this impression the mind makes a copy, which still remains after the impression has already ceased, and this we call an idea. This idea, if for example, it be pleasure or pain, when it has returned to the soul, again produces new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear. These new impressions may properly be called impressions of reflection, because they are derived from it. He concludes this analysis by describing impressions of reflection as passions, desires, and emotions arising mostly from ideas. 16

Hume further explains his division of impressions by describing the three kinds of sense impressions.

First, there are sense impressions of figure, bulk, motion and solidity of bodies. Also there are those of color, taste, smells and sounds, heat and cold. While the third kind of sense impressions includes pains and pleasures that arise from the application of objects to our bodies, such as the cutting of flesh with steel and the like. 17

As all ideas are copies of previous impressions, and since these impressions are perceptions of the mind, and no beings are ever present to the mind but these perceptions, which are the only existences of which we are certain, we ask the question, what is the mind in which these perceptions appear, and how does it operate? This leads to our last consideration in Hume's procedure, his definition and description of the mind. He describes the mind in the following manner:

16 Ibid., I, I, 2.
17 Ibid., I, IV, 2.
What we call a mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity. 18

In another later passage Hume describes the operation of the mind. He likens the mind to a kind of theater, where several perceptions appear, pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and sensations. However, he warns us that the comparison of the theater must not mislead us. For the successive perceptions alone are what constitutes the mind, nor do we have the most distant notion of the place where the senses are represented, nor the materials of which they are composed. 19

Thus Hume begins with the purpose of building a philosophy upon the science of human nature. The basis of his new philosophy must be the structure of experience and observation. However, it must be remembered, that observation means and includes the experimental method, which deals only with particulars. Hence essences remain unknown and the possibility of any ultimates or universals must be ruled out at the very beginning. This involved in Hume's first principle, that no beings are ever present to the mind but only perceptions.

These perceptions are all so many impressions and ideas. The impressions include sensations, passions, and emotions as they first enter the soul. They enter "with most force and violence." However, impressions appear again as faint images, which Hume calls ideas. He distinguishes

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., I,IV,6.
between impressions of sensation, which arise in the soul from causes un-
known, and impressions of reflection which are derived in a great measure
from our ideas. And the mind is nothing but a heap or collection of these
perceptions.

Having thus considered the purpose of Hume's philosophy, his first
principle, and the procedure in the development of his thought, let us
consider now those main tenets which clearly show how he deals with the
problem of the external world. These four major doctrines include his anal-
ysis of reason, the importance of belief, the meaning of knowledge, and the
place of the imagination.

First, we consider Hume's analysis of reason.

Hume holds reason to be only the slave of the passions.

Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of

the passions, and can never pretend to any other office

than to serve and to obey them.20

This is indeed an innovation in Hume's thought; in fact, he shows in
the context of this passage that it is customary in philosophy to speak of
the strife between passion and reason, and the pre-eminence of reason. The
greater part of ancient and modern philosophy is founded on the "supposed
pre-eminence of reason."21 This subordination of reason to the passions is
central in Hume's philosophy and runs throughout his whole thought.22 That

20 Ibid., II,III,3.
21 Ibid.
22 Smith, 154.
Hume was no doubt greatly influenced in his view by Hutcheson has been well expressed by Smith. 23

There are two kinds of reason, according to Hume:

All reasonings may be divided into two kinds, namely demonstrative reasoning, or that concerning relations of ideas, and moral reasoning, or that concerning matters of fact and existence. 24

Demonstrative reason considers the comparison of ideas, as found in mathematics, while moral reasoning "is connected with Hume's view of our knowledge as determined by natural belief, and possessing no absolute metaphysical truth." 25

Hume also holds that it is impossible to defend either reason or the senses.

It is impossible, upon my system, to defend either understanding or senses; and we but expose them further when we endeavor to justify them in that manner. 26

Likewise he maintains that reason and the senses are in opposition to each other.

23 Ibid., Here Smith shows that the main influence of Hutcheson upon Hume was in the inversion of the roles ordinarily ascribed to passion and to reason respectively. Passion is the term used by Hutcheson, as it is by Hume, to cover all types of feelings, not only feeling in the strict sense, (i.e. pleasure and pain) but also the instinctive bodily appetites, the emotions and sentiments, and in addition all the various types of appreciation which find expression in values of judgments...Accordingly Hutcheson's teaching appears in a new and revolutionary light in Hume, when he reformulates it in his fundamental maxim, reason is the slave of the passions.


25 Smith, 99.

26 Hume, Treatise, I, IV, 2.
There is a direct and total opposition betwixt our reason and our senses, or more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect, and those that persuade us of continued and independent existence of body.27

Finally, the reason is limited in that it cannot give the lowest degree of evidence in support of any proposition, either in philosophy or ordinary life.28 To further illustrate this point he cites the example of the Cynics, as

An extraordinary instance of philosophers, who, from reasonings purely philosophical, ran into great extravagances of conduct.29

The second main doctrine of Hume is that of belief. First, we have Hume's own definitions of belief.

A belief may be most accurately defined as a lively idea related or associated with a present impression.30

In the very next section Hume defines belief to be "nothing but a strong and lively idea, derived from a present impression related to it."31

In both of the above definitions belief is a lively and strong idea. However, in the first of these definitions is shown the relationship of the

27 Ibid., I, IV, 4.
28 Ibid., I, IV, 7.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., I, III, 7.
31 Ibid., I, III, 8.
idea of belief to an impression, as shown in the expression, "associated with", whereas in the second definition, is shown the origin of the idea, as being "derived from a present impression."

Belief is further described as an act of the mind arising from custom.32

Hume also holds to two natural beliefs. First, that objects have a continuing, independent existence, and second, that these bodies are operative one upon another.

We may well ask, what causes induce us to believe in the existence of body? But it is vain to ask, whether there be body or not? That is a point taken for granted in all our reasonings.33

He defends this view by showing that nature does not leave this to our choice, since it is of too great importance, "to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations."34

The operation of belief is described by Hume when he concludes

That belief consists merely in a certain feeling or sentiment; in something that depends not on the will, but must arise from certain determinate causes and principles of which we are not masters.35

Thus in the operation of belief Hume feels there is a determinate factor over which we have no control.

32 Ibid., I,III,8; I,III,9; and I,IV,2.
33 Ibid., I,IV,2.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., Appendix.
There is also a distinction between belief and imagination, which is vital in Hume's theory of knowledge. In the first distinction Hume asserts that

The belief or assent, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; and this alone distinguishes them from the imagination. 36

A further explanation of the distinction between belief and imagination is found in the Inquiry.

The difference between fiction and belief lies in some sentiment, or feeling which is annexed to the latter, not to the former, and which depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure. It must be excited by nature, like all other sentiments; and must arise from the particular situation in which the mind is placed at any particular juncture. 37

Thus, Hume continues, whenever any object is presented to the memory, it immediately by force of custom carries the imagination to conceive the object, which is usually joined to it. This conception is attended with a feeling or sentiment that is different from any of the loose reveries of the fancy. This is the whole nature of belief. 38

The third major doctrine in Hume's philosophy concerns the nature of knowledge.

First, knowledge consists only in the comparison of ideas. Hume admits that he defines knowledge in the same way as those philosophers who consider

36 Ibid., I, III, 5.
37 Ibid., Inquiry, V, II.
38 Ibid.
knowledge to be evidence arising from the comparison of ideas. And lest there be any misunderstanding, in the same section, in fact in the same paragraph, he again states his position: "By knowledge I mean the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas."39

Therefore, since Hume has already asserted that only perceptions exist, and that the mind is nothing but a heap or collection of these perceptions united by relations, it follows that ideas, which form the essence of knowledge, and are themselves "perceptions", must in the nature of the case also involve certain relationships; and thus knowledge is nothing but a subjective comparison of ideas.

Again, knowledge is reduced to probability. For since the mind knows only its own perceptions, and since all are within the soul of man, the conclusion is quite final, namely, that knowledge is reduced to a mere matter of probability. To this conclusion Hume devotes considerable attention. Since our reason is to be considered a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural consequence, and truth may frequently be missed because of the irruption of other causes, as well as by the constancy of our minds, the conclusion becomes evident, for

By this means all knowledge degenerates into probability; and this probability is greater or less, according to our experience of the veracity or deceitfulness of our understanding, and according to the simplicity or intricacy of the question.40

39 Hume, Treatise, I,III,11.

40 Ibid., I,IV,1.
The argument is further developed by showing that in all demonstrative sciences there are rules which are certain and infallible. But when we apply these rules our fallible and uncertain faculties are liable to enter in and thus result in error. This argument he develops by an example from mathematics:

There is no algebraist, no mathematician, so expert in his science, as to place entire confidence in any truth immediately upon discovery of it, nor regard it as anything but a mere probability. Every time he runs over his proofs, his confidence increases; but still more by the approbation of friends. Now it is evident that this gradual increase of assurance is nothing but the addition of new probabilities. 41

After showing the same situation to exist in numbers, he concludes that therefore all our knowledge resolves itself into probabilities. What is the basis for such a conclusion? Here Hume presents three reasons for the probability and uncertainty of knowledge.

First, the original uncertainty inherent in the subject. Then also the uncertainty derived from the weakness of that faculty which judges, and third, the possibility of error in the estimation we make of truth and the fidelity of our faculties. 42

Therefore, since all our knowledge is only a matter of probability, and as Hume has already stated, since the senses are in opposition to reason, and that neither of them can be defended, he is now ready for his conclusion. What is the conclusion, and to what end is his whole discussion of our knowledge of the external world? He answers in summary:

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
My intention then...is only to make the reader more sensible of the truth of my hypothesis, that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are derived from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive than of the cogitative part of our nature.\textsuperscript{43}

From Hume's analysis of reason, the importance of belief and the doctrine of knowledge, we may proceed to his fourth major doctrine, that of the imagination. His view of the imagination is basic to his solution of the problem of the external world. He himself admits that the imagination is "the ultimate judge of all systems of philosophy."\textsuperscript{44} In fact, Price holds that "the word 'imagination,' is the keyword to Hume's whole theory of knowledge."\textsuperscript{45}

Since all impressions are internal, that is, subjective, the belief or notion, as he terms it, of their distinct and continued existence must come from the agreement of some qualities with the imagination.\textsuperscript{46}

When any impression has been present with the mind it appears again as an idea, and this takes place in one of two ways. When it appears again it may retain a considerable degree of its original liveliness, somewhat between an impression or an idea, or perhaps it may lose that liveliness and remain a perfect idea. The faculty by which the impressions are repeated the first

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., I, IV, 4.


\textsuperscript{46} Hume, I, IV, 2.
way is called memory, while that of the second, imagination. Thus, it is obvious that the ideas of the memory are more lively and strong than those of the imagination.\textsuperscript{47}

However, it is well to remember that neither the ideas of memory nor imagination, that is neither the lively nor the faint ideas, can appear in the mind, unless their concurrent impressions have gone before them to prepare the way.\textsuperscript{48}

One other aspect of the imagination must be kept in mind. It seems that the imagination has the power of choice as well as of suggestion and its free play is almost boundless. Hume describes it thus:

Nothing is more admirable than the readiness with which the imagination suggests its ideas, and presents them at the very instant at which they become necessary or useful. The fancy runs from one end of the universe to the other, in collecting those ideas which belong alone to any subject. One would think that the whole intellectual world of ideas was at once subjected to our view, and that we did nothing but pick out such as were proper for our purpose.\textsuperscript{49}

Thus the whole philosophic system of Hume centers around these four major doctrines: reason, belief, knowledge and the imagination.

Reason, Hume holds, is and ought to be the slave of the passions. There are two kinds of reason, demonstrative and moral reasoning. Further, it is impossible to defend either reason or the senses, since there is a total

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., I, I, 3.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., I, I, 7.
opposition between them, and the reason is limited in that it is unable to
give the least degree of evidence in support of any proposition, either
in philosophy or in ordinary life.

Belief is nothing but a strong and lively idea associated and derived
from impressions, and is an act of the mind arising from custom. There are
two natural beliefs, that bodies have a continuing and independent existence,
and that these bodies are operative one upon another. In its operation
belief is merely a certain feeling or sentiment, not dependent upon the will,
but arises from determinate causes over which we have no control.

Knowledge consists only in the comparison of ideas, and since this
comparison is a subjective process, all knowledge is reduced to probability.

The imagination is the ultimate judge of all philosophy, and is to be
distinguished from the memory, in that memory consists in more forceful
ideas, while the imagination involves less lively ideas, in fact, it may lose
that liveliness and thus become a perfect idea.

If reason is not a faculty but only a slave of passion, and belief is
only a matter of impressions, which in turn are perceptions arising in the
mind of man, Hume has committed himself to a sensist theory of knowledge.
The imagination, moreover, which becomes the faculty by which we attribute
continued and distinct existences, gives no certainty beyond natural belief.

Whether or not Hume has validly reduced reason, demonstrative knowledge,
and belief to the level of ideas and impressions, we shall reserve to our
final chapter. What we have presented here is the basis - the only basis,
on which Hume can hope to account for a real world independent of the world
of thought. Can knowledge, as Hume explains it, solve the problem of the
external world?

David Hume posed the problem and likewise solved the problem in his own fashion. We must now turn to his solution.
CHAPTER II

HUME'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

Hume's solution of the problem of the external world involves two questions; first, why is it that we attribute a continued existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses? Furthermore, why do we suppose them to have an existence distinct from the mind and perception? Thus he begins his study with the following paragraph:

The subject, then, of our present inquiry concerning the causes which inducing us to believe in the existence of the body; and my reasonings under this head, I shall begin with a distinction which at first sight may seem superfluous, but which will contribute very much to the perfect understanding of what follows. We ought to examine apart these two questions which are commonly confounded together, viz, Why we attribute a continued existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses; and why we suppose them to have an existence distinct from the mind and perception? Under this head I comprehend their situation as well as relations, their external position as well as the independence of their existence and operation. 1

These two questions Hume considers to be intimately connected, and there are two reasons for their close relationships. First of all, if the objects of the senses continue their existence, even when they are not perceived, it follows that their existence is of course independent of and distinct from the perceptions; and also vice versa, if they exist inde-

1 Hume, Treatise, I, IV, 2.
pendently of the perception and distinct from it, then of course they must continue to exist, even when they are not perceived. But though the decision of the one question decides the other, still in order that we may "more easily discover the principles of human nature, from whence this decision arises," we shall carry along this distinction.²

After thus stating the problem, Hume proceeds to his solution. He does not admit the acceptance of the external world to be anything but belief. There are only three possible ways of approach, for we arrive at the belief in the external world, either by the senses, or by reason, or by the imagination.³

As for the senses, they are incapable of giving any notion of the continued existence of their objects, for the following three reasons:

The senses can only produce opinion of a distinct existence, not of a continued existence. For Hume, it is obvious that the senses are incapable of giving any opinion regarding the continued existence of their objects, after they are no longer present to the senses. To do so, the senses would have to continue to operate after they have ceased to operate.

Hence, the senses could only produce the opinion of a distinct, but not of a continued existence. And if they are thus to function, they must either present their impressions as images and representations, or else as distinct and external existences.

² Ibid.
³ Ibid., We shall consider whether it be the senses, reason or the imagination, that produces the opinion of a continued or of a distinct existence. These are the only questions which are intelligible on the present subject.
But the senses convey only single impressions. For it is evident that our senses do not convey impressions as images of something distinct, or independent and external, because they show us nothing but a single perception and never intimate anything more than that. And a single perception can never produce the idea of double existence, except as it is done by inference either by reason or the imagination. By double existence Hume simply means the continued existence of objects after they have ceased to be perceived by the senses.

The third reason Hume presents for asserting the incapacity of the senses to give any notion of a continued existence is due to the fact, that if the senses convey any idea of a distinct existence, it must be conveyed by a kind of fallacy or illusion.

All sensations are felt by the mind, and when we are not sure that they present themselves as distinct objects, or as mere impressions, the difficulty lies not in their nature, but rather in their relations and situations. Now if it were possible for the senses to present our impressions as external to and distinctly independent of ourselves, both the objects as well as ourselves would have to be evident to our senses; otherwise they could not be compared by these faculties.

It is at this point that Hume raises the question which is at the center of our sense knowledge and determines it, namely, "How far are we ourselves the objects of our senses?" He does admit the complexity of this issue, for he is sure that "there is no question in philosophy more abstruse than that

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
concerning identity, and the nature of the uniting principle, which constitutes a person."6 Further he concedes that the senses are not adequate to determine this question, but that rather, "we must have recourse to the most profound metaphysics to give a satisfactory answer to it."7 However, in ordinary life, these ideas of self and person are never very definite or determinate. Yet he dismisses the issue by concluding that "it is absurd therefore to imagine the senses can ever distinguish betwixt ourselves and external objects."8 Thus Hume concludes that our senses are unable to give us any notion of continued existence, since

They cannot operate beyond the extent in which they operate....We may therefore conclude with certainty, that the opinion of a continued existence never arises from the senses.9

In the Inquiry Hume maintains the same view regarding the senses. He has been dealing with the scepticism that arises from science and inquiry. The arguments of the sceptics are presented, or, as he terms it, the more trite problems presented by the sceptics of all times against the evidence of sense, such as the imperfection and fallaciousness of our sense organs on many occasions; the crooked appearance of an oar in the water; the deceptive appearance of objects viewed from various distances, and the double

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Hume, Inquiry, XII, 1.
image which comes from pressing one eye, and many other similar appearances. These arguments of the sceptics, according to Hume, are evidence enough to show that the senses alone are not to be implicitly depended upon. However, he continues, it seems evident that men are carried along by a natural impulse to have faith in their senses and that, without reason, we suppose there is an external world, which is not dependent upon our perceptions but would exist even though no sensible creatures existed.

But our senses alone cannot give us such knowledge of the external world. Thus, he concludes that the senses are incapable of producing an opinion of the continued existence of objects.

Hume now turns his attention to the consideration of reason. He maintains that reason is likewise incapable of producing any opinion concerning the objects existing independently of the mind. Here again he presents several arguments, which he feels are sufficient to establish his position.

First, if reason were sufficient, it would still only be valid for the philosophers, and they are but few. Furthermore their views would not greatly influence the majority of mankind in general. So that whatever convincing arguments philosophers might think they could adduce to confirm their belief in the existence of objects independent of the mind, it is quite obvious that these arguments would not be able to persuade peasants, children, nor the large majority of mankind to attribute objects to some of their impressions, and yet not to others.10

10 ______, Treatise, I, IV, 2.
Then again, the view of the philosophers is contrary, in this respect, to the view of the vulgar.

All the conclusions which the vulgar are found to hold concerning objects existing independently of the mind are directly contrary to those held by philosophers. For the philosophers, according to Hume, maintain that everything which appears is nothing but a perception, and therefore is interrupted and independent of the mind; whereas the vulgar, by whom Hume means those he has previously described as children, peasants and the majority of mankind, confuse what they perceive with the things they feel and which they see have a distinct and continued existence. Since, however, this view is unreasonable, the sentiment of the distinct existence of external bodies must come from some other faculty besides reason.\footnote{Ibid., I,IV,2.}

Since reason is the faculty which judges and which enables a philosopher to explain his views, the question naturally arises, why does Hume treat reason with such brevity, and why does he dismiss it with such ease? The answer to both of these questions can be gathered by a more complete description of reason as found in his works. There are several statements of Hume which show why for him reason is insufficient to give us any notion of external objects.

First, reason is nothing but a kind of sensation. All probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensations. It is not solely in poetry and music that we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in
philosophy. When I am convinced of any principle, it is only an idea which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give preference to one set of arguments over another, I do nothing but decide my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence.12

Hence, all reasoning is just a matter of feeling.

Again, reason is nothing but an "instinct." He describes it as being

Nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas, and endows them with particular situations and relations.13

In the light of both of these texts, it becomes evident that to Hume reason is no criterion of truth, as far as philosophy is concerned. For reason is likened to taste and fancy, and is a matter of preference. Reason is "nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct."

Reason resolves itself into custom. Hume holds that all reasonings are nothing but the effects of "custom", and the only influence of this custom is that it enlivens the imagination, thus strengthening the conception of any object. And he holds that reason is nothing but a matter of "habit", which in turn has no influence except to enliven the imagination. In his Inquiry he further describes the process of reasoning as follows:

In all reasonings from experience there is a step taken by the mind, which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding; there is no danger that these reasonings on which almost all knowledge depends will ever be effected by this discovery.14

12 Ibid., I,III,8.
13 Ibid., I,III,16.
14 ---, Inquiry, V,1.
The above statement is followed by several illustrations by which Hume attempts to substantiate his description. He cites the example of a person coming into the world endowed with the strongest faculties and argues that his conclusions concerning the continued succession of objects would be merely that they exist, but no further discovery could be made. Now what is that step taken by the mind that is not supported either by reason or understanding? To this question Hume answers that the principle here involved is simply custom or habit, and his reason seems quite evident. For whenever any particular act is repeated, there is always a tendency to repeat again, without being impelled by reason or understanding, and whenever this takes place, we always say that this tendency is the result of custom. So that custom becomes the great guide of life. 15

Finally, reason is a slave of the passions. Hume feels that we do not speak accurately or philosophically when we refer to the conflict between passion and reason, for he asserts 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. 16

15 Ibid.
16 ______, Treatise, II,III,3.
Smith, 45. Concerning this statement of reason as a slave to the passions, Smith states that this becomes the maxim of all of Hume's philosophy.
Thus Hume begins with the senses, showing the limitation of the senses in solving the problem of the external world. For the senses can produce opinion of a distinct existence, but not of a continued existence. Furthermore the senses convey but single impressions, and if the senses were to convey any impression of a continued existence it would have to be by way of fallacy or illusion. Hence the inadequacy of the senses.

Reason, however is also insufficient to induce our belief in the existence of the external world, for the judgments of reason are contrary to the opinions of the vulgar. And even if reason were sufficient it would be so only for the few, and not for the majority of mankind. Having shown that neither the senses nor reason are sufficient, Hume now turns his attention to the imagination, and shows that the opinion held of the distinct and continued existence of objects must be due entirely to the imagination.

Just what does Hume mean by the imagination? Although he does not give a precise definition, he does, however, describe the operation of the imagination as well as show the distinction within the imagination.

First, we have Hume's description of the operation of the imagination. When any impression has been present with the mind, it appears again as an idea, and this may take place in two different ways; either, when it appears again, it retains a considerable degree of its original liveliness, and somewhat between an impression or an idea; or when it loses that liveliness and remains a perfect idea. The faculty by which the impressions are repeated in the first way is called memory, while the second is called imagination. It is obvious that the ideas of the memory are more lively and strong than those of the imagination, and also that the memory paints its
objects in more distinct colors than any used by the imagination. 17

Hume also shows a distinction in the imagination in the operation of two principles on at least two different levels.

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 would immediately perish and go to ruin. The latter are neither unavoidable to mankind, nor necessary, or so much as useful in the conduct of life; but on the contrary are observed to take place only in weak minds, and being opposite to the principles of custom and reasoning, may be easily subverted by a due contrast and opposition. For this reason the former are received by philosophy and the latter rejected. 18

In the immediate context Hume illustrates both of these principles. The permanent and irresistible principles are evident when anyone concludes that somebody is near him, when he hears a definite voice in the dark. He reasons justly and naturally, even though his conclusion be derived from nothing but custom, which "infixes and enlivens the idea of human creature, on account of his conjunction with the present impression." 19

The changeable, weak and irregular principles of the imagination are at work when one is tormented for reasons he knows not why, with the "apprehension of spectres in the dark, may be perhaps said to reason, and to reason naturally too, but then it must be in the same sense that a malady

is said to be natural; as arising from natural causes, though it be contrary to health, the most agreeable and most natural situation of man.  

Hume's third explanation of the imagination deals with its scope of operation, and it is at this point that he shows the free and almost unbounded scope in the operation of the imagination.

Hume's own description is as follows:

Nothing is more admirable than the readiness with which the imagination suggests its ideas and presents them at the very instant in which they become necessary or useful. The fancy runs from one end of the universe to the other, in collecting those ideas which alone belong to any subject. One would think the whole intellectual world of ideas was at once subjected to our view, and that we did nothing but pick out such as were most proper for our purpose. There may not, however, be any present, besides those very ideas, that are thus collected by a kind of magical faculty of the soul, which though it be always perfect in the greatest geniuses, and is properly what we call genius, is, however, inexplicable by the utmost efforts of the human understanding.

Thus, to Hume, the imagination seems to possess the capacity of suggestion as well as choice, and though that power is perfect in the genius, it is nevertheless inexplicable by the human understanding.

Having considered Hume's explanation of the imagination, including his description, the distinction within the operation of the imagination, as well as its scope, we now turn to consider the emphasis he places upon the imagination. He further develops his position, that the imagination provides the basis for our belief in the external world, by a three-fold emphasis.

20 Ibid., I, IV, 4.
21 Ibid., I, I, 7.
First, since all impressions are internal and perishing existences, the notion of their distinct and continued existence must arise from a concurrence of some of their qualities with the qualities of the imagination. 22

As all our impressions are internal, that is subjective, and appearing that way, the notion of their distinct and continued existence must come from the comparison of those impressions to which we attribute a distinct and continued existence, with those which we regard as internal and perishing. 23

Hume likewise maintains that we cannot attribute continued existence to involuntariness and superior force and violence. Since it is neither because of the involuntariness of certain impressions, as is commonly supposed, he asserts, nor because of the superior force and violence that we hold that they have a continued existence, which we do not attribute to others that are more feeble and voluntary. For it is obvious that we never suppose our passions and affections, pleasures and pains, to have an existence beyond our perception, although they act with greater violence and are also involuntary. 24

In Hume's third and final emphasis upon the imagination, he holds that there are two qualities in our impressions which make us attribute to them a distinct and continued existence, namely constancy and coherence. Just a

22 Ibid., I, IV, 7.
23 Ibid., I, IV, 2.
24 Ibid.
little investigation will show that all objects to which we attribute a continued existence have a peculiar constancy which distinguishes them from the impressions which exist because of our perception. He continues his argument by way of illustration.

The mountains, houses, and trees which Hume sees have always appeared to him in the same order. When he loses sight of them by shutting his eyes or by turning his head, he soon finds them returning to him without any alteration. The same is true of his bed, his books, and papers which also present themselves to him in the same way, and they do not change because of any interruption or because of his not seeing them. Thus, Hume reasons, happens in the case of all those impressions whose objects are supposed to exist externally. 25

Still this constancy is not so perfect as not to admit of change and certain exceptions. These exceptions Hume defines by coherence, by which the changes are dependent upon each other. Once more he illustrates this point. If after an hour's absence, he returns to his chamber, he finds the fire not as when he left it. He is accustomed to seeing other changes whether he is present or absent, near at hand is one of the characteristics of external objects as well as their constancy. 26

He now turns to the question of the relationship of constancy and coherence to the opinion of the continued existence of bodies. Although internal impressions also involve coherence, it is not necessary from them

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
to conclude the existence of external bodies. Outer impressions, however, require a supposed external existence; otherwise they lose the regularity of their operation. He finds himself again seated in his chamber, by the fire, his face to the fire, and all the objects that strike his senses are within a few yards of him. His memory does not inform him, to be sure, of the existence of many objects, but that information does not go beyond their past existence, nor do his senses or memory give any evidence of the continuance of being. While sitting and reflecting on these thoughts, he hears a sudden noise as though the door were moving toward him. This, of course, gives opportunity for many new reflections and reasonings. First of all, he had never thought that this noise could possibly come from anything but the motion of the door. Thus it would contradict all past experience unless the door he hears be actually the one he remembers being on the other side of the chamber. 27

Other factors, of course, are included. The human body has the quality of gravity, and there must be stairs for the porter to mount. So when the porter hands him a letter which he perceives by the handwriting and subscription to come from a friend who says he is two hundred leagues distant, he is sure he cannot account for this phenomenon, like to his experience in other instances, without spreading out in the mind the whole sea and continent between us, and supposing the effects and continued existence of posts and ferries, in the light of his memory and observation.

27 Ibid.
At every moment of his life similar instances are presented to him in which he must suppose the continued existence of objects, otherwise his experiences cannot be made consistent with themselves. What makes this supposition possible? Hume answers his own question by replying that custom, though vital and involved, is not sufficient alone. Other factors are also operating. The imagination, as Hume has already observed in mathematics, when it is set in any particular train of thought, is apt to continue even when its object fails it. For the imagination operates

Like a galley slave put in motion by the oars, carries its course without any new impulse....The same principle makes us easily to entertain the opinion of the continued existence of body. 28

From this description of Hume, there seems to be in the imagination an impulsive drive that moves the imagination on, once it has begun to operate in any given situation. Now no matter how much emphasis Hume has placed upon coherence, he will not let himself hold that coherence alone is sufficient, for he confesses its inadequacy in the following manner:

I am afraid it (coherence) is too weak to support along so vast an edifice as is that of the continued existence of all external bodies. 29

It is at this point that Hume reaches the climax of his argument. We now know why we attribute a continued existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses, and also why we believe them to have an

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.
existence distinct from the mind and perception. It is because of this principle of coherence, which Hume acknowledges is not too plausible. He must therefore give a more positive explanation of the role of the imagination in producing this belief in the external world.

However, he feels that the explanation of this position involves a considerable compass of profound reasoning, and in short, to avoid confusion, he thinks it proper to give a short sketch or abridgement of what he calls "my system."

He now describes his thesis, which he terms as his own system, in contrast to both the view of other philosophers, as well as the position of the vulgar. It is the following opinion:

The opinion of the continued existence of body, which is prior to that of its definite existence, and produces the latter principle.30

What does Hume mean by the word, principle? He has already stated the impossibility of knowing either universal or ultimate principles. What then does he mean? He explains his use of the word principle later in the same paragraph, as "this supposition, or idea, of continued existence."31 In other words, to Hume, a principle means merely a supposition or idea. And since ideas are but faint images of previous impressions, they can be neither ultimate nor universal principles, but merely relative to the situation involved at any given moment.

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
Hume then presents a brief outline of his argument, followed by the four main arguments for his position, which include: the principle of individuation; the reason why the resemblance of our broken and interrupted perceptions induce us to attribute identity to them; the explanation of that propensity, which this illusion gives to unite these broken appearances by a continued existence; and the explanation of the force and vivacity of conception which arises from this propensity.

He first presents his argument in outline. The perceptions of the sun, or ocean, which return, after an absence or annihilation with like parts, and in like order, we are likely to regard as different. However, the interruptedness is felt to be difficult. In order to free ourselves from this difficulty, we disguise the interruptedness as much as possible, or else remove it altogether, by supposing that these interrupted perceptions are connected by a real existence of which we are sensible. Hume concludes this argument with the following summary:

This supposition, or idea of continued existence, acquires a force, and vivacity from the memory of these unbroken impressions, and from the natural tendency to suppose them to be the same; and according to the past reasoning, the very essence of belief consists in the force and liveliness of the conception.32

The four main arguments for Hume's position follow. First, the principle of individuation.

The view we have of any single object is not sufficient to convey the idea of identity, for one single object conveys the idea of unity, but not

32 Ibid.
of identity. A number of objects can never convey this idea, however much they may be supposed to resemble each other. Since then both number and unity are incompatible with the relation of identity, the latter must lie in something that is neither of them. But this seems at first sight impossible, since between number and unity, there can be no medium. To solve this difficulty Hume refers once more to the time factor, or duration. Time has reference to succession and when applied to any unchangeable object. The only way it is possible for any unchangeable object to be supposed to participate in the changes of co-existent objects, and particularly in that of our perceptions, is by a fiction of the imagination. Hume feels that this fiction does not universally take place, and only thus is it possible that a single object placed before us, and observed for any length of time without our discovery of any variation or interruption in it, is able to give a notion of identity. He concludes this argument on the principle of individuation as follows:

The principle of individuation is nothing but the invariableness and uninterruptedness of any object, through a supposed variation of time, which the mind can trace it in different periods of its existence, without any break of the view, and without being obliged to form any idea of multiplicity of number. 33

The second argument involves the reason why the resemblance of our broken and interrupted perceptions induces us to attribute an identity to them.

33 Ibid.
In presenting this argument, Hume again takes the position of the vulgar in order, as he feels, to avoid all ambiguity and confusion. Here again the imagination is vital in the explanation. Once more Hume finds himself in his chamber surveying his furniture. He shuts his eyes and after a while opens them again, whereupon he finds new perceptions to resemble perfectly those which formerly struck his senses. This resemblance is observed, according to Hume, in a thousand instances, and naturally together with these ideas of those interrupted perceptions by the strongest relations, enables the mind to pass from one to another with an easy transition. The whole of this phenomenon he explains by means of the operation of the imagination.

This he summarizes in the following brief but important paragraph:

An easy transition or passage of the imagination along the ideas of these different and uninterrupted perceptions, is almost the same disposition of mind with that in which we consider one constant and uninterrupted perception. It is therefore very natural to mistake the one for the other.34

In a footnote to the above explanation, Hume admits that his reasoning is somewhat abstruse and difficult to understand, but he immediately contends that this very difficulty can be converted into a proof in favor of his argument, for he shows that there are two different relationships at work, both of which are resemblances. The first of these is the resemblance of perceptions. While the second is the resemblance

34 Ibid.
Which the act of the mind in surveying a succession of resembling objects bears to that in surveying an identical object. Now these resemblances we are apt to confound with each other; and it is natural we should according to this very reasoning.

He concludes his second argument with a still further explanation of the operation of the imagination. Here he shows how, by the smooth passage of the imagination along the ideas of resembling perceptions, we are easily led to ascribe to them a perfect identity. The interrupted manner in which they appear makes us consider them as so many resembling but still distinct, beings, appearing after certain intervals. We find ourselves perplexed by this contradiction, and thus have a certain tendency to untie these broken appearances by the fiction of a continued existence.

The third argument considers the account for that propensity which this illusion gives, to unite these broken appearances by a continued existence.

Hume makes clear that the real issue is not concerning the matter of fact, that is, whether the mind actually forms a conclusion from its perceptions, but only regarding the way in which the conclusion is reached, and the principles from which it is derived. He feels sure that almost all of mankind, including philosophers themselves, for the large part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose that the very being which is then present to the mind is actually the real body

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
of material existence. Hume is also sure that this perception or object is assumed to have a continued and uninterrupted existence, and not to be annihilated by our absence, nor to be brought again into existence by our presence. When we are not present with it, we still say it exists, even though we do not feel it or see it, while when we are present we say we see it and we feel it.37

The fourth and final argument deals with the explanation of the force and vivacity of conception which arises from the propensity. He believes that an intelligent reader will find it easier to accept his system than to understand it fully and distinctly, and will after a while with little reflection admit that every part of his argument carries its own proof along with it. He feels it is obvious, as the vulgar suppose, that their perceptions are their only objects, yet at the same time they believe the continued existence of matter, that is upon the basis of the supposition that we must account for the origin of this belief.

Based upon this supposition, it is a false opinion that any of our objects or perceptions are identically the same after their interruptions, and consequently the opinion of their identity can never arise from reason, but must necessarily arise from the imagination. The only way the imagination is seduced into such an opinion is because of the resemblance of certain perceptions, which we have a tendency to suppose the same. This tendency

37 Ibid.
to consider our resembling perceptions identical results in the fiction of a continued existence, since that fiction as well as the identity is actually false, as all philosophers acknowledge. And thus it has no other effect than to remedy the interruption of our perceptions, which is the only condition that is contrary to their identity. 38

Thus we find Hume's solution to the problem of the external world to be based not on sensation, nor on reason, but rather on the belief in the distinct existence of the world in the imagination.
CHAPTER III

THE REASONS FOR HUME'S POSITION

What are some of the reasons for Hume's position, and how did he arrive at his conclusions? In this chapter we shall deal with these questions, in a consideration of the claim of Hume to originality, as well as the influence of other philosophers upon his thought. For Hume is not alone in his theory of knowledge. Other thinkers before him influenced his position, particularly Locke and Berkeley. Hume follows Locke, who is more consistent than Berkeley.

Hume claims for himself a certain amount of originality. He refers to his system of philosophy, as "my system." ¹ Also when referring to the imagination as the ultimate judge of all philosophy, he begins with the statement, "according to my philosophy." ² Furthermore in the Introduction to the Treatise, he professes to be establishing "a complete system of sciences, built upon foundations almost entirely new." ³

That other philosophers influenced Hume is evident from a comparison of the works of other writers who preceded him, as well as his own references and also acknowledgements to other men. Although no doubt,

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1 Hume, Treatise, I, IV, 2.
2 Ibid., I, IV, 3.
3 Ibid., Introduction.
many thinkers influenced Hume, consideration here is given only to those who seem most directly involved, the chief of these, being John Locke and George Berkeley. As is to be expected, Hume admits the influence of other thinkers upon his thought.

The first of these references is found in the Introduction to the Treatise, where Hume remarks that Mr. Locke (who is given consideration later in this chapter), my Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutcheson, Dr. Butler, etc. had indeed commenced a great work, to which he feels his own work will be a contribution. 4

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4 Ibid. Hendel. In Chapter III, 95, Hendel summarizes the influence of the above named writers upon Hume.

Their preoccupation was almost entirely with the life of sentiment and morals. Shaftesbury studied the Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. Mandeville likened man to animals in his Fables of the Bees. Hutcheson started his career with an Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, deploring in his preface the almost universal interest of philosophers in the understanding - hence his later work, An Essay on the Nature of the Passions and Affections. And Bishop Butler gave to the world his Sermons on Nature, portraying man as fundamentally a creature of impulse like the animals and achieving moral excellence only by "conscience," which is a wise reflection upon the complete meaning of our personal life.
Hume was also influenced by what he himself describes as "the Newtonian Philosophy."\(^5\) However, this single reference to Newton is not alone in indicating Hume's indebtedness to him, for his whole approach by way of experiment is Newtonian. In his Introduction to the Treatise, he describes this method of experiment:

When I am at a loss to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation, I need only put them in any situation, and observe what results from it.\(^6\)

There remains still another aspect in which Hume was influenced by Newton; in his proposal to develop a static and dynamics of the mind, modelled on the pattern of the Newtonian physics, and in which the association of ideas is conceived as Hume describes it, by

A kind of attraction, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms.\(^7\)

The influence of Father Malebranche is also evidenced in Hume's

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\(^5\) Ibid., I,II,5.

\(^6\) Ibid., Introduction.

Smith describes the influence of Newton upon Hume in the following manner when he states: "Hume contrives to combine reliance on experiment with the conviction that the ultimate secrets of nature are permanently withheld from human view. Experiments, Hume teaches, is the final court of appeal in all matters of fact."

\(^7\) Ibid., I,II,4. and also Smith, 71.
analysis of cause and effect, so well summarized by Gilson:

Hume applied his analysis to the idea of cause and effect, with the result that he could find nothing essential in that idea, but a relation of contiguity, or succession between what we call cause and effect. What is there in our mind, for instance, which answers to the word, efficacy? Malebranche, to whom Hume himself expressly refers at this point, had conclusively proved that no philosopher has ever been able to explain the so-called "secret force and energy of causes."8

It is likewise evident that the writings of Cicero had influenced Hume, which he admits in a letter, dated on September 17, 1739, while still engaged in the completion of his Treatise.9

In Thomas Hobbes, Hume had already seen evidence of the place and importance of the imagination.

8 Gilson, The Unity of Philosophical Experience., 216 and 217.


Hume writes: I had indeed the former book (Cicero's Offices) in my eye in all my reasonings. And in the same letter - You are a great admirer or Cicero as well as I am. Please to review the fourth book of De Finnibus et Malorum.

10 Ibid., 75. In referring to Hobbes' influence on Hume, he writes: Thomas Hobbes was another figure in whose writings Hume had already discovered a fallacious argument to prove the necessity of a cause for every event. Hobbes saw in the activity of the senses that of the imagination is the most significant capacity of our human mind. It gives rise to both single and compound thoughts. When we direct our imagination by means of words or other vocabulary signs, we have that special phase of mind we call mental discourse or understanding.
One cannot consider the thinkers who influenced Hume without including Francis Bacon. Hendel presents considerable evidence to indicate that some of Hume's scepticism was no doubt derived from Bacon. In his work, The Great Instauration, Bacon avows himself an improved Academic Sceptic. To him the sceptical attitude is a state of mind preparatory to a methodical knowledge, and doubt defends philosophy against error, for it calls attention to what needs to be considered more carefully. He vigorously defends the method of experiment and holds that we are to trust the first deliverances of the senses. Thus Bacon maintains that the natural judgment of man upon his perception is right. The chief task, according to Bacon, becomes the ability to produce data of our knowledge by investigation and experiment.11

Though these other thinkers, no doubt, influenced Hume, the most direct and definite influence upon Hume's thought was the influence of Locke and Berkeley, whom we now consider.

Before considering the influence of Locke and Berkeley upon Hume, it is noteworthy that Locke, in turn, was greatly influenced by Descartes. In fact Locke's own account of his debt to Descartes is clearly revealed in a letter to Stillingfleet, who had inferred that Locke was not original in his

11 Ibid., 40 and 41.
essay, but had rather shown undue dependence upon Descartes. 12

This is in complete agreement with the account Lady Masham gives of her conversation with Locke:

The first books, as Locke himself told me, which gave him a relish of philosophical things, were those of Descartes. He rejoiced in reading them, because, though he often differed in opinion from this writer, yet he found what he said very intelligible. 13

Thus, though Locke attributes his philosophical awakening to Descartes, though he differs from him in many respects, still, "the whole conception of ideas as proper objects of knowledge is Cartesian in origin." 14

Pringle-Pattison agrees with this view, and states that the whole of modern philosophy may be said to begin with the subjective note of Descartes.

12 James Gibson, Locke's Theory of Knowledge and Its Historical Relations. Cambridge University Press, 1917, 205.

Locke replied: "Though I must acknowledge to that justly admired gentleman, the great obligation of my first deliverance from the unintelligible way of talking philosophy in use in the schools of his time, yet I am far from entitling his writings to any of the errors of imperfections which are found in my essay, as deriving their original from him that I must own to your lordship they were spun barely out of my own mind, and the ideas I had there, were not, that I know, derived from any other original."

13 Ibid., 206.

14 Ibid., 207. For full account, see the whole of Chapter IX, entitled Locke and Descartes.
His celebrated and much praised starting-point is in reality a false, or at all events an inadequate foundation for philosophy, for it apparently affirms the independent existence of that which, when separated from the world, cannot be otherwise regarded than a mere abstraction. As Descartes describes it, 'I exist, how often? As often as I think. For perhaps it would even happen, if I should wholly cease to think, that I should at the same time altogether cease to be.' In other words, thinking, then, is whereby I exist, or as Descartes expressed it, I am a being whose essence consists in thinking.15

However, it is well to remember that whatever differences there are between Descartes and Locke concerning innate ideas, "they are at one in the fundamental point that the sole object of the mind's knowledge is its own ideas."16

Locke is not concerned with the difficulties regarding either the general nature of the mind, nor the special mechanism of perception. These, he feels, are matters of speculation and out of reach.17

His first purpose is to reject the hypothesis of innate ideas, and in place of these ideas, he holds that the mind is

At first perfectly rasa tabula, quite void, but altogether capable of those characteristics, notions or ideas, which are the proper objects of our understandings wherein our knowledge consists, and beyond which we have not any knowledge at all.18

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15 Pringle Pattison, Scottish Philosophy. A Comparison of the Scottish and German Answers to Hume. William Blackwood and Sons, London, 1899, 9, 10
16 James Orr, David Hume and His Influence on Philosophy and Theology. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1903, 37.
18 Ibid.
Here Locke differs from Descartes, who taught that from the very nature of our mind, it followed necessarily that ideas are innate. What ideas did Descartes mean? The first principles of all being and of thought, such as for example, what is, is; and that the same thing cannot be and not be at the same time. To which Locke replied, that children, idiots, and even normal men die without ever knowing those principles. Still they have souls and minds, and how could those notions be imprinted upon their minds without their knowing them? So Locke concludes that no ideas are innate, not even the idea of God. It is at this point that Gilson remarks that the fate of Cartesian philosophy is a settled thing. For Descartes had held that it is necessary for the soul always to think, and if necessary, it ought always to be. However, the soul no more always thinks, than the body moves at all times. Even to state that the soul is nothing but a thinking substance is not even evident, for the soul not only thinks, but also wills, and has the power of putting the body into motion, that is motivity.

Having shown that there are no innate ideas, Locke proceeds to show that the two and only two foundations of all knowledge are experience and observation.

19 Gilson, The Unity of Philosophical Experience, 167-169.
Thus I think that all our knowledge is founded on and ultimately derives itself from experience and observation, employed either about external, sensible objects, or the internal operations of our minds, perceived by ourselves; which are the two originals and fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can have, do spring. 20

Since our minds have no innate ideas, how then do we arrive at knowledge? Locke answers that if we examine our ideas we find that they all come from two main sources, namely sensations and reflection. Ideas of reflection are such as perceiving, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning and willing, and in general all ideas which are not sensible are ideas of reflection, whereas ideas of sensation depend wholly upon our senses. Thus Locke describes how these ideas come into being.

Our senses are conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct ideas of images of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects affect them. And thus we come by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, hard, soft, ache, smart, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities. And this great source of most of the ideas we have depending wholly upon our senses and derived by them to our understanding, I call sensation. 21

Hume agrees with Locke that all the data of the human mind consists in reflections and sensations. He does, however, disagree with Locke as to the meaning of impressions and ideas. The basic difference goes back to his full disagreement with Locke on the question of innate ideas. This variance with Locke is of such importance that Hume gives considerable

21 Ibid., II, I, 3.
analysis of his view concerning innate ideas. The reasons for his disagreement with Locke are clearly presented in the Inquiry in the following analysis:

For what is meant by innate? If innate be equivalent to natural, then all the perceptions and ideas of the mind must be allowed to be innate or natural, in whatever sense we take the latter word, whether in opposition to what is uncommon, artificial, or miraculous. If by innate is meant, contemporary to our birth, the dispute seems to be frivolous; nor is it worthy to enquire at what time thinking begins, whether before, at, or after our birth. Again the word idea seems to be commonly taken in a very loose sense by Locke and others; as standing for any of our perceptions, our sensations and passions, as well as thoughts. Now in this sense I should desire to know what can be meant by asserting that self-love, or resentment of injuries, or the passion between the sexes is not innate?

But admitting these terms, impressions and ideas, in the sense above explained, and understanding by innate what is original or copied from no precedent perception, then may we assert that all our impressions are innate, and our ideas not innate.22

Thus instead of making our ideas stand for all of our perceptions, Hume clearly states that all of our perceptions are impressions. In a footnote to this exposition, Hume definitely describes this break with the position of Locke.23 He further admits that his theory of impressions

22 Hume, Inquiry, I, 2.

23 , Treatise, I, I, 1. In a footnote Hume makes the following statement: I here make use of these terms, impressions and ideas, in a different sense from what is usual, and I hope this liberty will be allowed me. Perhaps I had rather restore the word idea to its original sense, from which Mr. Locke had perverted it, in making it stand for our perceptions. By the term of impression, I would not be understood to express the manner in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves; for which there is no particular name in the English, or any other language that I know.
is singular, in that it has not been held before. 24

Locke continues to describe the ideas of sensation. As they come into the mind they are simple, and never confused, or complex, while all those ideas not simple are claimed by Locke to be compounded of simple ideas. 25

After thus describing how ideas come into the mind, Locke proceeds to consider the relationship between the ideas and the objects of which they are ideas. Here he finds it necessary to draw an important distinction between the two kinds of simple ideas. Some of them are of primary qualities, and these resemble qualities which in reality belong to the object. By quality Locke means the power which a subject has to produce an idea in the mind. These simple ideas of primary quality involve solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest and number; whereas simple ideas of secondary qualities are those without which are really nothing in the objects themselves, but only powers, which the objects have to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities. In these Locke includes colors, sounds, and tastes, which he thinks are produced in

24 Smith, The Philosophy of David Hume, 104. Smith remarks that "For the term 'impression,' Hume is himself responsible."

25 Locke, Essay, II, I, 24. The following is Locke's description of all knowledge: This then is the original of all knowledge, and the first capacity of human intellect - that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made upon it; either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them. This is the first step a man takes toward the discovery of anything, and the groundwork whereon to build all those notions which ever we shall have. And all those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing there.
us by the bulk, figure, texture and motion of the insensible parts of objects.26

Thus Locke holds to the doctrine that the mind has only knowledge of its own ideas, while at the same time, in order to account for these ideas, Locke posits a world of objects beyond consciousness. How Locke could hold that the mind has only the knowledge of its own ideas, and at the same time maintain that there exist a world of objects beyond our consciousness, is indeed difficult to understand and presents a real problem. Hume realized this problem and thus maintained that the external world of objects is a matter of belief, but not of knowledge.27

For Locke, the knowledge of the external world, is derived wholly from sensation. Therefore his position might well be termed that of a sensist. How then does he account for the objects existing by themselves?


27 Orr, David Hume and His Influence on Philosophy and Theology. 90. Concerning the problem facing Locke, that the mind has only the knowledge of its own ideas, and yet there exists a world of objects beyond our consciousness, Professor Orr pertinently asks: What is the warrant for this assumption? How can an idea which is wholly in the mind, yield us the knowledge of an object without the mind, or tell us anything of its nature?.....If reliance is placed upon the principle of causation, it is easy to retort, as was done by both Berkeley and Hume, that causation gives no title to infer resemblance, and in the case of primary any more than of secondary qualities. Hume adds that the whole procedure is illegitimate, and going beyond experience.
This leads directly to his analysis of substance. When we perceive, we are aware of simple ideas of primary and secondary qualities. However, we cannot imagine that the qualities of which these ideas are ideas, can subsist in and of themselves. Therefore we are accustomed to suppose some substratum which we call substance. What then is our idea of substance in general? To which Locke replies:

If anyone examines himself concerning his notion of substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition he knows not what, to support such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us. The idea, then, to which we give the general name of substance, being nothing but the supposed but unknown support of those qualities we find existing which we imagine cannot subsist, without something to support them; we call that support, substantia, which according to the true import of the word, is, in plain English, "standing under," or "upholding." 28

But here another question arises, how do we come to have specific ideas about substance? Locke answers:

Our specific ideas of substance are nothing but a collection of a certain number of simple ideas, considered as united in one thing. These ideas of substance, though they are commonly called 'simple apprehension,' and the names of them 'simple terms,' are complex and compounded. 29

Locke continues by way of example. The idea that an Englishman has of the name swan signifies white, color, neck, long, red beak and black legs, of a certain size with the power to swim in the water, all of them united in one common object, swan. Therefore Locke concludes that substance is

28 Locke, II,XXIII,2.
29 Ibid., II,XXIII, 14.
really unknown to us. Later Hume holds the same position, for he raises the question, "whether the idea of substance is derived from the impressions of sensation or reflection?" 30 If, according to the senses, by which one? But since this is not possible, Hume continues his argument, the idea of substance must come from some impression of reflection. But as all such impressions are either in the passions or emotions, neither of which are adequate to represent a substance, we must conclude, that we have no idea of substance distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities. 31

One other important influence of Locke upon Hume is found in his treatment of knowledge. For to Locke, knowledge is nothing but

The perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge; and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge. 32

Hume likewise maintains that knowledge is only in the comparison of ideas, for he admits that he defines knowledge as those philosophers who consider it, "to be that evidence which arises from the comparison of ideas," and in the same paragraph he further emphasizes his position in the following description, that, "by knowledge, I mean the assurance arising from the

30 Hume, Treatise, I, I, 6.
31 Ibid.
32 Locke, IV, I, 2.
Locke further describes the different degrees of knowledge, and the distinction is clearly seen, in "the different clearness of our knowledge, which seems to me to lie in the different way of perception the mind has of the agreement or disagreement of any of its ideas." 34

The description of the three different degrees of knowledge, continues. There is, first of all, intuitive knowledge in which the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas, immediately, that is without the intervention of any other. For example, that white is not black, and that a circle is not a triangle. This intuitive knowledge Locke describes as

Irresistible, and like bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived as soon as ever the mind turns its view that way; and leaves no room for hesitation, doubt, or examination. 35

All certainty depends upon this intuitive knowledge, and it is so great, that no one can conceive himself capable of a greater certainty than the knowledge that any idea in his mind is such as he perceives it to be, and no other. To this Locke adds another sentence that leads right into the center of Hume's scepticism, for he says,

He that demands greater certainty than this, demands he knows not what, and shows only that he has a mind to be a sceptic, without being able to do so. 36

33 Hume, Treatise, I,III,11.
34 Locke, IV,II,1.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
Hence once more, Hume agrees with Locke that the only knowledge that involves certainty is intuitive knowledge, which includes those relations depending solely upon ideas, which can be the objects of knowledge and certainty. These four are resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity and number. Three of these relations are discoverable at first sight, and fall more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration.37

These three discoverable at first sight include resemblance, contrariety, and degrees of any quality. In the fourth relationship Hume distinguishes between Arithmetic and Algebra, in contrast to Geometry, where appearances are involved. The other three relations are not intuitive, therefore they do not give certainty, neither are they objects of knowledge.38

The second degree of knowledge, according to Locke, involves demonstrative knowledge where the mind proceeds to discover agreement or disagreement of two ideas by the intervention of other ideas. However, each step in this demonstration must have intuitive evidence, since without such perception no knowledge can arise. Mathematics is capable of this demonstrative certainty. Hume also agrees with this position.39

However, it is in the third degree of knowledge that Locke's strongest influence upon Hume is clearly seen. For this third degree, which is sensitive knowledge, only goes under the name of knowledge, but does not reach the certainty of the first two degrees of knowledge. It consists in

37 Hume, Treatise, I,III,1.
38 Ibid.
39 Locke, IV,II,2.
"the perception of the mind concerning the particular existence of finite beings without it."^40 Locke further states that, as to whether there be anything more than the ideas in our minds, that of external existing bodies, corresponding to our ideas, some men doubt. But concerning the existence of bodies in general he holds that doubt is unreasonable, because of the clear difference between the idea of sense, and an idea of memory or imagination.^41

Hume likewise holds that there is a difference between perception and the memory or imagination, and that difference is one of feeling, but that does not necessarily prove the independent existence of a physical world.^42 Moreover, Hume also holds that the existence of the external world, also must be taken for granted; for

We may well ask, What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body? but it is vain to ask, Whether there be body or not? That is a point which we must take for granted in all our reasonings.^43

Thus the relationship and influence of Locke upon Hume is evident in Locke's statement that all knowledge comes out of experience and observation; that all that is included in knowledge involves sensation and reflection,

^40 Ibid., IV,II,14.

^41 Ibid.

^42 Morris, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume., 46.

^43 Hume, Treatise, I,IV,2.
and that the mind has only the knowledge of its own ideas. Furthermore, to Locke, as to Hume, the real nature of substance is unknown, and Locke finds himself in equal difficulty in dealing with the self. Furthermore his statement that mathematics is capable of certainty, as well as his distinction between perception and the imagination, indicate his relationship to Hume.

That Hume was greatly influenced by Locke is also expressed by that Humean authority, Hendel, in the following summary:

The writings of John Locke were immensely important for Hume. Their influence upon European thought had come to be very great, pervading the literature of the time. It was authoritative for Hume as well as others.44

From Locke it is but a step to the consideration of Berkeley's influence upon Hume. The opening statement of Berkeley's Principles of Human Knowledge not only expresses his own view as to our knowledge of the external world, but also clearly presents evidence for his first influence upon Hume.

It is evident to anyone who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted upon the senses; or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind; or, lastly, ideas formed by the help of memory and imagination - either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways.45

In these three divisions of the objects of knowledge are found all of Hume's perceptions. The first two, sense-ideas, and the ideas of the passions and operations of the mind, include Hume's impressions, whereas the

44 Hendel, 88.

third division, representations, correspond to Hume's ideas, and nearly correspond to Locke's simple ideas of sense and reflection, and his complex ideas. 46

After his opening analysis of the objects of knowledge, Berkeley continues with a description of what it is that knows.

There is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, remembering about them. This perceiving, acting being, is what I call Mind, Spirit, Soul, or Myself. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived - for the existence of an idea consists in its being perceived. 47

This, however, Fraser warns us, must not be taken to mean that Berkeley affirms the Ego, any more than the world of ideas is existing absolutely independent of being conscious, but rather that this 'something,' is the Ego, or conscious subject, which the object world infers, and through which it is united and becomes intelligible. 48

Hume carries this statement of Berkeley just one step further. He asserts that instead of the existence of an idea consisting in being perceived, he holds that not only ideas but also impressions are perceived, and these impressions are all that is perceived. 49

46 Ibid, 151.
48 Ibid, I,156.
49 Hume, Treatise, I, I,1.
From this point, Berkeley, in following Locke, has little difficulty in disposing of material substance. He begins by showing, as Locke before him had already shown, that the immediate objects of all knowledge are ideas. From this he logically concludes that the assumption of a second world of external sense-objects is without justification. This is made clear, if we understand what is meant by the term, exist, when used in reference to sensible things. This point he demonstrates by way of illustration.

The table I write on I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other Spirit actually does perceive it. There was an odor, that is, it was smelt; there was a sound, that is, it was heard; a color, or a figure and it was perceived by sight or touch... For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that is to me perfectly unintelligible. Their Esse is Percipi, nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds of thinking things which perceive them.\textsuperscript{50}

Later Hume asserts that the essence of the mind are perceptions. That there is an actual existing world, Berkeley continues, is

An opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects, have an existence, real, or natural, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding.\textsuperscript{51}

Here Berkeley holds that the existence of an external world is a matter of opinion and further in the same section, (Section 4) he calls it assurance.

\textsuperscript{50} Berkeley, I,3.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., I,4.
Hume also states that all men hold to the belief or opinion of an external world.52

Our of this assertion of the existence of the external world being merely a matter of opinion, Berkeley continues by stating that such a view, that is the attempted distinction of sensible objects from their being perceived, is found at the root to depend upon the doctrine of abstract ideas. Berkeley summarizes his view in the following way:

In a word the things we see and feel - what are they but so many sensations, notions, ideas, or impressions on the sense, and is it possible to separate even in thought, any of these from perceptions?53

If it is possible to separate by imagination the trunk of a body without limbs, or conceive the smell of a rose without thinking on the rose itself, then there is abstraction.

In demonstration of the part of the imagination in the consciousness of the existence of the external world, Hume uses almost the identical illustration.

Suppose I see the legs and thighs of a person in motion, while some interposed object conceals the rest of the body. Here, it is certain, the imagination spread out the whole figure. I give him a head and shoulders, and breast and neck. These members I conceive and believe him to be possessed of. Nothing can be more evident than that this whole operation is performed by the thought or imagination alone.54

52 Hume, Treatise, I,IV,2.
53 Berkeley, I,5.
54 Hume, Appendix to the Treatise.
Berkeley concludes this section with the statement that to him, in truth the object and sensation are the thing, and therefore he claims that they cannot be abstracted from one another.

In Hume's treatment of abstract ideas, Berkeley's most direct and significant influence is evident. This is evident in that Hume not only recognizes his influence, but considers Berkeley's treatment as "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years."

Hume's own account reveals his indebtedness to Berkeley.

A great philosopher, (Dr. Berkeley in footnote) has disputed the received opinion in this particular, and has asserted, that all general ideas are nothing but particular ones annexed to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification, and makes them recall upon occasion other individuals, which are similar to them.... I look upon this to be one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters.55

Berkeley's treatment of the external world as known by the imagination, also indicates his influence upon Hume. If substances exist without the mind, asks Berkeley, how could we possibly know them? It would be neither by reason, nor by the senses, both of which are insufficient. But someone may ask, is it not easy to imagine trees in a park or books in a closet? To this he replies, surely that is possible, but is only shows you have the power of imagination of the formation of ideas in your mind.56

55 Ibid., I,1,7.
56 Berkeley, I,23.
This is the same position of Hume, in fact he proceeds in his development along the same order. Neither the senses, nor the reason is sufficient to induce us to believe in the external world, therefore, he concludes we hold to an external world by means of the imagination.57

There remains one negative influence of Berkeley upon Hume, to which he sees fit to give considerable emphasis. For in the final analysis Hume feels that Berkeley's arguments result in Scepticism, rather than in proof.

Most of the writings of that ingenious author, (Berkeley) form the best lessons of scepticism, which are to be found either among the ancients or modern philosophers....All his arguments, though otherwise intended, are in reality, merely sceptical, appears from this, that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism.58

Thus the influence of Berkeley and his relationship have been clearly shown, though not as widespread as was that of John Locke. Berkeley's emphasis upon the essence of the mind as perception, and that the existence of the external bodies is merely a matter of opinion or assurance, and arises neither from the senses, nor reason, but by the imagination, are directly evident in Hume's system. Also his doctrine of abstract ideas was acknowledged by Hume to be of vital importance.

However, Locke is connected with Hume's thought in more aspects than Berkeley. Like Locke, Hume held that all knowledge comes out of experience and observation, and that all knowledge includes sensation and reflection.

57 Hume, Treatise, I,IV,2.
58 Ibid., I,I,7.
Likewise Hume held as did Locke that the mind has knowledge only of its own ideas, and that the nature of substance was unknown.

Although Hume accepted the general principles of both Locke and Berkeley he felt impelled for the sake of his science of man to give a definite answer to the question about the external world. To find this answer he had not only to accept the principles of these two forerunners, but at the same time to push further the analysis of sense knowledge.
CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF HUME'S POSITION

In order to evaluate properly the philosophy of David Hume, or any other philosopher, it is necessary, first of all, to consider his first principle, for, "what is first, last, and always in human knowledge is its first principle."¹

The first principle of Hume's philosophy is that "no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions."² Therefore all that ever appears to the mind are these perceptions, for it is "the successive perceptions that constitute the mind."³ And if we are to have any certainty it is that of these perceptions, since "the only existence of which we are certain are perceptions."⁴ Thus the mind, according to Hume, consists of these perceptions, and

What we call a mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity.⁵

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¹ Gilson, 315.
² Hume, Treatise, I, IV, 2.
³ Ibid., I, IV, 6.
⁴ Ibid., I, IV, 2.
⁵ Ibid.
Of these perceptions of the human mind there are two kinds, which Hume describes in the opening sentence of the Treatise.

All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I call impressions and ideas.  

He gives priority and precedence to the impressions; in fact he asserts that this

Is the first principle I establish in the science of human nature; nor ought we to despise it because of the simplicity of its appearance...the present question concerning the precedency of our impressions.  

Thus having stated that all the existences are perceptions, of which alone we are certain, and that these perceptions are the contents of the mind, Hume is given over to what Gilson has rightly described as

The most tempting of all false, first principles...that thought, not being, is involved in all my representations. Here lies the initial option between idealism and realism, which will settle once and for all the future course of philosophy, and make it a success or failure.  

In this false first principle of thought, Hume has chosen the pathway of idealism and subjectivism. However, his principle of immanence, that "no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions," need not be accepted. For on the basis of this principle knowledge is measured by knowledge, which leads all along the way to uncertainty and ends ultimately and inevitably in scepticism.

6 Ibid., I,I,1.
7 Ibid.
8 Gilson, 316.
Since Hume has chosen thought as his first principle, we notice the inadequacy of his first principle of reality, which is his own mind, only perceptions, and as that alone exists, he is faced with the problem of the external world, which is merely a supposition or belief.

Likewise the inadequacy of his first principle of knowledge, by which we judge knowledge by knowledge, or as Hume terms it, by the comparison of ideas. His knowledge is thus reduced to probability. Had Hume begun with the first principle of being, which can know other beings, existent things, there would be no problem of the existence of the external world, for being involves the knowledge of other beings, the knowledge of things.

The inadequacy of his first principle is further evidenced in his own treatment of sense knowledge. Here once more he is driven to scepticism. He himself admits we must confine ourselves to appearances only, if we are to carry

Our inquiry beyond appearance of objects to the senses, I am afraid that most of our conclusions will be full of scepticism and uncertainty. 9

Why this conclusion? If perceptions alone exist, and they resolve themselves into impressions and ideas, all of which are passions, emotions and sensations, again, there remains no way to measure knowledge but by itself. Senses are known only by senses. Therefore Hume is forced to confess that though he had begun with

Implicit faith in our senses....I feel myself at present of a quite contrary sentiment, and am inclined to repose no faith at all in my senses. 10

9 Hume, Treatise, I,II,5.
10 Ibid., I,IV,2.
Hume's difficulty with the senses is due to his inability to deal with self or personal identity. Since thought, not being, is his first principle, he has ruled out metaphysics, by which alone he could realize self. He does admit the inadequacy of sense to determine this question. He even goes so far as to admit that at this point, we must have recourse to the most profound metaphysics to give a satisfactory answer to it. However, he immediately adds, that in common life these ideas of "self, and person are never very fixed nor determinate." 

Still it is evident that Hume realized the vital importance of this question of self or personal identity, and that it is closely related to the issue of the external world, for shortly after the statement just quoted, he returns again to the question, and this time in relationship to the external world.

To begin with the question concerning external existences, it may perhaps be said, that setting aside the metaphysical question of the identity of a thinking substance, our own body evidently belongs to us. Here again the whole difficulty is due to his first principle of thought, for Hume now finds himself enmeshed within the net of his own perceptions. His own description best indicates his predicament.

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception, or other, or heat or cold, light or shade ...I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but the perception.\textsuperscript{14}

So he concludes, when he is asleep and insensible regarding himself, he is truly to be considered not to exist. And if all his perceptions were removed by death, he would be annihilated, and then what would be required to consider himself "a perfect nonentity."\textsuperscript{15} Here it is evident Hume would do away with the immortality of the soul.

Again we see the insufficiency of his first principle, for since all the perceptions are impressions and ideas, Hume asks the question concerning the immateriality of the soul, what is 

The impression that produces it, and tell distinctly after what manner that impression operates, and from what object it is derived?\textsuperscript{16}

Therefore Hume dismisses the issue and feels it sufficient reason to abandon the discussion of the materiality and immateriality of the soul.

Thus, having seen the inadequacy of Hume's first principle in relation to sense knowledge, our self, or personal identity and the immortality of the soul, we now consider his first principle as it applies to reason. Beginning with thought, which consists only in perceptions, in turn resolving themselves in impressions, the faculty of reason becomes to Hume a matter of custom and thus has no grounds of evidence for judgment and

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., I,IV,6.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., I,IV,5.
demonstration. In other words that by which we alone judge anything as being intelligible, becomes to Hume unintelligible, since reason as every other faculty is one of perception.

Therefore his conclusion concerning reason, that it is inadequate, in that it cannot give any degree of evidence concerning any proposition, and further, that it ends in total suspense of judgment. Having thus ruled out reason, Hume is on another road to scepticism. In attempting to answer those who reject all arguments of sceptics without inquiry, or examination Hume replies

If the sceptical reasonings be strong, say they, it is proof that reason may have some force and authority; if weak, they can never be sufficient to invalidate all the conclusions of our understanding. Thus argument is not just...for reason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority. Her enemy, therefore, is obliged to take shelter under her protection, and by making use of rational arguments to prove the fallaciousness and imbecility of reason and produces in a manner patent under her own hand and seal. This patent has at first an authority proportioned to the immediate authority of reason, from which it is derived. But as it is supposed to be contradictory to reason, it gradually diminishes the force of that governing power, and its own at the same time; till at last both vanish away into nothing, by a regular and just diminution.17

This lengthy description shows Hume's uncertainty and a kind of confusion concerning reason. However, he concludes the analysis by stating that it is fortunate that nature breaks the force of such sceptical arguments in time, and thus keeps them from influencing our understanding.

17 Ibid., I,IV,1.
He further holds that the understanding acting alone, and according to its most general principle, "subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or in common life."18

This leads to Hume's final significant question in which the end of reason is clearly seen. He asks, if reason itself be refused, what are the consequences? His own words present the best answer and indicate the sceptical results as well as the logical dilemma in which he now finds himself. He asks the question,

Shall we then, establish it for a general maxim, that no refined or elaborate reasoning is ever to be received. Consider well the consequences of such a principle. By this means you cut off entirely all science and philosophy.19

Furthermore, Hume continues, you contradict yourself, since,

You proceed upon one singular quality of the imagination, and by a parity of reason you embrace all of them; and you expressly contradict yourself; since this maxim must be built upon preceding reasoning.20

Finally, he asks what shall be done. If the issue is between false reasoning or no reasoning at all, he is at a loss to know what to do. The only solution is that this difficulty is soon forgotten, and leaves but a small impression.

Thus we have seen the complete inadequacy of Hume's first principle.

18 Ibid., I,IV,7.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
It reduces all knowledge to probability, and destroys the very foundation of reason and sense knowledge. If accepted, it ends in the destruction of both science and philosophy, in the logical dilemma of self contradiction and ends in scepticism. From this consideration of the inadequacy of his first principle, we turn now to his procedure on the basis of this first principle.

Hume is faced with the problem of the external world. First, let us consider his analysis of the imagination, for he concludes that neither the senses nor reason are sufficient to give any 'notion' (Hume's own expression) of the existence of the external world. This has already been shown is due to his first principle which invalidates both reason and the senses. Therefore there remains only the imagination, and hence he concludes, it "must be entirely owing to the imagination."21 The imagination becomes the faculty by which Hume attempts to solve the problem of the existence of the external world.22

He describes the operation of the imagination in the following manner. Every impression present with the mind, reappears as an idea in one of two ways. Either as a lively idea, which he calls memory, or as a faint idea, it is called imagination. The memory paints its objects in more distinct colors, "whereas in the imagination the perception is faint and languid, and cannot be preserved without great difficulty by the mind steady and uniform

21 Ibid., I,IV,2.
Hume further states that though both ideas of memory and imagination cannot appear in the mind without previous impressions, still the imagination is not restrained in the same order as the memory. Later in another distinction he states that "those faculties (referring to memory and imagination) are only distinguished by the different feeling of the ideas they present." If the operation of the imagination be only a reappearance of a former impression, faint and languid, and hardly able to be preserved by the mind for any length of time steady and uniform, how can it give rise to assurance of the external world? Furthermore, if the distinction between memory and imagination is only distinguished by the difference in the feeling tone of the ideas, and since they are constantly in a flux, how then can we be assured of the external world? Perhaps we should say there is no answer. But the problem itself would not have arisen, if Hume had not taken the idealistic position of analysis.

Next, he considers the two principles of the imagination, one permanent, irresistible and universal, such as the customary transition from causes to effects, and from effects to causes; then the principles which are weak and irregular. The former, he holds, are the foundation of all our thoughts and actions, so that if they were removed, human nature would immediately perish and go to ruin, while the latter are neither unavoidable nor necessary.

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23 Hume, Treatise, I, I, 3.
24 Ibid., I, III, 5.
Concerning the first of the two principles, Hume describes them as permanent, irresistible and universal. If the perception in the imagination be faint and languid, and can only with great difficulty be preserved for considerable time, on what basis can he describe it as permanent? Furthermore, if the perceptions of the imagination be such as to lose their original liveliness as in the corresponding impression, on what ground does Hume call it irresistible? And finally, how can he call this principle universal, when he has already ruled out any ultimate or universal principles as presumptuous and chimerical? 25

Regarding the latter principle, weak and irregular, he likens to the ancient philosophers, whereas, the modern philosophy, "pretends to be entirely free...and to arise from the solid, permanent and consistent principles in the imagination in the light of his description?

In the third part of his explanation of the imagination we find the scope described, and here it is that Hume allows to the imagination free and almost unbounded scope.

Nothing is more admirable than the readiness with which the imagination suggests its ideas, and presents them at the very instant in which they become necessary or useful. The fancy runs from one end of the universe to the other, in collecting those ideas which alone belong to any subject. One would think the whole intellectual world of ideas was at once subjected to our view, and that we did nothing but pick out such as were most proper for our purpose. There may not, however, be any present, besides those very ideas that are thus collected by a kind of magical faculty of the soul, which though it be always perfect in the greatest genius, is, however, inexplicable by the utmost efforts of the human understanding. 26

25 Ibid., Introduction.
26 Ibid., I, I, 7.
Here we have a procedural breakdown. The problem of belief in the external world is indeed solved. But in solving it we have recourse to the unintelligible. After all why call it inexplicable. We have placed full emphasis on perceptions. Have they led us astray? Reality pursues the idealist. Like every other idealism, Hume's is a misplaced reason. Here he endeavors by saying it cannot be explained.

However, Hume is not without scruples. He admits his vacillation is contrary to true philosophy, when referring to the two different senses in which he uses the word, imagination.

The word imagination is used in two different senses; and though nothing be more contrary to true philosophy than this inaccuracy, yet in the following reasonings, I have often been obliged to fall into it. When I oppose the imagination to memory, I mean the faculty by which we form our fainter ideas. When I oppose it to reason, I mean the same faculty, excluding only our demonstrative and probable reasonings.27

Thus we have Hume's own analysis of the imagination, on the basis of his first principle of immanence. The imagination becomes but a faint idea of a previous impression, distinguished from memory only in the feeling of the ideas, and built upon two principles, one permanent, irresistible and universal, the other weak and irregular. The imagination can choose its ideas at random with free and almost boundless scope, still it is inexplicable to the human understanding. Furthermore, he admits that the two senses in which he uses the word imagination is inaccurate and contrary to true philosophy. In one sense the imagination is opposed to memory, in another

27 Ibid., I,III,9.
it is opposed to demonstrative and probable reasonings.

Here we are making a two-fold criticism. First, no philosophy need accept the immanence principle. We can rather accept the evidence of things and validly defend their intelligibility as evidential. And if one does not accept this principle, he need not accept Hume's analysis of knowledge. But the second criticism is procedural. Hume destroys Hume's bases. We have just shown how the imagination fails to explain the belief only by denying it. But the imagination fails to explain the belief in the external world. Finally Hume climaxes his whole analysis of the imagination and completely contradicts his previous explanation, when he places memory, senses and the understanding all upon the imagination.

He has previously held the imagination to be in opposition to both memory and the understanding. Now he asserts that "the memory, senses and understanding are therefore all of them founded upon the imagination, or the vivacity of ideas."28

How can he now maintain the imagination founded upon lively ideas, when he has already expressly distinguished the imagination from memory, by this very distinction, namely that the lively ideas of previous impressions were what he called memory, and the faint ideas he termed the imagination.

In the very next sentence, however, Hume admits not only his inconsistency, but even the fallacy of his own analysis. Referring to his previous statement that the memory, senses and imagination are all founded upon the

28 Ibid., I, IV, 7.
imagination, of the vivacity of the ideas, he admits that it is no wonder that

A principle so inconstant and fallacious should lead us into error when implicitly followed, as it must, in all its variations. It is this principle which makes reason from cause to effect, and... which convinces us of the continued existence of external objects when absent from the senses.29

Thus we are lead again to scepticism regarding the imagination in relation to the external world and our belief in it ultimately devours all knowledge; sense, memory and the understanding. Here once more Hume's procedure comes as a result of his first principle. Since he begins with thought, he is forced to develop the faculty of the imagination, by which he asserts we believe in the external world, and now he confesses that this principle is fallacious and inconstant.

From this analysis of the imagination we now turn to his procedure in the treatment of the external world. What happens to the external world? Here once more he must proceed from his first principle. If no beings are ever present alone constitute the mind, then perception is the only knowledge and thus all knowledge is reduced to perception. We may then have no way to grasp the seemingly extra-mentally existing world. The problem for Hume then becomes this - how to explain the assertion of an extra mental world, as well as the faculty of this assumption.

It should be emphasized first of all, that Hume nowhere denies nor even attempts to doubt the existence of the external world. His problem of the

29 Ibid.
external world involves the question, how does belief or notion of the
external world arise? In several passages he emphasizes the existence of
the external world. After the consideration of the scepticism of reason,
he concludes that even though the sceptic continues to believe and reason,
and even though he claims he cannot defend his reason by reason, and by the
same rules

He must assent to the principle concerning the
existence of body, even though he cannot pretend by
any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity.30

Later in the same paragraph, he adds,

We may well ask, What causes induce us to believe
in the existence of body? but it is vain to ask, Whether
there be body or not? That is the point we must take for
granted in all of our reasonings.31

The existence of the external world must be taken for granted in all of
our reasonings. Why taken for granted? Had Hume begun with the first
principle of being, the external world would then not have to be taken for
granted, for he would then accept the evidence of things and their intelligi-
bility. Since it is a very part of the development of being, in that being
knows other beings, or things.

He again emphasizes the external world in the development of the argu-
ment. He has been considering the way in which the mind perceives, and
supposes a perception to exist, even when absent from the mind. Here again

30 Ibid., I, IV, 2.
31 Ibid.
he admits the question is not concerning the external world, but rather the way in which the mind proceeds to reach a conclusion. For

The difficulty is not concerning the matter of fact, whether the mind forms the conclusion concerning the existence of its perceptions, but only concerning the manner in which such a conclusion is formed, and the principles from which it is derived. 32

Here two questions arise. First, how can we hold that perceptions may be absent from the mind and not be annihilated, and second, how does an object become present to the mind without creation of a perception or image?

To the first question, Hume simply states his definition of the mind, which is nothing but a heap or collection of perceptions. In the second question he maintains the same reasoning continues. Here, however, he admits that external objects are seen, felt and become present to the mind, that is they acquire such a connection to a collected heap of perceptions. Here another inadequacy in Hume's development is evident. How can we see objects, when the perceptions by which we are supposed to see them, resolving into impressions are all internal and perishing. Once more Hume's first principle has bound him within the confines of his own mind.

From here it is but a step for Hume to state that we may remove any seeming interruption between our perceptions and the external world, by Feigning a continued being... but as we here not only feign, but believe this continued existence, the question is, from whence arises such a belief? 33

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
Belief arises in the following manner. Since belief merely consists in the vivacity of ideas, and these in turn arise from some present impressions, it is conveyed by a quality of relation, in which memory presents a vast number of instances of relations. Therefore, belief involves resemblance, memory and custom. However, Hume follows this explanation, by stating at once the "here we have a propensity to feign the continued existence of all sensible objects." 34

Therefore, to Hume, the solution to the problem of the existence of the external world lies in the belief of such a world. Here again, the inadequacy of Hume's view is seen, arising from his first principle of immanence.

First, his own description of the operation of belief reveals the weakness of his view. For

Belief consists merely in a certain feeling or sentiment; in something that is not dependent upon the will, but must arise from some determinate causes and principles of which we are not masters. 35

If, therefore, we are not masters, that is, if belief is beyond control, how then can we have any assurance of its validity, and how can we present evidence of any certainty?

Second, three times, Hume repeats the use of the word, feign, in connection with the existence of the external world. Since the word feign

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., Appendix.
means to invent or pretend; if that be the process of the mind in relation
to the external world, we are again left without any certainty, and the end
is once more scepticism.

Third, Hume's own final conclusion to this whole question of belief
follows logically from his first principle, for he admits that

It is impossible for us to distinctly conceive
objects to be in their nature, anything but exactly
the same with the perceptions.36

Then follows his own confession from his whole study of the existence
of the external world, which shows clearly not only the inadequacy of his
procedure, but the first principle of his procedure, the principle of
immanence which inevitably ends as Hume now acknowledges. He raises the
question,

What then can we look for from this confusion of
groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and
falsehood? And how can we justify to ourselves any
belief we repose in them?37

It is interesting to note that he speaks of groundless opinions, which,
of course is inevitable, since he has refused to accept any evidence of
being and things, but only the being of his own perceptions.

What then, is the way out in Hume's solution? His own words give the
answer, and reveal once and for all the consequences, if the principle of
immanence be carried to its logical conclusions.

36 Ibid., I, IV, 2.
37 Ibid.
This sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady which can never be cured, but must return to us every moment, however, we may chase it away. It is impossible under any system to defend either our understanding or senses; and we expose them further when we endeavor to justify them in that manner. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always increases the further we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity. 38

Thus scepticism concerning both reason and the senses is an incurable malady, and the further we reflect the greater the scepticism, if one begins with Hume's first principle, which necessarily restricts all knowledge to knowledge, by means of perceptions, that is sense knowledge, described by Hume himself as including passions, sensation and emotions. In his statement that "it is impossible under any system to defend either our understanding or senses," he should have included and added, under any system that begins with the first principle of immanence. For had he begun with the first principle of being which knows other beings, he would soon have seen that the intellect is not then in contradiction to the senses, but the intellect is in touch with the sense world, and from that first principle, others follow, one of which is that of sufficient reason, that to every being there must be an adequate reason, for if reality be intelligible, there must be a reason for things.

What then does Hume consider the remedy? There is no way out, for the only remedy is "carelessness and inattention." 39 For, whatever the reader's

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
view may be at the moment, an hour later he will still be persuaded that there is both an internal as well as external world. 40

Why this persuasion, for which Hume cannot account? And we answer without reluctance that it is in the very nature of being, by which the intellect knows the reality of the external world.

From this total scepticism of Hume concerning reason and the senses, and concerning the problem of the existence of the external world, including both the imagination, and belief in the existence of the world, other scepticism also follows.

What of the problem of universals, for universals "are but another name for what we call concepts or general ideas," and "these ideas or concepts are the very stuff of which our knowledge is made." 41

The problem, for Hume, is that concerning abstract or general ideas, "whether they be general or particular in the mind's conception of them." 42 Here he refers to a great philosopher, (Dr. Berkeley mentioned in the footnote) who disputed the generally held view and Berkeley has concluded, "that all general ideas are nothing but particular ones annexed to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification." 43 Hume believes this "to

40 Ibid.
41 Gilson, 3.
42 Hume, Treatise, I, I, 7.
43 Ibid.
be one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters." Therefore he desires to confirm with some arguments which he feels will put it beyond all doubt and controversy.

Hume holds that everything is particular in nature, which he states is a principle generally received in philosophy. However, when he comes to the application, in showing the procedure of abstraction, the difficulty arises. For the application of ideas, beyond their nature proceeds

From our collecting all their possible degrees of quantity and quality, in such an imperfect manner as may serve the purpose of life.45

If we find a resemblance among several objects that occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them, regardless of the differences in quality or quantity we may observe.46 Summarizing this whole process, Hume concludes,

This then, is the nature of our abstract ideas and general terms... that some ideas are particular in their representation. A particular idea becomes general, by being annexed to a general term.47

But someone may inquire, how does this process take place. To which Hume answers, it is the work of the imagination, which suggests with

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
readiness its ideas, "the fancy runs from one end of the universe to the
other in collecting those ideas which belong to any subject." 48

First, it is evident that though Hume does describe the process of the
imagination by which the universals are considered, he says nothing of the
nature of the universals themselves, that is what are universals? This may
be due to the fact that he already in the Introduction to the Treatise ruled
out universals and ultimate principles, which from his first principle of
thought, must be the case.

Second, the explanation concerning abstract ideas presents a difficulty
well described by Smith.

Hume is faced by the same difficulty which also
faced Berkeley, and to which neither of them had a
consistent answer...how we can think of 'all', or 'every',
or 'any', or how we can think of a 'sort', or 'kind', or
of a common characteristic, if we have no other means
of doing so than of taking a particular idea a represen-
tative of others resembling it. 49

Third, and most important, if there be no universals, what becomes of
knowledge? Hume must answer, since he has chosen the first principle of
thought, that all knowledge is reduced to probability, for since the mind
knows only its only perceptions, and these are within man, knowledge becomes
merely a matter of probability.

What happens to causation in Hume's system? He defines a cause as

An object precedent and contiguous to another, and
so united with it, that the idea of the one determines

48 Ibid.
49 Smith, 260.
the mind to form an idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other.\footnote{50}

Although the probabilities of causes are of various kinds, they are all derived from the same origin, namely, "the association of ideas to a present impression." Hence the relation of causes to effects is the work of the imagination, for "each impression draws along with it a precise idea, which takes its place in the imagination, as something solid and real, certain and invariable."\footnote{51}

But we have already seen that from Hume's own analysis, beginning with his first principle, the imagination leads to scepticism, how then can it present ideas as real, certain and invariable?

Hume also considers the question of efficacy of power in causation. He feels it has been the basis of much dispute among philosophers both ancient and modern. However, he acknowledges that he has received little encouragement from these philosophers, "who pretended to explain the secret force and energy of causes."\footnote{52}

He dismisses the whole discussion, however, with the restatement of his former principle.

\footnote{50 Hume, \textit{Treatise}, I, III, 14.}
\footnote{51 Ibid., I, III, 3.}
\footnote{52 Ibid., I, III, 14. This reference is footnoted with a notation, as follows: See Father Malebranche, Book VI, Part II, Chapter III.}
We have established it as a principle that as all ideas are derived from impressions, or some precedent perceptions, it is impossible we can have any idea of power or efficacy, unless some instances can be produced, wherein this power is perceived to exert itself.\textsuperscript{53}

Finally, he considers it frivolous of those who say that effect must have a cause, since it is implied in the very meaning of effect. Still, this does not prove that every being must be preceded by a cause, any more than one would reason because every husband has a wife, that therefore it follows that every man must be married. The real issue, he feels, is this, whether every object that begins to exist, must owe its existence to a cause, and to this he answers most emphatically," and this I assert to be neither intuitively nor demonstratively certain."\textsuperscript{54}

Here again Hume is caught in the net of his first principle of immanence. For had he begun with the first principle of being, that very first principle involves existence, and that existence is due either to itself or some other cause.

In Hume's further analysis of substance and the soul, his first principle again confines his conclusion. For in the light of his first principle, only perceptions are existing in the mind, which resolve into impressions and ideas, and thus substance is ruled out. There are only two kinds of impressions, those of sensation and those of reflection. The

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
idea of substance could not possibly come from some impression of sensation, for by which of the senses could it be perceived? Then it must come from reflection, but all the impressions resolve into our passions and emotions, none of which could possibly represent a substance. Therefore we have no idea of substance, for that idea is nothing but a collection of simple ideas united by my imagination. Thus he concludes that

These principles of substantial forms, and accidents, are not in reality any of the known properties of bodies, but are perfectly unintelligible and inexplicable. 55

From Hume's own first principle, substance and accidents must be unintelligible and inexplicable, since he has no principle of intelligibility, since he has already ruled out reason as insufficient, and but instinctive and unintelligible.

Thus, he likewise concludes, on the same basis of his first principle that the question concerning the substance of the soul is utterly unintelligible. 56

Concerning his scepticism of self or personal identity, we have already taken note, however, it is indeed interesting to mention here the criticism of those who would be inclined to agree with most of Hume's position.

Smith observes that Hume is inconsistent in his analysis of self, for several times in dealing with the passions he speaks of the self as if it were actual, and not just a bundle of perceptions.

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., I,IV,5.
It is evident that the idea or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person.\textsuperscript{57}

Again Hume states that

The immediate object of pride and himility is self, or that identical person of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations, we are intimately conscious.\textsuperscript{58}

In this second passage Hume definitely uses the term self or person, though, he by the sheer force of his own first principle, has been forced to rule it out.

Price also pertinently remarks that when Hume speaks of the operation of the imagination, as making a smooth transition, that

If the imagination is to make this smooth transition from item to item, must not it, itself have an identity which is not fictitious or constructed?\textsuperscript{59}

That Hume realized, at least to some degree, his own deficiency in this respect is obvious from his confession in the Appendix. He had entertained some hope that even though his theory of the intellectual world might be deficient, it would at least free him from these absurdities and contradictions which accompany every explanation of reason concerning the material world. But now he finds himself in a labyrinth, after dealing with his section on personal identity, he knows not how to correct his former

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., II, I, 11.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., II, II, 1.

\textsuperscript{59} Price, 6.
opinions, nor how to render them consistent. 60

He finally admits his dilemma, which he is unable to render consistent or to renounce two principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness.

That all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences. 61

We have seen clearly that Hume's first principle of immanence, that no beings are ever present to the mind but its perceptions, has led to his inadequate analysis of both reason and senses, the imagination and the external world, and that accepting his first principle, we not only end in uncertainty, but scepticism. In the last above quoted confession of Hume at the very end of his whole study, he admits that he actually has found no solution to the problem of the external world.

As has been indicated continually, it is not necessary to accept Hume's first principle of immanence, that thought is the first principle. Had Hume begun with the first principle of being, he would have had an adequate solution to the problem of the existent world, and at the same time the removal of scepticism.

Beginning therefore, with the principle of being, we have the basis for knowledge and for metaphysics. First of all, if we begin with being, the notion of being, certain first principles follow.

60 Hume, Treatise, Appendix

61 Ibid.
First, I compare being with itself and find that it is identical, and thus state as the principle of identity, whatever is, is; or, if a being is, it is. This, we find was one of Hume's constant difficulties in consideration of self and personal identity.

Second, I come to the second principle, that if being is, I compare it with that which is not, I derive another principle, that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time. This is the principle of contradiction. It has been evident, that Hume's numerous statements of contradiction are due to his first principle of thought. Had he begun with being, this second principle would have become evident to him.

Thus being is the first principle from which all other knowledge may be derived progressively. And the human intellect in touch with the sensible world intuits the first principles. It should be emphasized, however, that

Reason has not to prove any one of these first principles, otherwise they would not be first principles but conclusions; but it is by them that reason proves all the rest...The first principle brings with it, therefore, both the certitude that metaphysics is the science of being as being, and the abstract laws according to which that science has to be constructed.62

It is because of this lack of understanding on the part of Hume of the first principle that he uses the word with confused meaning, as a supposition or idea.

Here also is the reason for the inadequacy of any certitude in Hume. He refers in numerous passages to metaphysical reasonings, particularly.

62 Gilson, 314.
when considering the question of personal identity, but on the basis of his first principle he has ruled out all metaphysics, which alone can give intellectual certainty.

He also rules out reason on the basis of his starting point, and though he accepts sense knowledge, he has no way to validate that knowledge but by itself. Hence his sceptical conclusions.

Thus had Hume begun with the first principle of being, a position of realism, rather than his idealism, subjective and empirical only, he would have been able to adequately solve the problem of the external world, and the problem which he admits in the very end of his work, remains insoluble, as it must, in the nature of the case, would have been completely solved.

Therefore it is evident that the reason Hume's philosophy leads all along the way to doubt and uncertainty and ends in sceptical philosophy is due to his first principle. Instead of making thought a part of being, he enclosed all being in thought, making mind, to be nothing but a heap or collection of perceptions. Thus his subjective idealism, his empirical attack throughout his whole system with no ultimate point of reference outside of that mind which is always perceiving itself. Thus, what Gilson so expresses of any philosopher, is particularly realized in David Hume, in that he did "include the whole in one of its parts." 63

For Hume the part was knowledge, in fact, sense knowledge. Of that part he gave us a rich and stimulating analysis. But, unfortunately for

63 Ibid., 316.
him and for the many subject to his influence, to that part he sacrificed
the whole. Thus having locked himself within a part of reality, he was
never able to get out and never able to regain the whole.

THE END
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by John G. Herrmann has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

February 2, 1945

[Signature of Advisor]