THE THEORY OF IDEAS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUME AND REID

by

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An Abstract

The aim of this work is to show that Thomas Reid, David Hume's first serious critic, had a reasonable interpretation of one major element of Hume's philosophy, an incisive critique of that philosophy, and a constructive philosophy fully aware of the lessons of Hume. The first chapter of this work discusses the varieties of skepticism and shows that Reid believed on good grounds that Hume was skeptical about all claims to human knowledge. The second chapter, a close textual examination of Hume's discussion of impressions and ideas in the Treatise and Enquiry shows that these works have different and irreconcilable theories. It is argued that the theory presented in the Treatise is consistent but yields an unacceptable philosophy of geometry, whereas the theory in the Enquiry, the commonly accepted Humean philosophy, is inconsistent. The third chapter is a close textual examination of Reid's critique of Hume's theory of impressions and ideas. Reid rejects this theory, which rests on a claim to certain knowledge of absolute simples, and replaces it with a theory of concepts which does not make any claim to metaphysical knowledge. The fourth chapter examines Hume's discussion of causation in the Treatise and Enquiry, a test case for the claim that Hume had different theories about impressions and ideas in the two works. It is shown that Hume's skepticism about causation rests on a claim to certain

knowledge, a claim which in turn rests on a psychologistic theory of logic. The fifth chapter examines Reid's critique of Hume's discussion of causation. Without a claim to certain knowledge, Reid realizes that Hume's only valid conclusions are very weak claims. Reid's own common sense beliefs in causal principles are then shown to be consistent with the valid conclusions of Hume's arguments and are shown not to be claims to certain knowledge.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this work is the theory of ideas in the philosophies of David Hume and Thomas Reid. The theory of ideas is the name given by Reid to the doctrine that there is only one mental operation, perception, and that that operation has only one object, an idea. The goal of the dissertation is twofold. First of all, it offers an interpretation and critique, along lines suggested by Reid, of portions of Hume's philosophy. This goal is accomplished through 1) a close textual examination of Hume's Treatise and first Enquiry that shows Hume does hold the theory that Reid claims he holds, and 2) a defense of Reid's arguments that show Hume does use an unacceptable premise and derives unsound conclusions. The second goal is to examine Reid's constructive philosophy, a philosophy often misunderstood, but which makes a major contribution to philosophical thought. The accomplishment of these goals will show that Reid understood Hume, and his philosophy is an advance over Humean philosophy.

CHAPTER ONE

REID'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SKEPTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF DAVID HUME

Modern scholarship shows that skepticism played an important role in the development of philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.[1] Many thinkers went through the crise pyrrhonienne and many of the positive systems of philosophy were attempts to overcome skeptical attacks on prior systems. Descartes is far from being the only philosopher, or even the first philosopher, of that period to go through the crise pyrrhonienne; he is, however, the most well-known to twientieth century readers. His Mediations is an attempt to capture in literary form the crise pyrrhonienne, and to rise above it. Pierre Bayle, "the philosopher of Rotterdam," never went beyond skepticism, but his Dictionary became the standard skeptical work in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, furnishing arguments for other skeptics, and a test for positive philosophical systems. Skepticism, however, had a European flavor, not a

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[1] See especially Richard H. Popkin, The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes (Revised Edition), (New York: The Humanities Press, 1964).

British one. Locke never thought of himself as a skeptic; he did criticize parts of the Cartesian system, but only for the purpose of constructing a philosophy more in line with Newtonian thinking. Berkeley thought skepticism was one of the plagues of modern times, and he diagnosed one of its causes as certain errors in Lockean philosophy, e.g. abstract ideas. Despite the fact that Berkeley has been called a skeptic by Hume and others, he developed his philosophy as an answer to skepticism. The full title of two of his major works are A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge Wherein the Chief Causes of Error and Difficulty in the Sciences, With the Grounds of Skepticism, Atheism, and Irreligion are Inquired Into, and Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous The design of which is plainly to demonstrate the reality and perfection of human knowledge, the incorporal nature of the soul, and the immediate providence of a Deity: in opposition to skeptics and atheists. Also to open a method for rendering the sciences more easy, useful, and compendious. Hume, of course, is the great exception to the British attitude towards skepticism; he is not, however, connected with the nationalistic strain of British thought, but rather with the Scottish Enlightenment, a movement that saw itself as part of European culture, not English national culture.

Hume's first major critic, Thomas Reid, very much follows the Eighteenth Century pattern of philosophical development. In college he became a follower of Berkeley, a not uncommon event in Scotland. Scotland was one of the few places in

which Berkeley's philosophy was recognized as a major achievement. In 1717 a literary and philosophical society was founded in Edinburgh, the Rankenian Club, that had some of the leading Scottish thinkers of the day as members.[2] Its members included Principal Wishart of Edinburgh University, Charles Mackie, Colin Machlaurin, John Smibert, John Stevenson, George Turnbull, Robert Wallace, Alexander Boswell, Alexander Cunningham, Andrew Mitchell, and John Pringle. Maclaurin, a mathematician, was one of the early advocates of the Newtonian physics: he may have been a teacher of David Hume, and was at Marischall College, Aberdeen as Professor of Mathematics, when Reid was student there. George Turnbull was Reid's teacher at Marischall. The Rankenians not only discussed Berkeley's philosophy among themselves, they engaged in a lengthy correspondence with him. The Scot's Magazine article quotes him as saying that "no persons understood his system better than this set of young gentlemen in North Britain." When Berkeley planned the Bermuda College

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2 The history of the Scottish Enlightenment and its origins is only beginning to be written. The Rankenian Club played a significant role in the development of Scottish intellectual life, yet the earliest known reference to that club is in Scot's Magazine for July, 1771. In the secondary literature, Mossner discusses the club in his The Life of David Hume, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954) Bracken in his The Early Reception of Berkeley's Immaterialism 1710-1733. (Revised Edition) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), and Davie in his "Hume and the Origins of the Common Sense School", Revue International de Philosophie, VI (1952): 213-221. Much of this work's interpretation of the connection of the Rankenians to Reid is borrowed from Davie.

project, he invited the Rankenians to join it; one member did and went to America with Berkeley. When George Turnbull left Edinburgh for Aberdeen he brought with him a philosophy that was heavily influenced by the writings of Berkeley and the criticism it had received at the Rankenian Club. Turnbull, however, was also heavily influenced by the first great modern Scottish philosopher, Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson emphasized that in ethics we must use common sense distinctions. Turnbull believed that Berkeley's metaphysics was consistent with Hutcheson's emphasis on common sense. This combination which Turnbull later published as Principles of Moral Philosophy is the philosophy that he taught, and Thomas Reid accepted, at Marischall.

In 1739 David Hume published the first two books of A Treatise of Human Nature. Reid read it soon after which he was a minister at New Machar. He was one of the first to realize the significance of Hume's work, and to give it serious treatment rather than to denounce it. Hume produced in Reid the crise pyrrhonienne; to maintain his prior philosophy inherited from Turnbull, would be sheer dogmatism, but to accept Hume's conclusions would be absolute, total skepticism. In an attempt to avoid these two unacceptable positions, Reid formulated his own philosophy. Before we look at that philosophy, however, we must look at Reid's interpretation of Hume's philosophy. To understand Reid's philosophy, we must understand what he was reacting against, and what positions are not open to him because he believes they ultimately lead to skepticical conclusions.

Skepticism is a very ancient response to philosophical questioning; the grave difficulties that appear as soon as one tries to find the grounds for knowledge makes skepticism a very appealing position. At least some of the Sophists of Plato's time had a skeptical leaning, and a little later Pyrrho of Elea founded a school of skeptical philosophy. Plato's own school, the academy, itself adopted a form of skepticism in its Middle Period. Academic skepticism, however, was far different from Pyrrhoian skepticism. In fact, many philosophical systems, ancient and modern, have been called skeptical, but that does not mean that there is more than a family resemblance between them. Part of the reason different philosophers respond to skepticism in different ways is that they are facing widely varying critiques of knowledge. Just as the Middle Academy differed from Pyrrho, so the skepticism Descartes faced is not the one Reid faced. In fact, it is an oversimplification to say Reid faced one version of skepticism in David Hume. The skepticism of Hume's A Treatise of Human Nature is different from that of An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding. If the reader is not aware of this difference, which is not widely recognized, Reid's critique of Hume will seem much weaker than it is.

It is notorious that Kant did not think very highly of Reid's critique of Hume. Henry Sidgwick suggests that the reason for this is that Reid and Kent were reading and criticizing different Humes: Kant, the first Enquiry, Reid,

the Treatise.[3] Most commentators do not give a prolonged examination of the relationship between these two works. The conventional interpretation is that the first Enquiry is a shorter, popularized version of the Treatise with some of the technical details and paradoxical conclusions of the Treatise left out. A comparison of these two works, however, shows that Hume's skepticism will appear very differently to one who has read only the first Enquiry from one who has read both that work and the Treatise. Sidgwick points out that on Kant's reading, Hume's skepticism concerns whether the future resembles the past; Kant, unlike Reid, does not know that in the Treatise Hume argued against the infinite divisibility of space, showed that there are strong grounds not to accept the most cogent demonstration, and claimed that a person is nothing but a bundle of perceptions.[4] To take one example to support Sidgwick, in the "Introduction" to The Critique of Pure Reason Kant says:

> If he [Hume] had envisaged our problem in all its universality, he would never have been guilty of this statement, so destructive of all pure philosophy. For he would then have recognized that, according to his own argument, pure mathematics, as certainly containing a priori synthetic propositions, would also not be possible; and from such an assertion his own good sense would have saved him.[5]

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[3] Henry Sidgwick, "The Philosophy of Common Sense," Mind, N.S. 4 (April, 1895): pp. 145-158.

[4] Ibid., pp. 147-151.

[5] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965) B20.

It would be interesting to know if the "good sense" Kant speaks of is like Reid's "Common sense," but, in any case, Hume embraced the very conclusion Kant thought he would have rejected if he had thought of it. Book I, Part II of the Treatise is "Of the ideas of space and time." In SectionIV of that part Hume discusses mathematics.

> It appears, then that the ideas which are most essential to geometry, viz. those of equality and inequality, of a right line and a plain surface, are far from being exact and determinate, according to our common method of conceiving them. Not only we are incapable of telling, if the case be in any way doubtful, when such particular figures are equal; when such a line is a right one, and such a surface a plain one; but we can form no idea of that proportion, or of these figures, which is firm and invariable. Our appeal is still to the weak and fallible judgment, which we make from the appearance of the objects, and correct by a compass or common measure; and if we join the supposition of any further correction, 'tis of such-a-one as is either useless or imaginary.[6]

Reid, unlike Kant, knew of this passage, and furthermore, believed Hume's conclusion validly followed from commonly accepted premises. Reid, therefore, faced a much wider skepticism than Kant did.

There are many interpretations of David Hume's philosophy. These range from the mocking skeptic who tried to undermine all knowledge for the sake of the fame it would bring him, to

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6 David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888), Book I, Part IV, Section VII, p. 266.

the serious defender of science who tried to establish a secure foundation for science and banish metaphysics as so much nonsense. It is not the intention of this work to prove that Reid had the "true" interpretation of Hume's philosophy. Rather, we merely want to exhibit Reid's interpretation in order to facilitate an understanding of Reid's own philosophy. We will first look at Reid's general impression of Hume's philosophy, then we will examine specific arguments that Reid comments upon.

Skeptical philosophies can be divided into partial or total. Partial skepticism says that some kind of knowledge lacks grounds, e.g. metaphysical, ethical or theological claims. Total skepticism says that each and every knowledge claim lacks a foundation. Reid sees Hume as a total skeptic. In the "Introduction" to the Inquiry into the Human Mind Reid says that Hume attempted to demonstrate"...that no credit is to be given to our senses., to our memory, or even to demonstration."[7] Again in the "Introduction" to the Inquiry

> It seems to be a peculiar strain of humour in this author, to set out in his introduction by promising, with a grave face, no less than a complete system of the sciences, upon a foundation entirely new-to wise, that of human nature-when the intention of the whole work is to show that there is neither human nature nor science in the world.[8]

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7 Thomas Reid, Philosophical Works, With notes and supplementary dissertations by Sir William Hamilton. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagbuchhandlung, 1967), p. 102

8 Ibid.

In Essay II of the Essays on the Intellectual Powers he says Hume derived the consequence that

> ...there is no material world: No abstract ideas or notions: That the mind is only a train of related impressions and ideas, without any subject on which they may be impressed: That there is neither space nor time, body nor mind, but impressions and ideas only: And, to sum up all, That there is no probability, even in demonstration itself, nor any one proposition more probable than its contrary.[9]

In Essay VI of the Intellectual Powers he says that Hume starts from generally accepted premises and shows they"... overturn all knowledge, and at last overturn themselves, and leave the mind in perfect suspense."[10] Not only is the consequence of Hume's philosophy total skepticism, but Reid also believed that Hume's arguments are very closely reasoned.

> Your system appears to me not only coherent in all its parts, but likewise justly deduced from principles commonly received among philosophers; principles which I never thought of calling into question, until the conclusions you draw from them in the Treatise of Human Nature made me suspect them.[11]

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9 Ibid., p. 306.

10 Ibid., p. 438

11 Ibid., p. 91 (letter to David Hume, 18 March 1763).

This letter also shows why Reid believes he is making an original contribution to philosophy. He thinks that almost all previous philosophies have several premises in common, and that Hume's arguments showed that these premises must lead to universal skepticism. Reid argues that these "principles commonly received among philosophers" are accepted without argument, are only plausible because philosophers without warrant think of mind as analogous to body, and are not accepted by anybody outside of a philosophical study. Reid's contribution is to replace these philosophical principles with ones that are a foundation for knowledge and are accepted by everybody, i.e. the principles of common sense.

Reid and Hume agree that the effect of universal skepticism is pessimism. In the Treatise Hume says: "When we trace up the human understanding to its first principles, we find it to lead us into such sentiments as seem to turn into ridicule all our past pains and industry, and to discourage us from future enquiries."[12] Three pages later he says:

> I am confounded with all these metaphysical questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, inviron'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty.[13]

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12 Hume, II, IV, VII, p. 266.

13 Ibid., p. 269.

Reid says that if Hume is correct he has been imposed upon by spectries and apparitions, and has lived a life-long delusion. The following passage from the Inquiry shows the effect on Reid of Humean skepticism.

> But when I look within, and consider the mind, itself, which make me capable of all these prospects and enjoyments-if it is indeed, what the "Treatise of Human Nature" makes it- I find I have been only in an enchanted castle, imposed upon by spectres and apparitions, I blush inwardly to think how I have been deluded; I am ashamed of my frame, and can hardly forbear expostulating with my destiny. Is this they pastime, O Nature, to put such tricks upon a silly creature, and then to take off the mask, and show him how he hath been fooled? If this is the philosophy of human nature, my soul enter thou not into her secrets! It is surely the forbidden tree of knowledge; I no sooner taste of it, than I perceive myself, and the whole frame of nature shrink into fleeting ideas, which like Epicurus's atoms dance about in emptiness.[14]

It is possible to take a more optimistic view of Hume's philosophy. In the paragraph following the last quotation from the Treatise Hume says

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations,

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14 Reid, p. 103.

> they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further.[15]

To take this view, however, we must change our whole understanding of Hume and the Enlightenment. One of the great enemies of the Enlightenment was Superstition, and David Hume was one of the most vigorous combatants against that enemy. However, to accept the optimistic view of Hume's philosophy we must see Hume as advocating the most baseless superstition there ever was - that we have knowledge. Even though Reid is never discussed among Enlightenment thinkers, the pessimistic consequence that he faces in Hume's skepticism, rather than accepting a happy superstition, is much more in line with the demythologizing of the Enlightenment.

Hume himself is aware that his optimistic philosophy has a resemblance to superstition, but he argues that there is a difference between the two and philosophy is the preferable one. He says superstition "seizes more strongly on the mind, and is often able to disturb us in the conduct of our lives and actions."[16] Philosophy, on the other hand, only produces mild sentiments which rarely affect our natural propensities. "Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous; those in philosophy only ridiculous."[17]

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15 Hume, p. 269.

16 Ibid., p. 271-272.

17 Ibid.

Hume, then, says we have natural instinct and these should govern our action as much as possible. One of the tasks of philosophy is not to rule our conduct, as most of the ancients taught, but rather to keep a check on our imagination which leads us into superstition. Reid, on the other hand, does not accept philosophy as a harmless plaything that takes our mind off more serious trouble-making; it is,for him, an all or nothing attempt to gain knowledge. Either we have knowledge or our beliefs are delusions. If there is not the slightest ground for our beliefs, we must admit we live in superstition and ignorance.

It is usually believed that skepticism and commonly held beliefs stand mutually opposed to one another; non-philosophers believe that they really do know some things. Skepticism and common sensism, however, are not two separate issues upon which a philosophical system has a position; rather there is one question, "Do we have knowledge?", and two kinds of answer: skepticism and ordinary belief philosophy. There is also a third answer: we do (or at least can) have knowledge, but it is not what is usually supposed to be, e.g. Platonism might be such a philosophy. In any case, it follows from what we have said, that if David Hume is a skeptic, he must reject our ordinary beliefs as lacking foundation as knowledge claims.

Reid, in his positive philosophy, relied heavily on a certain portion of our ordinary beliefs, those that are fundamental principles, and called them common sense. In the Inquiry he says

> If there are certain principles, as I think there are, which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them - these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd.[18]

Hume's philosophy, then, is absurd, or, to use another term Reid frequently employs, paradoxical.

The twentieth century reader must beware of the word "paradox." Reid does not mean logical paradox, as in "Russell's paradox;" he means it simply as an opinion contrary to popularly held opinion. In its root meaning "paradox" need not even have an unfavorable connotation; many scientific theories have been called paradoxical simply because they overthrew commonly held beliefs, e.g. the Copernican theory.[19] Reid, of course, when he called Hume's skepticism absurd and paradoxical, meant these words to carry their full negative connotation.

If one might borrow a Marxist phrase, Reid believes that Hume's rejection of common sense violates the unity of theory and practice. Reid repeats over and over that skepticism is

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[18] Reid, p. 108.

[19] The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933. S. V. "Paradox."

unbelievable; it is strictly a closet philosophy. In the first essay of the Intellectual Powers Reid said the skeptics continue to trust their senses no matter how much they demonstrate their unreliability.

> I have never heard that any skeptic run his head against a post, or stepped into a kennel, because he did not believe his eyes.[20]

In the fourth essay he says

> Mr. Hume saw very clearly the consequences of this ideal theory, and adopted them in his speculative moments; but candidly acknowledges that, in the common business of life, he found himself under a necessity of believing with the vulgar.[21]

This argument against skepticism is an old one, as Reid himself acknowledges, but he believes that Hume, no more than any other skeptic, has been able to answer it.

Hume, however, does have a purported answer to the argument. He candidly admits that his speculative conclusions do not affect his practical affairs. His explanation is that "nature is stronger than logic" or, in his famous phrase, "reason, is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions."

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20 Reid, p. 234

21 Ibid., p. 432.

Hume's commentators have long recognized that this last phrase is important to an understanding of Hume's ethics. In the Eighteenth Century debate between moral rationalism and moral sentimentalism, Hume is a sentimentalist. Norman Kemp Smith, in his Philosophy of David Hume showed that Hume based all belief on sentiment rather than reason. By thus basing all action on sentiment Hume showed that reason is not the foundation of action. If Hume acts contrary to his speculative conclusions he is not being inconsistent because he has already shown reason is not the basis for any action.

Reid does not develop a full-scale Smithian interpretation of Hume. However, in his discussions of action he does consider Hume's notion of passions and says that the claim that reason is the slave of the passions derives its plausibility from a semantic mistake. Passions, says Reid, are such things as appetites and desires. Our ability to weigh our appetites, desires, beliefs as to probable consequences, etc., is not itself another appetite or desire, it is reason. This reason is not what the nineteenth century called reasoning; rather it is the higher office of reason. Hume took the lower office of reason as the whole of it, and then said that since that office is not the foundation of an action, reason is the slave of the passions. Once, however, we realize reason has a second office, and that this ability is far different from any passion, Hume's claim dissolves. Once he cannot claim all action is based on sentiment Hume must again try to explain why his speculative conclusions have no effect on his actions.

Some philosophers have wondered if there is any real difference between Reid and Hume. Hume admits we all have certain practical beliefs, but can give no reasons for them. Reid calls these beliefs common sense, but his defense of them seems dogmatic. The difference between the two is that Hume claims that all we can do is describe these beliefs; Reid claims these beliefs do have a certain justification. In Chapter Three we will see how Reid claims common sense beliefs are prescriptions, and must be accepted because they are part of the conditions of living in society.

Reid had a dialectical view (in Hegel's sense) of Hume's philosophy. Hume took the accepted principles of philosophy and showed that on that basis no knowledge is possible. Hume, however, was content with this conclusion, even though outside his closet he acted on the very beliefs that he had shown were groundless. To resolve this contradiction between speculative skepticism and practical action, Reid claims certain principles of common sense are the first principles of philosophy, not conclusions to be either demonstrated or to be shown to be false.

Now that we have an overview of Reid's interpretation of Hume's philosophy, we must look at the details of that interpretation. As is well-known, Reid has a description of the history of philosophy that he is the first to state and yet to him is an obvious statement of the facts. Reid's version of history is that there are "principles commonly received among philosophers." He calls one of these principles the

"theory of ideas" and claims that all previous philosophers, and especially David Hume, have held this theory. This theory is usually stated as a theory of perception, but, in fact, it is much wider than that. It is the intention of this work to show that, on Reid's interpretation of Hume, the theory of ideas is much more than a theory of perception, and that Reid's critique of Hume is much more wide ranging and deeply based, than is usually credited.

The theory of ideas, when stated in terms of the theory of perception, is that when we perceive an object, we immediately perceive an idea in our mind, and infer from that idea that there is an object in the external world. To state the theory in less restricted form, for every operation of the mind there is a corresponding object in the mind. Thus, Reid's interpretation of the opening line of the Treatise, "All the perceptions of the human mind may be divided into impressions and ideas"[22], is that there is only one operation of the mind, perception, and that just as in "I see the table," the table is the object of perception, so in every other operation of mind there is an object of perception called an impression or idea. Reid says that this theory of mind conflates many different sorts of things, e.g. perception proper, sensations, passions, emotions, memory, and imagination. According to Reid's interpretation

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22 Hume, I, I, I, p. 1.

> When a man is angry, we must say he has the perception of anger. When he is in love, that he has the perception of love.[23]

By the same reasoning, rather than saying "I remember," we must say "I have a perception of memory". This sort of speech, Reid says is nonsense. In the Intellectual Powers he says that Hume

> gives the name of perceptions to every operation of the mind.... a doubt, a question, a command is a perception. This is an intolerable abuse of language which no philosopher has authority to introduce.[24]
>
> But there is reason to distrust any philosophical theory when it leads me to corrupt language, and to confound, under one name, operations of the mind which common sense and common language teach to distinguish.[25]

There is a problem here. How much is Reid defending ordinary language against the abuse of philosophers, and how much is he creating ordinary language for his own purposes. Sir William Hamilton says Descartes and Locke use "perception" almost convertably with "consciousness" and that that use is not a mistake in etymology. The Oxford English Dictionary's etymology of "perceive" does allow that broad use, and lists

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23 Reid, p. 222.

24 Ibid., p. 227.

25 Ibid., p. 362

the Cartesian use of "perception" as a proper meaning for that word. Not only that, the OED claims that the Reidian meaning of "perception" was first introduced into common use by--Reid!!

> 6. In strict philosophical language (first brought into prominence by Reid): The Action of the mind by which it refers its sensations to an external object as their cause. Distinguished from sensation, conception or imagination, and judgment or inference.[26]

The OED cites a long list of authorities for this definition of "perception", one of which is particularly interesting because it nicely displays the line Reid's critics take.

> 1840, Mill Diss. & Disc. (1859) 11.91. The writer who first made Perception a word of make and likelihood in mental philosophy was Reid, who made use of it as a means of begging several of the questions in dispute between him and his antagonists.[27]

Reid is usually viewed as a philosophical conservative, as someone trying to defend our everyday beliefs against a revisionist philosophy based on science. In his use of language, however, Reid malgre lui, is just as revisionary as those he criticizes.

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26 Oxford English Dictionary, S.V. "Perception".

27 Ibid.

Before, we noted that Reid's version of the history of philosophy is an original contribution, often overlooked. Reid's revision of language is another contribution often overlooked.

Reid restricts Hume's wide use of "perception" because he believes Hume and others have missed an important fact- some operations of the mind have objects, and some do not. It is characteristic of Reid to claim that the structure of language embodies facts of which the philosopher must take account. The distinction between the act of perception, and the object of perception is found in the structure of all languages, says Reid, and that a philosopher cannot "take for granted, without proof, that distinctions found in the structure of all languages, have no foundation in nature...."[28] Many of Hume's paradoxical conclusions can be easily derived, believes Reid, once perception is accepted as the only operation of the mind, and the distinction between the act and object of perception is ignored. Among others, the denial of knowledge of the external world, Hume's theory of belief, Hume's theory of mind, his denial of a notion of cause beyond constant conjunction, and his paradox that reason is the slave of the passions all easily follow.

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[28] Reid, p. 224.

On Reid's interpretation, Hume allows only one operation of mind, perception, but it may be divided into two kinds depending on the force and vivacity of the objects; the stronger are the impressions, the weaker the ideas. Reid points out, however, that Hume can only illicitily distinguish them into two kinds. The only difference between impressions and ideas is that of degree. However, for things to differ in degree they first must be of the same species. Thus, Hume has one kind of object of perception. Reid thinks it is evident that with only one kind of object of perception, Hume must lose the distinction between dreams and reality. Reid thinks this point is so obvious he does not really argue for it. What seems to be in the back of his mind, however, is that the difference between a dream and reality is more than just the degree of coherence of our thoughts. Rather, a dream is only within our minds, as where a waking perception is contact with reality-existence independent of our thoughts. Many commentators have pointed out that the one point that all members of the Scottish School of Philosophy agree upon is metaphysical dualism-the existence of two radically different kinds of substances: mind and matter. To make material substance knowable there must be a specific operation of mind, i.e. perception, whose object is matter. Once Hume claims there is only one species of operation, with only one kind of object, he can never claim dreams are specifically different from waking perceptions.

Not only cannot Hume distinguish specifically between dreams and waking perceptions, Reid believes Hume denies we

can ever know the material world. The theory of ideas says that our immediate objects of perception are ideas in our mind that are caused by external objects. Berkeley has already shown that the only thing an idea can resemble is another idea. He does, however, claim that ideas are caused by an external object, God. Hume's analysis of causation, however, is that it is a constant conjunction of our impressions and ideas. Hence, the only cause of an idea is another perception. Therefore, there is no reason at all to believe there is anything independent of our thoughts to cause our ideas.

The above paragraph is now a time-worn summary of Hume on the problem of the external world. Reid, however, was the first to appreciate the force of the argument and to try to construct a system to answer it.

Reid believes that on Hume's notion of perception not only can we not know matter, we also cannot know mind. This conclusion follows from a very simple argument. Every object of thought is either an impression or an idea, but I have no impression or idea of my mind; therefore, Hume, concludes, the mind is a succession of impressions and ideas with any subject.

Reid, of course, rejects this argument. He believes the argument's fundamental error is that every operation of mind is an impression or idea. However, he also has two arguments to show that the conclusion must be false no matter how solid the argument may appear. These counter-arguments are instructive not just for their own sake, but because they

reveal characteristic differences between the Hume of the Treatise and Reid.

Reid's first counter-argument is that Hume's conclusion is equivalent is saying the only things that exist are impressions and ideas. If there can be thoughts without a thinker, there can be treason without a traitor, love without a lover, laws without a legislator, etc. This conclusion violates the structure of all languages and is one no one believes, including David Hume outside his closet.

Reid frequently claims that Hume's conclusions are strictly speaking, not believable in English or any other known language. Reid strongly holds that the subject-predicate grammar is universal, and he even more strongly holds that all meaningful statements in English must use that structure. S. A. Grave's interpretation is that Reid is claiming our grammar carries metaphysical commitments such as a subject attribute ontology. Grave then points out that many philosophers believe a Humean type of ontology can be translated into our common language; such philosophers then deny our common language has any metaphysical commitments.[29]

Reid, however, does not take the simple, dogmatic view that the structure of language carries metaphysical commitment; rather, he claims that no translation from a Humean type of ontology to common language can be done successfully. Consider the Humean claim that the mind is a bundle of perceptions.

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[29] S. A. Grave, The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense (Oxford The Clarendon Press, 1960) p. 96.

Reid concludes "I am, therefore, that succession of related ideas and impressions of which I have the intimate memory and consciousness."[30] It seems to be intelligible to say that whenever the word "I" appears, it can be replaced by "succession of perceptions." Reid, however, points out that the replacement phrase yields a nonsense statement whenever the original statement is about mental activity, i.e. whenever the original statement is such as "I remember," "am conscious," "judge," "affirm," "reason," "deny," "eat," "drink," "am merry," "am sad." If I remember idea I, the translation is that "the succession of impressions and ideas remembers idea I." Do ideas remember ideas or impressions, asks Reid, and do impressions remember impressions or ideas? The nonsense nature of these questions shows that Hume's conclusion cannot be used to make intelligible statements in English. Reid's claim, then that Hume's conclusions violate subject-predicate grammar is not dogmatic; it is based on a strong argument that when fully carried out the translation yields nonsense.

This criticism points up a difference between Reid and Hume. Hume says the only difference between perceiving and remembering is in the degree of force and liveliness of the idea. Reid believes they are two specifically different operations; on Hume's system, he believes a strong memory cannot be distinguished from a present impression because both have the same degree of force and livliness. Coupled with this belief in different operations of the mind is Reid's

claim that not only is there something more substantial than a succession of perceptions, but that this mental substance is active. Hume, on Reid's view, believes that mind is passive. Reid says that judging, etc. is an activity of mind. When Reid discusses causation he agrees with Hume that the only notion we have of causation in the physical world is constant conjunction, but he disagrees with the doctrine that the only notion we have of causation in the mind is constant conjunction of volition and effect. Rather, Reid says, we have a notion of efficient causation which lets us understand what it is to create something. Reid's theory of causation will be examined in a later chapter.

We have been examining the skeptical inference resulting from one of Hume's fundamental premises, the theory of ideas. Reid says Hume's theory of belief is both a product of the theory of ideas, and a support for other conclusions from that theory. Hume's definition of belief is that it is a present impression associated with a lively idea. Reid says Hume had to come to that conclusion because belief is not itself an idea, and on the theory of ideas, the only alternative is that it is a modification of an idea. This theory of belief is then used by Hume to account for the difference between perceiving and imagining, and to account for causation. When we believe an object presently exists, says Hume, we have a much more lively idea of it than if we merely imagine it. Similarly, in the case that we believe something is an effect of something else, we have a much more lively idea of the constantly conjoined effect than any other idea.

Reid believes that Hume's theory of belief is the most absurd thing that was ever maintained by any philosopher. He has several arguments to refute the theory. One such argument deals with non-existence claims. Suppose person A believes there is no such thing as object O, and that belief is firmly held. Is the idea of O faint or lively? If it is faint it is also lively because A has a firm belief. If the idea is lively then the belief has the same degree of force whether it is of the existence or non-existence of O.[31]

A second argument is that the same grounds which show that belief is only a modification of an idea also show that love is only a modification of an idea. It would follow, then, that love is a stronger idea of the object than indifference, and hatred is a degree of love or indifference. Reid believes this conclusion shows that love is more than an idea, it is an affection, and belief is more than an idea, it is an "assent or persuasion of the mind."[32]

Another argument by Reid against Hume's theory of belief is that Hume's theory tries to fix the temporal location of an object by the vivacity of the idea. This theory, however, loses its plausability when all of its implications are stated at one time. On the theory a very vivid idea (impression) exists in the present, but as the vivacity diminishes the idea exists in

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31 Ibid., p. 107.

32 Ibid., p. 198.

past, becoming more past as the vivacity continues to diminish. Suddenly, when the vivacity has diminished to a certain degree the idea leaps into the future without being in the present at any point during its leap. As the vivacity continues to diminish the idea moves more and more into the future, then, suddenly, leaps out of the temporal sequence and into the imagination. The very statement of this sequence shows the absurdity of the theory.

Reid notes that Hume himself in Volume III of the Treatise finds strong objections to his theory of belief and tries to modify it. Hume continues to maintain belief is a modification of an idea, but, he says, "vivacity" does not express that modification. Hume then replaces "vivacity" with "apprehending the idea more strongly, or taking faster hold of it." Reid objects, however, that this phraseology expresses the same modification as the old phrase and is open to the same objections.

David Hume is probably most famous for his analysis of causation; Reid is very aware of the significance of that analysis and gives it much attention. Since later parts of this work will extensively consider Reid's own theory of causation we will limit ourselves at this point to a statement of his interpretation of Hume's analysis.

According to Reid, Hume's analysis of the notion of cause is that it is a constant conjunction of two events; there is no further tie, such as a necessary connection, between the first and second event. This analysis, furthermore, applies to causation both in the physical world, and in the mind.

In Chapter VI of Essay VI of the Intellectual Powers Reid puts forward his version of Hume's argument that "everything that begins to exist has a cause " is not known inductively or deductively. The wording of the essay makes it difficult to know when he believes he is stating Hume's position, and when he is asserting hsi own. He offers three arguments against any claim that the above principle is known by induction; these arguments are reminiscent of Hume, yet they are not quite Hume.

The first argument against an inductive knowledge of "whatever begins to exist has a cause" is that the proposition is necessary, not contingent. The principle says that everything that begins to exist must have a cause, not simply that it always does have a cause. Experience, Reid notes, shows us the course of nature, but it never shows us what connections of things are necessary. This interpretation of Hume supposes Hume believes we have an idea of logical necessity. There is, however, a long history of interpretation of Hume's Treatise that says logical necessity is nothing but constant conjunction. Hume's discussion of geometry (infra) lends credence to this interpretation. If we have no idea of logical necessity, there is no problem of induction. This argument uses the principle that we can infer a cause from an effect without experiencing the cause. The problem can only arise if we believe we have a notion of a connection stronger than constant conjunction; if we do not, the problem cannot even be stated. Reid does seem aware that Hume needs an idea of logical necessity to state the problem. In a letter to James Gregory he asks

"Does he [Hume] maintain that we have no idea of necessary connection?"[33] and a little later he says:

> After all, how he should think that the bulk of mankind have, without reason, joyned the idea of necessary connection to that of constant conjunction, in the relation of cause and effect, when mankind have no such idea, I cannot account for.[34]

When we come to Reid's discussion of Hume's philosophy of geometry, we shall see he criticizes Hume for making geometrical theorems generalizations from experience.

Reid says Hume's second argument is that the principle "whatever begins to exist has a cause" is not an inductive principle. Inductive principles are generalizations from experience, and generalizations have a probability proportionate to their evidence. Even if all prior evidence supports a generalization, it is always possible there will later be exceptions. This argument has elements of both the first and third arguments. The first, in that it emphasizes the necessary universality of the principle of determinism. The third in that it emphasizes the nature of generalizations.

The third argument is that it is simply false that experience shows that every event has a cause. In most cases when something happens we simply do not know the cause. By

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33 Ibid., p. 79 (undated letter).

34 Ibid.

this phrase one would assume that Reid meant that in most of the events of life we do not know what prior event is constantly conjoined with the effect. Reid does in fact later on use that argument to show that causation is more than an habitual constant conjunction. That is not his meaning here, however. Here he means that we cannot sense causation, and thus have no evidence of it in the physical world. We are only conscious of power when we order our thoughts or act, but this evidence is too narrow to support the general principle of determinism. This argument, as Reid means it, depends on his notion of efficient cause. This, then, is an argument by Reid, not Hume. In a later chapter we will return to Reid's notion of efficient cause.

Hume, according to Reid, also gives two arguments to show that the principle "that everything begins to exist has a cause" is not self-evident. Because we will examine these arguments in great detail later, we will only list them here. The first is that certainty arises from a comparison of ideas and a discovery of their unalterable relations. An examination of the ideas of the principle of determinism reveals no such relationship. The second argument is that whatever we can conceive is possible. We can conceive an uncaused event; therefore, it is possible.

Reid himself best summed up his view of Hume's analysis of causation in a letter to James Gregory:

> What David Hume says of causes, in general, is very just when applied to physical causes, that a constant conjunction with the effect is essential to such causes, and implied in the very conception of them.[35]

On Reid's view, Hume's analysis of causation is intimately connected with his discussion of final causes and natural theology. Twentieth century thinkers, brought up to consider philosophy as a secular enterprise may consider this point strange, and doubtless an error on Reid's part. In fact, that is not the case. There are two views on Reid's relationship to religion. One is stated very strongly by Victor Cousin.

> Scholasticism, having been beaten down, the principle of Cartesianism, the spirit of independence, found itself face to face with the principle of authority without any intervention. The definitive triumph of the spirit of independence, - such was the mission, and such the work of the eighteenth century..... Read Condillac, Reid, and Kant.... Condillac was an abbe; I ask you if you can see any trace of it in his writings. Reid, a minister of the gospel, is so thoroughly penetrated with the principle of liberty, that he does not even speak of it....[36]

The other view, that religion is at the center of Reid's philosophy, is held by A. C. Fraser

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35 Ibid., 67 (letter of March, 1786).

36 Victor Cousin, Course of the History of Modern Philosophy, trans. O. W. Wight, Second Series, 4 volumes. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1853), 1:215.

> Reid's Common Sense is the final perception of a being who can know the universe only in part, and is, therefore needed by man in that intermediate position in which an absolute beginning or end of things must be to him incomprehensible. It is an appearance to that which must in reason be final, in an intelligence that only partly shares in divine omniscient reason.[37]

In another place Fraser says Reid carried his reflections

> ...onward from the merely physical to the ethical judgments of the common sense and so upward from the merely natural to the spiritual interpretation of the universe. "First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual.'[38]

Fraser does not elaborate on his interpretation, however, and, as far as this author knows, no one has ever developed such an interpretation of Reid. A close look at his theory of causation, however, shows that natural theology is at the very heart of Reid's philosophy. In the eighteenth century, works on natural theology were often exhortations. Cousin is right that Reid does not preach religion, but, on the other hand, the concept of God is logically tied to several other concepts in Reid's philosophy. God, for Reid, is not an ad hoc hypothesis; it is a central concept without which other concepts cannot be understood.

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37 Alexander Campbell Fraser, Thomas Reid, (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1898) p. 135.

38 Ibid., p. 100.

The argument from final causes is that we can infer certain things about the Deity from the nature of the universe. According to Reid, Hume's argument against this thesis is that causation is constant conjunction and that all we know about a cause or effect is what we observe about it. The universe, however, is a singular effect; we have not observed a constant conjunction of a god creating a universe. Therefore, we cannot infer anything about the nature of the creator from the nature of the universe.

Reid answers this argument with a reductio ad absurdum which is significant not just for its own sake but because it shows how Reid ties together problems secular e.g. Hume, try to keep apart. We never observe a person's mind or understanding, only the effects of that understanding, says Reid. On Hume's argument we can never infer that there are any other minds besides our own.

> It seems, then, that the man who maintains that there is no force in the argument from final causes, must, if he will be consistent see no evidence of the existence of any intelligent being but himself.[39]

On Reid's view, then, the problem of the existence of God is nothing but a special case of the problem of other minds. Reid would argue that any philosopher who is not a solipcist must be a theist. We will discuss Reid's natural theology in a later chapter.

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39 Reid, p. 461.

Connected with Hume's view of causation and, ultimately his solipsism, is his theory of possibility and necessity. In Essay IV of the Intellectual Powers Reid says

> ...I know of no philosopher who has made so much use of the maxim, that whatever we conceive is possible, as Mr. Hume. A great part of his peculiar tenets is built upon it; and, if it is true, they must be true.[40]

Hume's theory of necessity and possibility is that what is possible is whatever we can conceive, and what is necessary is whatever the contradictory of which is inconceivable. Hume's most famous use of this doctrine is in his discussion of causation. We can conceive of similar causes having dissimilar effects, and thus it is possible that similar future events will have dissimilar effects. It is not even more probable than not that future events will have effects similar to present ones.

Hume seems to accept without question the doctrine that conceivability is the test of possibility. Reid acknowledges that the test is widely accepted and quotes numerous seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophers, including Locke, Leibniz, and Wolff. Reid believes that Hume and others accept the test because it follows from the theory of ideas. It is accepted that no contradiction can exist in nature. Ideas, being things, are a part of nature. Hence, all existing

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40 Ibid., p. 378.

(conceived) ideas are non-self-contradictory (i.e. possible) things. Reid later offers substantial objections to this theory of possibility, but we will examine those objections, and the use Reid makes of his own theory in later chapters.

It is widely trumpeted in the secondary literature that Hume showed that causal statements are not necessary. It is usually overlooked that Hume also tried to show, in the Treatise, that geometircal theorems are not necessary. Reid gives this aspect of Hume's philosophy careful attention because he considers it a test of the whole theory of ideas.

According to Reid, Hume claimed that we have no such ideas as geometry pretends to discuss. Geometry says two straight lines cannot cut one another at more than one point. Hume, however, notes that no one has ever seen or felt such a line so straight that it could not cut another line at two or more points. Therefore, there is no idea of the line named in the theorem. Since this observation applies equally well to all other geometrical theorems, Hume concludes geometry is a rope of sand. Reid, characteristically, agrees that Hume's conclusion does follow from the premises, and that if there is any error in the argument it must be in a premise.

Hume's error, says Reid, is of the kind Bacon called an "idol of the understanding." Hume, in his zest for his own system, tries to force everything into that system; what does not fit is rejected as nonsense. Hume, sees, unlike those before him, that the theory of ideas cannot account for geometry, and boldly accepts the paradoxical conclusion that we have no ideas of the essential geometrical notions. Reid himself, in

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his positive philosophy, strives to avoid Bacon's "idols of the understanding." It is well-known that his common sensism will not let him reject an ordinary belief such as that the external world exists but it is not as well appreciated that his common sensism will not let him reject a science because of a metaphysical argument, e.g. Hume's argument would never convince any mathematician that the axioms of geometry are indistinct. Thus, since we cannot truly believe geometrical axioms are indistinct, and philosophy must avoid the "idols of the understanding,"

> Everything that is inconsistent with our having accurate notions of mathematical lines, surfaces, and solids, must be false. Therefore it follows, that they are not copies of our impressions.[41]

In the Treatise Hume gives a good deal of attention to his theory of the association of ideas; later, in the first Enquiry, he downgrades the significance of this theory. Reid, however, usually accepts the Treatise as canonical, and so devotes some space to the theory of the association of ideas. Hume thinks certain ideas attract other ideas, just as all bodies attract one another. He believes he has discovered the laws of universal gravitation. An idea attracts those that either 1) resemble it, 2) are continguous in space or time to it, or 3) are effects of it. Hume himself lists

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41 Ibid., p. 452.

these as three separate laws of association, yet, in his discussion of causation, he says that causation is nothing but constant conjunction. Reid says that on this analysis causation is just contiguity, and hence, there are only two laws of the association of ideas.

Reid has another criticism of this theory, again characteristic of Reid's view of Hume. Hume's theory makes the mind passive, it is the ideas that attract one another. Reid always emphasizes the activity of mind. He says our thoughts are often directed by our active powers, e. g. appetites, passions, affections, reason, and conscience; we choose which thoughts to have. We use our judgment rather than simply letting our thoughts come to us. Even a single complex thought is due to an act of judgment. Hume, on the other hand, says a complex idea is due to the associating qualities of several simple ideas. Reid says people want to express their wants, thoughts, and desires and so actively form complex ideas to fit their purposes.

Earlier in this chapter we saw Reid's criticism that Hume makes the temporal location of an idea depend on its force and livliness. Reid is particularly critical of Hume's discussion of the ideas of memory. Hume says an idea of memory is a second, weaker appearance of an impression. Reid points out that we could never know an idea is making a second appearance unless we had a distinct rememberance of it. Furthermore, a perception under Hume's philosophy, cannot make a second appearance; an idea has no existence when we do

not perceive it. A further difficulty for Hume is that he says we can repeat our impressions, but that implies we are the efficient causes of our memory. If Hume means an impression, causes an idea then either the idea is a second appearance of the impression, and thus impressions cause themselves, or the idea is new and a no longer existing impression produces the new idea.

CHAPTER TWO

IMPRESSIONS AND IDEAS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF DAVID HUME

In order to answer the universal skepticism of Hume's Treatise Reid makes great use of something he calls conceptions. The doctrine that there are concepts, or notions, as well as percepts, is an old one in philosophy. Before Reid can use such a doctrine, however, he must rescue it from Hume's universal skepticism and offer reasons to believe there are such things. In this chapter we will examine and compare Hume's doctrines of impressions and ideas, and his argument against abstract ideas in the Treatise and Enquiry. In Chapter Three we will turn to Reid's theory of conception and examine why he believes there are such things. In later chapters we will investigate Reid's use of concepts as a support for other anti-skeptical theories.

The most famous sentence in all of Hume's writings, and the most controversial, is the opening one of the Treatise. We will once again quote it and the immediately following sentence which amplifies it.

> All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas. The difference betwixt

> these consists in the degrees of force and livliness with which they strike upon the mind and make their way into our thought or consciousness.[1]

What are Hume's grounds for making this distinction? It would seem that he has examined a large number of his thoughts, and each one belongs to either one category or the other.

> I believe it will not be very necessary to employ many words in explaining this distinction. Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking.[2]

Hume goes on to indicate instances in which we do mistake an idea for an impression, e.g. in sleep or a fever. Since these are circumstances that affect our observations rather than our a priori reasoning, Hume's whole distinction is based on observation. Because Hume's distinction is an empirical observation that there are two kinds of entities, a critic of Hume can say that Hume has failed to observe that there are other contents of the human mind besides impressions and ideas. This is the very criticism that Reid makes.

The most fundamental law of the relationship of impressions and ideas is that all ideas are copies of prior impressions, or, as Hume states it:

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1 Hume, Treatise, p. 1 (Hume's italics).

2 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

> After the most accurate examination, of which I am capable, I venture to affirm that the role holds here without any exception, and that every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it ...[3]

Hume makes much use of this principle, and the problem of the grounds for it is quite important. The grounds for the principle occur in the next quotation.

> That the case is the same with all our simple impressions and ideas, 'tis impossible to prove by a particular enumeration of them. Every one may satisfy himself in this point by running over as many as he pleases. But if anyone should deny this universal resemblance, I know of no way of convincing him, but by desiring him to show a simple impression that has not a corresponding idea, or a simple idea that has not a corresponding impression. If he does not answer this challenge, as 'tis certain he cannot, we may from his silence and our own observation establish our conclusion.[4]

As with much of Hume's writings, this passage is open to different interpretations; some would say the argument is inductive, others, that it is a priori. The inductivist interpretation of the first sentence is that no inductive argument yields certainty because the enumeration of cases is always smaller than the number of cases. The second and

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[3] Ibid., p. 3

[4] Ibid., p. 3-4.

third sentences support this interpretation by saying anyone will realize all ideas are copies of impressions by examining a sufficiently large number of impressions and ideas. Those who wish to reject this principle even after such an examination could do so if they produce a single case of an idea that is not a copy of an impression. The last sentence would then mean that since Hume has already examined such a large number of cases, it is very unlikely anyone will come up with an idea that does not resemble an impression. This inductivist interpretation relies heavily on the second and third sentences, but must read a great deal into sentence four; an inductive argument never yields certainty, as Hume himself says in the first sentence.

The a priori interpretation of the first sentence is that the principle of resemblance of impressions and ideas is not the sort of thing than can be proven by induction. In the eighteenth century a proof was an argument whose conclusion was not as certain as a demonstration. The proposition that an induction is not a demonstration is a trivial proposition that Hume would not bother to state in the Treatise. He must mean that a particular enumeration is no argument at all for the principle. The "in this point" of the second sentence must refer to the fact that the argument cannot be proven by induction. The third sentence then has the same interpretation as on the inductivist account--the challenge to find a counter-example to the principle. Since argument by counter-example works against both a priori and a posteriori arguments, both interpretations of Hume may agree

on this point. The last sentence then means that it is impossible for anyone to find a counter-example; Hume himself says "'tis certain he cannot", hardly a statement of inductive probability from one who is so aware of the nature of induction. This a priori argument relies heavily on sentence four, but must give a rather strained reading to sentence two.

The interpretation of this argument is closely connected with the interpretation of the opening sentence of the Treatise. If the distinction of perceptions into impressions and ideas is empirical, then it follows necessarily that all ideas and impressions examined so far resemble one another; the only observed difference between the two is in their force and livliness. The inductive interpretation of the principle of resemblance then makes the whole argument for the principle redundant. The only way to make the argument significant on that interpretation is to make the original distinction a priori. If perceptions are sorted into two kinds solely on the basis of their force and livliness, it is then an empirical discovery that in all other respects they resemble one another; it might have been the case that there is another characteristic, different from force and livliness, but which only occurs in forceful and lively perceptions. This interpretation of Hume, however, leaves him open to one of the most common objections raised against his philosophy--his first premise is a priori.

A further problem with the inductive interpretation of the principle is that Hume frequently uses that principle to argue that there could not be any ideas of a certain kind.

If the principle is inductive, a supporter of the idea under question can always reply that this idea is the counter-example to the principle that Hume had previously demanded. Since Hume does not ever consider this reply, the principle is quite likely a priori.

In trying to reach an acceptable interpretation of the Treatise we are not offering a single demonstration that shows once and for all the correct interpretation; we are, rather, examining various grounds such that we arrive at an interpretation that makes the greater part of the text's arguments valid and consistent with one another, and which does not unduly strain the wording of each passage. Using these criteria, we conclude that Hume's principle of the resemblance of impressions and ideas follows a priori from his distinction of perceptions into impressions and ideas. The distinction of perceptions, then, must be based on observation. If the distinction is a priori, Hume's entire philosophy is a priori. Many a priori philosophers have been proposed, but they usually rest on some one or several principles that are claimed to be self-evident, intuitively known, or have some such ground. That all perceptions divide into impressions and ideas does not seem to be of that sort. Therefore, if Hume's philosophy is to be significant, that distinction must be based on observation.

Someone might reply that even if our reasons so far do firmly show that the principle of resemblance is a priori, there is one other ground, much harder to state, which convinces one of the contrary interpretation. This reason is

that the "tone" of that section of the Treatise is totally empirical. Even at the cost of robbing some arguments of significance, we must be true to the spirit of the work, and read the arguments as inductive ones. There are many passages that give this "feeling". In distinguishing simple and complex perceptions Hume says:

> Tho' a particular colour, taste, and smell are qualities all united together in this apple, 'tis easy to perceive they are not the same but are at least distinguishable from each other.[5]

In the second sentence of his discussion of the resemblance of impressions and ideas, Hume says:

> The first circumstance that strikes my eye, is the great resemblance betwixt our impressions and ideas in every particular except their degree of force and vivacity.[6]

Later in the same paragraph he says:

> When I shut my eyes and think of my chamber, the ideas I form are exact representations of the impressions I felt; nor is there any circumstance of the one, which is not found in the other.[7]

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[5] Ibid., p. 2 (my italics).

[6] Ibid., (my italics).

[7] Ibid., p. 3

In the next paragraph he catches himself making an overly hasty generalization and says:

> I observe, that many of our complex ideas never had impressions that corresponded to them, and that many of our complex impressions are never copied in ideas.[8]

To support this last point Hume mentions, as an example, that he can imagine the New Jerusalem, though he has never seen such a city. Finally, besides these direct quotations, it must be noted that on a literary level the inductive reading of the argument for resemblances of impressions and ideas puts a much less strained construction on the words of the text.

This argument for an inductive reading has great initial plausibility, but it is a misreading of the text. The argument assumes that the literary style of the Treatise is very much like Locke's Essay, a straightforward statement of the author's viewpoint. Hume is often praised for his literary style, but so far as this author knows, no one has ever made a study of that style. Without pursuing the subject too far, we will make some suggestions.

The style of Locke's Essay might be called the deductive style; it uses geometrical proof as its stylistic model, and only modifies it in that the work is written in essay form,

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8 Ibid., (my italics).

rather than in numbered propositions, each followed by its grounds, as, for example, in Spinoza's writings. In both the Essay, and its geometrical model, the goal is the same, to prove the point under consideration in the most direct way possible. In such a work each paragraph, each sentence, should bring us nearer the conclusion. Besides this literary form, however, Hume had at least two others at his disposal; both were popular in his time, and had been used by well-known philosophers. These forms are the meditation, and the dialogue. Hume did, in fact, use the dialogue form; in a work on ethics called "A Dialogue", and, most notoriously, in Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. Hume, of course, had many prior examples, both ancient and modern, from which to learn the dialogue form but Berkeley's Three Dialogues must have been a particularly strong influence; Hume, we now know, studied Berkely quite carefully. Hume, however, also studied one of the world's greatest practitioners of the meditation form, Descartes. It is our suggestion that the Treatise should be read as a meditation.

One of the advantages of the dialogue form is that it allows the author to explore different answers to a question, and to compare and contrast corresponding parts of the answers. These comparisons and mutual criticisms can be put into a dialogue in such a way as to make the issues very clear without forcing the author to prematurely commit himself to a position. Plato is the consumate master of this form, but Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion show a similar ability to dispassionately examine an issue from all sides.

A meditation is similar to a dialogue in that it is a conversation that explores various sides of an issue in order to arrive at the best possible conclusion. The difference between the two forms is that a meditation is a conversation with oneself, an exploration (not a simple, perhaps logically valid, statement) of one's thoughts. If the Treatise is a meditation then we should expect to find ideas brought from confusion into clarity, and alternative positions examined, much material would be included that would not appear in a formal proof of the text's conclusions. For example, in Descartes' "First Meditation" he introduces the evil demon, a creature that may be perpetually deceiving him. Later Descartes says such an evil demon is impossible because of God's goodness. The evil demon is a device introduced to help explore the limits of doubt; Descartes is not committed to the existence of the evil demon, nor to the claim that all beliefs are doubtful. Similarly for Hume, there may be theses that he introduces as devices, but to which he is not committed.

We might read the opening paragraphs of the Treatise in the following manner. Hume begins with the empirical observation that there are impressions and ideas. He then makes a second empirical observation, some impressions and ideas are simple, and some are complex. Having made two empirical distinctions of the same material, viz. our perceptions, he realizes there are four possible classes of perceptions. He now asks himself what are the relationships between these four classes. His first theory is that for every impression

there is a corresponding idea and vice versa. He quickly comes up with counter instances to this theory, e.g. the New Jerusalem, and rejects it. Thus the fact that the discussion of the resemblance of impressions and ideas has an empirical "flavor" is not a strong ground that the final argument is empirical; the empirical "flavor" of the opening concerns the categorization of perceptions.

Hume continues now in the same empirical "tone" to investigate the relationship between impressions and ideas. Suddenly, in the last sentence, having already caught himself in one overly hasty generalization, Hume says that it is certain one cannot present an idea that does not resemble one or more simple impressions. Since no inductive generalization can support a necessary proposition, Hume must be arguing for his principle by starting with an unmodified a priori principle and gradually modifying it by coming upon counter-examples. The modified a priori principle to which he can find no counter-examples he accepts. What, however, are the positive grounds for this principle? We suggest that the resemblance of impressions and ideas follows directly from the distinction of perceptions into two kinds. If it is observed that there are only two kinds of perceptions, and only one differentia, it follows logically they resemble each other in all other respects. There is a second distinction among perceptions, however, simple and complex. Hume's investigation considers how this second distinction modifies the original principle that impressions resemble ideas. The method of counter-example works because there are only

sixteen possible relationships between simple and complex impressions and ideas. We can tabulate these relationships as follows:

1. simple impression resembles simple impression
2. simple impression resembles complex impression
3. simple impression resembles simple idea
4. simple impression resembles complex idea
5. complex impression resembles simple impression
6. complex impression resembles complex impression
7. complex impression resembles simple idea
8. complex impression resembles complex idea
9. simple idea resembles simple impression
10. simple idea resembles complex impression
11. simple idea resembles simple idea
12. simple idea resembles complex idea
13. complex idea resembles simple impression
14. complex idea resembles complex impression
15. complex idea resembles simple idea
16. complex idea resembles complex idea

Many of these possibilities need not be discussed because their truth value is obvious. That a thing resembles itself is either true or meaningless statement; in either case it is not a counter-example to Hume's principle. Thus, lines 1, 6, 11, and 16 need not be considered. A part does not resemble the whole of which it is a part; no simple perception resembles a complex one. One might argue a part can resemble a whole in a certain respect, e.g. color. Hume, however, can-

not make this claim here. Both the parts and the whole we are discussing are impressions and ideas. As we shall argue in our discussion of abstract ideas, there are no impressions or ideas of color (color is resemblance among impressions), or any other quality. Further, one cannot argue that even if there are no impressions of color, there are at least ideas of color. Hume says: "Now since all ideas are deriv'd from impressions, and are nothing but copies and representation of them, whatever is true of the one must be acknowledg'd concerning the other."[9] Hence, since every impression, including those which are parts of a complex impression, is an independent existence (as we shall argue), every idea also is an independent existence. Thus, Hume cannot allow that a quality of an impression or idea is part of that impression or idea. Therefore, a part cannot resemble the whole. Thus lines 2, 4, 10, and 12 are eliminated. A whole is composed of its parts, therefore a complex perception is composed of simple ones. A whole does not resemble one of its parts. Thus lines 5 and 15 are eliminated. Ten of the sixteen possibilities are eliminated by the laws of logic, i.e. a thing is identical to itself, a part is not a whole, and a whole is not a part. None of this is in the Treatise, but Hume may have thought it so obvious as to be unnecessary. Hume, however, does state and discuss the empirical finding that not every complex idea has a corresponding complex impression, and not every complex impression has a corresponding complex idea. Thus lines 8 and 14 are eliminated. At this point only four possibilities are left: lines 3, 7, 9, and 13. Lines 3 and 7 are non-

controversial; we can recall a faint image of an impression at a later time. Thus for impressions there are corresponding simple ideas. The truth value of line 13 depends on that of line 9. A complex idea is composed of simple ideas; if there is a corresponding simple impression for every simple idea, then the same is true for every complex idea. The only one of the original 16 possibilities which is not either trivially true or false, or for which Hume cannot find a counter-example is line 9, for every simple idea there is a resembling simple impression. Hume is certain this principle is true because he has already observed that the only difference between an impression and idea is its force and liveliness. Hume sorts perceptions into two kinds, impressions and ideas, and compares the members of the class of impressions with the members of the class of ideas. He notices that one of the differences between the members of the two classes is their force and liveliness. Slightly later he notes some complex ideas do not have a corresponding member in the class of impressions. Had Hume observed that some simple ideas had no corresponding member in the class of impressions he would have noted that fact. It follows, then, that Hume has observed that for every simple idea there is a corresponding impression. The point of the meditation is as we read it, to discover what modifications the second distinction of simple and complex perceptions introduces to the principle of resemblance. The unmodified principle, as we argued above, is logically entailed by the original observation.

Even though the principle that all ideas have corresponding impressions validly follows from the empirical distinction between impressions and ideas, the truth of the principle is dependent upon the inductive generalization. We are still faced with the possibility that someone might defend the existence of a disputed idea by claiming it is the counter-example to the inductive generalization. Hume cannot in logic, rule such a disputed idea out of court. Reid, and most of Hume's commentators, say that Hume uses the principle of resemblance of impressions and ideas as his chief or only argument against many putative ideas. It is claimed, for example, that Hume denies we have any idea of substance because there is no impression of substance. Hume does use this argument in the Treatise[10] and it is the only one used against the idea of substance. The argument as it appears in the Treatise, however, is only a refutation to those who believe substance is an impression. In the eighteenth century, however, many philosophers denied substance was observable, e.g. Descartes and Berkeley; both these philosophers said we had an abstract idea of substance. If Hume's principle that ideas resemble impressions is based on an inductive generalization, it is no argument against those who believe the idea of substance is an abstract idea. Since Hume spends only one paragraph on the idea of substance, he must not have thought he was dealing with a major issue. On

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Ibid., pp. 15-16.

the next topic, however, abstract ideas, he spends nine pages. Since abstract ideas would be one of the significant counter-examples to Hume's inductive generalization, he would consider it carefully. Furthermore, since Hume does discuss abstract ideas, we have more evidence for out interpretation that his discussion of substance was solely directed to those who claimed we gained the idea of substance through observation.

We entered into this discussion of substance because it seemed to be a place at which Hume uses his principle as if it yielded absolute certainty rather than being an inductive generalization. On our interpretation, however, Hume is only answering those who believe substance is observable. We think it is hypothesis worthy of further investigation that Hume never argues, in the Treatise, that simply because a supposed idea has no corresponding impression, there is no such idea; rather, Hume always accepts the principle as an inductive generalization that might be overthrown by a counter-example. We must say, then, that part of Reid's interpretation of Hume that treats the resemblance of impression and ideas as certain is incorrect.

We must turn now to a detailed examination of Hume's critique of abstract ideas. Such an examination is needed in order to evaluate Reid's reply to Hume, and it serves as a test case for our interpretation of Hume.

Abstract ideas have always proven a troublesome question for empiricists. Locke had a theory of abstract ideas, but Berkeley raised the criticism that this theory led to a claim that certain non-empiricial things existed, e.g. material

substance. Berkeley has a critique of abstract ideas and claims there are no such things. However, the non-empirical ego occupies a central position in his philosophy; he claims we have a notion of an ego, not an abstract idea. Many critics of Berkeley fail to see any difference between a notion and an abstract idea.

Hume, of course, rejects abstract ideas and those things that are claimed to be known through abstract ideas, e.g. material substance and the ego. Reid, who does claim there is both material and mental substance, argues for abstract ideas, or, as he calls them concepts or notions. We will first look at Hume's arguments in the Treatise against abstract ideas, and how these arguments connect with other parts of the Treatise and the Enquiry; in later chapters we will examine Reid's counter-arguments and some of his uses of the things he calls concepts.

Book I, Part I, Section VII of the Treatise is devoted to a discussion of abstract ideas. In it there are three separate arguments against these being abstract ideas. All three revolve around the notion that an abstract idea is one that lacks a precise degree of quantity or quality; Hume's example is that the abstract idea of a man is not an idea of any particular man; rather, it "represents men of all sizes and qualities."[11] These abstract ideas then, are abstract

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[11] Ibid., p. 18.

general ideas, not abstract particulars. An abstract particular would be, for example, the idea of the shape of a particular man that did not also include his color or any quantity or quality. Hume's arguments apply equally well to abstract particulars and abstract general ideas. The arguments claim there is no such process as as abstraction, no matter whether it be abstracting one particular quality from the rest in an individual, or abstracting a general quality from several individuals. Reid, as we shall see, argues for both abstract particulars and abstract general concepts. In fact, the critical argument for Reid is that there are abstract particulars; once that conclusion is accepted, the steps to abstract general notions are much less controversial.

Hume's first argument against abstract ideas is that an abstract idea is an attempt to separate a thing from itself. The argument contains two premises:

1. "...whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination.[12]

2. the abstracted circumstances are not distinguishable and different from the unabstracted ones in an abstract idea.

The example Hume gives to explain the second premise is that "the precise length of a line is not different not distinguish-

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12 Ibid., p. 18

able from the line itself....[13] The only interpretation of these premises is that for Hume ideas are particulars, entitles, objects, things, parts of nature. When he says that things that are distinguishable are separable he means physically separable, as, for example, the apples and oranges in a fruit basket.

The obvious reply to this premise is that somehow we do distinguish things that are inseparable, e.g., the color and shape of an object. Hume answers this objection by claiming that besides distinctions as separations there are also "distinctions of reason" of things that are inseparable. When a distinction of reason is made, however, the word naming the distinction, e.g. the color, does not refer to an idea.

Hume explains a "distinction of reason" in the following manner. Such things as color and figure are neither distinguishable nor separable. Different objects have different combinations of colors and figures and we can note resemblances between these objects, e.g. a white globe, black globe, and white cube. Thus we consider a white globe and a black globe and note the resemblance between them. We can never think of just the shape without the color, but when we consider the figure of the white globe by a "distinction of reason" we "consider the colour and figure together, but still keep in

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13
Ibid., pp. 18-19

our eye the resemblance to the globe of black marble, or that to any other globe of whatever colour or substance.[14]

A "distinction of reason" is, strictly speaking in Hume's vocabulary, not a distinction at all. When we distinguish things we actually separate them, but when we make a "distinction of reason" we merely note resemblances between things. Not every word, then, names an idea; some mark resemblances between ideas. Words, then, that name ideas, name individual entities.

We argued above that in order to understand Hume's argument against abstract ideas, ideas must be objects. An abstract idea is an abstract object. We can now paraphrase the first argument against abstract ideas in a much less elliptical manner than the original. Ideas only exist when perceived. For there to be an abstract idea (object) we would have to separate that idea (object) from those ideas (objects) with which it is usually found. We cannot, as a matter of empirical fact, perform such a separation. Therefore, there are no abstract ideas.

Hume's first argument against abstract ideas is an empirical one. He does not have to worry, however, that there are any counter-examples to his inductive generalization; no one has ever claimed that abstract ideas are separable (in Hume's sense) from particular ideas. Once it is admitted that abstract ideas are not separable, given the first premise, it is admitted that there are no such things.

The crucial premise, then, is the first one; all distinguishable objects are separable. As was noticed above,

14 Ibid., p. 25

this premise is logically equivalent to the claim that ideas are objects. Why, however, should Hume accept, or ask us to accept, that premise? At least two answers are possible. One is that "non-separable ideas" arise from distinctions of reason. Hume can account for such distinctions of reason, given his first argument, without appealing to a new kind of entity, the non-separable idea. Given the principle Do not multiply types of entities beyond necessity," Hume has good reasons for his conclusion. Many nominalists have argued in just this way, but that does not seem to be Hume's argument. Hume never mentions the Ockhamite principle, and it is against the temper of his philosophy. The Ockhamite principle is a rule for constructing hypotheses. Hume, however, follows the Baconian rule to only accept principles that are inductive generalizations in the "Introduction" to the Treatise Hume says the only foundation we can give to science must be based on experience and observation. The Ockhamite interpretation of the first argument against abstract ideas must be rejected.

The other ground for concluding that all distinguishable ideas are separable is that the premise follows directly from the original observation that the only difference between impressions and ideas is their force and liveliness; if impressions are objects, then ideas are objects. Since this conclusion follows so directly from the premise we can see why Hume did not think it necessary to put in a special argument. Furthermore, this line of reasoning is consistent with our general interpretation of the Treatise. It would

seem, then, that Hume's first argument is bound up with the key observation of the entire Treatise, and stands or fails with it.

Hume's second argument against abstract ideas also turns *on* the doctrine that ideas are copies of impressions. The premises of this argument are:

1. All present impressions are determined in degree of quantity and quality,
2. All ideas are copies of impressions, or, more precisely,
2'. Whatever is true of an impression, is true of an idea, except in degree of strength and vivacity. From these premises it clearly follows that ideas are determined in degree of quantity and quality.

Given these premises, this argument is very powerful. The first premise does not present any problems unless one raises the entire issue of what is an impression. The second premise, however, especially in its precise form, raises many problems. If Hume is committed to the second premise, then many of the paradoxical conclusions that Reid says follow from Hume's philosophy, really do follow. Reid, at one point, says he dare not think of a lion because it might eat him. If it is true that an impression of a lion can eat Reid, then, it is true that idea of a lion can eat Reid. Upon premise 2' this conclusion is inescapable, but it is empirically false.

Hume's only reply would be that the conclusion does follow, and in fact, the idea of a lion can eat Reid because on the Treatise's theory of induction anything can happen.

The fact that no imaginary lion has ever eaten a real person is no reason to believe that next time Reid imagines a lion it will not eat him. Hume would agree with Reid that the conclusion is paradoxical and that no one ever refrain from imagining a lion out of fear of being eaten by it. The difference between the two philosophies is that one says this lack of fear is due to the operation of our sentiments, and the other says it is due to our reason.

Premise 2' also gives credence to Reid's interpretation of Hume's theory of geometry. Reid says that Hume claims tha the ideas of geometry are not exact and its anxions are not precisely true. All geometers and philosophers would admit our impressions are not exact and that conclusions made by comparing and measuring impressions are not precisely true. On the premise that whatever is true of impressions is true of ideas, Reid's interpretation necessarily follows.

Our interpretation of Hume varies in a small but significant way from Reid's. Reid believes Hume says the idea of a lion could eat a real person <u>because</u> all ideas resemble impressions. On Reid's interpretation the principle is certain (known <u>a priori</u>) and can always be applied to a new case. On our interpretation the Humean paradoxes are consistent with, but not derived from the principle that ideas resemble impressions. Since the principle is an inductive generalization, it can never prove, solely by itself, that a new case is not a counter-example. Reid, however, would seem to have the better interpretation because Hume does use the principle as an argument against abstract ideas. Either

we can defend our inductive interpretation, Hume has a purely deductive system, or he is inconsistent.

We suggest that the principle that ideas resemble impressions is an inductive generalization. Hume, we claim, never uses this as the sole ground to claim a supposed idea does not exist. Rather, Hume always offers another argument besides appealing to the principle. Once he has argued against the supposed idea on other grounds, he can then appeal to the principle for additional support. The fact that an inductive generalization holds true in all previous cases gives us some reason to believe it will hold true in this case. (Let us leave aside the special case of induction of cause-effect relationships. If an argument has already shown there cannot be a certain thing, the fact that we have not come upon that thing up to now is further reason to believe there is no such thing.

On our interpretation it is significant that the second argument (rather than the first) against abstract ideas is based on the resemblance of ideas and impressions. The second argument gives further support to the first argument, but by itself it is extremely weak. If the first argument were refuted, or it were demonstrated that there are abstract ideas, the second argument would carry no weight because it could be claimed that an abstract idea is the case that overthrows the inductive generalization.

Hume's third argument against abstract ideas turns on the notion that anything of which we hace a clear and distinct idea is possible. Since it is very difficult to understand this

argument, and it is not valid, we will first quote Hume (adding numbers to each of his sentences) and then will interpret the argument.

> 1. Thirdly, 'tis a principle commonly received in philosophy, that everything in nature is individual, and that 'tis utterly absurd to suppose a triangle really existent, which has no precise proportion of sides and angles.
>
> 2. If this therefore be absurd in fact and reality, it must also be absurd in idea; since nothing of which we can form a clear and distinct idea is absurd and impossible.
>
> 3. But to form the idea of an object, and to form an idea it simply is the same thing; the reference of the idea to the object being an extraneous denomination, of which in itself it bears no mark or character.
>
> 4. Now as 'tis impossible to form an idea of an object, that is possest of quantity and quality, and yet is possest of no precise degree of either; it follows that there is an equal impossibility of forming an idea, that is not limited and confined in both these particulars.
>
> 5. Abstract ideas are therefore in themselves individual, however they may become general in their representation.[15]

The first point is that this argument is not based on experience. Neither the first, nor any of the later sentences say that Hume has examined his ideas and discovered that none of them are undetermined in quantity or quality. The four premise sentences contain claims that various things are

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15 Ibid., pp. 19-20 (Hume's italics)

absurd and impossible. Hume is well aware that generalizations from experience never give us information about what is necessary or impossible. We must conclude then, that this argument against abstract ideas is a priori. Reid frequently complains that Hume substitutes a priori arguments for observation. This third argument is most definitely subject to that criticism. Of Hume's three arguments, then, one is based upon an experimentally discovered fact (that certain supposed ideas cannot be separated from certain others), one upon an inductive generalization (all ideas resemble impressions), and one upon a priori premises. We must look at this third argument more closely.

The first sentence in the third argument has a certain resemblance to the first premise of the second argument (pp. 52-53). The second argument speaks of impressions, and the third of things in nature. For those who believe Hume denies we know of an external world, these premises are about the same kinds of objects. For those who believe Hume does claim we know of an external world, the fact that Hume uses both formulations is a ground for their interpretation. In any case, both interpretations would agree that the "principle commonly received in philosophy" is the one used in the second argument, i.e. everything has a determinite degree of quantity and quality. A difference between the two arguments is that the premise in the second seems to be based upon observation, but that in the third is known a priori.

Sentence 2 of the third argument is very difficult to understand. Its forms indicate it is a complete argument with

sentence 1 as one of its premises. In syllogistic form the argument is

> 2.a. All triangles not of precise proportion are absurd in fact and reality.
>
> 2.b. No things of which we can form a clear and distinct idea are absurd and impossible.
>
> 2.c. Therefore, all triangles not of precise proportion are absurd in idea.

This supposed syllogism, however, has four terms; if the argument is to be valid we must interpret sentence 2 in a less strict manner.

Hume's intended conclusion is clear enough; an idea of an imprecise triangle is an impossible idea. His first premise is also clear; an imprecise triangle is an impossible thing. The problem is to explain why an impossibility in fact is an impossibility in idea. The first clause of the sentence says that all things of which we can form a clear and distinct idea are possible, so such a triangle is possible, but that is not the question in dispute. The question is whether an idea that is <u>not</u> clear and distinct is impossible. The premise that Hume needs is the converse of the last clause of sentence 2; all possible things are things of which we can form a clear and distinct idea. Conversion of a universal, affirmative proposition is not valid; if Hume holds to this proposition he must do so on independent grounds. It is unlikely, however, that if Hume is a skeptic, he affirms such a proposition. The proposition

asserts that we can form a clear and distinct idea of each and every possible thing, or, alternatively, there is no thing of which it is impossible for us to have a clear and distinct idea. Above we mentioned two interpretations of Hume's theory of the external world; this last proposition is inconsistent with both of them, if Hume is, in some sense, a skeptic. If Hume believes there is an external world, this proposition says that we can know each and every thing in that world; many philosophers have held that position, but none could be called skeptics. If, on the other hand, Hume believes that we do not know there is an external world, all we know are our impressions and ideas, our proposition says that there is no external world because, if there were, we could form clear and distinct idea of it. There are other philosophers who have denied there is an external world; but the significance of Hume is that he is not a dogmatic skeptic. The interpreter of Hume, then, is in a dilemma; either the third argument against abstract ideas is invalid, or we must accept a premise that is inconsistent with much of Hume's philosophy; to preserve the spirit of the Treatise we must reject the argument as invalid.

Thsi writer has always had trouble understanding sentence 3 of the third argument. The meaning of the first clause seems to be that there are not two things, ideas and objects, but only one, ideas of objects. The second clause seems to deny that there is a necessary connection between ideas of objects and objects. This interpretation is consistent with a previous observation that for Hume ideas are particular,

separable things; they are not something with strange metaphysical characteristics that somehow link up with external objects to form perceptions. Reid would say this premise rests on the theory of ideas and muddles the distinction between perceiving an object and conceiving of an object. This issue is of great significance for our topic, but the meaning of sentence 3 is now clear enough within the context of the third argument. We will, in a later chapter, examine Reid's claim that there are concepts as well as percepts.

Sentence 4 is quite clear; it is an argument that uses as premises the conclusion of sentence 2, and, silently, sentence 3, and concludes that abstract ideas are impossible.

4.a. All ideas of objects have a precise degree of quantity and quality.

4.b. All ideas of objects are simply ideas.

4.c. Therefore, all ideas have a precise degree of quantity and quality.

As it stands this argument is invalid (fallacy of an illicit minor). It is clear, however, from Hume's use of the phrase "simply is the same thing," that he meant that something is an idea of an object if and only if it is an idea. We will then have a valid syllogism if we replace premise 4.b by

4.b'. All ideas are ideas of objects.

Premise 4.b' makes the argument in sentence 4 valid, but it also commits Hume to the view that all our ideas are ideas of objects. This view also follows from the second argument. Premise 1 of that argument says that all impressions are

determined in quantity and quality. Hume never tells us what it is to be an object, but it would seem that to be determined in quantity and quality would be at least part of it. All impressions, then, are impressions of objects. Ideas are copies of impressions. It follows, therefore, that all ideas are ideas of objects. The third argument, then, seems unneeded; that there can be no abstract ideas follows so clearly in the second argument from premises so fundamental to Hume's philosophy, one might wonder why he adds the third argument, which is so much weaker.

One reason for the third argument might be that Hume wishes to show that his denial of abstract ideas is not dependent on some of his other controversial conclusions, viz. his denial of knowledge of the external world. The opening sentence of the third argument, "'tis a principle commonly received in philosophy...", might mean, not that Hume is going to assume something because everyone else accepts it, but rather that even if one accepts the common theory of an external world, there still could not be abstract ideas. This interpretation also explains why Hume started sentence 3 as he did; even if one holds there is both a mental and material world, there are still only two things, external objects and ideas of those objects. There is no third thing, a pure idea. Furthermore, sentence 3 states the conventional seventeenth and eighteenth century theory that the relationship between an idea of an object, and an object, is purely accidental. Descartes, Locke, and other seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophers believed that they had to <u>prove</u> the existence of

the external world; whatever their proofs (or denials that there are such proofs) they all agreed that the relationship between ideas of objects and objects was not self-evident. A further indication that Hume is using other philosophers' premises to derive this conclusion is that he speaks of clear and distinct ideas. This notion was very common since Descartes, but it is not one that Hume uses very often, nor does it seem in keeping with the rest of his philosophy. We discussed above that in sentence 2 the argument would only be valid if a premise is used that is inconsistent with Hume's usual skepticism. If we interpret the whole argument as we now are, Hume now has a valid argument against abstract ideas without being committed to the premises. In sum, if we wish to know Hume's own reasons for denying that there are abstract ideas, and to which premises Hume is committed, we should only consider the first two arguments.

Of Hume's three arguments against abstract ideas, the only significant one is the first. The third argument only applies against a Cartesian type of rationalism; seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophers raised so many other objections to Cartesian philosophy that by Hume's time the significance of that philosophy was already historical. The second argument, as we have already noted, is very weak by itself; the appeal to an inductive generalization can always be answered by the claim that the case under consideration overthrows the generalization. The only argument remaining is the first, which is powerful but leads to a strange, often overlooked conclusion.

In Chapter One we quoted a letter from Reid in which he wondered if Hume had a notion of logical necessity. Reid thought that Hume had to have such a notion; we, however, claim that Reid's suspicion that he does not has more grounds than Reid realizes. The first argument against abstract ideas uses the premise that whatever is different is separable. Any two ideas that are necessarily connected are inseparable; if they were separable the connection between them would not be necessary. Therefore, there is no necessary connection between any two idea. Hume's claim that a causal connection between two things is never logically necessary is merely a trivial deduction from the more general case. We can now understand why Hume never discussed logical necessity in the Treatise-- there could not be such a relationship among ideas.

There is, however, one case in which Hume might allow logical necessity, that is, between distinctions of reason. Consider a geometrical theorem such as "base angles of an isosceles triangle are equal." This theorem names only one idea, a certain trangle (not a certain kind of triangle); phrases such as "side of the triangle", and "angle of the triangle" do not name ideas--the side of a triangle cannot be separated from the angle of a triangle. Hume could have said in the Treatise, though he did not, that there is a logically necessary connection between the sides and angles of the triangle. We must note, however, "side" and "angle" do not refer to ideas; using Hume's theory of distinctions of reason, they refer to a very complex series of resemblances among many different impressions and ideas. To state the series of

resemblances would be tedious and would not further our goals; therefore, we will forego it. We have made our point that if Hume had any notion of logical necessity at all in the Treatise, that relationship could only be between distinctions of reason, and never between ideas. When we come to Hume's discussion of causation in the Enquiry, we will use the above discussion to show how far removed philosophically is that work from the Treatise.

In Chapter One we suggested that there are some important philosophical differences between the Treatise and the Enquiry, and that Reid is often unfairly criticized for not replying to the Enquiry when, in fact, he is answering the Treatise. Up until now in this chapter we have put forward a self-consistent interpretation of the Treatise that is, in general, consistent with, but more detailed than Reid's interpretation. To further support our thesis we must now turn to the Enquiry.

The Enquiries begin with the famous "Advertisement" in which Hume abjures the Treatise. The common interpretation of the "Advertisement" is that the philosophical principles of the Treatise are carried into the Enquiry, but they are expressed in a more popular style that will win Hume the literary fame he so loves. Let us see how much of that interpretation stands up to textual examination and historical fact.

The "Advertisement" opens:

> Most of the principles, and reasonings, contained in this volume were published in a work in three volumes, called a Treatise of Human Nature: A Work which the Author had projected before he left College, and which he wrote and published not long after.[16]

Neither of the main clauses of this sentence are factually false, but they do leave the reader with a misapprehension if he does not know all the facts (as, of course, most readers do not.) We do not know precisely when Hume left the University of Edinburgh, and he may, for all we know, have received his original inspiration while there, but we do know he spent several years preparing for and writing the Treatise. Mossner believes that Hume left the university in 1725 or 1726[17] and that the Treatise was written during Hume's stay in France from 1734 to 1737. The first two volumes of the Treatise were published in January, 1939, and and the third in November, 1740. Even if Hume left Edinburgh University in 1726, thirteen years elapsed before the first two volumes appeared in print. The Treatise was not a collection of the first, ill-digested thoughts of someone fresh

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16 David Hume, Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals by David Hume: Reprinted from the Posthumous Edition of 1777 and Edited with Introduction Comparative Tables of Contents, and Analytical Index by L. A. Selby-Biggs, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 2 (Hume's italics).

17 Ernest Campbell Mossner, The Life of David Hume (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954), p. 49.

out of college; it was a well thought out, carefully constructed work.

The statement that most of the principles and reasonings of the Treatise are in the Enquiry also needs closer examination. Selby-Bigge, in his "Introduction" to his edition of Hume, compares the topics discussed in the two works. Among others, Selby-Bigge finds the following missing from the Enquiry: distinction between simple and complex ideas, impressions of sensation and reflection, memory and imagination; abstraction, substance, space and time, and "the position of cause in the fabric of our knowledge."[18] Selby-Bigge lists other topics, but these are ones relevant to what we have discussed in the Treatise. From this short list we must conclude that Hume's opening statement is not an accurate description of the details of his writing's contents.

The second sentence of the "Advertisement" is:

> 2. But not finding it successful, he was sensible of his error in going to the press too early, and he cast the whole anew in the following pieces, where some negligences in his former reasoning and more in the expression are, he hopes, corrected.[19]

In later life Hume claimed the Treatise fell "deadborn from the press" yet in 1740, soon after the first two volumes were

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[18] Hume, Enquiry, p. XIV.

[19] Ibid., p. 2

published, he wrote to Francis Hutcheson:

> The Bookseller, who printed the first two Volumes, is very willing to engage for this [Volume III of the Treatise]; and he tells me that the sale of the first Volume, tho' not very quick, yet it improves.[20]

Publishers do not publish books that do not sell; people were buying and most likely reading the Treatise soon after it was published. The book may not have been the succes de scandal Hume had hoped for, but neither Hume nor his philosophy was totally unknown. The letter quoted above to Hume's good friend, Francis Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow and the founder of Scottish Philosophy. Hume had intellectual ties not only with Hutcheson, but with most other members of the Scottish Enlightenment. Furthermore, Hume was denied the chair in Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh because he was popularly believed to be an atheist. A further piece of evidence that the Treatise was known is that Thomas Reid an unknown parson in an obscure parrish outside of Aberdeen, received a copy of the Treatise soon after its publication. From all this evidence we must once again conclude that the "Advertisement" gives a somewhat distorted picture.

In the rest of the second sentence Hume says the Enquiry corrects certain negligences in reasoning and expression.

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20 David Hume, The Letters of David Hume, ed. J. Y. T. Greig (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1932), pp. 36-37.

We will argue, in the appropriate places, that these changes in reasoning are most profound. The conventional understanding is that most of the changes are in style, and in deletions of boring material. It is true that there is no absolute distinction between a change in expression and in reasoning, often to clarify an argument is to change it somewhat. Hume's modifications, however, are much stronger than mere clarifications.

We will consider the third and fourth sentences together:

> 3. Yet several writers, who have honoured the Author's Philosophy with answers, have taken care to direct all their batteries against that juvenile work, which the Author never acknowledge, and have affected to triumph in any advantages, which, they imagined, they had obtained over it: A practice very contrary to all rules of candor and fair-dealing, and a very strong instance of these polemical artifices, which a bigoted zeal thinks itself authorized to employ.
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> 4. Henceforth, the Author desires, that the following Pieces may alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles.[21]

It is difficult to know who these sentences are directed against, and just what the argument is. Most likely they are directed against various ministers who denounced Hume; "bigoted zeal" would be a euphemism for religious enthusiam (in the eighteenth century sense). Despite Hume's claim that the Treatise fell deadborn from the press, Hume himself was

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21 Hume, Enquiry, p. 2.

a controversial person, and was frequently denounced from the pulpit. Reid, though he was a minister, never denounced Hume; it would be interesting to know whether Hume had Reid in mind when he wrote these sentences.

What is Hume saying in these sentences? The third sentence makes only one point, his commentators have concentrated on the Treatise, and ignored the Enquiry. This sentence offers no reason why the Enquiry is more worthy of attention, except that it was written at an older age. The fourth sentence expresses the desire that only the Enquiry be considered, and not the Treatise; again, no further reason is offered. The only reason offered, then, for preferring the Enquiry occurs in sentence 2--certain negligences of reasoning and expression in the Treatise. We have already noted that the Treatise is more abundant in topics than the Enquiry. If Hume really believed that the Enquiry was merely clearer than the Treatise, he would say that on those topics treated in both works, the Enquiry is canonical. However, he does not say that; he says those topics not treated in the Enquiry are not part of his philosophy--a very strange position if one is merely clarifying some poorly written passages. This position would make a great deal of sense, however, if a radically different philosophy was being presented. Let us now turn to an examination of that philosophy.

The discussion of impressions and ideas in the Enquiry opens with two paragraphs of empirical observations before the distinction is introduced. Hume has been accused of starting in the Treatise with an a priori premise; in the

Enquiry he makes it quite clear he is appealing to observation. In the first paragraph of Section II he observes that no one (except in certain rare cases) confuses a present perception with something remembered or imagined. In the second paragraph Hume observes that this difference of vivacity runs through all our perceptions. In the third paragraph he introduces his terminology. At this point the only principle established is that our more forceful and lively perceptions are called impressions, and the less so, ideas.

The Treatise next discusses the distinction of single and complex perceptions. The Enquiry, on the other hand, immediately takes up the claim that all ideas are copies of impressions. Either the Enquiry is silently assuming this distinction, or it is presenting a different philosophy. In the Treatise Hume says: "I observe, that many of our complex ideas never had any impressions, that corresponded to them..."[22] Since Hume in the Enquiry maintains that ideas copy impressions he must have some answer to the objection; either the answer is that of the Treatise or it is a different philosophy. We will return to this problem in our examination of Hume's arguments for the principle that all our ideas copy impressions.

The arguments for the principle that ideas copy impressions are clearly empirical in the Enquiry. The first is

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[22] Hume, Treatise, p. 3.

that "when we analyze our thoughts or ideas, however compounded or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as were copied from a precedent feeling or sentiment.[23] As a support for this inductive argument, Hume shows how a likely counter-example,the idea of God, can be analyzed to fit the principle. In the previous paragraph, which leads up to the principle, Hume offers two other examples that can be shown to fit the principle, i.e. the ideas of a golden mountain, and a virtuous horse. Having analyzed these three cases, Hume then offers his famous challenge that those who do not think this proof is universally true can refute it by producing an idea not derived from a previous impression. Hume, of course, believes he can analyze any idea into correspounding impressions.

At first sight this argument appears similar to the one in the Treatise; there are, however, some major differences The differences are that (1) the quoted reference to "simple ideas" does not mean the same thing it does in the Treatise, and (2) "impression" and "idea" do not mean the same thing in the two works.

Since Hume's argument is inductive, his examples are more than aids to understanding; they are the argument. The examples he uses, then, tell us a great deal about his meaning. Let us look at his example of the golden mountain because it

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Hume, Enquiry, p. 19

is superficially very similar, and in reality very different from that of the "New Jerusalem" om the Treatise. Hume says the New Jerusalem is a city "whose pavement is gold and walls are rubies."[24] The example is introduced as a counter-example to the claim that all ideas resemble impressions. Immediately afterwards, Hume adds the modification that every simple idea resembles a simple impression. We are supposed to infer, then, that gold and rubies are simple ideas. "Gold" and "rubies" refer to particular hunks of each. It is obvious that "ruby" refers to a particular ruby, but one might think "gold" refers to a property. Hume, however, says "pavement is gold," not "pavement of gold." He obviously has in mind a cobblestone type of pavement, but composed of gold cobblestones. Furthermore, we saw in the discussion of abstract ideas that Hume is committed to the principle that all distinguishable ideas are separable. If there are ideas of gold they must be separable as the cobblestones of a street are separable from one another.

In the Enquiry Hume says "When we think of a golden mountain, we only join two consistent ideas, gold and mountain, with which we were formerly acquainted."[25] Golden mountain, however, cannot be analyzed into two simple ideas, gold and

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[24] Hume, Treatise, p. 3.

[25] Hume, Enquiry, p. 19.

mountain; they are neither simple nor ideas in the Treatise's sense of those terms. The idea of mountain most definitely is not simple; someone can understand what it is to be a mountain even if that person has not met one in his experience. Much more important, however, than the failure of mountain to be simple, is the fact that neither gold nor mountain is an idea in the Treatise's sense. It is unclear in the Enquiry whether "gold" refers to the color, or the metal, but our argument applies equally against both cases. All mountains are made of something; there are granite mountains, red shale mountains, etc. One cannot separate a mountain from its material, e.g. one cannot remove the grante from Sugar Loaf Mountain and be left with just the mountain. Therefore, using the principles of the Treatise, there is no idea of mountain: all distinguishable ideas are separable. What one can do, according to the Treatise, is note the resemblance between Sugar Loaf Mountain and Mont Blanc and form the distinction of reason called "mountain". A distinction of reason, however, is not an idea according to the Treatise; if it were, the criticism of abstract ideas would collapse. By a parallel argument it is equally conclusive that gold is not, in the Treatise's sense, an idea. Rather than repeat the argument, we will quote the Treatise itself on its discussion of a globe of white marble.

> Thus when a globe of white marble is presented, we receive only the impression of a white colour dispos'd in a certain form, nor are we able to separate and distinguish the colour from the form. But observing

> afterwards a globe of black marble and a cube of white, and comparing them with our former object, we find two separate resemblances, in what formerly seem'd, and really is, perfectly inseparable. After a little more practice of this kind, we begin to distinguish the figure from the color by a distinction of reason; that is, we consider the figure and colour together, since they are in effect the same and undistinguishable; but still view them in different aspects, according to the resemblances, of which they are susceptible.[26]

If Hume does not think in the Enquiry that a simple idea is separable, i.e. is a logically distinct atom of experience, what is his theory of simple ideas? Using his examples as our only evidence, we might hypothesize that simple ideas are products of the analysis of complex ideas. What we find in experience are impressions. By comparing, analyzing, and abstracting these impressions or corresponding ideas we arrive at simpler ideas, not simplest ideas, e.g. the simple idea of the metal gold can be analyzed into other simpler ideas, weight, hardness, etc. Hume never explicitly subscribes to this theory but if his first argument, which is an inductive generalization, is to have any significance, he must hold to some form of the theory.

The above interpretation, which is far removed from the conventional interpretation, might be bolstered by the following historical speculation. One of Reid's criticisms of

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26 Hume, Treatise, p. 25.

Hume is that Hume believes we experience simple ideas. Reid believes that "simple ideas" (in Hume's terminology) are the products of our analysis of what we experience, i.e. "simple ideas" are abstractions. Those who think highly of Reid praise him for such things as his clarity and care; the one thing no one has ever praised Reid for is his originality. If Reid argues that "simple ideas" are abstractions, then by the time he wrote his works, that notion must have been in the intellectual atmosphere. If such a claim was in the atmosphere, Hume, who had contact with the leading Scottish intellectuals of his day, would have heard it. Hume might have tried to incorporate that argument into the Enquiry while trying to maintain as much of his previous philosophy as possible.

The argument that gold, mountain, etc. are not simple ideas is very strong for the cases considered. One might reply, however, that even though Hume might have carelessly used some poor examples, there are other cases where his meaning is perfectly clear, and in those cases he holds the same thesis as in the Treatise. Hume's second argument for the principle that all ideas are copies of impressions is just such a counter-instance.

> If it happen, from a defect of the organ, that a man is not susceptible of any species of sensation, we always find that he is as little susceptible of the correspondent ideas.[27]

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27 Hume, Enquiry, p. 20.

The argument is so clear no interpretation is needed. A few words of commentary, however, are appropriate. There may have been some philosophers at some time who claimed that a man blind from birth could a priori form ideas of color, a deaf man ideas of sound, etc., but except for these few (if any) philosophers, this argument is besides the point; most major philosophers who have argued for ideas that are not copies of impressions have claimed that they are either innate, or the products of the analysis of other ideas. Hume himself is certainly aware of this point; the Treatise contains a sustained critique of various proposed ideas that are not copies of impressions. Hume, however, in the Enquiry does seem to write as if most philosophers thought all ideas are copies of sensations. Section VII. "Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion", for example, is a detailed examination of the various ways in which there might be a sensation of necessary connection, and a refutation that any of these furnish such a sensation. It would seem, then, that whether or not this argument is a good answer to other philosophers, it does show that Hume is committed to the view that there are logically distinct atoms of experience, and all our ideas copy such atoms.

A further indication that Hume is committed to simple ideas in the sense of the Treatise is that after arguing that all ideas are copies of impressions, he adopts his famous criterion of meaningfulness:

> When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire from what impression is that supposed idea derived.[28]

If this principle is to have any significance at all, Hume must be committed to simple impressions. If an idea can be derived from an impression by analysis or abstraction, then all this criterion does is make the trivial demand that the analysis be in some minimal sense, intelligible. If, on the other hand, the criterion demands that for every meaningful term there is a corresponding logically distinct impression, it is very strong. Someone who wants to claim that Hume is committed to simple impressions has good grounds for the strong version of the criterion, and can claim that Hume's analysis of golden mountain, and several other examples, are mistakes that do not effect the main argument.

We have used the principle that an interpretation of a text must 1) make the text as consistent as possible, 2) must make the argument as strong as possible, and 3) must not unduly strain the words of the text. Up to now, we have been able to do so for the work of Hume. At this point, however, we must conclude that there is a radical inconsistency in Hume's theory of ideas in the Enquiry. At times he uses the theory that simple ideas are atoms of

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28 Ibid., p. 22 (Hume's italics).

experience, the theory of the Treatise; at other times he believes simple ideas are the products of analysis. The proof of this contention, however, must wait for Chapter Four in which we examine Hume's discussion of causation.

One would think that our problem of interpretation would be settled by Hume's discussion of abstract ideas. If Hume allows that there are ideas gained by analysis then our first interpretation is correct; if he denies analysis yields ideas, then he is maintaining the same philosophy as in the Treatise. As is well known, however, the Enquiry does not contain a discussion of abstract ideas. The only reference to the topic occurs in a footnote to a discussion of mathematical points. The footnote opens:

> It seems to me not impossible to avoid these absurdities and contradictions, if it be admitted, that there is no such thing as abstract or general ideas, properly speaking; but that all general ideas are, in reality, particular ones, attached to a general term, which recalls, upon occasion, other particular ones, that resemble in certain circumstances, the idea present to the mind.[29]

The rest of the footnote explains the theory that particulars become general, and outlines how the theory resolves the supposed absurdity in mathematics.

From such a short discussion we cannot deduce too much, but we can make the point that the nominalist theory here

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29 Ibid., p. 158.

has a different methodological base than the Treatise. We argued above that in the Treatise the nominalism is based on an empirical argument. In the Enquiry it is a hypothesis that is supported solely on the ground that it is the only theory that does not yield an absurd conclusion. That Hume is soon to put forward conclusions that are more paradoxical than the one under discussion at this point shows that he is not deeply committed to the nominalist theory on this argument for it. The discussion is only a footnote and is in the spirit of a small aid to a general philosophical position that is soon to be overthrown for many more reasons. It is true that the footnote is against any abstract ideas, particular or general, but the brevity of the discussion, and its tentative nature does not allow us to draw any firm conclusions about how deeply Hume is committed to the denial of all abstract ideas. The resolution of this problem must wait until Chapter Four.

CHAPTER THREE

REID'S CRITIQUE OF HUME'S DISCUSSION OF IMPRESSIONS AND IDEAS

The elements of a philosophical system are often bound so tightly together that in order to explain one proposition in a system, one must first explain all the others. Thomas Reid's Common Sense Philosophy is not a system in a sense that Descartes' or Spinoza's philosophies are systems, a series of propositions, each deduced from the preceding propositions. Well-founded beliefs do not come in such neat ways, says Reid, and he rejects all attempts to make philosophy fit some pre-established order. Reid, however, is systematic in that he is carefully consistent. Even though his philosophy is called "Common Sense," he frequently uses terms in a technical sense that varies from the ordinary meaning. In that sense one must know a good deal of Reid's philosophy before one can appreciate any of it.

In the Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man Reid begins his critique of Hume's philosophy in the first chapter and continues it throughout the book. We will begin with the first chapter, but will bring in material from other parts of the book. In this way we will be able to explain and interpret Reid's opening remarks, and give a better appreciation

of Reid's philosophy by juxtaposing elements of his philosophy that are usually kept apart or ignored.

Chapter I of Essay I is called "Explication of Words;" Reid believes that many of the disputes in philosophy are due to the failure to use words properly. The chapter is a criticism of other philosopher's misuse of words, a guide to the popular use of those words, and an explanation of Reid's technical use of words.

At Reid's time, the claim that philosophical disputes are due to misuse of words was not new. Three of the better known English-speaking writers who made an identical claim are Hobbes, Locke and Hume. The eighteenth century was full of suggestions of ways to avoid this problem. Hume's suggestion the first Enquiry is one of the more famous and more relevant to the study.

> When we entertained, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but inquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived.[1]

At the end of Chapter Two we noted that this principle has a strong and a weak meaning, depending on whether an idea is an atom of experience or a product of analysis. Despite this ambiquity, however, we can say that the principle means that every problematic philosophical term that is meaningful names an idea, and the meaning of that term is the idea named.

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[1] Hume, Enquiry, p. 22 (Hume's italics).

Hume, of course, believes that all the terms he employs, e.g. 'impression' and 'idea' fulfill this criteria.

Even though Reid warns us against misusing words, he, unlike Hume, never presenta a criterion of meaning; if he were asked to do so, he would probably say that such a program was one more attempt to apply a rigid form to a diffused content. Rather than present a rigid formula, Reid says the way to avoid nonsense and semantic disputes is to carefully consider the common meanings of words and to note when one is departing from that meaning. One way to be careful about the use of words is to define the more troublesome ones, if such a definition is possible. Before stating Reid's theory of definition we should note that there is a difference between Hume's criterion of meaningfulness and any theory of definition. Hume's criterion establishes a relationship between words and things (i.e. impressions), and claims only words that have that relationship are meaningful. A theory of definition, on the other hand, establishes a relationship between words and words. Reid, furthermore, recognizes that many meaningful words either need not or cannot be defined. We will try to show in this chapter that Reid relies heavily on the basic principles of common language because there is not and cannot be a criterion of meaningfulness. Reid's theory of definition is the traditional genus- species theory.

> A logical definition--that is, a strict and proper definition--must express the kind of of the thing defined, and the specific difference by which the species defined is

> distinguished from every other species belonging to that kind.[2]

Along with the theory Reid introduces the usual caveats that there can be no definition of individual things, nor of the most general words (highest species). He also notes we sometimes cannot define a word because we have no word to express the specific difference between two species, e.g. the difference between scarlet and green.[3]

Reid never gives a full fledged argument in the Essay for his theory of definition, but he does note that mathematics and natural philosophy advanced, and ceased having disputes, when they defined their terms.[4] Apparently he believes these two fields of knowledge use genus-species definitions. As we noted in Chapter One, Reid believes that mathematics and physics are examples of knowledge and that common sense rejects any attempt to say otherwise. Hume in the Treatise does reject both of these sciences as examples of knowledge, but by the time he wrote the first Enquiry, as we will see in Chapter Four, he totally rejected the Treatise's philosophy of mathematics and accepted a far different one.

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2 Reid, Works, I, I, p. 219.

3 Ibid., p. 220.

4 Ibid., p. 219.

Before we come to any substantive issue, we already have a vast difference between Hume and Reid. Hume, to make his meanings clear, points to individuals, the starting point of all discussions; species are abstract ideas, words that must be translated into statements about resemblances among individuals. Hume carries on the Cartesian spirit of starting anew; we do have perceptions of individuals and can build our language and our beliefs out of them without any help from the past or from others. Reid is anti-Cartesian in that he starts with abstractions, species, that are already part of our heritage; we cannot wipe the slate clean and begin all over again. The reason why we cannot is that there are no absolutely simple concepts. Analysis of concept yields simpler ones; this process continues as long as it is useful, but it has no ultimate conclusion. We will closely examine this theory of simple concepts later in the chapter.

Thomas Reid might be said to be the Edmund Burke of philosophy. Both believe we start with a heritage, we can reform this heritage and pass it on better than we found it, but we cannot reject it and start from a new beginning.

Reid's conservatism, his theory of definition, and his emphasis on common sense and common language are all connected. He himself points out that since words are defined in terms of other words, not all words can be defined. Some words must be understood before any words can be defined.[5] Common

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[5] Ibid.

words are already understood are already understood and form the basis for definition. We can define new, technical terms by use of common words, but without our common language as a basis no definitions are possible. Hume, on the other hand, who says the meaning of every problematic philosophical term that is meaningful is the original impression, does not need to be a conservative and hold to our common language.

The starting point for Hume's and Reid's philosophies are so different, it is hard to know whether either could criticize the other--they seem to lack any beliefs in common which then could be used as a test case for each philosophy. It is this difficulty that has let so many critics of skepticism, including Hume in the second inquiry,[6] to say that extreme skepticism cannot be answered; it must be ignored because the skeptic is not serious, i.e. his actions do not follow from a skeptical principle. Reid also uses this argument, as we saw in Chapter 1, but it is a mistake to believe it is his only one. He also offers criticisms of Hume's premises from his own standpoint. Most importantly, Reid claims that philosophy of mind is an inductive science, and must be grounded in the facts. Hume, however, said the same thing:

> And as a science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation.[7]

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6 Hume Enquiry, pp. 169-170

7 Hume, Treatise, p. xx.

Some errors of observation are due to inattention, e.g "I did not see the rock I tripped on because I was watching the ducks in the lake." If the disagreements between Hume and Reid were of this nature, they could be easily resolved. Some disagreements about observation, however, are theory laden, e.g. "Is it the same thing to be in love and to have the perception of love?" Hume would say they are the same, Reid, that it is nonsense. Once again, there seems to be no common ground on which to settle the dispute. We will argue that the issue on which the two philosophies meet head on is whether there are such things as simple ideas such as described in the Treatise. Humean skepticism, and all traditional empiricism rests on that issue. Before we examine that issue, however, we must explain certain other parts of Reid's philosophy.

As I mentioned above, one of the restrictions on a genus-species definition is that neither the highest genus nor the lowest species, an individual, can be defined. Reid believes that many important terms in philosophy name a highest genus and that many errors arise in philosophy from trying to define the indefinable. Since many philosophical words are indefinable, we must stick to the common meaning of such words if we are to be understood. Reid's own explication of words merely points out ambiquities in common words, or explains (but does not define) less common words in terms of the more common. The demand, then, that philosophy be based on common language is not dogmatic or ad hoc; it is based on the claim that that is the only way for philosophy to be understood.

This demand adds another aspect to Reid's anti-Cartesianism. Philosophy from Descartes to Hume had been egocentric. Descartes tried to sort out his beliefs and separate the true from the false. He believes anyone who uses his method will wind up with the same clear and distinct ideas, but that result was not due to the communication of clear and distinct ideas between people, rather, it was due to the fact that God gave us the same ideas. Common language according to Descartes, might be the result of common ideas, but it was not the cause of clear and distinct ideas.
Hume also has an egocentric philosophy. As we saw above, the meaning of a term is the corresponding impression. In Hume's associationist psychology language is the medium used to cause another person to have ideas. If a person has had a previous association of the corresponding impression and word, then, and only then, communication is possible. Since, those and only those words are meaningful to a person which have corresponding impressions, there is an easy way to communicate ones ideas, and one need not worry further about communication.

Reid, on the other hand, believes that language, and hence philosophy, is a social enterprise. Most words in our language are general terms, not the names of individuals. General words name species. We develop concepts of species by a process of abstraction from individual things.[8] Species

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[8] Reid, V, III, pp. 394-398.

however, are not fixed; we form notions of species that are useful or beautiful.[9] Since the process of species formation is complex, often requiring several levels of abstraction, and species are not fixed, learning the meaning of species names is quite difficult. Sometimes we learn the meaning of a term by logical definition, but in the overwhelming number of cases we learn it by both hearing the words used in various contexts and using it ourselves, sometimes being corrected for misuse by more knowledgeable speakers of the language.[10] For Reid, even definitions are social in nature, as opposed to those who believe a definition expresses the real essence of something.

> A definition is nothing else but an explication of the meaning of a word by words whose meaning is already known.[11]

Unless all the words in the definiens are understood, there is no definition; as we have already explained, this leads to the conclusion that all philosophical terms must be based on common language.

For those to whom there is a one-to-one correspondence between words and things there is no need to worry about

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9 Ibid., V, IV, pp. 393-403.

10 Ibid., V, V, pp. 403-405.

11 Ibid., I, I, pp. 219.

communication; all one need to do at the appropriate time is produce the individual and name it--this is true for innate ideas, impressions, even Platonic Forms. If, however, there is no such correspondence and language is learned by its use in complicated contexts then one cannot wander very far from common language without ceasing to communicate.

Reid is forever saying that if Hume were to make his meanings clear, it would be obvious he was not speaking English, or any other known language. Let us grant for the moment that Hume's use of "perception," "impression," "idea," etc. varies widely from common language. Hume might reply that this language can be used consistently (Reid admires Hume for being one of the most consistent philosophers who ever lived) and he can teach others how to use it (that Reid can explain Humean skepticism shows he can use Humean language, e.g. "it leads to less superstition." Reid might reply to Hume that even if his program could be carried out, common sense would reject it. What, however, is the force of this appeal to common sense?

Reid is usually interpreted as believing common sense beliefs are true beliefs, truth being understood in some absolute sense as a correspondence between our beliefs and reality. Most modern philosophers prior to Reid wished to describe the way reality really is. Descartes argued that our clear and distinct ideas truly represent reality; there is no evidence counter to that belief and God, who is good, would not deceive us in ways we could not overcome. This argument--that God is not a deceiver--was later borrowed

from Descartes by a great many other philosophers. Those in the Baconian tradition generally avoided this argument and some would have like to avoid the whole question. Locke, however, did say our ideas of primary qualities were copies of primary qualities, and Berkeley did argue our ideas of objects are the objects, i.e. we know reality. The Idealists who came after Reid (even, perhaps, including Kant) saw the task of philosophy as describing Reality. Thus, most of Reid's contemporaries, and those who wrote later, would come to Reid expecting to find some demonstration about the nature of Reality. Finding that Reid claims that the first principles of philosophy are known by Common Sense, these philosophers would naturally conclude that Reid believes our common sense judgment gives us an accurate picture of reality. There is, as a matter of fact, no evidence that Reid held such a philosophy. Reid's appeals to common sense are never conceived as insights into Reality; there is no reason to hold such an interpretation of Reid. It is difficult in a sprawling work such as Reid's Works to gather together all references to a topic; we will gather a representative sample that supports our interpretation and hope we have not missed any significant counter examples.

Any significant interpretation of Reid's philosophy must take into account Humean skepticism; different views about the effect of Humean skepticism on Reid are possible, however. Those with the absolutist temperment would at most acknowledge that Hume showed that one supposed road to absolute knowledge

does not get us there; Hume, however, has not shown that no road leads us there. An absolutist philosopher would then believe that Reid is showing us another road, common sense, that, unlike the Humean dead end,gives us absolute knowledge. Those with the absolutist temperment must always believe that a sound skeptical philosophy is a partial skepticism, some road to some knowledge is still open. The absolutist and the skeptic, furthermore, share a very important premise, i.e. that knowledge, if it exists, is a copy of reality.

We would like to argue, on the other hand, that Reid does not hold that knowledge is a copy of Reality. Reid believes that Hume's philosophy is a sound system that leads to total skepticism. Reid's response to Hume is not to search for a detour around the Humean dead end; it is, rather, a recognition that we can never reach absolute knowledge. Reid's disagreement with Hume concerns what happens once we reach that recognition. Hume claims that the response to that recognition is despair, and that the only relief for that despair is to forget one's skeptical principles. Reid's response, on the other hand, is that the skeptical conclusions cannot be believed, i.e. it is not in the capacity of any human being in society to believe skeptical principles. It is not a matter of forgetting them; no one ever believes them. Our basic common beliefs, then, are accepted, not because they are absolutely true, or because we forget philosophy, but rather because they are the only ones we can have. In outline, this interpretation is our view of Reid's appeal to common sense.

In Reid's early work, the Inquiry into the Human Mind he does say our original and natural judgments are "an inspiration of the Almighty."[12] This certainly sounds like an echo of the Cartesian position. The Cartesian argument, however, is never stated, and there are other traditions Reid could equally well be echoing. Locke had stated that God had given us the capacity to gain enough knowledge to live in this world, but not necessarily the capacity to know all the secrets of the universe. Reid, in fact, is only making this modest claim; to know enough to live is not necessarily to know the absolute nature of reality. Reid's explanation of common sense shows this emphasis on day to day living.

In the sentence right after the reference to the Almighty Reid says our original and natural judgment "serve to direct us in the common affairs of life . . . ."[13] This emphasis on daily use is picked up and amplified in the Essays. "Common sense is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business."[14] Slightly later Reid explains that common sense is what makes life in society possible.

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12 Ibid., p. 209.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., VI, II, p. 421

> There is a certain degree of it [sense] which is necessary to our being subjects of law and government, capable of managing our own affairs, and answerable for our conduct towards others; this is called common sense, because it is common to all men with whom we can transact business, or call to account for their conduct.[15]

This explanation does not state that common sense is what makes sheer physical survival in a state of nature possible. Reid would probably reject discussions of states of nature as hypotheses, and hence, only darken our understanding. The fact is that we all do live in society, and this manner of life is possible only because we share many judgments. The question whether our common judgments are "true" is irrelevant (if not meaningless). Let us say two systems of common judgment are possible, the actual one (common sense - A), and a hypothetical one (common sense - H). If someone did adopt common sense - H, that person could no longer live in that society because an event would produce different expectations for common sense - H than common sense - A; an analogy might be a Western Plains Indian trying to live his style of life at the court of Louis the XIV. Since human society (Reid seems to believe human beings form one society) is not about to change en masse, it is besides the point to ask if it should adopt a different system of shared judgments. Reid's explanation of common sense, then, is that it is that system of shared judgments which makes society possible.

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15 Ibid., p. 422.

The same sort of philosophical temperment that believes first principles are a copy of reality also tends to believe that there is a gulf between theory and action. Such a philosopher would tend to believe that Reid claims that all people in society accept certain principles, but these principles are known by a different faculty than the ones that are used in everyday problem solving. Once this interpretive line is entered, the philosophy of common sense begins to have a strange sound. Most people rarely, if ever, think about metaphysical questions, i.e. the speculative faculty of common sense is rarely used. Thus, most people never consciously entertain the beliefs Reid claims that they have. The only plausible defense of Reid then seems to be an appeal to unconscious belief which only becomes conscious when a philosopher denies one of our common sense beliefs. Such a defense, however, either pushes Reid in the direction of innate ideas, a position he would reject, or it makes the acquisitions of first principles mysterious and the whole philosophy suspect.

Reid, however does not believe there is a division between our speculative and practical knowledge. The selfsame common sense that allows us to function in society gives us, in the same act, our common sense first principles. In the Essays Reid says:

> The same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in the conduct of life, makes him capable of discovering what is true and what is false in matters that are

> self-evident, and which he distinctly apprehends.[16]
>
> All knowledge, and all science, must be built upon principles that are self-evident; and of such principles every man who has common sense is a competent judge, when he conceives them distinctly.[17]

A person of common purdence has some knowledge. This knowledge might not be what a Platonist or Absolute Idealist would call knowledge, but in our common language it is called knowledge. This knowledge is based on first principle; if these first principles were different our knowledge and hence our practice would be different. Hence, there is a continuum, not a gulf, between our first principles and our everyday activities. As we proceed in our discussion of common sense philosophy, we shall see more evidence to support this interpretation of Reid, and show that this interpretation makes Reid's philosophy coherent and plausible.

Another topic that shows that common sense is not to be given some sort of absolute interpretation is the determination of which judgments belong to common sense. Those who claim we know Reality usually say our first principles are true, a denial of them is false, and ground this claim on a theory, e.g. the goodness of God, the constitution of mind and nature,

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16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

etc. Reid never said our common sense judgments are true, or denials false. If Reid believed our common sense principles are true he would have said so; the fact that he does not is significant. What Reid does say is that to deny them is absurd and lunatic. In the Inquiry he says:

> . . . What is manifestly contrary to any of those first principles, is what we call absurd . . . A remarkable deviation from them, arising from a disorder in the constitution, is what we call lunacy, as when a man believes that he is made of glass. When a man suffers himself to be reasoned out of the principles of common sense, by metaphysical arguments, we may call this metaphysical lunancy; which differs from the other species of the distemper in this, that it is not continued, but intermittent: It is apt to seize the patient in solitary and speculative moments; but, when he enters into society, Common Sense recovers her authority.[18]

The two criteria of absurdity and lunacy are picked up in the Essays. Reid discusses with approval Fenelon's claim that contradictions to common sense are absurd and ridiculous; they make the inquirer laugh and "put it out of a man's power to doubt."[19] Reid also quotes with approval from Shaftesbury's Sensus Communis:

> That some moral and philosophical truths there are so evident in themselves that it will be easier to imagine half of mankind run mad, and joined precisely in the same species of folly, than to admit any-

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[18] Ibid., "Inquiry," p. 209.

[19] Ibid., "Essays," p. VI, II, p. 424.

> thing as truth which should be advanced against such natural knowledge, fundamental reason, and common sense.[20]

These arguments have often been interpreted to mean that Reid is a dogmatist. To call an opponent's position absurd and lunatic appears to be name calling, not reasoned argument. If one believes there are absolute principles which copy Reality, and these principles can be known, then "absurd" and "lunatic" is name calling. If, however, one is pessimistic about the possibility of absolute knowledge, then it is simply a statement of fact that one who denies our accepted principles, and acts in accord with other principles, is called absurd or lunatic.

Hume himself in the Treatise, characterized himself in a skeptical mood in terms similar to Reid.

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds [of skepticism], nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium . . . when after three or four hours amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further.[21]

Hume and Reid agree that our everyday principles are not skeptical, and that there is a close connection between

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20 Ibid.

21 Hume, Treatise, I, IV, VII, p. 264 (my italics)

our principles and practices. Someone who had skeptical principles would act very differently from most people; e.g. such a person would have just as much reason to leave a room by the window as by the door. If someone does jump out a window, that event is considered prima facie evidence that the person is crazy. There are, of course, contexts in which the action can be shown to be sane, e.g. the building was burning, and jumping out the window was the only method of escape. If no such explanation is found, however, the person is placed under supervision for his own safety. If someone at a sanity hearing were to quote the Treatise of Human Nature as an explanation for jumping out the window, that person would be placed under supervision. This case may be hypothetical, but there are many such hearings in which some religious work or experience is so cited. In those cases, if the person is a threat to his own or anyone else's safety, he is placed under supervision. Reid is quite correct that society does not permit people who do not act in accord with the basic principles of society to live in society.

The difference between Hume and Reid is that Hume explains the fact that we leave by the door by claiming that nature is stronger than logic. According to his associationist psychology, there is such a strong connection between the idea of jumping out the window and the idea of being hurt, that no logical argument can overcome the fear of injury. Reid's explanation, on the other hand, appeals neither to absolute knowledge or to psychology. We have been taught common sense principles; it is part of the socialization process.

Those who do not learn these principles are removed from society. People in society leave by the door rather than the window because they have learned society's rules. For Hume, our first principles are descriptive, for Reid our first principles (even our scientific ones) are prescriptive.

Many philosophers say that the claim that the denial of common sense beliefs is lunacy is besides the point because, in point of fact, philosophers of different schools behave in the same manner (could one sort out the Idealists at an A. P. A. cocktail party); David Hume was not only one of the world's great skeptics, but also one of the most sociable and beloved philosophers who ever lived. It is in recognition of the fact that skeptics act like everyone else that Reid says skepticism is a special kind of madness which he calls "metaphysical lunacy." The characteristic feature of this species is that it occurs intermittently, only in speculative moments. This description of a pathology precisely fits David Hume. It is a pathology because it does produce melancholy and delirium in the patient, and the person would be judged insane if he were to act on a skeptical principle. A philosopher might reply that a sane skeptic is possible. Such a skeptic would act as other do because he knew he would be confined otherwise (insanity laws could then be seen as acts of political oppression), and such a skeptic would not feel any tension between his skeptical beliefs and his acts. Reid would most likely reply that to the extent that such a philosopher is sane, he is not a skeptic. Someone who not only does not act in accord with a supposed belief, but does not even

feel any tension between his acts and that supposed belief, simply does not have that belief. Such a philosopher might occasionally think of certain verbal formulation, but that verbal formulation could not be called anything as strong as a belief. As a matter of fact, Reid would say, such a person has the same common sense beliefs we all share.

Thomas Reid, then, does not say common sense is a special speculative intuition, nor that it gives us any insight into Absolute Reality. Rather, it is a series of principles upon which our actions in society are based; all those who know how to act in society, know those principles. Hypothetically, another set of principles might be possible. However, society rigidly enforces this set of principles; those who violate them are removed from society. As socialized human beings we find it beyond our powers to reject such principles; the knowledge that these principles do not describe Absolute Reality does not make us accept them any the less, just as the belief that they do describe Absolute Reality does not make us accept them any the more.

We have been examining and defending for many pages now Reid's defense of common sense. The need for such an examination arose because Reid claimed Hume's terminology varies in significant ways from common language, and that to consistently adopt Humean terminology is to surrender our common sense principles. If Reid is correct that we are not capable of abandoning our common sense beliefs, then if Hume's terminology is so eccentric, he has a strong case against Hume. We must turn now to an examination of that terminology.

Three key terms in Hume relevant to the discussion in Chapter II are "perception," "impression" and "idea." We will look at those of Reid's comments on these words that are irrelevant to his critique of Hume.

Hume begins both the Treatise and first Enquiry with a division of perceptions into impressions and ideas. Once he has explained what impressions and idea are, he stops speaking of perceptions and never discusses them. In none of his work does he state what it is to be a perception, i.e. he does not tell us in what manner all things called perceptions resemble each other. From his use, however, he may gather that every being is a perception; in Book I, Part II, Section VI he does note that there is no separate idea of existence. Hume may be accepting some version of the Berkelean equivalence of being and perception. Since it is notoriously difficult (Reid would say impossible) to state what it is to be, it is understandable that Hume did not try. If "perception" however, does mean the same as "being," then Hume is opened to the objection he is violating common language. The statement "The cat outside my window is a being." does seem to be different from "The cat outside my window is a perception."

Reid, like Hume, does not define "perception," but he explicitly states it is indefinable. Reid also points out several facts about the uses of the word that Hume seems to violate. The aim of Reid's pointers is to remind us that "perception" is not a generic term for all the operations of the human mind. Hume never discusses any operation of the human mind that is not a perception. There is no term in

Hume's vocabulary to name an operation of the mind that is not a perception. Reid, on the other hand, maintains there are s several other operations besides perception. Each of these operations has its own characteristics. The characteristics of perception are that the object of perception (I) exists, (II) is an external object, and (III) is in the present.[22] Operations in which each, in turn of these conditions is missing are (I') imagination (or conception), (II') consciousness, (III') resembrance. Perception, then, is only one operation among many. Reid offers an argument to show "perception" cannot be a general name for all mental operation. He says it is nonsense to speak of the perception of another mental operation.

> He [Hume] speaks often of the perceptions of memory, and of the perceptions of imagination; and he might as well speak of the hearing of of sight, or of the smelling of touch: for, surely, hearing is not more different from sight, or smelling from touch, then perceiving is from remembering or imagining.[23]

The entire Reideon critique of Hume's use of "perception" is unsayable in the language of the Treatise, a profound difference between Reid and Hume. When Hume is discussing his own philosophy he never predicates anything of "perception;" he always uses the "is of identity." He never states that a perception is an operation or anything else. From textual evidence, then, we cannot say that to Hume a perception is an

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22 Reid, I, I, p. 222.

23 Ibid.

operation; the reason for this textual omission, however, is not an accident of literary style; it is a direct result of Hume's rejection of abstract ideas.

In Chapter Two we saw the importance to Hume in the Treatise of the premise that "Whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination."[24] In an event such as my seeing-the-tree, I cannot separate the tree from the operation of my seeing it, as I can, for example, separate in space the tree from the operation of my seeing it, as I can, for example, separate in space the tree from the leaves lying on the ground near it. By some kind of intellectual analysis we might analyze seeing the tree, and the operation of seeing, but these elements would be the very things that Hume denies exist, abstract ideas. The most Hume would allow is that there is a resemblance between my seeing the tree and my seeing the fense; we might name the resemblance between the two the operation of seeing, but Hume would most strenuously deny that the resemblance is an existing thing. Reid is quite right that Hume darkens the difference between the act of perception and the object perceived. From Hume there are not two separate things; there is only one thing that might be described as my-seeing-the-tree. What exists for Hume are not what have variously been called subjects, objects, or substances; not only would Hume

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24 Hume, Treatise, I, I, VII, p. 18.

deny there are such things in the arcane meanings metaphysicians give to these terms, he would deny there are such things in the ordinary language of such terms. The common person would say the tree exists independently of my seeing it. Part of what that means is that the tree would exist right now even if I were not looking at it. Hume would say such a notion is an abstract idea. Since Hume is correct that we cannot separate the act and object (there is no seeing that is not the seeing of something) then we must either give up the common sense belief that objects exist, or we must reject Hume's denial of abstract ideas. Reid, of course, claims we cannot give up the common sense belief in objects; he thus believes we can perform the operation of analysis and form abstract ideas (or as he calls them, concepts). The concepts we form can be concepts of things we believe exist. We can form a concept of an operation, and another concept of the object of that operation. Thus Reid can analyze perception into the operation of perceiving, and the object being perceived. Without his prior belief in our ability to form concepts by analysis, such an analysis of perception would be as impossible for Reid as it is for Hume.

Besides his criticism of Hume's use of "perception," Reid also discusses "idea" and "impression." Since much of this discussion repeats points already made in our discussion of "perception" we can go through these more quickly.

Reid believes the word "idea" has two meanings, a popular, and a philosophical meaning. The popular meaning is that of

conception, apprehension or notion.[25] This statement is not a definition of "idea," for the word is indefinable; it is rather an indication of the sort of thing Reid believes an idea is. His point is that in popular usage "idea" is far different from that in philosophical usage. Philosophical usage has varied according to Reid, but the one point that has remained fixed is that an idea is an object of thought, rather than, as in popular usage, the act or operation of thinking.[26] The nature of the object of thought has varied from philosophy to philosophy; it might be a Form, as in Platonism, or the sensible species, as in Aristotelianism, or the image of the external object, as in Lockean philosophy. In the case of Plato and Locke Reid claims the idea is an object, a thing (he acknowledges that there are various interpretations of Aristotle).[27] In common language, however, the idea of something is our act of thinking of that something; the idea is not the thing of which we are thinking. Reid faults every philosopher prior to himself, including Hume, with introducing this philosophical usage without indicating that the philosopher is violating common usage and without giving a single reason why we should accept this philosophical usage.

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25 Reid, I, I, p. 224.

26 Ibid., p. 225.

27 Ibid., p. 226.

"Impression" as a modern philosophical term is confined to Hume. Under his discussion of "impression" Reid not only makes remarks about Hume's usage, but he also introduces substantive problems about Hume's entire theory of impressions and ideas.

Hume begins the Treatise by dividing all perceptions into two kinds, impressions and ideas, according to their degree of force or liveliness. Reid points out that a difference in degree is not a difference in kind. Reid holds the traditional genus-species theory of definition. On that theory a genus can only be divided into two species if there is a qualitative difference among members of the genus; members of a genus may have quantitative differences, but that, by itself, does not put them into separate species. This objection by Reid is important because it is part of the Treatise's program to show anything can happen (or, there is no reason why anything cannot happen). If the only difference between impressions and ideas is quantitative, the program is more realizable. Reid believes that by not allowing any specific difference between an impression and idea, Hume has already destroyed the common sense distinction between reality and dream. Once that distinction is destroyed, anything can happen. Common sense, however, will never accept this possibility.

> Wherein lies the difference between this impression and this idea; between the dream and the reality? . . . [Hume says] they are distinguished by different degrees of force

> and vivacity . . . Common sense convinces every man, that a lively dream is no nearer to a reality than a faint one; and that, if a man should dream that he had the wealth of Croesus, it would not put one farthing in his pocket.[28]

Common sense, according to Reid, believes there is a difference between reality and dream, a difference that is so wide that common sense will automatically reject any philosophy that tries to replace the two on a continuum. In Chapter One we showed that according to Hume's philosophy it is possible that if Reid were to think of a lion, that idea of a lion might devour Reid. Once there is no specific difference between impressions and ideas, such as occurence becomes possible. Common sense rejects the possibility of such an occurence; hence, common sense says there is a difference in kind, not just degree, between our dreams and reality.

Hume's use of "impression" also destroys another common distinction, that between an active agent and a passive subject. According to Reid,an impression is a change produced in a passive subject by the operation of an external cause;[29] the classic example is the dye stamping the wax. The operation, e.g. the stamping of the wax, is always distinguished from the

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28 Ibid., p. 228.

29 Ibid.

impression, e.g. the wax with the pattern. In all languages, seeing, etc., is called an operation. Hence, seeing is not an impression. This argument is the same one Reid made against not distinguishing between acts of perception and objects of perception. Hume would say that the stamping of the wax or any operation, apart from the wax with the pattern, is an abstract idea. Reid would reply common sense does make that distinction, and we have no choice but to follow common sense.

We have now looked at some of Reid's criticisms of Hume's terminology. It would be traditional at this point to turn to Reid's theory of perception and his critique of prior theories of perception. We will not, however, do that. We will turn instead to Reid's theory of conception; a theory which is interesting in its own right, contains a criticism of Hume's theory of impressions and ideas, and explains certain elements in Reid's theory of perception.

Thomas Reid claims that the human mind has certain abilities that the Humean philosophy does not account for nor even recognizes; one such faculty he calls conception. As has already been noted, Hume never defines "perception;" we put forward the claim that for Hume "perception" is equivalent to "being". Even if one disagrees with that claim, it would seem that, at the least, Hume believes "perception" to be co-extensive with the class of all mental predicates. In the Treatise he says warmth, coldness, sounds, love and hate are all perceptions. He also says for every idea there is a corresponding impression, and impressions are forceful and

lively perceptions. Hume never speaks of anything that is not an impression or idea. For Hume, then, "perception" is the highest genus of mental terms. Considering that that meaning was the standard meaning of perception before Thomas Reid, this conclusion is not surprising. Furthermore, considering that Hume did not believe there was a specific difference between any mental processes (there are only quantitative differences) it is not surprising he would adopt a single term to denote all such processes.

Reid claims that it is a fact, obvious to anyone who cares to observe it, that there are specific mental processes. To remember something, for example, is very different from perceiving it. A memory may be very forceful and lively, yet it is not confused with a perception. The specific difference between the two is that to remember something is to believe it existed in the past, and to perceive something is to believe it exists in the present; no change in liveliness can change temporal reference. Similarly, there are times when one thinks of something without believing any such thing exists; Reid calls such a thought a conception. The specific difference between a perception and a conception is that in the case of perception one believes the object of perception exists, and in a case of conception one does not need to believe the object of conception exists. Every common person claims that sometimes we perceive things that we do believe exist and that sometimes we think of things that we do not believe exist; any philosophy that purports to account for reality must explain this common sense claim.

Hume tries to explain this claim, on Reid's view, by introducing impressions and ideas. If every operation of thought has an object then the only difference between operations is in their objects. A conception has a weak object, and a perception a strong object. In both cases, however, the object exists. Hume, is then left with the paradoxical claim that even when we think of an object which we deny exists, we think of an object which exists.

The above is Reid's interpretation of Hume. We do not believe it is totally accurate. On our view, relying heavily on Hume's critique of abstract ideas, an object of perception is an abstract idea; perception and objects of perceptions are inseparable. For Hume there is only the unit which might be described by the abstract ideas "combinations of operation of perception and object of perception." For Hume, all perceptions are on the model of the sensation of pain, one cannot separate the operation of feeling pain from the object of that sensation, the pain. What Reid calls a perception, Hume would say is like feeling a sharp pain; the force of the pain convinces us it exists. On the other hand, what Reid calls a conception, Hume might compare to a slight twinge; we are not even sure there is a pain. This interpretation is closer to Hume's actual statement; it is still open to the Reidean objection, however, that it does not account for conception. A pain, no matter how slight, is still there. If it is not, then there is no feeling. When we conceive of something, on the other hand, we can be quite convinced there

is a thought process occuring, even though we deny that the object of thought exists. Even under our interpretation then, Reid is correct that there are operations of the mind for which Hume's philosophy can offer no account.

What precisely are these operations Reid calls conceptions" Reid never defines the word, but he does offer several synonyms for the operation of conceiving; these include imagining, apprehending, understanding, having a notion of a thing, having an idea of a thing, and simple apprehension. All these synonyms help to indicate to the reader what it is Reid is discussing, but none are definitions. Conceiving does not have a logical definition; it is too simple to be defined. The best way to know what conceiving is, is to attend to it in our own minds. To further help us understand what conceiving is, and to lend support to other elements of his philosophy, Reid offers several observations about conception.

Conceptions are neither true nor false; the concept of a lion, for example, neither affirms nor denies anything about the lion, nor that lions exist. It is judgments that are true or false, not conceptions. According to Reid, conception is unique in that it is the only mental operation that does not include judgment.

Conceptions are often thought to be analagous to painting; in some respects they are, but Reid carefully warns that there are some very important differences between the two. Reid is very aware of how metaphorical our language is. One of our strongest metaphores is that of material objects; many non-

material things are described in our language as if they were material. Conceptions are often described in a metaphorical way as images or copies of an object. Copies of something, such as a painting of an object, however, are the effect of an action, e.g. the act of the painter painting. The production of the painting is one thing, the finished painting another. A conception, on the other hand, is nothing but the act of conceiving; Reid says conceiving is an immanent act; it produces nothing beyond itself. There is no thing called a concept; a mind does not have concepts in the way a museum has paintings. All that the mind has is thought, and activity; concepts are nothing but acts. Reid is very aware that one of the greatest errors in philosophy is to take metaphors literally; he himself is always careful to avoid treating non-material things as if they were material.

Once aware of the disanalogy, Reid notes the analogies between conceiving and a painting.[30] Both concepts and paintings may or may not be copies of something real. ("Copy" is a metaphor, concepts do not copy anything in the way a portrait copies its subject.) If they are not copies of something real, and even if we do not believe them to be copies, we can still reason about them. If a concept is a copy it may copy one of two things: an individual, or a universal. With "individual" and "universal" we have come

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30 Ibid., p. 363.

to Reid's metaphysics. Even though he introduces it at this point, we will hold off a discussion of it until after we have listed some of his other explanatory points about conception. In that way we may be able to draw several concepts together into a coherent whole.

Another point made by Reid is that concepts may be clear, distinct and steady, or obscure, indistinct and wavering. People disagree in their judgments due to the indistinctness of their concepts, and due to the different degree of liveliness of their concepts.

Reid's next point is one that sets him apart from the classic empiricist tradition. He says that the ingredients of a bare conception:

> may either be things with which we were before acquainted by some other original power of the mind, or they must be parts or attributes of such things.[31]

These parts or attributes of things, however, need not be objects of nature, as traditional empiricists hold, they may be obtained by intellectual analysis of objects of nature. For example, by analysis of the notion of body, we obtain the concepts of extension, solidity, space, point, line and surface.

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31 Ibid., p. 367.

> It is proper to observe, that our most simple conceptions are not those which nature immediately presents to us. When we come to years of understanding, we have the power of analyzing the objects of nature, of distinguishing their several attributes and relations, of conceiving them one by one, and of giving a name to each, whose meaning extends only to that simple attribute or relation: and thus our most simple conceptions are not those of any object in nature, but of some single attribute or relation of such objects.[32]

Reid claims, therefore, we can form concepts for which Hume would say there is no corresponding impression.

One of the main stays of the Humean philosophy is the doctrine that for every idea there is a corresponding impression. In Chapter Two we argued that that claim is based upon Hume's empirical distinction of perceptions into impressions and ideas. It would appear that when Reid claims we have simple concepts of things that do not appear in nature, he is directly denying the Humean claim. As it happens, he is not. Reidean concepts are not Humean ideas. Reid strenuously denies that there are any such things as Humean ideas. The word "idea" carries both a popular (Reidean) meaning and a philosophical meaning. The popular meaning is what Reid meant by concept. It is illicit to believe the Hume and Reid are talking about the same thing when one uses "idea" and the other "concept". For Hume, ideas are

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32 Ibid.

perceptions, the less forceful and lively ones. For Reid, a conception is specifically different from a perception. There is nothing in Hume's terminology (or universe) that corresponds to Reid's conceptions. Either there are such things as conceptions or there are not. If there are not, Reid is simply in error in believing there are. If there are, Hume has missed something in the universe. Even if Hume has proven with absolute certainty that for every idea there is a corresponding impression, he has not proven we do not have concepts of things for which there is no corresponding impression. To repeat, the issue is whether or not there are such things as concepts. If there are, all Hume's arguments against there being any ideas not corresponding to impressions is irrelevant.

The last point about the nature of conceptions is that we must distinguish between the act of conception and the object of conception. If one thinks of something that does not exist, the act of conception is real; the object of conception, however, does not exist. Reid would most likely say that philosophers have been led to believe every thought must have an existing object because they assumed all language is like that about material objects. In the material world the object of an act must exist; that principle, however, simply does not hold in the mental world. Every person of common sense knows that someone can think of something that does not exist; only philosophers who are blind to the metaphorical uses of language are blind to that fact. To say that the object of an act of painting is the wall, is a

metaphorical use of language. This language is the only one we have, so we must use it; we must not, however, be led astray by it.

Let us turn now to an exposition of that part of Reid's metaphysics given along with an explanation of conception. Conceptions can only copy two kinds of objects: individuals, and universals. Our conceptions of individuals, according to Reid, are always imperfect and inadequate, but may be true as far as they reach. He believes an individual has a real essence, but that essence is beyond human knowledge.[33] Because of this lack of knowledge, we cannot define individuals; "a definition ought to comprehend the whole nature or essence of the thing defined."[34] Because an individual cannot be defined; it can only be named or described. Such descriptions are made on pragmatic grounds; an adequate description is one that is true and sufficient to distinguish that individual object from every other.

The other kind of object of conception is a universal; we can have perfect concepts of universals because, unlike individuals, they are our own creation. Reid takes a universal to be that which belongs to many individuals; unlike Realists, however, Reid denies that universals exist, or that there are natural kinds. "Things are parcelled into kinds and sorts,

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33 Ibid., p. 364.

34 Ibid.,

not by nature, but by men."[35] Things are arranged into kinds on the basis of utility and beauty.[36] Kinds are expressed by general terms. A universal is the meaning of a general term, i.e. a conception. Since conceptions are never things, universals are never things. Such conceptions are true not because they copy things, but because they are the same meaning which other users of the language attach to the word.[37] Reid uses "truth" ambiguously; sometimes he means correspondence to reality, sometimes he means consistency with common linguistic usage. Because universals are created by humans, we can express the complete essence of a universal; thus universals, unlike individuals, can be defined. We say humans "create" universals because humans, not nature, sort things. "Create" is a metaphor in this case because universals do not exist according to Reid. Most language, however, is not learned by strict definition; rather, it is learned by observing it being used and then performing an induction on those cases.

> The meaning of some of these [general notions] is learned by a definition, which at once conveys a distinct and accurate general conception. The meaning of other general words we collect, by a kind of induction, from the way in which

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35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., V, IV, p. 400.

37 Ibid., IV, I, p. 364.

> we see them used on various occasions by those who understand the language. Of these our conception is often less distinct, and in different persons is perhaps not perfectly the same.[38]

Since there is no existing universal to be intuitively grasped, and since an induction is often incomplete or subject to other errors, we do not always use the same words in the same way. Thus, semantic disputes develop.

The above is in general outline, part of Reid's metaphysics. At this point we do not want to argue for it, or even deeply explicate it. Our point, rather, is to show the drift of Reid's thinking, and perhaps erase some prejudices. Reid uses some high powered metaphysical terms, but if we look at his meanings, we can see his metaphysics is rather agnostic and low keyed. He denies we know the essence of individuals. In fact, he does not even claim we know any metaphysically absolute individuals; his examples of individuals are such things as the city of London--an entity no metaphysician has called an absolute particular. Reid's individuals are everyday common sense individuals; he is simply saying that in our language there are things we call individuals; whether an omniscient being would so call them, is beyond our power to know. The discussion of universals is also in the same common sense, low keyed vein. Reid takes

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38 Ibid., V, VI, p. 409.

it as a fact that we do understand general terms that do not correspond to any existing individual, and that we do not need to go through any complex process of noting resemblances, as Hume would claim. Reid, however, does not build a vast metaphysics on our ability to form general concepts. Universals, rather, are simply the meanings of general terms, and general terms name kinds. Kinds, however, are a human creation, and our ability to name them is developed by using language, not by any special faculty. Reid's metaphysics, then is a description of the beliefs of common sense, but Reid remains agnostic about the nature of Absolute Reality.

We might just note in passing that on this interpretation Reid is more careful and agnostic than Hume. Despite all his skepticism Hume believes that he can sort out the absolutely simple impressions (if he could not, he could not generate his discussion of induction). Reid, in general, is not so bold as to claim to know metaphysically absolute indiiidual objects in nature. This reluctance is one of the points at which Reid's metaphysical position is in line with his logical position that the highest genus and lowest species cannot be defined.

We have been examining Reid's theory of conception as a criticism of Hume's theory of impression and ideas. Reid's purpose, however, in developing the theory is more than a negative one. To understand his positive purposes, however, we must look at some other aspects of the theory. Reid develops these aspects by contrasting his theory of conceptions with other such theories. Without going into detail about other theories, Reid makes the following criticisms:

1. Reid very carefully distinguishes between sensation, which are feelings within us, and perceptions, which always include belief in an object external to us.

2. Sensation and perception always include judgment and belief; simple conception does not contain any belief as to whether or not the object of conception exists. One of the keystones of Reid's philosophy is that perception is analyzable into simpler elements. The hallmark of perception that distinguishes it from every other operation of the mind, is that it includes belief in the present existence of the object of perception. The hallmark of conception, ontthe other hand, is that it is the only operation of the mind that does not contain any belief about the existence, past, present, or future, of the object of conception.[39]

3. Logicians say that in imagination the image is in the brain, in pure intellection it is in the intellect. Images are ideas, and Reid denies that any such things as ideas exist as objects in the brain, mind or anywhere else.

The next theory about conception Reid argues against is that apprehension is temporally prior to all other operations of the understanding, and that judgment is a combination of apprehensions.[40] Reid, here, is most obviously criticizing

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[39] Ibid., IV, III, p. 375

[40] Ibid., p. 376.

Locke, but it might be argued that everyone in the classic empiricist tradition holds this assumption. Hume, however, would seem to be an exception to this generalization. Hume gives temporal priority to impressions. To believe something exists according to Hume, is to have a lively idea of it; and no idea is more lively than an impression. Hume, then, does not begin with simple apprehension, he and Reid both begin with perception. The difference between the two is that Hume never acknowledges there is such a thing as simple apprehension.

Locke believes judgments are built out of temporally prior simple apprehensions. Reid believes that sensation and perception are complex operations but they are temporally prior to apprehension. Reid believes that it is a fact of nature that when we perceive something, we believe it exists. Such a belief is not the result of any logical operation. Since perception is not the result of a logical operation, it does not need to wait for logical entities, such as simple apprehensions, before it can occur. When a baby opens its eyes, etc. perception occurs, no further explanation is possible.

Reid's claim that sensation always includes belief needs further clarification. Does Reid mean that "sensation" logically includes "belief" or only that sensation is always empirically conjoined with belief? Reid would probably reject the attempt to apply this whole distinction. He would say we know belief accompanies sensation by doing a common sense analysis of sensation. Common sense analysis is not an empirical investigation, but neither is it a strict logical investigation that uses only logical concepts

such as necessity; rather, it shows how we use language.

Once perception has occurred it can be analyzed into elements e.g. operation, object of perception, belief, etc. These elements, which are simple apprehensions, are the products of analysis. These elements are not things in the way that the bricks are elements of the house. Simple apprehensions are not objects in nature. Conceptions are acts, not things; they are not objects, unlike the "ideas" of traditional empiricists. "Intellectual analysis" is a metaphor; unlike chemical analysis, it does not give us the constituent objects.

> Simple apprehension, therefore, though it be the simplest is not the first operation of the understanding; and instead of saying that the more complex operations of the mind are formed by compounding simple apprehensions, we ought rather to say, that simple apprensions are got by analyzing more complex operations.[41]

Slightly later Reid says:

> Nature presents no object to the senses, or to consciousness, that is not complex.[42]
>
> So that it is not by the senses immediately, but rather by the powers of analyzing and abstraction, that we get the most simple and the most distinct notions even of the objects of sense.[43]

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41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.,

43 Ibid.

Again we find Reid taking an anti-absolutist position. Just as species are our creation, so are simple apprehensions. In neither case are we guided by nature because neither exists in nature, or anywhere else. The only guide that can be used in constructing simple apprehensions is the same one used in constructing species, common sense.

We are now in a position to understand what Reid is doing when he puts forward a theory of perception; Reid himself was quite aware of his methods. He begins with perception as a fact; even David Hume did not deny there was such a thing. Reid then proceeds to analyze perception. This analysis is not a causal explanation; Reid never offers a physiological or psychological description in place of analysis. This analysis is nothing like a chemical analysis. Reid often describes himself as a follower of Bacon and the inductive method. Many critics have wondered what Reid means by that because he never offers anything like analysis in physics or chemistry. We can now explain what he means, and will do so below. Reid's analysis does not give us the metaphysically Real elements of perception; analysis gives us concepts, but conceptions, unlike perceptions, do not carry any belief in the existence of their objects. When Reid analyzes perception all that he is doing is giving the concepts which common language says are a part of perception. No absolutist claim is being made. The method is significant, however, because Reid would deny that any method that violates common sense would be accepted. Other non-common sense analyses are possible; language is a human creation, and could have been

created differently. The plain fact, however, is that the language we have is the language we will keep, and will reject any attempt to radically alter it.

We can now see how Reid is at least in one way a Baconian and an inductivist. Most general words are not learned by strict definition; they are learned by induction, i.e. observing them in different contexts. Reid has observed the way ordinary people use the words associated with perception. By induction from these cases he can articulate the analysis of perception found in ordinary language.

If Reid is correct that there is a mental operation of conceiving different from perceiving, then he has a powerful case against Hume. Hume's whole philosophy rests on the claim that everytning can be reduced to impressions, ideas, and the relations between impressions and ideas. Within that context he must further show that all ideas are copies of prior impression, and there are no abstract ideas. Reid claims that Hume's philosophy is self-consistent; grant Hume his few assumptions and everything else necessarily follows. Reid, however, denies a key assumption--perception is the only operation of the mind. This disagreement is not a disagreement about analysis; it is a disagreement about the existence of observable things. This disagreement might be stated in phychological terms about what we observe in our mind, or it might be stated in linguistic terms about how language is used. If we observe our own minds we find we do think of things which do not exist. If we observe language, we find people talk of things which they deny are in any sense, existing objects.

If there are such things as conception, Reid can answer Hume's skepticism, as we shall see in Chapter Five, concerning induction. That Reid can answer Hume's skepticism, however, does not mean he has erected a new absolutist philosophy, or even a probabalistic theory of knowledge. Reid's appeal to common sense is an appeal to prescriptive rules, not descriptive ones. As the growing child is socialized it learns how society expects it to behave and to speak; included in what is learned is what society considers the nature of knowledge and reality. We are never able to get beyond these prescriptions. The outcome of any attempt to discover the "true" nature of knowledge and reality is Humean skepticism, a set of assumptions and conclusions we have been socialized not to accept. We have no choice therefore, but to accept society's prescriptions.

Alternative Interpretations of the Enquiry

Our interpretation of Section IV of the Enquiry is based on the assumption that Hume is commited to the two basic notions of that section, relations of ideas and matters of fact, i.e. he believes they are coherent notions. One might however, claim that the Enquiry is consistent with the Treatise and Section IV is intended solely as an internal criticism of another philosophical system. This interpretation has great plausibility. In the Treatise Hume at times assumes another philosophy's premises in order to show it cannot reach its intended conclusion; he does not do it on so grand a scale

as an entire chapter, but the Inquiry is a much later work. He also had a keen awareness of logical inconsistencies; Section IV is incoherent, a good indication Hume is not committed to it. Furthermore, Section IV is inconsistent with later sections. In Section VII, in which Hume analyzes necessary connection, he reverts to the Treatise's theory of impressions and ideas. In that section he equates necessary connection with power, not logical necessity; reasserts that complex ideas are composed of simple ones and those are copies from impressions; asserts there is no impression of power; asserts that reasoning cannot give us a new simple idea; and denies there is any idea of power beyond constant conjunction.

In opposition to the above interpretation we may note that in sections other than IV, Hume does not unambiguously hold to the Treatise's theory of impressions. As we have noted, Hume's example of the analysis of complex ideas, in Section II, are not simple ideas, they are abstract ideas, e.e. golden and mountain. Furthermore, the criterion of meaningfulness of the Enquiry is inconsistent with the Treatise's philosophy; terms that name relations are meaningful, but they do not have corresponding impressions.

In view of the conflicting evidence there is no way to settle the problem of interpretation short of discovering in an attic in Edinborough a letter from Hume to Henry Hume revealing his true intentions. Interpretation has given us as much help as it can towards our understanding of the philosophy. Two tasks, however, still remain open, one historical, the other philosophical. The historical task is to fully

develop each interpretation and to show how each interpretation has been philosophically fruitful for other philosophers. Our interpretation of the Enquiry for example, shows the direct link between Hume and Kant; a statement of Hume's incoherencies under our interpretation shows precisely the kind of problem Kant had in mind and from where he derived it. The second, philosophical task, is to determine which of the philosophies under the various interpretations is justifiable. For example, under the Treatise's philosophy the Kantian philosophy is not justifiable because no analytic a priori judgements are possible (there is no such relation as logical necessity). Thus, even though the Kantian philosophy arose out of an interpretation of the Enquiry it must seek its justification on its own grounds, and must be able to answer the objections raised by the Treatise's philosophy.

For our work, however, the philosophy of Thomas Reid, the problem of the two interpretations is not a great obstacle. Most of those who claim Reid misunderstood Humes follow the Kantian interpretation of Hume. If Reid is replying to the Treatise, however, any evaluation of him just be made on that basis. If the Kantian interpretation of Hume is incorrect or the Kantian philosophy is not justifiable, Reid appears in an even better light. Reid had to struggle with the far more sweeping skepticism of the Treatise, e.g. Kant could assume, unlike Reid, that Hume recognized the logical necessity of geometry. Under this view Reid might appear as the less dogmatic philosopher, rather than Kant.

Lately, another interpretation of Hume's philosophy has been developed. It has been argued that Hume is a realist, i.e. Hume believes there are two metaphysical categories, and that the external world does exist. This view has been most recently put forward in Nicholas Capaldi's David Hume: The Newtonian Philosopher (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975, with annotated bibliography). This view is not that different from our interpretation of the Enquiry. We argue that the Enquiry allows the possibility of dualism, but only admits we know the mental world. It is consistent with this interpretation to argue that Hume accepts the existence of the external world as an axiom (not a conclusion) of Newtonian science that any modern philosophy must accept.

Our interpretation of the Treatise is clearly inconsistent with any realistic interpretation. The realistic interpretation is supported by the opening of Book II of the Treatise.

> As the perceptions of the mind may be divided into impressions and ideas, so the impressions admit of another division into original and secondary.... Original impressions of sensation are such as with any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs.[39]

No reasonably straight-forward interpretation of the quotation can make it consistent with our interpretation. It follows

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38 Ibid., II, I, I, p. 275.

that either our interpretation is incorrect or Hume is inconsistent. Our interpretation relies heavily on Hume's critique of abstract ideas. Fine points in our discussion of abstract ideas are disputable, but it is indisputable that Hume rejects abstract ideas. Without a notion of abstract ideas, however, Hume cannot meaningfully discuss objects which are antecedent to perceptions and are not themselves perceptions. Such objects are neither perceptions nor abstract ideas, bur Hume never acknowledges any other kind of object in the understanding. It would seem, then that Hume is inconsistent. Different interpretations that arise depend upon the interpreter's evaluation of the relative commitment Hume has to realism and the rejection of abstract ideas.

With the completion of Chapter Four we have performed our historical task. We have developed a reasonable interpretation of the Enquiry that leads to Kant and we have developed an interpretation of the Treatise, different from that of the Enquiry, which does not lead to Kant and which does lead to Reid. We still have left the philosophical task of explaining and showing the plausibility of Reid's reply to the Treatise.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF IMPRESSIONS AND IDEAS IN HUME'S THEORY OF CAUSATION

In Chapter Two we examined some of David Hume's theses about impressions and ideas. These theses included: (1) that for every idea there is a corresponding impression, and (2) there are no such things as abstract ideas. At the end of the chapter we concluded that in the Treatise every impression and idea is an individual, existing thing. We had argued, however, that such an interpretation of the first Inquiry is questionable and that an examination of Hume's discussion of causation might help settle the question.

I. Treatise

A. Nature of Knowledge

The discussion of causation in the Treatise occurs in Book I, Part III entitled "Of Knowledge and Probability." This title might mislead the reader, however. In a part devoted to a discussion of knowledge, one would expect to find a description of what knowledge would be like if there were such a thing. Knowledge as clarity and distinctness of our ideas, or the agreement or disagreement of our ideas are the sorts of theories one might expect a work published in

1739. One might expect a skeptic to argue there is nothing in actuality that corresponds to those theories, or that the theories are inadequate descriptions of what knowledge really is, or perhaps to argue that a general theory of knowledge is impossible. One would not expect a total absence of any discussion of general theory of knowledge. If a philosopher denies we have any knowledge, one would like a clear statement of what is denied. The fact that Hume never gives a statement of what knowledge is like must be philosophically significant.

1. Nature of Philosophical Relations

Section I of Part III of the Treatise is entitled "Of Knowledge." The section is, in fact, a discussion of what Hume called philosophical relations. In Section V of Part I, Hume distinguishes two senses of "relation," a common and a philosophical. He says the word "relation" is used

> Either for that quality, by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination, and the one naturally introduces the other, after the matter above explained [association of ideas]; or for that particular circumstance, in which, even upon the arbitrary union of two ideas in the fancy, we may think proper to compare them.[1]

The three natural relations, according to Hume are resemblance contiguity in time or place, and resemblance. These three relations are natural because a present perception attracts

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[1] Hume, Treatise, I, I, V, p. 13.

other perceptions that have these relations to the present perception. Just as a body attracts other bodies due to gravity, present perception attract others due to the three natural relations.

A philosophical relation is any circumstance in which we compare any two ideas. There are, says Hume, seven such relations:

1. resemblance
2. identity
3. space and time (which includes distance, contiguous, above, below, before, after)
4. quantity or number
5. degree of quality
6. contrariety (only applies to ideas of existence and nonexistence)
7. cause and effect

(a) Criticism of Definitions of "Relation"

Before moving on, we should make one objection to these definitions of "relation". Hume says a natural relation is a circumstance. Both of these definitions violate common language. In common speach a quality of a thing has a much more intimate connection with a thing than an adventitous relationship, such as resemblance, contiguity, or cause and effect, has. Qualities belong <u>to</u> things, relations hold <u>among</u> things. One can turn relational terms into predicates, but only under the influence of a theory would one claim that that predi-

cate named a quality. It is even stranger to say that a quality connects two ideas together. One might compare the qualities of two things, or one might compare two things in terms of a quality. We compare (or perhaps connect) two ideas; it is not the quality that does the connecting. Hume here is clearly violating common language in order to state a theory. The only analogous cases he can point to in use of "quality" are those of gravity and magnetism. Possibly, one might say that one body attracts another by its gravitational (or magnetic) quality. To some, however, that statement is akin to Moliere's line that opium induces sleep because of its dormative virtue. Gravity, magnetism and the dormative virtue, unlike color and shape, are not common sense qualities. Hume, here, is trying to be the Newton of the mind; resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect are thought to be qualities in the same way gravity is a quality. All of them are the " secret powers" Hume sometimes mentions. This attempt to apply the language of material objects to thought leads Hume, however, to violate our common language. It is even more obvious that a relation is not a circumstance than a relation is not a quality. The circumstance of an event is the context in which the event occurs. If one compares the number of peas on two plates while eating lunch, it seems nonsense to say the relation between the two numbers is while eating lunch. It does make sense to say the relation is that of equality; equality,

however, is not a circumstance. One might expect Hume to mean quality when he says "circumstance." It seems to make more sense to compare two ideas in a quality. Hume wants to avoid mentioning qualities in this case, however, because they would be abstract ideas, as we pointed out in Chapter Two, one does not compare one idea of color with another idea of color.

> When we wou'd consider only the figure of the globe of white marble, we form in reality an idea both of the figure and colour, but tacitly carry our eye to its resemblance with the globe of black marble: And in this manner, when we wou'd consider its colour only, we turn our view to its resemblance with the cube of white marble.[2]

Hume, then, cannot mean "quality", or any other abstract idea, when he says "circumstance." If "circumstance" has its usual meaning, however, his definition of relation violates common language.

(b) Concepts in Hume and Reid

While we are once again discussing abstract ideas, we would like to make one digression that may show a certain resemblance and development from Hume to Reid. Hume finishes the section on abstract ideas in the following manner:

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[2] Ibid., I, I, VII, p. 25

> A person, who desires us to consider the figure of a globe of white marble without thinking on its colour, desires an impossibility; but his meaning is, that we shou'd consider the colour and figure together, but still keep in our eye the resemblance to the globe of black marble, or that to any other globe of whatever colour or substance.[3]

The words "in our eye" have been italicized because they are a metaphor. One does not have a resemblance in one's eye as one has a speck of dust; Hume would even deny a resemblance is a thing. Nor is keeping a resemblance in one's eye like squinting; no matter how one squints, one never sees a figure without a color. To keep a resemblance in one's eye, then, must be a metaphor and means to keep the resemblance in mind (another metaphor). Reid would say that to keep something in mind is to have a concept, not a Humean idea of it. Reid develops this observation, as where as Hume does not. Hume does allow the basic point, however, that there is something going on which can only be described by metaphors, but which is necessary if we are to compare things. We do not want to make too much out of a single phrase, but at the very least it does show a line of continuity from Hume to Reid. From this digression, however, let us return to our main topic--relations and knowledge.

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[3] Ibid., (my italics)

Hume, then, has two kinds of relations, natural and philosophic. All the natural relations are also philosophical (contiguity is classified under the philosophical relation, space and time). If they were not, Hume could not name them. If two ideas succeeded each other which we could not compare, we could not name the "circumstance" in which we compare them; hence we could not name their relationship and could not name any general laws about ideas of the first kind being succeeded by ideas that have a certain relation to the first.

2. Classes of Philosophical Relations

Now that we have explained natural and philosophic relations, we can return to Part III, Section I "Of Knowledge." Hume begins the section by dividing philosophical relations into two classes:

> ... into such as depend entirely on the ideas, which we compared together, and such as may be chang'd without any change in the ideas.[4]

Four of the seven philosophical relations are only dependent on ideas:

Resemblance

Contrariety

Degrees in quality

Proportion in quantity or number

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[4] Ibid., I, III, I, p. 69.

Three relations that can be changed without any change in our ideas are;

Relation of space and time

Identity

Causation

This classification is different from that of natural and philosophical relations. One of the natural relations, resemblance, depends solely on its constituent ideas; two of the natural relations contiguity and causation, do not.

(a) Geometry may not be a relation of ideas.

Hume's classification of relations further strengthens our thesis that in the Treatise ideas are individual objects. Hume says:

> ...the relations of contiguity and distance betwixt two objects may be chang'd merely by alteration of their place, without any change on the object themselves or on their ideas...[5]

If ideas were abstractions, or anything other than full fledged entities, it would be odd to talk of them changing their place; on the other hand, it might seem that Hume's discussion of relations that depend solely on ideas is a counterexample to our thesis.

> 'Tis from the idea of a triangle, that we discover the relation of equality, which

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[5] Ibid., (Hume italics).

> its three angles bear to two right ones; and this relation is invariable, as long as our idea remains the same.[6]

A triangle as an individual object is possible, but its angles are not. The angles of a triangle, when distinguished from its sides, are obviously not separable from the triangle. If equality is a relation among ideas, and if three angles are equal to two right angles, then, angles are ideas, and ideas are not individual objects. Hume comes perilously close to this position, and one might claim that if he makes sense, he must embrace that position. Hume, however, always stops short of it. In the quotation given above, Hume never calls angles ideas; only the triangle is called an idea. The final mention of the word "idea" in the quotation already given is in the singular: "This relation is invariable as long as our idea remains the same." "Idea" in the singular is not quaint eighteenth century usage; Hume must keep it in the singular or he must admit angles are ideas. What Hume might have done is translate "angle" into a statement about resemblances among figured objects, as he does for "figure" in the section on abstract ideas. Equality, then, would be a relation between the resemblances of objects. The problem with this route is that it conflicts with some of Hume's epistemology.

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[6] Ibid.

(3) Epistemological Considerations of Geometry

The four relations that Hume says depend solely upon our ideas are the sorts of things that are usually said to give immediate knowledge, i.e. no reasoning is required. Hume himself says that the four relations are objects of knowledge and certainty.[7]

> Three of these relations are discoverable at first sight, and fall more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration.[8]

The relation Hume excludes from intuitive knowledge is proportion of quantity. Even if Hume denies this relation yields intuitive knowledge, he must admit it yields something like intuitive knowledge and is a rather simple process. If every theorem about angles were to be translated into a very complex statement about relations among resemblances of figures, the translation would be seen to be implausible. If Hume cannot account in a plausible way for our ability to do geometry then the basic premise of a system, all that there are are impressions and ideas, must fall. The way Hume does choose to meet the problem is to deny the intuitive certainty of geometry, but to leave the mathematical process very simple. Hume says we assert a proportion of quantity based upon an observation of objects.

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7 Ibid., p. 70.

8 Ibid.

> As to equality or any exact proportion, we can only guess at it from a single consideration; except in very short numbers or very limited portion of extension; which are comprehended in an instant, and where we perceive an impossibility of falling into any considerable error. In all other cases we must settle the proportions with some liberty, or proceed in a more artificial manner.[9]

In math, according to Hume, we never attain certainty. In short numbers and limited extensions we guess at the proportion, but perceive that our errors must be of a small magnitude. In larger numbers and extensions we guess more wildly, or use an artificial manner. The artificial manners are geometry, arithmetic, and algebra. Geometry "never attained a perfect precision and exactness. Its first principles are still drawn from the general appearance of the object; and the appearance can never afford us any security, when we examine the prodigious minuteness of which nature is susceptible."[10] Arithmetic and Algebra, on the other hand, do yield certainty.

> We are possessed of a precise standard, by which we can judge of the equality and proportion of numbers; and according as they correspond or not to that standard, we determine their relation without any possibility of error. When two numbers are so combin'd, 'as that the one has always an unite answering to every unite of the other, we pronounce them equal....[11]

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 71.

11 Ibid.

With these two quotations in mind we can make an interpretive comment and a criticism of Hume's philosophy. Our interpretive thesis-- that geometry is a science based upon the observation of objects--is supported by a comment that Hume makes on the page following the preceding quotation. Here he rejects the claim that mathematics requires abstract ideas. He notes that most mathematicians claim their science deals with ideas not found in imagination. Philosophers, he continues, take over the obscure and uncertain abstract ideas to hide their own absurdities. In reply, Hume appeals to the principle that all our ideas are copies of impressions.

> ...from thense we may immediately conclude, that since all impressions are clear and precise, the ideas, which are copy'd from them, must be of the same nature, and can never, but from our fault, contain anything so dark and intricate [as an abstract idea].[12]

Since geometry expresses relation among ideas, ideas are copies of impressions, and impressions are individual objects, then geometrical relations are among individual objects. Hume, then, by making geometry an observational science is able to account for its high probability while still allowing it to use simple thought processes.

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12 Ibid., p. 72-73.

(4) Criticism of Hume's Epistemology of Mathematics

Hume is open to two objections at this point. The first is that, on his theory, the standard which he claims is used in arithmetic should be usable in geometry, yet it clearly is not. Two numbers are equal according to Hume because "one always has an unite answering to every unite of the other." Lines are composed of points, and every point is an impression. If two straight lines are equal in extension they have the same number of points. For two short lines it would be easy to determine if for every point in one, there is a corresponding point in the other. As a matter of fact, this procedure is impossible. There is something defective about Hume's philosophy.

Our second objection is that Hume's empirical philosophy of geometry does not solve the original problem, i.e. that geometry expresses relations among ideas, yet in his own example, the interior angles of a triangle equal two right angles, there is only one idea, the triangle. The angles can never be separated from the triangle, and hence can never be impressions or ideas. Hume is caught in a dilemma from which he never extricates himself in the Treatise. Geometry does seem to be about relations. The only things the Treatise can allow as relata are impressions and ideas. The usual relata of geometry, angles, sides, circumferences, etc. do not qualify as impressions or ideas. Hume, then, must either translate such terms into statements about things that are impressions and ideas. Hume does not do the first, possibly

because such a translation loses the immediate nature of mathematical inference. Hume claims to do the latter but he never does. Where he presents a geometrical theorem, he never exhibits more than one idea; where he presents his claim that mathematical ideas copy impressions he never discusses an example. It is our claim, then, that (1) the philosophy of mathematics in the Treatise is radically deficient, but (2) this philosophy, as it stands, is consistent with the general thesis of the Treatise that all impressions and ideas are separate, existing objects.

3. Extent of Knowledge

a) Resemblance, degree of quality, contrariety

The discussion of the Treatise's philosophy of mathematics arose out of the discussion of the division of philosophical relations into those that do and do not depend solely on their constituent ideas. Proportion of quantity is unique in that it is the only one of the four relations that depends solely on their ideas that does not have intuitive certainty. Hume does believe that there can be knowledge about resemblance, contrariety, and degrees in quality. Hume, then, unlike the ancient skeptic, is not a total skeptic. The type of knowledge he admits, however, is quite limited. Since all of it is of an intuitive nature, it is all known immediately upon perceiving the objects and nothing more is knowable.

b) No Knowledge of Logically Necessary Relations

It is interesting to note that Hume's certain knowledge is different from both Locke's trifling propositions and Kant's analytic judgments. In the case of both Locke and Kant, the statements are logical relations. Two of Hume's relations are definitely empirical, resemblance and degree of quality. The third relation, contrariety, is more debateable, but given the tenor of the Treatise, it is likely to be empirically known. Contrariety is a relation that holds between only two ideas, existence and non-existence. To know whether contrariety is an empirical or a logical relation is to know whether the law of non-contradiction is empirical or logical. Given Hume's general penchant against a priori principles, he probably claim it is known by experience. The evidence, however, is not adequate to strongly support any conclusion. In any case, the point is clear that Hume's intuitively certain relations are not the ones many other philosophers have accepted. This conclusion is not surprising in light of our discussion in Chapter Two. In that chapter we argued that Hume could not allow a relation of logically necessary connections among ideas; two necessarily connected ideas are inseparable. Hence, Hume could not allow a trifling proposition, or an analytic judgment to be a relation among ideas.

Of the seven philosophical relations, Hume has now shown that in three cases we can have certainty and

and knowledge, and that in one case we sometimes have knowledge, and sometimes we have something with a high degree of accuracy. We now face the question of whether there is ever an instance of knowledge in which we use the other philosophical relations, identity, relations of time and place, and causation. We might note that in the Treatise causation is not a special or unique problem ; it is part of the larger problem of how we know two impressions or ideas have a certain relation.

c) Identity, Space and Time, Causality

Hume divides the relations of identity and situation in place and time into two epistemological cases: (1) when both impressions or ideas are present (2) when either one or neither impression or idea is present. The first case presents no problem according to Hume.

> When both objects are present to the senses along with the relation, we call this perception rather than reasoning.... [13]

The reader may find this quotation more puzzling than Hume does. In the case of identity, if two objects are present to the senses at the same time, they are two objects and hence not identical. Thus, one can never perceive identical objects. What Hume might mean is

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13 Ibid., I, III, II, p. 73.

that within a visual field some objects might change while others do not change. The object we perceive at time 1 would then be said to be identical to the object of time 2. In that case, however, the statement of the relation names only one object, but names it twice.

(1) Absence of Reasoning in Relations

(a) Identity and space and time.

A second puzzling question is that Humes says we perceive identity and relations of space and time but we intuit resemblance, contrariety, degree in quality and proportion in quantity. Hume makes a point of stating that the comparison in terms of identity and space and time is called perception because it is not reasoning. In the case of the other four he says they are examples of intuition, not demonstration. Since demonstration is a type of reasoning, it would seem intuition also is; if it were not, Hume would say so, as he does in the case of identity and relations of space and time. Furthermore, Hume says in perception, we are passive.

> nor is there in this case [perception] any exercise of the thought, or any action, properly speaking, but a mere passive admission of the impressions thro' the organs of sensation.[14]

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14 Ibid.

> No such statement is made concerning intuition. Was Hume silently admitting that in intuition there is mental activity? In the quotation just given Humes denies there is "an exercise of the thought, or any action." What is the force of the "or"? Does Hume equate thinking with mental action? It seems unlikely that he would because that might give us an idea of causation. Why then would Hume insist perception is passive? What is the difference between perception and intuition?

There isn't enough evidence in the text to give a definite answer. We should note, however, that no matter what he means by intuition, Hume must claim that perception without reasoning is involved in the cases of identity and relations of time and place.

> ... of those three relations, which depend not upon the mere ideas, the only one, that can be trac'd beyond our senses, and inform us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel, is causation.[15]

It will turn out, as is well known, that causation does not give us knowledge of anything not present to the senses. The argument against rational knowledge of causation rests on the premise that we can never reason from the cause to the effect. That premise, however, must apply to all relations of existing objects, not just causal relation, if the skeptical philosophy

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15 Ibid., p. 74 (Hume's italics).

is to stand. Identity and relations of space and time are relations of existing objects, according to Hume. For example, if it were possible to reason immediately or mediately that for an object continually present to the senses the object at time 1 is identical to the object at time 2, then it might be possible, by the same type of reasoning to know that an object present to the senses at time 1 is identical to an object not present to the senses at time 2. Such reasoning would show there are things that are neither impressions or ideas. If Hume is to be a skeptic he must say

> ... we ought not to receive as reasoning any of the observation we may make concerning identity and the relations of time and place; since in none of them the mind can go beyond what is immediately present to the senses, either to discover the real existence or the relations of objects.[16]

Up to now we have been investigating perception of relation in terms of Hume's motivation; we have been arguing that given his skeptical conclusions he must deny any use of reason in the relations of identity and space and time. Let us now reverse ourselves and try to determine his argument in the above quotation for his skeptical conclusion. What are the premises in the above quotation? It would seem that that everything after the "since" is the premise. That statement, however, is a shift from the original question. The

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16 Ibid., p. 73.

original question is why when both objects are present to the senses is there only perception and not reasoning? Hume might be arguing that because whenever only one object is present to the senses we cannot go beyond it "to discover the real existence or relation of objects," even if two objects are present we do not infer their relations, i.e. there can only be an inference between two present relata, if there can be an inference when only one of the relata is present. It then becomes necessary to show that whenever only one of the relata is present, we never make such an inference. Hume's argument is that when we appear to do so, we are really using the relation of causation.

> 'Tis only causation which produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas follow'd or preceded by any other existence or action; nor can the other two relations be ever made use of in reasoning, except so far as they either affect or are affected by it.[17]

Hume, now, has an argument that shows that in identity and relations of space and time there is never an inference.

(a) Resemblance.

Does Hume's reasoning concerning the relation of identity and space and time apply to the other philosophical relations? Resemblance seems to be a relation we perceive.

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17 Ibid., pp. 73-74.

> When any objects resemble each other, the resemblance will at first strike the eye, or rather the mind; and seldom requires a second examination.[18]

The phrase "strike the mind" also appears in the second sentence of the Treatise in a discussion of perception.

> The difference betwixt these [impressions and ideas] consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into thought and consciousness.[19]

Things that strike upon the mind are perceptions; if they are not, Hume's philosophy of mind is incomplete. It would seem, then, that resemblance is a perception just as identity is. The situation, however, is not that simple. If two objects resemble each other there are two perceptions, the two objects there is no third perception, that of the resemblance. If there was, the resemblance would be a perception, but relations are not objects. Hume's only solution to this objection would be to claim that "strike the mind" is ambiguous; resemblances do not strike the mind in the same sense that impressions and ideas do. This solution, however, opens the way to Reid's claim that there are conceptions as well as perceptions. The same argument also applies to any other relation that is claimed to be perceived. Hume says

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18 Ibid., I, III, I, p. 70.

19 Ibid., I, I, I, p. 1.

> When both the objects are present to the senses along with the relation, we call <u>this</u> perception rather than reasoning.[20]

This statement is ambiguous as to whether the relation is present to the senses; if it is, it is a third object. More likely, the statement means that that two objects are present to the senses, and that they have a relation. On this reading a relation is not a perception; if it were we would have the first interpretation. Either we think of a relation and have an idea (hence a perception) or we think of a relation and there is something else involved besides impressions and ideas.

A way out of the difficulty that looks appealing is to claim the two objects plus their relation form a single impression. Any attempts to anlyze this single, simple impression yields abstract ideas (or as Hume would call them, distinctions of reason); we perceive a single, simple impression. This attempt will not work. Anything that is separable is different. Two objects that have a relation can be separated e.g. if they are contiguous, one can be removed (at least in thought) from the field of vision. Even in the case of identity we can imagine separating the object at time one from the object at time two by not perceiving it between the two times. Thus, the relata of a relation of resemblance must be two distinct impressions or ideas. There does not

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20 Ibid., I, III, II, p. 73.

seem to be any solution open to Hume that is consistent with the rest of his philosophy.

(2) Contrariety

Despite the problems with stating that relations are perceivable, let us continue to examine whether Hume believes other philosophical relations are perceivable. The next philosophical relation is contrariety; a relation which only holds between two ideas, existence and nonexistence. Strictly speaking there is no idea of existence.

> The idea of existence, then, is the very same with the idea of what we perceive to be existent.[21]

The idea of nonexistence

> excludes the object from all times and places in which it is supposed not to exist.[22]

In the relationship of contrariety, one of the relata, existence, is perceivable; it is simply to have a perception. Non-existence, however, does not seem to be perceivable. To perceive an object when it is not existing is simply not to have a perception. It would seem then, that contrariety is not a perceivable relation, as identity is.

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21 Ibid., I, II, VI, p. 66.

22 Ibid., I, I, VI, p. 15.

(3) Degree of Quality and Quantity

The next philosophical relations are degree of quality and proportion of quantity. Since the argument we will develop applies to both, we will only mention the first relation, but will mean both. Qualities include "colour, taste, heat, cold...."[23] In the section on abstract ideas which we have quoted so often, Hume says there is no idea of colour; rather, statements about colour must be translated into complex statements about resemblances among objects. Here we have a clear case in which the apparent relata of a philosophical relation are not ideas, and hence not perceivable. Let us say we have a globe of white marble, a cube of white marble, and a cube of black marble. According to Hume, when we compare the degree of quality of the globe and white cube we note the resemblance of the globe to the white cube and its resemblance (or lack thereof) to the black and then note the degree of difference in quality.

R = relation of resemblance

Q = relation of degree of quality

g = globe

w = white cube

b = black cube

Then we note $gR_1{}^w$ and gRob and $(gR_1w)\ Q\ (gR_2b)$. The relata

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23 Ibid., I, III, I, p. 70.

of Q are not themselves perceptions. A complex perception can be broken into simple perception, but resemblance is not a perception. Hence, even if resemblance is a perceivable quality, degree of quality is not. Thus, when Hume says degree of quality falls under intuition he is setting it off from those relations known by perception. It is hard to see how he could account for it and maintain the rest of his system. We have already seen that an intuitively known relationship cannot be translated into a passive perception of a relation of ideas. Hume, to account for intuition, would have to admit that either there are other objects of mental operations besides ideas, or that the mind is active and can in some sense create relations (or at least act to note them). In either case Hume cannot reduce intuition to the elements of his system, nor can he leave it out and account for something we all do.

4. Summary

We have up to now in this chapter been examining the seven philosophical relations Hume apparently believes all our knowledge claims fall under one or more of these relations. Three of them, he says, we know with certainty--resemblance, contrariety, and degree of quality. One we sometimes know with certainty and sometimes with a small error--proportion of quantity. Two we know by perception when both relata are present to the senses--identity and relations of time and place. When eith or both relata are absent, however, our knowledge of these last two relations depends upon our know-

ledge of the relation of causation. It is to this last philosophical relation that we now turn.

B. Causation

1. Origin of Causation

Hume begins his discussion of causation by noting there is, strictly speaking, no idea of causation. He does so in a single paragraph in which he says he can find no impression of causation from which the idea can be derived. This point can be made so quickly because no major philosopher ever claimed causation was an impression or idea (in Hume's meaning of those terms). Hume next considers whether causation can be derived from some relation among objects, and discovers the relations of contiguity and succession. The attempt to derive causation from other relations is itself puzzling. Some people have argued causation is sui generis. Hume himself never reduces any of the other philosophical relations, why should he do so with causation? The only possible answer is that for Hume there really only are two philosophical relations, resemblance and contiguity in space and time. Three relations--contrariety, degree of quality and proportion of quantity--that depend solely on the constituent ideas are special cases of resemblance. To note that two shades of color are close matches, or two lines are of the same length, or that an object exists at one time and not at another, is to note certain resemblances among them. Thus,the only relationship that depends solely upon its constituent ideas is resemblance. Identity holds between resembling ideas that

are contiguous in space and time. Hume says identical objects are constant and unchanging; if two ideas that succeed each other do not resemble each other down to the slightest detail, there has been a change. In the relationship of identity there really are two ideas; one can imagine the idea t-one with their being an idea at t-two. If these two ideas are not contiguous in space and time, their has been a change, and hence they are not identical. The relation of identity, then, is derived from the relation of resemblance and contiguity in space and time. Hume, himself, in the Treatise never performs these reductions. Such a reduction, however, is not inconsistent with anything in the Treatise, is in line with Hume's general reduction of tendencies, and explains why he should try to reduce causation to other relations. If the only relations are resemblance and contiguity in space and time, then it is obvious causation must be contiguity in space and time.

2. Causation and Necessary Connection

Causation, however, is usually thought to be something more than contiguity in space and time; Hume must meet the claim there is a necessary connection in that relation. On reflection though, it sounds very strange for David Hume to use the phrase "necessary connection". Necessity usually means logical necessity. The Treatise, however, contains no extended of discussion of logic (especially modal logic). This result is not surprising given the general philosophical program of the Treatise.

> And as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences including logic, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation.[24]

Long before Hume, philosophers believed that logical necessity could not be derived solely from experience and observation. If Hume can carry out his program he has no need to discuss logical necessity; there is no such thing. As we have already argued, on the Humean view there cannot be a relationship of logical necessity. If two objects are necessarily connected then they are not separable, but all distinguishable ideas are separable. Hence, there are not two ideas.

The one place in which Hume might be thought to allow logical necessity, he does not. He says the relation of resemblance is known by intuition and with certainty. Other philosophers have said that logical relations are known by intuition and with certainty. To recognize, however, the validity of modus ponens, for example, is very different from recognizing a resemblance between two objects. The first of these deals with abstractions, the second, with the concrete. More importantly, in the first case long chains of inference are possible, in the second, they are not. Resemblance simply is not a logical relationship. Thus, even where Hume allows

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24 Ibid., "Introduction," p. xx.

intuition, he does not allow it being used to discover logical relationships. We see, then, from his program, from the text, and from the basic premises, that Hume in the Treatise has no notion of logical necessity. The denial that causation contains logical necessity is neither ad hoc nor a surprise, it is bound up with the most basic principles of the Treatise's philosophy. Hume need not argue at length that causation does not contain logical necessity; by the time he comes to this discussion he has already said almost everything he can say.

Returning to the text, once Hume raises the question of necessary connection he notes that necessary connection does not depend on the qualities of the objects and it is not found in the relations of the objects. He then says

> Shall the despair of success make me assert, that I am here possessed of an idea, which is not preceded by any similar impression? This wou'd be too strong a proof of levity and inconstancy; since the contrary principle has been already so firmly establish'd, as to admit of no farther doubt; at least, till we have more fully examin'd the present difficulty.[25]

We have here strong evidence to support our thesis in Chapter Two that in the Treatise the distinction between impression and ideas is based upon observation. Hume does allow the possibility that the idea of cause is not a copy of a prior impression. We argued in Chapter Two that the thesis that

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25 Ibid., I, III, II, p. 77.

all ideas are copies of impression follows directly from the distinction of perceptions into impressions and ideas. In the quotation just given Hume says that one cannot *a priori* rule out the possibility of an idea that does not copy an impression. Hence, the distinction of impressions and ideas is not *a priori*.

Even though Hume does speak as if there is a possibility of an idea of necessary connection he does not have to seriously worry about that possibility. Ideas for Hume are objects, and no one ever claimed that necessary connection is an object. Nor does Hume have to worry that necessary connection is a relation. We have argued that Hume only recognized two relations, resemblance and contiguity; to introduce a third would be *ad hoc*. Furthermore, we have already argued there could be no relation of logical necessity on the Humean theory of ideas. Since necessary connection cannot possibly be an idea of a relation, the only thing left for it to be is a feeling. Hume, then, has good reasons not to worry that there is an idea of necessary connection.

3. Principle of Determinism: A Necessary Truth?

Before Hume puts forward his theory of causal inference, he raises two other questions. The first is

> for what reason we pronounce it *necessary*, that everything whose existence has a beginning, shou'd also have a cause.[26]

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[26] Ibid., p. 78.

Most of Section III of Part III is concerned with refuting various arguments that have been put forward that claim everything that begins to exist necessarily has a cause. We will not be concerned with these counter arguments, only with Hume's general arguments against there being any such necessity.

Hume notes that those who claim the principle is necessarily true, claim it is founded on intuition and is intuitively certain. It is worth noting that Hume never questions the principle that necessity and intuitive certainty are logically equivalent. He assumes that if a proposition is not known with intuitive certainty, it is not necessary. It is an overlooked contribution of Thomas Reid that he recognized that logical necessity is not an epistemological concept, such as certainty, nor does a statement of logical necessity have to be known in a special way. That, however, will be examined in Chapter Five, and we must return to Hume's argument against the necessity of determinism.

Hume says that the necessity of the principle of determinism is the same as the impossibility of something not having a cause, or, to put it more formally, the following statements are logically equivalent:

(1) It is necessary that all things that begin to exist are things that have causes.

(2) It is impossible that some things that begin to exist are not things that have causes.

Hume, however, says we can conceive statement 2--something begins to exist and does not have a cause. The argument for

such conceivability is the following:

(1) All distinct ideas are separable from each other.

(2) The ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct.

(3) Therefore, we can conceive an object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause.

(4) Therefore we can separate in imagination the idea of a cause from the idea of a beginning of existence.

(5) Therefore the actual separation of these objects is possible and imply no contradiction or absurdity. This argument, given to Hume's system, is very powerful; it is, however, totally dependent on the Treatise's theory of ideas. We have seen the first premise many times before; once again, it must be interpreted to mean each idea is a separate object. If ideas are not objects, the argument is not sound; Hume can only go from the fourth statement to the fifth because what is true of ideas is true of objects. If ideas were not objects, then the fact that they were separable in imagination would not be any evidence at all that they were even possibly separable in actuality.

4. Review of Treatise's Principles

Hume, then, in the Treatise is totally committed to the notion that ideas are objects. If they were not, his argument against the necessity of determinism collapses. To put it more generally, his equivalence of necessity and certainty would collapse. If ideas are not objects, then the possibility of two ideas having a certain relationship is no

is no argument that two objects can have that relationship. Furthermore, if the Treatise's program is to succeed, we most know which impressions and ideas are absolutely simple. If we could not discover the simple impressions or ideas then it would be possible that two objects that had a causal relationship were parts of a more complex object. In the Treatise Hume need not worry about such a possibility because impressions and ideas are what they appear to be, are the only objects, and can only have relations of resemblance and contiguity. If impressions and ideas were not objects, however, then the knowledge that ideas are simple would not be any evidence that the objects having caused the relationship were simple in respect to each other. Hume, then despite his skepticism, uses and must use a metaphysical and epistemological principle, i.e. that there are simple objects and we know them. If that principle cannot be sustained, or is abandoned, then, not only is it lost, but also the Treatise's entire thesis about causation.

5. Nature of Causal Inference

(a) Not a Priori

Let us turn now to Hume's discussion of the nature of causal inference in Section VI of Part III. He opens the section by arguing that we do not make a causal inference by penetrating into the essense of objects.

(1) An inference from one object to another would be knowledge and "wou'd imply the absolute contradiction and

impossibility of conceiving anything different"[27]

(2) All distinct ideas are separable.

(3) The causal impression is separable from the effect idea.

(4) Therefore, the replacement of the effect idea by another is never impossible.

(5) Therefore, "there is no object, which implies the existence of any other if we consider these objects in themselves, and never look beyond the ideas which we form of them."[28]

The first premise of this argument is very strange in the context of the Treatise. It says that a knowledge claim is something whose denial is a self-contradiction. The knowledge claim itself, then, must be a statement of logical necessity. Logical necessity, however, is an incoherent concept on the Treatise's principles. It is also strange that Hume uses the premise because it is unneeded; the second premise does all the work the first would appear to do. Separable ideas cannot necessarily imply one another; if they did, they would not be separable. Since they do not have a logically necessary connection, the assertion of one idea and denial of the other can never be a self-contradiction. Once again, we find an argument that follows directly from, and is totally dependent on, the claim that there are logically simple ideas.

We might also compare the first premise with a case in which Hume allows that there is knowledge--the relation of resemblance. The denial that two objects resemble each other is not a logical contradiction. Hume, however, might not mean

27 Ibid., I, III, VI, p. 87.

28 Ibid., p. 86-87.

logical contradiction. He speaks, in the first premise, of the "absolute contradiction and impossibility of conceiving anything different." This "absolute contradiction" might be an empirical possibility such as occurs in resemblance. When two objects resemble eath other we cannot help but note the resemblance; it is beyond our power to conceive them not resembling each other. On the other hand, in a causal relationship it is in our power to conceive of a different sequence. This interpretation has the virtue of making the first premise consistent with the rest of the Treatise, even though it is still superfluous; once it is granted that the cause and effect ideas are distinct, it is granted that someone can conceive of one without the other. This interpretation of the first premise has the further defect that the impossibility involved in resemblance concerns noting the relation, while the possibility involved in causation concerns the relata. On no interpretation, then, is the first premise needed or even particularly coherent.

(b) By Experence

Despite the problems with the first premise, Hume's conclusion--that we cannot infer by pure reason and effect from a cause--is quite justified by the other premises. Hume concludes, therefore, that the inference is known by experience. While discussing the experience of causation he notes a new relation between cause and effect, constant conjunction. Strictly speaking this is not a rew relation for Hume, constant conjunction is made up of resemblance and contiguity. To say two

objects, C and E, are constantly conjoined, is to say that objects that resemble C are always contiguous with objects that resemble E. Hume has not ad hoc introduced a new relation or modified his past list of philosophical relations.

6. Principle of Induction

Once constant conjunction is introduced, the question of the uniformity of nature arises. Hume notes that if in the past we have experienced a constant conjunction, and if in the present case reason infers the effect from the cause, it must use the principle.

> that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.[29]

a) Not known a priori

Hume has a short argument to show that this principle cannot be demonstrated.

> We can at least conceive a change in the course of nature; which sufficiently proves that such a change is not absolutely impossible. To form a clear idea of any thing, is an undeniable argument for its possibility, and is alone a reputation of any pretended demonstration against it.

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29 Ibid., p. 89 (Hume's italics).

30 Ibid.

This argument rests on the premise that whatever is conceivable is possible, a premise Hume has already implicitly used to argue that pure reason cannot infer (1) an effect from a cause, and (2) the logical necessity of determinism. The premise is also logically equivalent to the first premise tf the last argument--what is impossible is inconceivable. We have already pointed out that Hume cannot legitimately use the concept of logical necessity.

(1) Possibility in the Treatise. It is an interesting question of how Hume could account for possibility. There is no impression of possibility. He might say that whatever was ever actual is possible. That is true, but Hume wants to say that some things that never have been actual are possible, e. g. the sun not rising tomorrow. On a common sense view, this statement of possibility makes sense, but it is hard to conceive how Hume could account for it. One way might be to note that the only difference between impressions and ideas is their force and vivacity; anything else that is true of one is true of the other. To conceive of something is to actually have it be the case, except less forcefully than when we have an impression of it. Thus, something is possible means it is the case either as an impression or idea. A common sense objection to this view is that it does not capture our notion of logical possibility. Some things seem to

be possible even though no one has ever thought of them, e.g. if it is possible that the sun will not rise tomorrow, that possibility is just as open even if no one ever thought of it. Hume, on the other hand, would have to say that if the sun did not rise, but no one had ever thought of it, the sun's not rising was not possible before that occuremce, but was possible afterwards. It is worth noting in the last sentence "not possible" does not mean "impossible". (Hume has no notion of logical necessity and hence logical impossibility). "Not possible" can only mean "not conceived or having happened;" common language, however, asserts more than that.

Putting aside any problem Hume might have with the modal operators, it is clear that his argument against the indemonstrability of the uniformity of nature depends on the premise that conceivability is the test of possibility. That premise in turn rests on the thesis that ideas are objects. If we had any concepts that were not objects, then the fact that they could be combined in a certain way would not show that the objects of the world could so combine.

b) Not Known by Probable Reasoning

(1) Nature of Probable Reasoning

Having shown that the uniformity of nature cannot be demonstrated, Hume next argues it cannot be known by probable reasoning. By probable reasoning, Hume means reasoning in which we infer something which is not seen or remembered from something which is. Hume never gives a further explanation of the nature of probable reasoning.

The very notion of such reasoning is out of place in the Treatise. Impressions and ideas are perceptions; if Hume allows that perceptions can exist unperceived ("neither seen nor remembered") we have no ideas of what he means by "perception," "impression" and "ideas." Furthermore, if one were to infer something exists one would think of it, i.e. would have an idea of it. A thing is not separable from the ideas of a thing, hence a thing minus the idea of it is an abstract idea. The Treatise, then with its rejection of abstract ideas, could never accept any case of probable reasoning as valid. Hume gives only one sentence to the nature of probable reasoning because it is not a type of reasoning to which Hume is committed. The whole issue of probable reasoning is raised as a critique of other philosophies. The Treatise gains strength because it shows that even given the premise that probable reasoning is possible, we cannot know the principle of induction. If Hume's argument, however, did not work, he would still have to reject probable reasoning because probable reasoning uses abstract ideas.

(2) Argument Against Induction.

Let us turn now to Hume's argument.

(1) The only relation which leads us beyond our impressions of the memory or senses is cause and effect.

(2) Cause and effect relationships are derived from our experience of constant conjunction.

(3) All probable reasoning assumes a resemblance between those objects we have experienced and those we have not.

(4) Therefore, probable reasoning can never prove the principle of induction because it already assumes it.

Hume's argument for the first premise is in Section II; it is that four philosophical relation are solely dependent on their constituent ideas. Of the three philosophical relations not so dependent, two--identity and realtions of time and place--only give us knowledge of the relata not present because of our knowledge of cause and effect.

The entire negative argument against knowing the principle of induction is quite sound. Its key premise is the third, the future uniformity of nature can never be known by past experience. To a pure empiricist there can be no reply to that claim. Hume, however, considers a quasi-rationalist objection. The objection concedes we must have long experiences of constant conjunctions to prove the principle of induction. However, the objection claims that if there is an effect, there must be something which has the power to produce it. Whenever that power occurs, the effect must follow. Hence the principle of induction is justified.

Hume offers two replies to this objection. The first is that the second premise has no ground--that something exists

does not imply something has the power to produce it. The argument for this reply is the same as the one for the denial that every object must have a cause. Hume's second reply is that the productive power in an object is separate from its sensible qualities. We cannot prove that like sensible qualities are conjoined with like powers; any appeal to experience of prior conjunctions assumes the conclusion that is to be proven. Thus, even after long experience of a constant conjunction, we cannot by use of our reason know what will be the future effects of an object similar to a present one.

There is no need to make any further comments on this argument. It is a sound criticism of the objection. However, since the larger argument of which it is a part, is solely intended to show the inconclusiveness of certain other philosophers, it does not reveal anything more than we have already noted about the Treatise.

7. No Need to Further Examine Treatise

With this last argument Hume ends his critique of causation. He now presents his positive thesis. Our concern, however, is with Thomas Reid and his response to Hume. What we must examine is Reid's theory of causation and consider whether it can meet Humean objection. To reach that goal we do not need the close examination of Hume's positive thesis that we needed fo his critique. Before we turn to Reid, however, we must look at Hume's arguments in the first Enquiry. It is part of our thesis that Reid was replying to the Treatise, not the very different argument in the Enquiry. It is to those arguments we must now turn.

II. ENQUIRY

A. Philosophical Relations and Enquiry

Let us turn now to Hume's discussion of causation in the first Enquiry. The first thing one notices is the absence of any discussion of philosophical relations. In the Treatise the problem of causation was a subspecies of the problem of the kind of philosophical relations of which we could have knowledge. In the Enquiry Section IV opens with the distinction of objects of human reason into relations of ideas and matters of fact. Nothing in prior sections prepares us for this distinction, and it is far different from the list of philosophical relations. Before we discuss this distinction, however, let us see how the doctrine of philosophical relations might fit into the Enquiry.

Despite the fact that the Enquiry lacks many of the doctrines of the Treatise, it does contain one that has no analog in the Treatise--every problematic philosophical term that is meaningful names an idea. The discussion of philosophical relations in the Treatise cannot meet this test of meaning; relations are not ideas in the Treatise's sense of "idea". If relations were ideas, there would be impressions of relations, i.e. relations would be objects; it is clear, however, that if two objects, for example, resemble one another, that resemblance is not a third object. Hume cannot maintain both the theory of ideas of the Treatise and the criterion of meaningfulness of the Enquiry. If there are logically distinct object (impressions and ideas) they must

have relations. There is no way to have an atomistic philosophy and not allow relations; no matter how parsimonious one is, resemblance is not eliminable. On the other hand, if every meaningful term names an idea, there must be ideas of relations. Relations, however, are not things; one cannot confuse the relation with the relata. Hence, either the theory that ideas differ from impressions only in force and vivacity must be abandoned, or the criterion of meaningfulness must be abandoned. We have already argued that the Treatise retains the theory of ideas; it is not our thesis that the first Enquiry abandons the theory of ideas in favor of the criterion of meaningfulness, but that at critical points it inconsistently tries to maintain both. This contradiction makes the Kantian philosophy possible, and, more importantly for us, shows that Hume had implicitly accepted Reid's theory of conception even though he did not draw Reid's conclusion.

It is significant, then, that the Enquiry does not discuss the philosophical relations, especially resemblance. If it did, it would have to face the problem squarely of whether there are simple ideas of things of which there is clearly no impression. The Enquiry, furthermore, does not need to discuss resemblance as the Treatise does. The Treatise is one of the boldest attempts to reduce logical relations to empirical ones. The strongest case for logical relations is made by mathematics. The Treatise clearly tries to translate all mathematical statements into statements of resemblance; geometry loses its certainty, but Hume finds that an acceptable

consequence. The important point for us is that the theory of ideas of the Treatise cannot recognize the relation of logical necessity. In order to complete the Treatise's program, all apparent statements of logical necessity must be translated into statements of resemblance. The Treatise be done. The Enquiry on the other hand, never makes any such attempt, nor has it any need to do so.

B. Relations of Ideas

Relations of ideas are explained in only one paragraph in the Enquiry; having read the Treatise, it seems remarkable that anyone could believe the Enquiry is consistent with consistent with the Treatise. We will quote the entire paragraph, minus two sentences which only give examples.

> All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, Relations of Ideas, and Matters of Fact. Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain... Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle of triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would forever retain their certainty and evidence.[31]

The second sentence of this paragraph says that the affirmations of geometry are intuitively or demonstratively

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[31] Enquiry, Section IV, Part I, p. 25 (Hume's italics).

certain. The Treatise explicitly denies this claim, as its theory of the nature of ideas requires. If every simple idea is a copy of a simple impression there are no ideas of mathematical points or lines. The Enquiry, however, clearly recognizes such ideas; it allows that geometry is certain. To explain this point we must note the different uses of "certainty" in the Treatise and Enquiry.

I. Certainty

In the Treatise the one relationship that includes certainty is resemblance. This certainty does not arise from logical necessity; resemblance is a contingent-relation. Relations of resemblance are certain because whenever one perceives two objects, one immediately notes their resemblance. One is certain that the two objects resemble each other in precisely the same way as one is certain that one perceives two objects. In the Enquiry, on the other hand, certainty arises from logical necessity. That the square of hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides, to use Hume's example, is not known by staring at a triangle and immediately becoming aware of it. Rather, it is certain because it can be derived by a chain of arguments, each of whose steps is a logically necessary consequence of a prior step. On the Treatise's theory of certainty and geometry the Pythagorean Theorem is not certain; the theory is much too complex to ever have the absolute assurance that accompanies noticing a simple resemblance.

The certainty of the Enquiry arises from the relation of logical necessity. Distinguishable impressions and ideas

cannot be logically connected. Since ideas in the Enquiry can be necessarily connected, they are not distinguishable objects as they are in the Treatise. Hence the nature of ideas in the Enquiry is radically different from that in the Treatise.

II. The Nature of Ideas

The third sentence in the quotation gives further evidence for this interpretation. It says relations of ideas are discovered by thought without dependence upon what is existent. In the Treatise Hume relies heavily on the principle that whatever is actual is possible. We have argued that for him, possibility means to have been, or to be actual. He can use this principle because whatever is true of impression is true of ideas, and conversely. If a certain combination of ideas is possible, so is that combination of impressions. Ideas in the Treatise exist; they are objects. Ideas also are part of nature. The last sentence of our quotation says they are not that the truths of geometry would be certain even if they were no triangles in nature. When Hume in the Treatise denies they are ideas of mathematical points or other abstract ideas, he is denying that ideas are outside of nature. In the Enquiry he is clearly claiming that some ideas are outside of nature.

From the above consideration it is clear that in the Enquiry ideas are very different sorts of things in the Treatise. Ideas are not existent objects, they are not in nature, and they can be necessarily connected. Like the

Treatise, the Enquiry says ideas are less forceful and lively than impression. We shall argue that Hume sometimes uses this theory of ideas in the Enquiry that ideas differ in nature from impressions and sometimes he uses the theory of the Treatise. The theories are inconsistent, but Hume does not seem to realize that. The very next paragraph confuses the two theories.

C. Matters of Fact

The second paragraph of Section IV, Part I explains matters of fact. It says that matters of fact differ from relations of ideas in two ways: (1) they are not ascertained in the same manner, (2) their evidence is of a different nature. To support this claim Hume says

> The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality.[32]

1. Criticism

Given what Hume says about relations of ideas, can he make the claim in the quotation? In the Treatise, Hume can legitimately claim everything that is conceivable is possible. Ideas differ from impressions only in force and vivacity, if it is true that a certain combination of ideas obtain, then it is true

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32 Ibid.

that the same combination of impressions can obtain, and conversely. Such a claim, however is illegitimate in the Enquiry How does Hume know the contrary of a matter of fact is possible? In the Enquiry, there is a difference between thought and what exists: "Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe." Since one can think of what does not exist, thinking of something does not prove it can exist. We do not know what makes states of affairs possible. If we can think of a state of affairs, all that means is that for all we know that state of affairs is possible; it does not mean that the state of affairs is possible. To use an analogy, at a certain time it might be the case that for all one knows it is possible to take a train from Maine to New York, i.e. it is not self-contradictory. However, it is not possible, service has been discontinued. Once thought is disconnected from what is existent, then thought can at best give us what is logically possible, not what is empirically possible. It is sheer dogmatism upon Hume's part to claim that what is logically possible is empirically possible. The most he can claim is that for all we know a certain state of affairs is empirically possible. That claim, however, is consistent with the claim that for all we know that state of affairs is impossible.

II. Nature of Matters of Fact

Let us return now to the Enquiry's distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact. Hume was very

conscious of style and the names he gives to these two objects of reason are revealing. We have already argued that the relation in the relation of ideas is not one recognized in the Treatise, logical necessity, and the relata, ideas, are not the same as the ideas in the Treatise. If Hume were to distinguish two objects of human reason, and one was relations of ideas, one would expect the other to be relations of impression. The Treatise's discussion of knowledge begins with a discussion of relations; every thing that he allows as knowledge, or considers as a knowledge claim, is a relation. Despite these considerations, however, matters of fact are not relations of impressions, are not relations at all, and are not impressions.

Consider Hume's famous example of a matter of fact--the sun will rise tomorrow. Tomorrow is not a separate impression or idea in the Treatise. It is hard to know what Hume in the Enquiry would say about time (one has a strong urge to put Kant in his mouth), but it seems unlikely he would claim there are ideas or impression of time. The sun rising does not seem to be a relation, it is a single event. Rising is not a distinct impression; hence, there can be no relation between the impression of sun and rising. The sun rising tomorrow, then, is not a relation, it is a single event.

One might think, then, that a matter of fact is not a relation of impression, but is a single impression. The sun rising tomorrow, however, is not an impression, it is not as forceful and lively as my impression of the sun rising today.

In the Treatise impressions are only in the present and past; if the Enquiry is to make any sense at all, Hume must deny that impressions are in the future. Clearly he does, because he never calls a matter of fact an impression.

If matters of fact are not impressions, what are they? After explaining the difference between relations of ideas and matters of fact Hume says

> It may, therefore, he a subject worthy of curiosity, to inquire what is the nature of the evidence which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact; beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory.[33]

Note the phrase "real existence and matter of fact". What is the force of the "and". Does it mean that "real existence" is equivalent to "matter of fact" or does it mean that the same sort of evidence that assures of a real existence, assures of a matter of fact. Certainly the two are closely connected because they are supported by the same kind of evidence (as opposed to the evidence which supports relations of ideas). Furthermore, "matter of fact" is modified by the phrase "beyond the present testimony of our senses...." If a matter of fact is an idea, then in so far as we think of it, it would be an idea; ideas, however, are not dependent upon what is existent, there need be nothing beyond the idea. If we think of a possible matter of fact we have an idea, but clearly Hume is asking how we know there is anything more than an idea.

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33 Ibid., p. 26.

Hume reintroduces the duality of thought and the external world and he straight-away comes across the problem of how we know the external world. This is clear if we note that in the last quotation "beyond the present testimony of our senses" modifies "real existence" as well as "matter of fact". If it did not, half the statement would be trivial; it does not seem to be a significant question to ask for the evidence for the real existence of something which we sense. In the Treatise the only things that exist are lively ideas; in the Enquiry Hume seeks a means by which we know things that we do not sense. This question is nonsense in the Treatise because "unperceived object" is an abstract idea, as we argued previously. Ideas and impression are things of which we are directly aware; Hume allows that we may not be directly aware of real existences and matters of fact. Real existences and matters of fact, then, are neither impressions nor ideas. What they are, Hume does not say. We do have abstract ideas of real existences and matters of fact (one cannot separate (in the Treatise's sense) the thought of a matter of fact from the matter of fact). The Enquiry, then, allows the possibility for a kind of being the Treatise would reject as nonsense.

Our interpretation is supported by the sorts of examples Hume uses in his discussion of causation. In the Treatise he discusses examples that involve direct verification, e.g. putting one's hand near a flame and feeling heat. As we have argued, the Treatise is in the Cartesian egocentric tradition,

and this example is in keeping with that tradition. In the Enquiry Hume uses as an example of a matter of fact his friend being in France. In the Treatise Hume can say he has a weak idea of his friend being in France, but he cannot say there is a really existing object, his friend who is in France, while he, Hume, is in Scotland. The inability of Hume to say this in the Treatise does not arise from his analysis of causation; it arises from his critique of abstract ideas. Hume's analysis of causation would lead him to say he has not good reason to believe his friend is in France; his critique of abstract ideas would lead him to say it is nonsense to speak of his friend in France and mean anything more than his idea of his friend. In the Enquiry Hume takes it as sensible (even if not provable) to say his friend is in France. The only way he could accept this is if he believes thoughts could refer to something beyond themselves. In other words, thoughts refer to objects, but are not themselves objects; we can separate in thought what cannot be separated in fact--an object and our thought of the object.

D. Review of Enquiry Principles

From Hume's discussion, then, we can draw the following conclusion about principles used in the Enquiry. Ideas are not objects that exist (as in the Treatise) because relations of ideas are not dependent upon what exists. The relationship involved in relations of ideas is logical necessity. Geometry, algebra and arithmetic are all relations of ideas and are necessarily true. Matters of fact are expressed by statements

that are not self-contradictions. Matters of fact are neither relations, nor impressions, nor ideas. Matters of fact are thought of by abstract ideas which refer to an object which is intellectually distinct from the thought. Metaphysical dualism, then, is at least intelligible.

I. Criterion of Meaning

We have now answered a major question of Chapter Two--the interpretation of Hume's criterion of meaningfulness. The traditional interpretation--that every meaningful term names an atom of experience--is incorrect. Hume believes mathematics is meaningful, yet some of its key terms e.g. point and line, do not name separable impressions. Furthermore, words that name absent real existences and matters of fact do not name impression, nor do they name ideas. If Hume is committed to the distinction of relations of ideas and matters of fact, then his criterion of meaningfulness is the very weak demand that every meaningful term must have some connection with experience but there need not be a one to one correspondence of ideas and objects. By analysis of experience, we can derive meaningful terms which do not name a separable experience. We shall soon show that even though Hume must hold this interpretation, he at times lapses into the strong interpretation. We might note, once again, that no one has ever or can ever consistently hold the strong interpretation. The strong interpretation requires that there be separable atoms of experience. Such atoms of experience have at least two relations, resemblance and contiguity. "Resemblance"

"contiguity" are meaningful terms, but they do not name impressions. Hence, no one, not even the Hume of the Treatise, was ever consistently committed to the strong interpretation of the criterion of meaningfulness.

E. Causation

Let us return now to our direct examination of the Enquiry. Once Hume notes that the evidence for matters of fact is not the law of non-contradiction, he suggests that the evidence is the relation of cause and effect. He then raises the question of how we know any cause and effect relationships. He argues we can only know it by experience because we cannot know it a priori.

I. Not Known a priori

Hume's basic argument is that no one has ever been able to accurately predict the causes or effects of any unfamiliar object.

> Let an object be presented to a man of ever so strong natural reason and abilities; if that object be entirely new to him, he will not be able, by the most accurate examination of its sensible qualities, to discover any of its sensible causes or effects.[34]

Hume notes that for unfamiliar objects we readily agree we do not know its causes or effects. To show the same holds true for familiar objects he asks the reader to discover its cause

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34 Ibid., p. 27.

and effects "without consulting past observation...,"[35] i.e. consider it as unfamiliar. Hume then repeats the sorts of remarks quoted above for unfamiliar objects. Hume then concludes

> In a word, then, every effect is a distinct event from its cause. It could not, therefore, be discovered in its cause, and the first invention or conception of it, a priori, must be entirely arbitrary.[36]

(a) Interpretation of Argument

Is this argument inductive or a priori? Is Hume arguing that because no one has been able to know the causes or effects of an object from observing only that object, that such an inference is impossible? On the other hand, the above might be a heuristic device, and the real argument is that objects are logically distinct and thus could not be logically connected. We hace argued that in the Treatise the corresponding argument is a priori. Impressions are logically distinct, there is no relation of logical necessity, hence, the assertion or denial that a certain cause has a certain effect can never be self-contradictory. The Enquiry, on the other hand, allows the relation of logical necessity, and does not say that the relata of causal relations are impressions. In Section IV of the Enquiry Hume often calls the

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36 Ibid., p. 30.

relata of causal relations objects, sometimes, events; it is noteworthy that "impression" never appears at all in the section. Two questions immediate arise: (1) What are the nature of impressions in the Enquiry? (2) What is the nature of the relata of causal relation in the Enquiry"

(1) Nature of Impression

We have argued that in the Treatise impressions and ideas are objects, not common sense objects such as trees, but objects which are the union of the elements of perception, e.g. the object which might be named by the abstract terms, "my-seeing-the tree." In the Enquiry, as we have noted, ideas are not objects, they are not dependent on what is existent. If the only difference between impressions and ideas is their force and vivacity, then impressions are not dependent upon what is existent, i.e. they are not real existences or matters of fact. We have a problem in interpretation and philosophy here. If impressions and ideas differ only in force and vivacity, Hume has set up a metaphysical dualism that does not permit us to know the real world, but which acknowledges either the existence or the logical possibility of the existence of the real world, i.e. impressions and ideas belong to the mental world, real existences and matters of fact belong to the external world. This philosophy is very far from the Treatise; in that work impressions are existent and are not mental entities. The Treatise is neither dualistic nor idealistic. Both these positions are nonsense (in the literal

sense) according to the Treatise; both "material object" and "mental object" are abstract ideas, and there are no abstract ideas. The Treatise's metaphysics is atomistic; the atoms are not material atoms, but atoms which are the units of experience. They are the union of perceiver, act of perceiving and object of perception (if we might be permitted to use those abstract terms). In the Enquiry, on the other hand, if impressions differ from ideas solely in force and vivacity, the Enquiry is not atomistic, it is dualistic.

Suppose, however, we, as interpreters, claim that in the Enquiry Hume does not, despite his opening paragraph, believe impressions differ from ideas solely in force and vivacity. The problem with this interpretation is that impressions then have no place in the philosophy. An impression cannot be a real existence or matter of fact because these latter can exist unperceived. If the Enquiry is to make sense, an impression must be a perception. An impression cannot be a mental entity that arises when a matter of fact is present to the senses; in that case the only difference between impressions and ideas would be their force and vivacity--a contradiction of our interpretative hypothesis. An impression cannot be an atom of experience as in the Treatise because everyday objects, such as the chair on which I am sitting, would be two mutually exclusive kinds of entities at the same time, a matter of fact and an impression. These consequences show that the Enquiry

must retain the doctrine that impressions differ from ideas solely in force and vivacity. Since, however, ideas are not dependent on what is existent, the philosophy of the Enquiry allows the logical possibility of dualism, i.e. there may be both ideas and matters of fact, but is episteomologically Idealist, i.e. no matters of fact beyond the present testimony of the senses can be known by reason.

(2) Nature of Causal Relata

The second question we raised a while back concerns the nature of the relata of a causal relation. The candidates for such relata are impressions, ideas, real existences and matters of fact. Hume himself never considers this question directly, but his examples show that he usually takes the relata to be real existences and matters of fact, or rather, he takes one of the relata to be that of nature. Consider this famous example:

> If you were to ask a man, why he believes any matter of fact, which is absent; for instance, that his friend is in the country, or in France; he would give you a reason; and this reason would be some other fact; as a letter received from him, or the knowledge of his former resolutions and promises.[37]

In this example the absent friend in France is taken as a fact which is the cause of the letter, a fact present

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37 Ibid., p. 26

to the senses.

At first sight this example seems unproblematic, yet the more one studies the Enquiry the more puzzling it becomes. In the Treatise cause and effect are logically distinct because all impressions and ideas are logically distinct. In the Enquiry ideas and impressions are not logically distinct--members of each kind can be necessarily connected among themselves. There is, therefore, no a priori argument that if impressions or ideas are causal relata, they cannot be necessarily connected. If the causal relata are impressions and ideas, Hume's arguments that a causal interest is never known a priori is a generalization from experience. Contrary to the usual interpretation, someone might, in the future, logically infer an effect from a cause; we have no reason to exclude that possibility. Ancient Egyptian geometers discovered the 3, 4, 5, right triangle by measuring triangles; later Greek geometers showed that the Pythagoran Theorem is necessarily true, and that the 3, 4, 5, right triangle is a special case of that theorem. Given the arguemnt in the Enquiry such a reduction might happen to our causal laws.

Hume, however, does not consider impressions and ideas as causal relata in Section IV. In the quotation given above, the relata are matters of fact. We have already mentioned that matters of fact are out of place in a Humean philosophy. They are not directly perceivable. The only way they could be known is by a causal

inference, but, according to Hume, all causal connections are known by experience, and we cannot experience matters of fact. Matters of fact, i.e. the external world, are unknowable. If causal relata are matters of fact then Hume's argument against an a priori causal inference is not a generalization from experience because we have no experience of them from which to generalize. The argument cannot be a priori either because matters of fact cannot be known a priori and hence we cannot know their nature or how to define them. Matters of fact are totally unknowable; hence, there is no way to infer one from the other, nor is there any way to know if they have causal connection or even exist.

The interpretor of Hume is put in a dilema. The only coherent interpretation of the argument that no causal inference is a priori is that the argument is a generalization from experience, and the experience is of impressions and ideas. That interpretation, however, flies squarely in the face of the text, which says the causal relata are matters of fact. The only way to resolve this problem is to claim that Hume is not concerned about the nature of the causal relata. His argument is that whatever it is that has causal relations cannot be inferred from other such things. His argument, then, is a posteriori. All a priori arguments concern the nature, or essence, or definition of something; all a posteriori arguments, on the other hand, may report certain observations without concerning themselves with

the nature of what is observed.

2. Principles of Induction

Once Hume has shown that causal relations are not known by a priori reasoning, he raises the problem of induction--how is it that by experience we know that objects that have certain causal relation in the present, will continue to do so in the future. His well-known answer is that no process of reasoning from experience can allow us to infer future causal relations from present ones. To support this answer Hume presents several arguments which parallel arguments in the Treatise.

The first argument claims that no one has ever derived a future causal connection from a present one. The argument rests upon a division between the sensible qualities and secret powers of a thing.

(1) Our senses inform us of the sensible qualities of a thing, but we know nothing of its secret powers.

(2) There is no known connection between sensible qualities and secret powers.

(3) Therefore, we cannot directly know from its secret powers what causes an effects an object will have.

(4) Therefore, we cannot know from its sensible qualities what causes an effects an object will have.

To put this argument another way, consider the following proposition:

(a) In the past object 0 has always had effect E.

(b) In the future 0' (similar in appearance to 0)

will have effect E' (similar to appearance to E). The connection between these propositions is not intuitive, one needs a medium to go from the first to the second. That medium would be the secret powers of things, either known directly, or through the mediation of sensible qualities. We do not know the secret powers either way; hence, we cannot go by reason from the first to the second proposition.

We shall only make a few comments on this argument. First of all, this argument is not stateable in the language of the Treatise. "Secret power" is an abstract idea because it is an idea for which there is no corresponding impression (if there were, or it were a relation, it would not be a secret). Secondly, even in the Inquiry the argument is a heuristic device. Hume himself, in a footnote says he is using the word "power" in a loose sense here. Since in Section VII he analyzes power as constant conjunction, he is not committed to the existence of secret powers. The point of the argument is to show that even if one does believe in secret powers, that is not enough to give a reason for a future causal connection. This argument, then, because it is only a heuristic device,is consistent with the Treatise.

Hume's second argument against induction is to show that no method of reasoning allows us to infer a future causal relation. Hume recognizes only two kinds of reason, demonstrative (relations of ideas) and moral (matters of fact and real existence). The same argument that shows a causal relation is not known a priori, also shows that one cannot demonstrate that future causal relations will resemble present ones, i.e.

"it implies no contradiction that the course of nature may change."

Matters of fact are known by experience; that experience, however, is of a causal connection. Whenever we infer a future causal connection (as we do in all inductive arguments), we assume the uniformity of nature. Therefore, no argument from experience can prove the uniformity of nature, because it already assumes such uniformity as a premise.

Hume's next paragraph after this argument, presents a difficulty to the interpreter. The substance of the paragraph is that if the uniformity of nature were known by experience through reason, then, after experiencing one causal connection, we could expect it to be repeated. However, we have such an expectation only after repeated instances of that connection. One problem with this paragraph is that it is difficult to know whether Hume is discussing the general principle of the uniformity of nature, or a particular instance of it. Hume is incorrect that we repeat an experiment to test whether a particular conjunction reoccurs. We repeat experiments to determine which elements in a causal event are part of the cause, and which are extraneous to the production of an event. What Hume might mean is that if the general principle of uni- were known by reason through experience, then the experience of any causal connection would allow us to know, not assume, that the conjunction will remain fixed.

Hume next considers what looks like a counter-argument to his claim that the uniformity of nature is never proven. The counter-argument is that from our uniform experience of cause

and effect we infer a connection between the sensible qualities and secret powers of an object. His reply to this counter-argument is that from our uniform experience of cause and effect we infer a connection between the sensible qualities and secret powers of an object. His reply to this counter-argument is that the inference from sensible quality to secret power must be either a relation of ideas or matters of fact. It is not a relation of ideas because it is not a self-contradiction to assert that these sensible qualities may be connected with other secret powers. This connection is not a matter of fact because all such reasoning assumes the uniformity of nature. Thus the uniformity of nature cannot be shown because one cannot infer a connection between the sensible qualities and secret powers of things.

Hume ends Section IV of the Equiry with one last argument. Peasants, infants and beasts expect similar causes to have similar effects, yet they do not reason. It would follow, therefore, that causal connections and the uniformity of nature are not known by reasoning.

There is little need for comment on Hume's discussion on induction because most of the relevant comments have been made about his discussion of the causal relationship. His continued use of the concepts used in the discussion of the causal relationship, e.g. relations of ideas and matters of fact gives further evidence that he is committed to these concepts and that the Inquiry presents a different philosophy then the Treatise.

(a) Comparison of Treatise and Enquiry on Induction

It is instructive to compare the argument concerning induction in the Treatise and Enquiry. We need not concern ourselves with those arguments which discuss secret powers because they are either heuristic or intended as criticisms of other philosophies. The only remaining argument in the Enquiry is that the principle of induction is not knowable either as a relation of ideas or matter of fact. This two part argument is analagous to the Treatise's claim that the principle cannot be known by demonstrative or probable reasoning.

We have argued that the Treatise's denial that the principle of induction can be demonstrated follows directly from the theory of impressions and ideas. That theory denies any logical interpretation of the modal operators; hence, the only sort of possibility is empirical possibility. Once one can have an idea of nature not being uniform, such a situation is possible and hence is not a self-contradiction. The argument in the Enquiry is superficially similar to that of the Treatise but it is in fact different. The Enquiry accepts the notion of logical neccessity unlike the Treatise, it will take more of an argument to show that the principle of induction is not necessary. The argument uses a premise in common with that in the Treatise, we can conceive of similar causes not having similar effects. The Enquiry, however, uses two concepts of possibility (although Hume does not recognize it)--logical and empirical. In the Enquiry

what we conceive are ideas; combinations of ideas are not dependent upon what is existent. The Enquiry's argument shows that the principle of induction is not logically necessary; it does not show the uniformity of nature is empirically possible. To prove this last point the Enquiry would have to exhibit an example of the non uniformity of nature. To sum up, the Treatise shows that a violation of the principle of induction is empirically possible; the Enquiry shows that for all we know a violation of the principle of induction is possible, i.e. it is logically possible that a violation of the principle of induction is empirically possible.

Hume's argument in the Treatise that the principle of induction cannot be known by probable reasoning is analogous to the argument in the Enquiry that it cannot be known by experience. Both arguments point out that any attempt to prove the principle of induction by an appeal to prior experience is circular because such a proof assumes the principle. The Enquiry, unlike the Treatise, however, adds another argument. If the principle of induction were known by reasoning we would need only one instance of a constant conjunction, not many of them, to be assured of the principle.

The difference between the arguments in the two works is that the argument is not needed in the Treatise. Probable reasoning is a priori impossible in the Treatise; whereas the Enquiry accepts matters of fact as logically possible.

Thus even though the same argument appears in both works, it plays very different roles. Once again, the apparent similarity of the two works conceals fundamental philosophical differences.

F. Hume, Kant, Reid

We now have evidence that the Treatise and Enquiry present very different philosophies. A criticism of one of these philosophies is not necessarily a criticism of the other. The philosophy of the Enquiry is the "classical" Hume, the one that Kant and most later critics have considered. If our explication has been successful, the transition from the Enquiry to Kant is clear. The initial assumption of the Enquiry, such as the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact, have great initial plausibility; they lead, however, to many philosophical problems, and Hume's initial assumption, coupled with the ultimate incoherence of his philosophy, has created great interest in that philosophy and has been fruitful of proposed remedies to the problems posed by that philosophy. The more one studies the Enquiry, the more the Kantian solution seems historically necessary and one's appreciation of the genius of Kant increases.

Our thesis, however, concerns Reid, not Kant. Reid is replying to the philosophy of the Treatise, not the Enquiry. It might be fruitful to consider Reid's Essay, not as a critique of the Enquiry, bur rather to consider the Essay and Enquiry as competing replies to the Treatise. The Essay and Enquiry share a very important premise which the Treatise

denies, i.e. that thoughts are not objects. The ideas of the Enquiry are the "concepts" of the Essay. Neither are existing objects, both may be derived by intellectual analysis, both may have logical relations, and both may be about things which do not exist. Given these similarities, it might be fruitful to consider how and why the conclusion of these works differ. In order to make that comparison, we must examine Reid's theory of causation.

G. Alternative Interpretations of the Enquiry

Our interpretation of Section IV of the Enquiry is based on the assumption that Hume is committed to the two basic notions of that section, relations of ideas and matters of fact, i.e. he believes they are coherent notions. One might, however, claim that the Enquiry is consistent with the Treatise and Section IV is intended solely as an internal criticism of another philosophical system. This interpretation has great plausibility. In the Treatise Hume at times assumes another philosophy's premises in order to show it cannot reach its intended conclusion; he does not do it on so grand a scale as an entire chapter, but the Enquiry is a much later work. He also had a keen awareness of logical inconsistencies; Section IV is incoherent, a good indication Hume is not committed to it. Furthermore, Section IV is inconsistent with later sections. In Section VII, in which Hume analyzes necessary connection, he reverts to the Treatise's theory of impressions and ideas. In that section he equates necessary connection with power, not logical necessity; reasserts that complex ideas are composed of simple ones and those are copies from impressions; asserts there is no impression of power; asserts that reasoning cannot give us a new

simple idea; and denies there is any idea of power beyond constant conjunction.

In opposition to the above interpretation we may note that in sections other than IV, Hume does not unambiguously hold to the Treatise's theory of impressions. As we have noted, Hume's examples of the analysis of complex ideas, in Section II, are not simple ideas, they are abstract ideas, e.g. golden and mountain. Furthermore, the criterion of meaningfulness of the Enquiry is inconsistent with the Treatise's philosophy; terms that name relations are meaningful, but they do not have corresponding impressions.

In view of the conflicting evidence there is no way to settle the problem of interpretation short of discovering in an attic in Edinborough a letter from Hume to Henry Home revealing his true intentions. Interpretation has given us as much help as it can towards our understanding of the philosophy. Two tasks, however, still remain open, one historical, the other philosophical. The historical task is to fully develop each interpretation and to show how each interpretation has veen philosophical fruitful for other philosophers. Our interpretation of the Enquiry for example, shows the direct link between Hume and Kant; a statement of Hume's inconsistencies under our interpretation shows precisely the kind of problem Kant had in mind and from where he derived it. The second philosophical task, is to determine which of the philosophies under the various interpretations is justifiable. For example, under the Treatise's philosophy the Kantian philosophy if not justifiable because not analytic a priori judgments are possible (there is no such relation as logical necessity). Thus, even though the Kantian philosophy arose out of an interpretation of the Enquiry it must seek its justification on its own grounds, and

must be able to answer the objections raised by the Treatise's philosophy.

For our work, however, the philosophy of Thomas Reid, the problem of the two interpretations is not a great obstacle. Most of those who claim Reid misunderstood Hume follow the Kantian interpretation of Hume. If Reid is replying to the Treatise, however, any evaluation of him must be made on that basis. If the Kantian interpretation of Hume is incorrect or the Kantian philosophy is not justifiable, Reid appears in an even better light. Reid had to struggle with the far more sweeping skepticism of the Treatise, e.g. Kant could assume, unlike Reid, that Hume recognized the logical necessity of geometry. Under this view Reid might appear as the less dogmatic philosopher, rather than Kant.

Lately, another interpretation of Hume's philosophy has been developed. It hs been argued that Hume is a realist, ie. Hume believes there are two metaphysical categories and that the external world does exist. This view has been most recently put forward in Nicholas Capaldi's David Hume: The Newtonain Philosopher (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975). This view is not that different from our interpretation of the Enquiry. We argue that the Enquiry allows the possibility of dualism, but only admits we know the mental world. It is consistent with this interpretation to argue that Hume accepts the existence of the external world as an axiom (not a conclusion) of Newtonain science that any modern philosophy must accept.

Our interpretation of the Treatise is clearly inconsistent with any realistic interpretation. The realistic interpretation is supported by the opening of Book II of the Treatise.

> As the perceptions of the mind may be divided into impressions and ideas, so the impressions admit of another division into original and secondary.... Original impressions or impressions of sensation are such as without any antecendent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs.[39]

No reasonable straight-forward interpretation of the quotation can make it consistent with out interpretation. It follows that either our interpretation is incorrect or Hume is inconsistent. Our interpretation relies heavily on Hume's critique of abstract ideas. Fine points in our discussion of abstract ideas are disputable, but it is indisputable that Hume rejects abstract ideas. Without a notion of abstract ideas, however, Hume cannot meaningfully discuss objects which are antecedent to perceptions and are not themselves perceptiojns. Such objects are neither perceptions nor abstract ideas, but Hume never acknowledges any other kind of object in the understanding. It would seem, then, that Hume is inconsistent. Different interpretations that arise depend upon the interpreter's evaluation of the relative committment Hume has to realism and the rejection of abstract ideas.

We have now completed out historical task. We have developed a reasonable interpreation of the Enquiry that leads to Kant and we have developed an interpretation of the Treatise, different from that of the Enquiry, which does not lead to Kant and which does lead to Reid. We still have left the philosophial task of explaining and showing the plausibility of Reid's reply to the Treatise.

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39 Ibid., II, I, I, p. 275.

CHAPTER FIVE

REID'S DISCUSSION OF CAUSATION

INTRODUCTION

In moving in our examination from Hume to Reid we face a problem. Reid's criticism of Hume is not limited to a single point, nor does he consider Hume's various theses about causation in the same chronological or logical order as Hume. It is important to remember that Reid is not just a commentator on Hume, he is a philosopher in his own right who starts with basic premises that are far different from Hume's. This difference is not just that Reid has a starting premise that Hume denies, it is rather that Reid takes as first principles beliefs that Hume takes as conclusions. In order, then, to explain Reid's critique of Hume, and to develop Reid's own theory of causation, we will not simply lay his comments beside Hume's. That method leads to a gross distortion of Reid's philosophy because the reader must first realize that Reid rejects certain commonly accepted Humean principles. To explain Reid's philosophy we will first develop some of his key principles, and only after they have been examined will we compare his theory of causation to Hume's.

In explaining Reid's theory of causation we have a special case of a problem mentioned in Chapter Three. Reid's

works are not presented as deductive systems that move smoothly from definitions and axions to conclusions. Since Reid believes that many philosophical terms cannot be logically defined, he indicates what they mean by discussing the sort of things they name. On such a view Reid's full meaning of a term is not clear until the discussion is over; the term, not being defined, everything said about the term helps us to understand it. A defect of this method of philosophizing is that some concepts may always be in shadow because they are used to explain other concepts, but they themselves arenever put into the spotlight. Reid has been undervalued as a philosopher because some of his central concepts have been overlooked; he never brings these concepts center stage. Reid emphasizes those concepts other philosophers, especially Hume, have misused; he often gives little attention to those concepts, central to his own philosophy, Hume considers peripheral.

I. Our Knowledge of Other Minds, Including God

It is our interpretive thesis that the logically central concept in Reid's philosophy is that of "God". Reid discusses God very rarely, but the only way his philosophy is coherent and an effective reply to Hume is if God is the central concept.

This thesis is likely to drive away the empirically minded. Empiricists have generally viewed God as a separate side problem in metaphysics and epistemology, not as a logically central one. There are empiricists who are also

religious and view the question of God as evaluatively the most important, but in metaphysics and esistemology they are empiricists first, and religionists second. To such thinkers, to begin with the concept of God sounds like rationalism or irrationalism. Many empiricists are agnostics or atheists concerning God. These thinkers view questions about God as subsidiary to the major questions of empiricism; certainly not as the starting point for empiricism. Against such prejudice all the defender of Reid can do is appeal to the empiricist's traditional open mindedness, point out that Reid does not try to prove that the Kirk of Scotland is God's True Church on Earth, and most importantly, emphasize that Reid's use of God eliminates, in a logical manner, some of the traditionally strong objections against empiricism.

Reid's references to God are quite brief; he does not have a fully developed philosophical theology. Before we look at it, it might be helpful to add some cautions. In Chapter Three we argued that Reid's philosophy of common sense has been misunderstood because most readers approach it with the assumption Reid has an absolutist epistemology. Reid, however, never claims absolute certain knowledge, and in fact often denies that humans can have such knowledge. In discussing God, Reid again takes an anti-absolutist position. He never claims to know the true nature of God or to know how God works His Will in the World. Reid merely claims that there is a God, and that the existence of this God solves Hume's problem of induction. Reid's argument for the

existence of God occurs in the Essays on the Intellectual Powers, Essay VI, Chapter VI, "First Principles of Necessary Truths". In many ways the argument is typical eighteenth century natural theology; it uses the argument from design--if there is a clock there must be a clockmaker. Reid's innovation is that he realizes that this argument is the same one used to solve the problem of other minds, and that the rejection of this argument from design must lead to solipsism. Let us look at this argument more closely.

A. Infer Design in Cause from Signs in Effects

In Essay VI, Chapter VI, Reid discusses those principles of common sense that are necessary truths. He divides the principles into several classes, including grammatical, logical, mathematical and metaphysical. The third metaphysical principle is

> ...That design and intelligence in the cause may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect.[1]

It is within the discussion of this principle that Reid argues for the existence of God.

Reid begins his discussion of the principle by noting

> Intelligence, design, and skill, are not objects of the external senses, nor can we be conscious of them...[2]

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[1] Reid, Works, p. 457 (Reid's italics)

[2] Ibid., p. 458.

He gives a few examples of the above and then says

> Yet it is to be observed, that we judge of men's talents with as little doubt or hesitation as we judge of the immediate objects of sense.[3]

After giving examples of such judgments, such as inferring wisdom from wise conduct, Reid concludes

> This inference is made with perfect security by all men. We cannot avoid it; it is necessary in the ordinary conduct of life; it has therefore, the strongest marks of being a first principle.[4]

The first premise of this argument is unexceptional. No philosopher who ever distinguished between acts of intelligence and intelligence itself, ever claimed we sense intelligence. In the case of our own intelligence, Hume had shown that we are no more conscious of such qualitities in ourselves as we sense such qualities in other.

Reid's second premise is much more interesting; it is an observation on how live. The quotation given above does not capture the full force of the premise--that comes from Reid's examples. Reid's point is that in everyday life we must distinguish the intelligent from the unintelligent. Reid's point is that ineveryday life we must distinguish the intelligent-from the unintelligent. Reid does not mean intelligence in some metaphysical sense; he means it in the sense as when one hires a worker one hires an intelligent

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

one as opposed to an unintelligent one. This everyday distinction is especially important in the law. It has gone unobserved that many of Reid's examples come from the law and that many of his common sense principles are principles that the law could not do without. Reid's first example to support the premise that we do judge of people's talents is from the law.

> One person, we are sure is a perfect idiot, another, who feigns idiocy to screen himself from punishment, is found, upon trial, to have the understanding of a man, and to be accountable for his conduct.[5]

Reid believes the notion of legal competence is prior to any metaphysics. Human life as we know it is not possible without some system that holds us accountable and every notion of human accountability must include the notion of intelligence. Any metaphysical system that does not permit us to make our ordinary distinction between the intelligence and unintelligence must be wrong because human life could not continue if it were adopted.

Just as the above argument claims that no metaphysical system can imply there is no such thing as intelligence, the above argument does not imply any metaphysical system about the nature of intelligence. It is a habit of many twentieth

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5 Ibid.

century philosophers to ascribe a Cartesian or Idealist metaphysics to anyone who uses any mental terms. There are, as a matter of fact, a great many theories of the nature of mind, and many do not claim that mind is a separate, existing substance. Reid's metaphysical agnosticism prevents him from claiming to know the nature of mind; any attempts to foist such a theory on him is totally unfair.

Reid's demand that any satisfactory philosophical system must leave room for intelligence and accountability is directed at Hume. Hume had shown there is no reason to believe there are other minds, that is, other intelligences. Hume's only method for allowing the belief that there are other intelligent beings is to stop doing philosophy; play a game of billards and nature reasserts herself over logic. We have argued in Chapter Three that Reid replaced Hume's natural belief with common sense beliefs based on the socialization process. Reid would say that the principle that certain signs are the mark of an intelligence is essential if there is to be society. Society teaches this principle to all new members. Those who do not accept the principle are removed from society. Society, however is concerned with practical affairs, not speculation. Theories about the nature of intelligence are speculative; hence there can be disagreements about them. About the belief that there is intelligence, on the other hand, there can be no disagreement.

Reid's argument so far is that the principle of inferring an intelligent cause from design in the effects is used

in everyday life, it is necessary to human society, is not provable from observation or by demonstration and, therefore, is a first principle. Reid immediately faces two counter claims to his conclusion. Some philosophers would claim the principle is known by reason, and others would claim it is known by experience. Reid and Hume reject both these claims. In his argument against these claims Reid openly acknowledges his debt to Hume.

Reid has three arguments against the claim that this principle is known by reasoning. The first is that the principle is universally held by humans, yet "not one in ten thousand can give a reason for it."[6] This argument parallels one of Hume's arguments in the Enquiry that the principle of induction cannot be known by reasoning. Hume notes that children, brutes and peasants act in accordance with that principle. If the principle is known by reasoning, Hume notes ironically, he must be a very poor scholar because he cannot now offer a piece of reasoning he knew in his cradle.

Both Reid and Hume realize the above argument is weak, neither devotes much space to it. Most philosophers who claim a disputed principle is known by reason say it can be known by reason, not that everyone does know it by reason; sometimes they go so far as to say only a philosopher can know the reasons for the principle. To answer this argument

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[6] Ibid.

Reid examines the work of two philosophers who have defended the principle that intelligence in the cause may be inferred from signs of it in the effect. Reid quotes from Cicero's De Divinatione and Archbishop Tillotson's Sermons. He then notes that neither work has a single step for reasoning; the first simply appeals to common sense and the second shows the denial of the principle appears ridiculous to someone of common sense. Thus, even philosophers never support the principle by deriving it from another premises.

We might note, as an aside here, that the above argument not only reveals some of Reid's philosophy, it also shows his care and ability as a student of other philosophers. He can examine a passage with care and understand what method an author is using and what reasoning is being invoked. Reid's ability in this area should give other philosophers pause, before they accuse him of misunderstanding Hume. Reid's analysis of Cicero and Tillotson should also give cause to those who claim that Reid does not know the difference between reason and invective. Reid here clearly shows that he does. Reid's philosophical works deal mostly with what Reid believes are first principles. Something is a first principle precisely because it is not supported by reason. Reid believes that one of the few ways to argue for a first principle is to show its denial is ridiculous. A critic of Reid might dispute with Reid about which principles are first principles, but any critic who understands Reid's philosophy must allow that his method of doing philosophy is appropriate to the conclusions he wishes to draw.

Let us return now to Reid's denial that we can, by reason, infer intelligence from signs in effects. Reid considers the argument from the mathematical doctrine of chances, i.e. it is unlikely that a design in something should be the effect of chance. Reid's counter arguemnt is that the doctrine of chances is a special case of the principle to be proven; hence any argument from the doctrine of chances is circular.

> ...I would observe that the doctrine of chances is a branch of mathematics little more than a hundred years old. But the conclusion drawn from it has been held by all men from the beginning of the world. It cannot, therefore, be thought that men have been led to this conclusion by that reasoning. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the first principles upon which all the mathematical reasoning about chances is grounded, is more self-evident than this conclusion drawn from it, or whether it is not a particular instance of that general conclusion.[7]

Reid next turns to the claim that the principle under consideration can be known by experience. He advances two arguments against that claim. The first argument is that the principle under consideration is like a mathematical truth, there is a difference between a necessary truth and a contingent truth even though both are in agreement with experience.

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7 Ibid., VI, VI, p. 459.

> ...the first is a necessary truth, and that it is impossible it should not be true, but the last is not necessary, but contingent, depending upon the will of Him who made the world.[8]

Since the principle is a necessary truth, its agreement with experience is not enough to justify it as a necessary truth.

> Experience informs us only of what has been, but never of what must be.[9]

This argument is very perplexing. First of all, Reid never argues that the principle is necessary; he simply assumes it. Second, he says it is necessary in the same way as mathematical truths are necessary, yet he never explains this obscure claim. A careful reading of Reid, however, shows that Reid does in fact solve the first problem. The solution of the second problem, however, required that the reader become interpreter and, perhaps, philosopher.

The first premise, of Reid's argument that the principle is a first principle, is that intelligence is not an object of external sense or consciousness. His second argument, that the principle cannot be known by experience, is an expansion of that premise and also an argument that the principle is a necessary truth. The argument is as follows.

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8 Ibid., pp. 459-460.

9 Ibid., p. 460.

1. We only know by experience a connection between a thing and the thing signified by it when we (1) perceive both thing and things signified, and (2) always perceive them in conjunction.

2. "The mind is not an immediate object of sense or consciousness."[10]

3. "We may, therefore, justly conclude that the necessary connection between thought and a mind, or thinking being, is not learned from experience."[11]

Reid's argument here is that the principle is not a necessary truth which also agrees with experience. No one could experience one of the relata of the principle, hence the principle receives absolutely no confirmation from experience. This conclusion, we might note is well grounded, and is also in accord with Humean philosophy. Reid, however, goes from that conclusion to the claim that the principle is a necessary truth. One might wonder how he does that; it seems possible that the principle could be contingent but have no grounds in experience. Reid never faces this question. He, however, might claim that we do know the principle (the final argument in this chapter), all principles are either contingent or necessary, if the principle is contingent we do not know it;

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

hence the principle is necessary.

This last argument can help us solve our second problem, Reid's ground for asserting that the principle of design is necessary in the way that the truths of mathematics are necessary. We must begin by noting two theories of necessity. Traditionally, most philosophers believe that necessary truths can be sorted from contingent ones by inspection. It is often said that Descartes' clear and distinct ideas are necessary truths. As a matter of fact that is not quite the case. Descartes says clear and distinct ideas are certain. He also says, however, that God could change the laws of logic, if He so chose. Thus, if a necessary truth is one that could never be false, no truth, according to Descartes, is necessary. However, if a necessary truth is one that the denial of which is inconceivable by the human mind, then Descartes' clear and distinct ideas are necessary. Later on we will closely examine Reid's rejection of the view that conceivability is the test of possibility. For now, we will just note that Reid says that impossibilities are just as conceivable as contingent truths. A second theory of necessity, traditionally ascribed to Leibniz, is that a necessary truth is one that is true in all possible worlds. This view holds that God is bound by the laws of logic; they are not contingent on His will. Hence, any statement that would be true no matter what world God created, is a statement of a necessary truth.

Reid often sounds as if he subscribes to the Leibnizean view. In the quotation given above in which Reid contrasts

a necessary with a contingent truth, he says the latter is dependent on the will of God. It follows that a necessary truth is not dependent upon the will of God, i.e. is true in all worlds God could possibly create. This view leaves Reid with a problem that the Cartesian view avoids. On the Cartesian view we know immediately which truths are necessary --those whose denial are inconceivable. The view that Reid embraces, however offers no such simple solution; lacking a knowledge of all the worlds God could possibly create, we cannot know which principles would be true in all those worlds. It is true that a statement whose denial is a self contradiction is necessary, but it is very difficult to know which statements fit this category. Reid points out that even in mathematics it is difficult to discover which statements are self-contradictory; mathematicians have used much time trying to prove statements which were later discovered to be self-contradictory.[12] The knowledge that a statement is a self-contradiction is a hard won discovery; we do not know beforehand which statements we will discover to be self-contradictory. Furthermore it is necessary, for all we know, that all necessary statements are ones whose denials are self-contradictions. It is possible, for all we know, that some statements whose denials are not self contradictory are true in all possible worlds; knowledge of all possible worlds belongs to God, not to us.

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12 Ibid., IV, IV, pp. 378-379.

Given the above interpretation we can now explain why Reid believes both the principles of design and the first principles of mathematics are necessary. In both cases the principles are not known by experience and could not be known by experience; some of the things named in the principles, eg. minds and lines, are not the sorts of things that are perceivable. Since the principles are not known by experience they are either necessarily false or necessarily true. We find it impossible for us, as socialized beings, to reject these principles as false or even to suspend judgement; hence they are necessarily true. The first principles of mathematics are not on any firmer grounds than the principle of design; both are equally necessary and for the same reasons.

Reid's second argument for the denial that the principle of design can be known by experience is a repetition of arguments he has already made, and assumed in the first argument. To know a connection between two things by experience, we must be able to perceive both relata. But neither our own mind nor the purpose or intelligence of another mind can be perceived by us. Hence we cannot by experience infer intelligence or design in the cause.

With the repetitiom of this argument Reid ends his argument for the principle of design. Before we examine his use of it in natural theology it would be informative to compare his arguemnts to Hume's. Hume never questioned that common sense principles, such as the principle of design, are necessary and useful for ordinary life, or that a sane person could not help believing them. What Hume does do is give a

naturalistic account of them that shows they have no foundation in reason. Hume's naturalistic account of a principle appeals to habit; we are accustomed to a certain kind of constant conjunction, e.g. fire and heat, and apply it to a analagous relata, e.g. purpose and an effect, even though we have no rational grounds for doing so. Such an account cannot work, however, in the case of mind, intelligence, purpose, wisdom or moral qualities (of a person); such terms do not name things we perceive. They do not name either ideas or modifications of ideas. There is no analogy that permits the mind to go from an observed conjunction to a conjunction of intelligence, etc. and an effect. Hume himself never discusses the principle of design in the Treatise or Enquiry there is no way he could account for it within his naturalistic philosophy.

Hume's failure to account for the principle of design is significant. Hume says the errors of philosophy are only ridiculous, while those of religion are dangerous. The failure to account for purpose, however, is more than ridiculous; it is dangerous. It is of immence practical concern to distinguish between those things which have intelligence and act purposefully from those that do not. Our entire social, moral and legal system is based on the ability to make that distinction. Perhaps a society is possible that lacks any concept of intelligence, purpose, responsibility, etc., but that society would be far different from ours. Hume's inability to account for purpose, etc. is the

inability to account for one of the most fundamental concepts used in daily life. Even a utilitarian philosophy of law, such as Hume might have held, uses the concept of purpose in such matters as determining what things are bound by the law, e.g. people are bound, rocks are not, and in distinguishing deliberate from negligent act.

The above argument, that Hume could not account for purpose, is ours based on some of Reid's observation. Reid has his own argument that Hume cannot account for purpose, etc., but the argument occurs within his argument for the existence of God. Let us now turn to that argument.

B. The Existence of God

Most of Reid's argument from design is standard eighteenth century thought.

> The argument from final causes, when reduced to a syllogism, has these two premises: First, That design and intelligence in the cause, may, with certainty, be inferred from marks or signs of it in the effect. This is the principle we have been considering, and we may call it the major proposition of the argument. The second which we call minor proposition, is That there are in fact the clearest marks of design and wisdom in the works of nature; and the conclusion is, That the works of nature are the effects of a wise and intelligent Cause.[13]

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13 Ibid., VI, VI, pp. 460-61.

Reid notes that with the advance of science, even atheists concede that the world has a regularity and a fitness of means to end. Modern atheists, of which Hume is the chief representative, deny the major proposition. Reid mentions the argument that Hume uses in Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. We know an effect has a certain cause and that "...if we had been accustomed to see worlds produced, some by wisdom and others without it, and had observed that such a world as this which we inhabit was always the effect of wisdom, we might then, from past experience, conclude that this world was made by wisdom; but having no such experience we have no means of forming any conclusion about it."[14]

Many empiricist philosophers believe Hume's argument is unanswerable, yet Reid gives a reply that is in keeping with Humean premises, is elegant in its simplicity, and carries great weight. Reid's solution is that the problem of the existence of God is a special case of the problem of other minds. Any argument that shows we cannot know of the existence of God from design equally shows we cannot know of any other intelligence. Solipsism violates common sense (it is both ridiculous and dangerous). Any philosophy that avoids solipsism at the same time proves the existence of God.

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14 Ibid., p. 461.

Let us put Reid's argument more formally.

1. Hume assumes we infer design in a cause from our past experience of a constant conjunction of design in a cause and marks of design in the effect.

2. We never perceive design, intelligence, in a cause.

> It seems, then, that the man who maintains that there is no force in the argument from final causes, must, if he will be consistent, see no evidence of the existence of any intelligent being but himself.[15]

The argument is overwhelming. In fact, however, Reid could have substituted a more general conclusion. As Reid observes slightly earlier, we do not perceive our own mind; we infer we are an intelligent being from the marks of it in our thoughts. It follows then that those who deny the argument from final causes cannot see evidence for any intelligences, including themselves.

One of the most important aspects of Reid's argument and something that is characteristic of Reid's thinking, is that it is independent of any particular metaphysical system. There are numerous philosophical accounts of mind, intelligence, etc.; they range from behavioristic to Idealistic. No matter which one a philosopher adopts, the philosopher accepts the existence of God. Philosophers will disagree on the nature of God, but Reid would say that that only those with

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Ibid.

much hubris would even, in the first place, try to know the nature of God. It is only of the existence of God that we have knowledge.

II. The Meanings of "Cause

This chapter is about Reid's views on causation, yet the first topic we discussed is the existence of God. We did so because God is central to Reid's theory of causation. We cannot explain this role, however, until we explain Reid's concept of causation. It is time then that we turn directly to Reid's discussion of causation. The first item of that topic that we will discuss is Reid's examination of the common meanings of the word "cause". The outcome of that discussion will be a surprise to those who hold a Kantian attitude towards Reid.

As we have seen in this work, Reid is very aware of the meanings of words, that words are often ambiguous, and that old words are often given new meanings, especially by philosophers. The word "cause" is one of those words. Reid distinguishes the various meanings and is very careful to state what he means by the word. He performs this task in two places--an undated letter to Dr. James Gregory[16] and in Essays on the Active Powers of Man.

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16 Ibid., "Letters", C, Letter XVI, pp. 77-78.

Reid distinguishes two meanings of "cause", a popular and a precise philosophical one. In ordinary life a cause is anything of which we have the least suspicion it produces the effect.

> In common language, we give the name of a cause to a reason, a motive, an end, to any circumstance which is connected with the effect, and goes before it.[17]

The philosophical notion of "cause" on the other hand, is closely tied to that of "active power".

> That which produces a change by the exertion of its power we call the cause of that change...[18]

We will presently examine Reid's notion of active power; we can note for the moment that he believes it is something we are all aware that we have, is a property of beings with intelligence, and might be a property of beings without intelligence. Reid never claims material objects cause anything. He distinguishes the meaning of the word "cause" in natural philosophy and philosophy. In science (natural philosophy) "cause" means what Hume means, "a constant conjunction.

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17 Ibid., I, VI, p. 526.

18 Ibid.

> Natural philosophers... mean by the cause, a law of nature of which that phaenomenon is a necessary consequence.[19]

In the above quotation Reid does not mean that the laws of nature produce the effect.

> The laws of nature are the rules according to which the effects are produced, but there must be a cause which operates according to these rules. The rules of navigation never navigated a ship; the rules of architecture never built a house.[20]

It is imperative to note that when Reid discusses causation, he means efficient causation attributable to an intelligent agent; he does not mean the constant conjunction of events in the material world. Reid never questions the Humean view of causation as used in the physical sciences. A great deal of mistaken criticism has been leveled at Reid because critics, including Kant, have failed to note this point.

Reid's view of causation leads to a sharp distinction between the physical and the social sciences. By induction the physical sciences discover constant conjunctions of phaenomena, but these sciences never look for or discover efficient causes. The social sciences, on the other hand, observe individual events and seek to determine the cause.

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19 Ibid., I, II, p. 515.

20 Ibid., I, VI, p. 527.

> Upon the theater of nature we see innumerable effects, which require an agent endowed with active power; but the agent is behind the scene. Whether it be the Supreme Cause alone, or a subordinate cause or causes; and if subordinate causes be employed by the Almighty, what their nature, their number, and their different offices may be--are things hid, for wise reasons without doubt, from the human eye.
>
> It is only in human actions, that may be inputed for praise and blame, that it is necessary for us to know who is the agent; and in this, nature has given us all the light that is necessary for out conduct.[21]

The above shows not only the difference between natural and social science, it also shows Reid's view of the place of God. Reid does not have a Deistic or clockmaker view of God; God is not the creator who then lets the universe run by the laws he has given it. Natural phaenomena are not the causes of other natural phaenomena; only God or His agents can be such causes. Hence God, either directly or indirectly through His agents participates in the affairs of the universe Reid's view of God, then, is akin to that of the Cambridge Platonists, Malebranch and Berkeley, and opposed to the eighteenth-century Deistic and mechanistic views of God.

A. Causation and Active Power

In order to understand Reid's theses about causation, principles related to causation e.g. determinism, and his critique of Hume, we must be clear about his notion of active

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21 Ibid.

power. This notion is presented in the first two chapters of the first essay of the Essays on the Active Powers of Man. As we have already mentioned Reid does not try to define this term because he denies it can be logically defined. Instead he offers several observations to help hs reader understand what he means by the term.

Reid's first observation is that

> Power is not an object of any our external senses, nor even an object of consciousness.[22]

This observation shows the influence of Hume, which Reid acknowledges. The difference, according to Reid, is that whereas Hume says that since there is no impression of power there is no idea of it, Reid says that since everyone knows what active power is, we know of things other than through sense or consciousness.

Most philosophers accept that power is not an object of sense. Ried's argument that it is not an object of consciousness is almost identical to Hume's, although Hume's is broader. In the Enquiry Hume considers the claim that the idea of power "is an idea of reflection, since it arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and on the command which is exercised by will, both over the organs of

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22 Ibid.

the body and faculties of the soul."[23] Hume goes through several examples to show we have no idea of power. In each case he shows that all we know is a certain event, a command of our will, is followed by another event, the willed event, or is not followed by the event. It is only by experience, Hume concludes, that we discover whether the command of the will is followed by the willed event. One of these cases is the man suddenly struck with palsy.

> A man suddenly struck with palsy in the leg or arm, or had newly lost those members, frequently endeavors, at first to move them, and employ them in their usual offices. Here he is as much conscious of power to command such limbs, as a man in perfect health is conscious of power to actuate.... consciousness never deceives. Consequently, neither in the one case nor in the other, are we ever conscious of any power.[24]

Reid's argument that we are not conscious of power does not consider the several cases as Hume's does; rather, it is limited to the case of the palsied man.

> This belief [of active power in ourselves], however, is not consciousness--for we may be deceived in it; but the testimony of consciousness can never deceive. Thus, a man who is struck with a palsy in the night, commonly knows not that he has lost the power of speech till he attempts to speak; he knows not whether he can move his hand and arms till he makes the trial; and if, without making trial, he consults his consciousness ever so attentively, it will give him no information whether he has lost these powers or still retains them.[25]

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[23] Ibid., I, I, p. 512.

[24] Hume, Enquiry, Section VII, Part I, p. 64.

[25] Ibid., p. 66

Reid's close paraphrase of Hume shows that he understands Hume's arguments and accepts its conclusions. Reid accepts two conclusions from the argument: that the belief in active power in ourselves is not gained by consciousness, that the only way we know we have active power is to assert it.

Reid's second observation is that we have only a relative, not a direct, conception, of power. Things of which we have a direct conception are things of which "we know what they are in themselves;"[26] examples of such things are the primary qualities of body and the apparitions of the mind of which we are conscious. Things of which we have a relative conception are things of which we know "only that they have certain properties or attributes, or certain relation to other things",[27] examples of such things are our notions of body, mind, secondary quality, powers of bodies, and objects of mathematics.

Power, says Reid, is conceived relative to its effect, but it is distinguished from its effect.

> Our conception of power is relative to its exertion or effect. Power is one thing; its exertion is another thing. It is true there can be no exertion without power; but there may be power that is not exerted. Thus, a man may

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26 Reid, p. 513.

27 Ibid.

> have power to speak when he is silent; he may have power to rise and walk when he sits still.[28]

What would Hume say in reply to the above paragraph? First off, let us repeat that Reid is only speaking of the power of intelligent agents. Reid accepts the Humean view of causation concerning material objects. The only dispute is whether the action of intelligent agents can be distinguished from the sequences of events in the material world.

Hume in the Treatise allows for relation, but he could not allow relative conception. A relative conception is not a relation; it is a conception of a thing which has a relation to something else. All distinguishable things (impression) are separable; power, since it is not an impression is not separable. Reid, however, has already denied power is anything like an impression. For Hume power is either an impression or a relation. It is, however, neither. We come then to a crucial test of a philosophical system. Can it account for everything? The key element in this case is the notion of human responsibility. Hume cannot distinguish, using metaphysical concepts, between human action and other behavior because he cannot account for active power. Reid thus concludes that Humean system is inadequate and one of its premises is incorrect. Hume can reply that he cannot account for human responsibility using metaphysical concepts, but he can using ethical concepts. It is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this work to examine Hume and Reid's ethics; such a text would be as great as our present one.

We can see, however, the close connection between these two beanches of philosophy in the eighteenth century. We might add, as an obiter dictum, that we believe ultilitarianism cannot account for human responsibility, and hence Reid's criticism of Hume is fully justified.

Reid's third observation is also in direct opposition Hume's principle. "Power is a quality, and cannot exist without a subject to which it belongs."[29] Hume cannot recognize qualities (i.e. attributes) because they are not separable from the things of which they are qualities. In order for Reid to claim power is a quality he has to show that causation cannot be reduced to constant conjunction, and he has to develop a theory of abstract ideas and conceptions to account for qualities. In Chapter Three we saw Reid's account of conceptions, and in the present chapter we see his claim that power is an irreducable concept. With these two theses Reid has a coherent response to Hume that uses much of Hume's own philosophy, but goes beyond it where necessary.

Reid's fourth observation is that

> We cannot conclude the want of power from its not being exerted; nor from the exertion of a less degree of power can we conclude that there is no greater degree in the subject.[30]

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29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

This observation is important for Reid's ethics and philosophy of law. In cases of negligence and omission a person is held responsible if the person had the power to do otherwise, but did not. If power does not exist when it is not being exercised then no one could be held responsible for a negligence or an omission.

Reid's fifth observation is that

> There are some qualities that have a contrary, others that have not: Power is a quality of the latter kind.[31]

Reid considers this observation to be obvious. His only comment is that weakness and impotence are privations of power, not contraries to it.

Reid's next point is that "power" is a word with a meaning, contra Hume. The grounds for this claim are twofold: it is used in common language and if this word is meaningless, a great many other words are meaningless. The ground for the first claim is that we immediately assent to many propositions about power, including those in Reid's five observations above. If we assent to some propositions about power, and deny their contraries, then "power" must have a meaning.

This defense is very weak. Hume never said "power" was totally meaningless; he only said it was nothing more than a habit formed by a constant conjunction. It is not clear, but it is possible that Hume's meaning of "power" is consistent with Reid's five observations. Reid himself may have realized

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31 Ibid.

the argument is weak; he devotes only a single paragraph to it, the second argument receives an entire chapter.

Reid's second argument for the meaningfulness of "power" is that

> There are many other things related to power, in such a manner that we can have no notion of them if we have none of power. 32

Among such words are "cause," "effect," "action," "passion," "exertion," and "operation." The critical terms in this list are "action" and "passion." Hume's philosophy does give a meaning to "cause" and "effect." That theory, however, cannot distinguish between an action produced by an agent and the occurence of an event. Without that distinction there is no way to account for moral and legal responsibility. Reid uses all of Chapter II of Essay I to establish the distinction between action and passion.

Reid begins Chapter II by noting that the distinction between activity and passivity is found in the structure of all languages.

> ...there is no language so imperfect but that it has active and passive verbs and participles; the one signifying some kind of action; the other being acted upon. 33

We have seen Reid appeal to the structure of language in prior chapters and have discussed why he believes that is a strong argument. Rather than repeat that discussion we right away turn to what Reid considers a counter argument to such an appeal in this case, and Reid's reply.

The counter argument is that the structure of language does not always parallel its contents; a term that is gramatically active might refer to something passive, and the reverse.

32 Ibid., p. 515.
33 Ibid.

Hence, the grammatical difference between active and passive not due to a regard for action and passion. In general, Reid's reply to this argument is to admit that the grammar and contents are not always parallel, but to show that these failures of parallelism are special exceptions that have no force against his argument.

Reid's first counter argument is that even though there are exceptions, it is, in fact, a general rule that verbs and participles have an active and a passive voice. That there is such a rule shows people have always distinguished action from passion.

This argument is weak; since Reid only gives it one paragraph, he himself must think so. Granting Reid's premise that a universal grammatical feature also shows a metaphysical feature, he must show the feature is universal, not merely general. If it is only general then it does not govern our beliefs and actions in the way Reid claims our common sense principles do. Violations of common sense are ridiculous and absurd. There can be no legitimate exceptions to a common sense principle, for all violations of common sense principles are ridiculous and absurd. This first counter argument is only significant if it is placed in the context of the other counter arguments. Once Reid can show that the apparent exceptions are not real exceptions then his point that grammar does distinguish between active and passive becomes significant.

Reid's second counter-argument is more to the point. Language is always a compromise between two needs, economy of structure and precision of meaning. In order to keep the

structure simple, the same structure is used for many purposes. Thus, the active and passive structures are used to express action and passion, but they are also used to express other things that are little or not at all related to action and passion.

This is an important claim for Reid; it should remove many apparent counter-examples to his thesis. It is, however, unfortunate that he does not give any examples of the use of the active and passive structures in ways that are clearly irrelevant to the notions of action and passion.

Reid's third counter-argument is that language was formed when human knowledge was very primitive. People had all sorts of fanciful theories of what caused various things, and built those theories into the language. One of the most important of those theories was that life and activity were ascribed to natural phaenomena, and thus were described as active, rather than as passive. "Thus we say, the wind blows, the sea rages, the sun rises and sets, bodies gravitate and move."[34] Now, we know such things are inactive, but it is impossible to change our language; instead we keep the old expressions, but understand them to mean the scientific explanations of the phaenomena. Furthermore, say Reid, even though we know these phaenomena are passive, the fact that people gave them active significations when people believed they acted, shows people do distinguish between action and passion.

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[34] Ibid., p. 517

This counter argument is very strong, yet it brings in a point that can undermine Reid's entire thesis. The strength of the argument is that it does account for a huge number of cases where an active structure is used to describe something passive. The problem is that science can overthrow our current ones, including our belief in human activity. If Reid is to reply he must argue that science cannot, or at least has not, shown humans are only passive. In order to do that he must be clearer about the nature of action and passion, and explain how science does in fact show anything, formerly believed to be active, is passive. Such an undertaking seems possible, but it cannot be accomplished by an appeal to the structure of language. Once Reid allows science to overthrow one belief built into language, he has a much more difficult task than to appeal to language to justify any belief based on language.

Reid's fourth counter-argument goes beyond language to the conduct of humans. His argument is that much of human conduct depends on the belief that humans. His argument is that much of human conduct depends on the belief that humans perform certain operations of mind; these operations, in turn, imply a belief in active power. The sorts of conduct to which Reid is referring are volitions, efforts to act, deliberations, purposes, promises, counsels, exhortations and commands.[35] We would do none of these, and we would be crazy

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35 Ibid.

if we tried, if we did not believe that we or the agent we were addressing, had the power to do them.

Reid here names the most important argument for the notion of agency; there are certain human activities, such as promising, with all its related notions, that cannot be explained as a constant conjunction of events. Unfortunately, Reid names the argument rather than stating it. Reid says no one would make or accept a promise if the promisor did not believe he had the power to fulfill it. One might just as well argue no one would eat unless the food had the power to nourish. The point is not whether one event is likely to be followed by another; the point is whether a notion of active power is needed. Reid simply never considers that point in this passage.

Reid's fifth counter argument is that people desire power; since people desire power, "power" must have a meaning. It is difficult to understand this argument. If by "power" Reid means political or economic power, Hume can give a meaning to these terms. As we noted above, Hume never says "power" is meaningless, though he would claim "active power" is meaningless. Once again, Reid fails to note that he must show a concept of active power is needed to explain human behavior. In the instance of desire of power, as a matter of fact, "power" does not mean "active power." Active power is not something that can be acquired or lost, as political office or wealth can; either one has active power or one has not. This argument, then under a straightforward interpretation, does not support reid's thesis.

In the course of Chapter II Reid shifts his purpose. He begins by trying to show that the difference between active and passive structures in grammar represent a distinction between action and passion. In the first three arguments he notes that, generally, active forms indicate action and passive forms passion, that the economic structure of language forces us to use the same structure for many purposes, and that even though science has proven many things passive, the ancient belief that they are active remains embedded in our language. The admission that science can overturn a belief universally expressed in language forces Reid to show that the belief in the existence of active power is needed to explain operations of the mind and human conduct. Reid, however, does not do this. What he does do is show that word "power" has some meaning. What he must do, but does not, is show that the belief in the existence (not just the conceivability) of active power is needed to explain operations of the mind and human conduct. We must admit, then, that Reid does not give a satisfactory answer to Hume. Hume tried to show "power" was nothing but "a habit developed by observing a constant conjunction." Reid accepts that thesis for events in the material world, but argues that intelligent beings have active power. Reid does not prove that there is such a thing as active power, but his importance lies in the fact that he lays down a program which other philosophers can try to complete to show active power is needed for intelligent conduct.

III. Reid's Theory of Causation

Even though Reid does not prove that active power exists, his notion of active power is clear enough to be able to make clear his view of causation. It might help make that view of causation clearer if we contrasted it, with Descartes' theory. Descartes believed that events in the physical world are necessary, each event necessarily determines the next, just as the values of its variables necessarily determine the solution of a function. Descartes went so far as to claim that from the idea of God, one can infer the structure of the universe and the course of events. On this view God is the first cause, but once He acts, it is the particular event, not God, that causes the succeeding events. Over the course of time Descartes' a priori, purely geometric physics has been abandoned, yet his belief that events cause events has become firmly entrenched. Any science that is not to have any theological implications must hold such a view. There are only three possible explanations for the course of nature: either events cause other events, something extra-sensible causes events, or events do not have causes. Most people cannot accept the third alternative. The second alternative has many variants, but all acknowledge some metaphysical being or beings, and usually end up with some claim to the existence of God. Thus, people who wish to keep science independent of religion are forced to take the first alternative. Since Hume, however, that alternative is not really available; no one has been able to show events have any deeper

connection than a constant conjunction. Most nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers have simply refused to face the dilemma that they must accept a radical indeterminism or a theology. Most philosophers have used Hume's argument (especially against metaphysics), but have refused to seriously consider its other implications. Thus, the view that events do produce other events is still strongly believed, although it is acknowledged we do not know how such production is accomplished.

Eighteenth century philosophy is frequently characterized as mechanistic and Deistic, that is, it holds the view that events produce other events. There are many eighteenth century philosophers who held that view, but there are many who did not. Malebranche, Berkeley and Reid are among the latter. All three hold that God is more than the First Cause which set the universe in motion and then let it operate by itself; they hold that God is constantly operating in the universe and is the direct cause of many things. Reid tries to give this view a clear, defensible foundation. We have already looked at his proof for the existence of God and his notion of active power. According to Reid, God is the ultimate cause of events (Reid leaves open the possibility He works indirectly through inferior agents or instruments). God must be the cause because events do not cause events, and events must have causes. Reid's metaphysical agnosticism however, does not let him say more than this. We do not know metaphysical individuals or the laws by which God operates.

All that we do know are the constant conjunctions which we observe in nature. This knowledge is gained by induction, never by deduction from hypotheses about how God must run the universe, but we know nothing of how He operates. The above view, however, depends on the principles of determinism and induction. We must turn now to Reid's critique of Hume's arguments about these principles, and Reid's own positive theses.

IV. Induction and Determinism

In our examination of Hume's argument concerning determinism and induction in Chapter Four, we noted that Hume frequently relies on the principle that whatever is conceivable is possible, e.g. it is conceivable, hence possible, that the sun will not rise tomorrow. Hume uses that principle because impressions and ideas differ only in force and vivacity; if a certain idea is possible, then its corresponding impression is possible. In our discussion in Chapter Four we noted that if logical possibility is distinguished from empirical possibility (i.e. the theory of impressions and ideas is surrendered), Hume's argument leads to the much weaker claim that for all we know it is empirically possible the sun will not rise tomorrow. This conclusion that for all we know it is impossible that the sun will not rise tomorrow. This criticism of Hume is inspired by Reid, but has been placed in a chapter about Hume for the sake of clarity. We must now, however, look at Reid's grounds for denying that conceivability is the test of possibility.

A. Conceivability as The Test of Possibility

Reid's examination of conceivability as the test of possibility occurs in Essay IV, Chapter III of the Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man. Reid notes that Descartes claims that all that we perceive clearly and distinctly is true; later philosophers, however, discovered we can perceive clearly and distinctly what is not true. Conceivability then passed from a test of truth to a test of possibility. Reid, however, offers four arguments that conceivability is not a test for possibility, i.e. that we conceive impossibilities as well as possibilities.

Reid's first argument is

1. "Whatever is said to be possible or impossible, is expressed by a proposition."[36]

2. To conceive a proposition is to understand distinctly its meaning.

3. But one can understand a proposition which expreses an impossibility, e.g. any two sides of a triangle are together equal to the third.

4. Therefore, propositions which express impossibilities are conceivable.

Reid next considers that "conceiving a proposition" means "supposing or conceiving it to be true." Reid makes several observations on this claim.

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[36] Reid, Intellectual Powers, IV, III, p. 377.

1. We can suppose an impossible proposition to be true because we can draw consequences from it. These consequences can be propositions that express situations as impossible as that expressed by the original proposition.

2. "Conceiving to be true" may mean "giving some degree of assent." Experience shows, however, that people have assented to propositions that later proved to be impossible--assent is not a guarantee that the proposition expresses a possibility.

3. "Cannot conceive to be true" may mean "judge to be impossible." The principle that nothing conceivable is impossible then becomes nothing is impossible which we judge to be possible. What one person judges to be possible, however, another judges to be impossible. Therefore, judging that something is possible is not a guarantee that it is possible.

Reid concludes the entire first argument

> I can understand a proposition that is false or impossible, as well as one that is true or possible; and I find that men have contradictory judgments about what is possible or impossible, as well as about other things.[37]

We will withold comments on this argument until we have examined Reid's other arguments. However, it is fitting at this point to answer Sir William Hamilton's objection to this argument, which he places in a footnote to Reid's argument in

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37 Ibid., p. 378.

Hamilton's addition of Reid.[38] Hamilton says we do understand a proposition which expresses an impossibility, but its inconceivability lies in our inability to represent in consciousness a unity of the terms named in the proposition, e.g. we cannot have a unified representation of a square circle. In support of this view Hamilton quotes from Christian Wolff's Logic. The point of the quotation is that we sometimes think we understand a proposition which we do not realize expresses an impossibility; further thought, however, (especially with the aid of geometry) shows the "expression is an empty sound."[39]

There are two basic objections to this argument. The first is that a unity of representation in consciousness seems to be picture thinking. Reid always denies that concepts are pictures; they are only meanings. Furthermore, there can only be a unity of representation in consciousness for very simple objects. Many situations that geometry shows to be impossible are too complicated to be represented in consciousness. The second objection is that we never know that something we believe possible is impossible until it is proven. That something is believed possible is no argument that tomorrow it will not be proven impossible. It is Reid's point that beyond

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38 Ibid., pp. 377-78, footnote.

39 Ibid., p. 378, footnote.

what is actual, we do not know what is possible. Since Wolff himself admits we can be mistaken about what is possible, our belief that something is possible is no evidence that it is possible.

Reid's second argument that conceivability is not the test of possibility is that

> Every proposition that is necessarily true stands opposed to a contradictory proposition that is impossible; and he that conceives one conceives both...Every proposition carries its contradictory in its bosom, and both are conceived at the same time.[40]

Reid offers no further support for this argument. Apparently, he considers it evident that in the everyday meaning of "understand" we do understand propositions that express an impossibility. In the prior argument he noted that we can draw inference from an impossible proposition. Probably it is our ability to reason from an impossible proposition that is Reid's ground for claiming that we understand each pair of contradictory propositions.

Reid's third argument is that mathematics have demonstrated many things to be possible and impossible, and many of these would not have been believed without a demonstration. No such demonstration, however, ever claimed something is possible on the grounds that it is conceivable, or impossible because inconceivable.

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40 Ibid., p. 378.

Hamilton objects to this argument that all of geometry is founded on our intuition, i.e. conception of space.[41] Hamilton is committed to Euclidean geometry. Reid, with his metaphysical agnosticism, does not want to hamper the development of science, deductive or experimental. It is beyond the scope of this work to develop our argument, but Reid would have been delighted in the development of non-Euclidean geometry. Concepts are our creation, there is nothing inherently impossible about creating an alternative system of geometrical concepts.

Reid's fourth argument that conceivability is not the test of possibility arises from the use of reductio ad absurdum arguments.

> Mathmeticians often require us to conceive things which are impossible, order to prove them to be so. This is the case in all their demonstrations ad absurdum... [I conceive a premise] -- I reason from it, until I come to a consequence that is manifestly absurd; and from thence conclude that the thing which I conceived is impossible.[42]

If we take all four arguments together, we note that certain theses run through them. The first thesis is that in the ordinary sense of "understand," we understand propositions which express impossibilities. Philosophers from Descartes to Hume denied that we could understand propositions which expressed impossibilities; to understand a proposition

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42 Ibid., p. 379.

was to have an idea of it, and ideas were the entities which had the relations expressed in the proposition. For Reid, however, concepts are not objects; we can understand a string of concepts even though no objects could have that relation. Reid is doing away with psychologism, the replacement of logical entities by psychological ones. Pholosophers from Descartes to Hume tried to give logic a solid foundation by using psychologism. Reid points out, quite rightfully, that psychologism flies in the face of the facts because we do understand propositions which express impossibilities.

A second thesis, which is a corollary of the first, is that humans are never certain about any propositions. Philosophers from Descartes to Hume claim that we can be certain that some propositions are true (because their denials are unintelligible) and we can be certain other propositions can can possibly be true (because both they and their denials are intelligible). Reid cuts out the gound for any claim to certainty by showing all propositions are intelligible. Certainty precludes the possibility of error. Reid points out that not only do people disagree about necessary truths, propositions firmly believed to be necessary have been proven to be impossible. For Reid we never reach certainty, the possibility of error, or a failing to note a contradiction, always remains open.

Most of the failure to appreciate Reid arises from the last point; he was so far ahead of his time no one realized what he was saying. The quest for certainty was so strong in early modern philosophy that no one could have no certain

knowledge of empirical statement Reid showed we could have no about logical ones. Since Hume's arguments about causation use logical reasoning, they are no longer certain. Humean skepticism always argues a certain belief has no rational grounds; without arguments based on certainty the skepticism collapses. Every Humean conclusion must have prefixed to it, "For all we know." This new conclusion is compatible with the claim that for all we know the denial of the original conclusion is true.

Reid does not try to replace Humean skepticism with dogmatism or probabilism. Reid knows certainty is beyond human capacity; it is to make Reid schizophrenic to claim that he believed common sense beliefs are certain. Common sense beliefs are not probable either. Probabilism, as classically understood, is the striking of a balance when different arguments give different evidence for or against a conclusion. There are no arguments for or against common sense beliefs (although there are arguments that a belief is or or is not a common sense belief). We accept common sense beliefs because they are socially given, not because they are certain.

Reid avoids the charge of skepticism, not because he is a dogmatist, but because he draws from our lack of certain knowledge different consequences than the classical skeptic. The classical skeptic concludes that human activity is irrational. Reid concludes human activity is rational (though it is not grounded on certain knowledge) and that it is the philosopher who is irrational who demands certain knowledge.

In line with his rejection of certainty, Reid makes some observations on modal propositions. The first such observation is that our knowledge of what is impossible is at least as extensive as our knowledge of necessary truths.[43] We know some truths are necessary because the contradictories of such propositions are impossible.

The second observation is that "Our knowledge of what is possible must, at least, extend as far as our knowledge of truth."[44] Reid says we know these non-necessary truths by our senses, testimony, memory and other means.

The third observation is the critical one.

> If a man pretends to determine the possibility or impossibility of things beyond these limits, let him bring proof. I do not say no such proof can be brought. It has been brought in many cases, particularly in mathematics. But I say that his being able to conceive a thing, is no proof that it is possible.[45]

As an example of the above, Reid mentions the case of God creating a world without natural or moral evil. Reid grants that this case is conceivable, but he denies it is a pressing difficulty because it

> is grounded on the supposition that such a thing is possible, when there is no good evidence that it is possible, and, for

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43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

> anything we know it may, in the nature of things, be impossible.[46]

Because of all that we have said about Reid, the above observations do not need elaborate comment. Our first short observation is based upon Reid's theory of conception. Concepts are now our creation, therefore we know their nature and what is necessarily true of them. It should be noted that we do know necessary truths; we do not know them with certainty.

The second observation, that what is true is possible, is in accord with Reid's emphasis that science proceeds by induction. The third observation out-Humes Hume. Reid always denies we know the nature of things, we only know the nature of our own creations, i.e. concepts. Hume, on the other hand, believes we do have certain knowledge about impressions (e.e. we know which are the simple impressions). Without knowing the nature of things, we cannot know, beyond what we have experienced, what is possible. Any claim that "for all we know it is possible that..." can be met by the counter claim "for all we know it is impossible that..." It is tragic that philosophers after Reid did not realize he was as vigorous and as skeptical of absolutist metaphysics as Hume, and developed a philosophy evolved from Humean skepticism.

The above observations upon modal propositions are the basis for our critique of Hume's argument concerning the

[46] Ibid.

principles of determinism and induction in Chapter Four. Reid himself never states these criticisms of Hume, but then Reid is not writing a commentary on Hume. Reid, however, must have had such a criticism in mind. He does note that Hume extensively uses the principle that conceivability is the test of possibility and odes admit that those arguments which uses this principle have as their only weak premise this principle.[47] Although Reid does not offer a line by line commentary of Hume, he does argue, against Hume, for the principles of determinism and induction. Now that we have offered an interpretation of Reid's appeal to common sense, and his theory of causation, we can turn to those principles.

B. Induction and Determinism

Reid considers the principle of determinism "That whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it, "in Essay VI Chapter VI of the Essays on the Intellectual Powers." He claims that Hume was the first to deny this principle, and that one can only hold one of three possible positions concerning the principle.

1. Those who believe the principle do so foolishly, without evidence.

2. The principle is provable by argument.

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[47] Ibid., p. 378.

3. The principle is self-evident, unprovable, and unquestionable.

Reid follows Hume and rejects the second alternative. The only dispute between the two concerns whether it is foolish or reasonable to believe the principle. We will first look at Reid's rejection of the proof of the principle of determinism, and then at his arguments for its reasonableness.

Reid notes that Hobbes, Clarke and Locke try to prove the principle of determinism by abstract reasoning. Rather than show these rationalist proofs fail, Reid refers the reader to Hume's Treatise; "Mr. Hume in his "Treatise of Human Nature," has examined them all; and, in my opinion, has shown that they take for granted the thing to be proved ...."[48] Reid, on the other hand, does offer his arguments that the principle of determinism cannot be proven by experience.

The first argument is that the principle of determinism is taken to be a necessary proposition. "Experience informs us only of what is or has been, not of what must be; and the conclusion must be of the same nature as the premises."[49]

The second argument is that maxims grounded on experience are only probable, and always leave open the possibility of future exceptions. The principle of determinism, on the other

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48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

hand, is not admitted to have exceptions. The first argument and the second are really the same, except the first emphasizes the nature of the principle of determinism and the second the nature of reasoning from experience. Both arguments, however, are in the spirit of Hume.

The third argument is only partially in the spirit of Hume and marks an advance on Hume. Experience does not convince us every change has a cause.

> In the far greatest part of the changes in nature that fall within our observation. The causes are unknown; and, therefore from experience we cannot know whether they have causes or not.[50]

Reid notes only experience causation when we act, and this experience is too narrow a foundation for the claim all things have causes. We shall return to this argument shortly.

The above arguments show that the principle of determinism is not provable. The only remaining question is whether we believe the principle foolishly or reasonably. Reid offers two arguments that it is held reasonably. The first argument is that it is held universally; David Hume is the only person to ever question it. Reid offers evidence that philosophers, common people, and savages all believe the principle. Since Hume himself admits that outside his closet he believes and acts in accord with the principle,

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50 Ibid.

Reid's evidence can be accepted without examination. The problem, however, is Reid's other premise.

> Indeed, with regard to first principles, there is no reason why the opinion of a philosopher should have more authority then that of another man of common sense, who has been accustomed to judge in such cases.[51]

Many philosophers, including Kant, take Reid to mean that truth is discovered by counting votes. We argue that that interpretation is incorrect because it supposes Reid is making a claim to some kind of absolute or certain knowledge. Common sense beliefs, however, are prescriptive, not descriptive. In order to be considered a member of society (and humans are social animals) a person must accept certain rules (among which is the principle of determinism). Among the tests which determine which rules determine membership in society is universality. (Other rules determine who is a member of a local society, e.g. a European or a Jesuit). Once it is understood that Reid has fully learned the lessons of Humean skepticism the force of this argument is apparent. Modern philosophers might say Reid commit the genetic fallacy, offering an historical explanation instead of a justification of the rules. Reid would reply there is no justification beyong the historical fact that these are the rules.

51
Ibid.

There is one passage within the argument we are considering that might be considered as counter to our interpretation.

> This universal belief of mankind [that whatever begins to exist must have a cause] is easily accounted for, if we allow that the necessity of a cause of every event is obvious to the rational powers of a man. But it is impossible to account for it otherwise. It cannot be ascribed to education, to systems of philosophy, or to priestcraft.[52]

Reid says the universal belief in determinism cannot be ascribed to education, yet our interpretation ascribes it to socialization. On our interpretation Reid must mean formal education, such as learning a trade or the liberal arts; "education"does not mean learning the basis rules for behaving in society. In the passage Reid also says that the principle is obvious to the rational power of man. On forst view this statement seems to claim the belief is innate or arises from some a priori intuition. The statement might just mean, however, that any rational person can accept the principle Even if this passage must be stretched to fit our interpretation we are justified in doing so. An interpretation is never quite the same as the original work. If it were, it would be a paraphrase, not an interpretation. An interpretation must not do violence to the original, but in its very act of making precise and adding emphasis, it marks a

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52 Ibid., p. 378.

departure from the original. Our general interpretation has good grounds. It is consistent with what Reid says and introduces a consistency and greatness into Reid's philosophy that other interpretations do not do. The one item of our interpretation that Reid does not say even though everything points to it, is that common sense is prescriptive. We have noted that he distinguishes ordinary reason from common sense, yet he is strangely silent about the origin and justification of common sense. If we might speculate for a moment, if Reid were to say outright that common sense beliefs are prescriptions, he would have faced such polemicist charges as being a Hobbist and atheist. Such charges would be nonsense, but nonsensical claims never stopped those who attack Hume. It is speculation, but Reid might have wanted to avoid Hume's fate; giving his premises, but using "reason" in his conclusion may have been his method.

Reid's second argument that determinism is a first principle is that it is impossible to act prudently without it. Reid lists several examples, all legal or quasi-legal, where it would be shocking to raise the possibility that the event under investigation had no cause. Since Hume, Kant and everyone else conceives belief in determinism is part of prudence, this part of the argument need not be further examined. The interesting question, according to Kant, is not the usefulness of determinisms, but its <u>a priori</u> justification. What Kant and Reid's other critics fail to realize is that according to Reid practical first principles have no <u>a priori</u> justification. All we can do is describe our first principles;

without knowing the nature of things, we cannot know if our principles are justified. It is important to realize prudence is not a justification for determinism; determinism is part of prudence itself. Reid is not saying human society cannot be prudent without determinism; he is saying human society cannot be human society without prudence (and hence determinism). Reid in this argument never says we could not survive without believing in determinism, he says our legal system could not operate without it. Human society is a human creation; the principle of determinism is one of the foundations of what we have created. We can no more justify the principle than we can the kind of society we have; both simply are.

Another interesting aspect of Reid's discussion of determinism and prudence is that it contains an implied devastating critique of Hume's descriptive account of our belief in determinism. Hume says our nonrational belief in determinism is due to our habit of expecting causes that had similar effects in the past to continue to do so. We have already noted Reid's argument that we do not know the causes of most events. He now expands that argument in Humean fashion.

> Suppose a man's house to be broken open, his money and jewels taken away. Such things have happened time innumerable without any apparent cause; and were he only to reason from experience in such a case, how must he behave? He must put in one scale the instances wherein a cause was found of such an event, and in the other scale the instances where no cause was found, and the preponderant scale

> must determine whether it be most probable that there was a cause of this event, or that there was none.[53]

This argument shows clearly that our grounds for belief in determinism cannot arise from experience. The key premise is that we do not know the causes of most events. Thus, no naturalistic explanation of the first principle is possible. Many of Reid's critics dismiss him because Hume acknowledged we all do believe in determinism. The point those critics missed is that there is no way, under Hume's system, to account for that belief. Since the principle of determinism is not provable, as Hume shows, and it cannot be given a naturalistic, historical explanation, it must be prescriptive.

At the end of his discussion of the principle of determinism Reid lists Hume's three objections against the principle being self-evident, and then lists his counter arguments. Hume's first objection is that "certainty arises from a comparison of ideas and a discovery of their unalterable relations."[54] Reid's reply is that he has already examined this theory of certainty. As we pointed out earlier, Reid never claims we know anything with certainty. Hume's second argument is that whatever we can conceive is possible. We have already seen how important this premise is to Hume, and that Reid has shown it to be unjustified. Hume's third argument is that a cause is nothing but one event constantly

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53 Ibid., p. 457.

conjoined with a following event. Reid notes here that this theory makes day the cause of night. We have already noted that Reid denies we know the cause of night. We have already noted that Reid denies we know the causes of material phaenomena; our knowledge of causation is limited to that produced by active power.

C. Induction

The remaining principle we must discuss is that of induction. Hume showed that this principle could not be proven a priori or through experience, and concluded that our belief in it is the result of habit. Reid thoroughly agrees with Hume that the principle is unprovable; he himself does not list all the objections to the attempted proofs, he simply acknowledges that Hume has refuted all such attempts.

> Mr. Hume hath shewn very clearly, that this belief [in induction] is not the effect either of Reason or Experience.[55]

Reid disagrees with Hume concerning the origin of our belief in this principle. Reid denies it is due to habit, but he does not claim it is a common sense belief. Reid's argument that the belief is not due to habit is similar to his argument that our belief in determinism is not the result of observing constant conjunctions.

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55 Reid, Active Powers, Essay III - Part I, Chapter II, p. 549.

> A person who has lived so long in the world as to observe that nature is governed by fixed laws, may have some rational ground to expect similar events in similar circumstances; but this cannot be the case of the child. His belief, therefore, is not grounded on evidence. It is the result of his constitution.[56]

This argument is Humean in nature. A habit is the result of observing constant conjunctions. Children believe similar causes have similar effects long before they have observed many such conjunctions. Hence, our belief is not the result of habit. This argument is very powerful; it does not seem that any purely Humean answer is possible.

Reid's positive thesis about induction is not an appeal to common sense; it is an appeal to our human constitution. To claim we have a certain belief because of our constitution is not to explain or justify that belief. The claim simply says that this is the way we are. Hume recognizes that the principle of induction is the foundation for all our other beliefs. Reid accepts this belief as an ultimate fact. In every system of explanation or justification something must remain unexplained or unjustified; in the matter of causation; induction occupies that position.

Many people interpret Reid to mean that common sense is part of the human constitution. We have argued that common sense is the result of our socialization, but is not part of our constitution or <u>a priori</u> explanable or approvable. Reid

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Ibid.

view of induction gives further support to our interpretation If Reid believes that a belief such as induction, that is part of our constitution is a common sense belief he would call it so and list it in the chapters on common sense belief; instead, he discusses it in a chapter about instinct. Reid cannot claim it is learned in the socialization process; it is believed before the infant has been socialized. Reid recognizes our belief in induction is a brute fact,and treats it as such, not as a result of the socialization process.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Reid's theory of causation, and his critique of Hume's theory. We discussed Reid's claim that any solution of the proble of other minds also proves the existence of God. We noted that for Reid causation is efficient causation; we know the causes of what is willed by human beings; we do not know the direct causes of events in the material world. We do know, however, God is the ultimate cause of events in the material world. The views of human beings about causation are directly connected with their social, ethical and legal views; to change one is to change the others. Hume's view of causation is incorrect for deep technical reasons concerning possibility and certainty as well as because it asks humans to change their social, ethical and legal views. Reid replaces the deficient Humean account of causation with the view that the principle of determinism is a common sense belief--a product

of socialization, and that the belief in the principle of induction is a part of the human constitution.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The driving force in Thomas Reid's philosophizing is skepticism. Everything in his philosophy, either directly or indirectly, is a response to Hume's skeptical conclusions. Reid, unlike Hume, cannot accept skepticism for two reasons: (1) meaningless conclusions can be validly derived from it, and (2) it is inconsistent with human activity.

Reid faced the skepticism of the Treatise, not the first Enquiry. In the Treatise Hume argues that none of the traditional claims to knowledge have any grounds, including the claim that geometrical theorems are necessary and are known a priori. Hume, starting with the premise that the only operation of the human mind is perception, and its only two subjects impressions and ideas, validly concludes that we cannot know the external world, our own minds, causal connections (beyond constant conjunctions), and the principles of determinism and induction. From these skeptical results in his theory, Hume further concludes that human action is based on sentiment, not on reason; those who do philosophy lapse into melancholy that can only be cured by forgetting philosophy through activity.

Reid argues that many of Hume's conclusions cannot be

stated in English, or any other natural language. The conclusions appear to make sense when stated elliptically, but when stated fully they are nonsense. This result is especially clear in Hume's theory of belief, and his claim that the temporal reference of an impression or idea is the degree of its force and liveliness. Other skeptical conclusions, especially concerning practice, are meaningful but are rejected by everyone, including Hume, as absurd and lunatic. Any successful philosophy, claims Reid, must unite theory and practice, not separate them.

Implicit in his criticism of Hume is Reid's own common sense position--a philosophy must be in accord with the fundamental structure of language and with our fundamental practices. Reid believes many philosophers, e.g. Locke, realized their conclusions must accord with common sense, but these philosophers had a premise that prevented them from reaching such conclusions. Reid calls this premise the theory of ideas, and claims that Hume was the first to realize that the theory of ideas must lead to skepticism. The theory of ideas itself is the belief that there is only one operation of the mind, perception, and this operation has one, and only one object, a mental entity called an idea. Reid believes that the way to refute Humean skepticism is to show that the theory of ideas, as exemplified in Hume's writings, violates common sense.

Hume believes perceptions (Reid's "ideas") are of two kinds, impressions and ideas. His view of what impressions and ideas are changes from the Treatise to the first Enquiry.

In both works the distinction between impressions and ideas is based on observation, but in the Treatise their only difference is their force and liveliness. Hume then argues, in the Treatise, all simple ideas are copies of simple impressions. Further on, he argues there are no such things as abstract ideas. Of the three arguments against abstract ideas, only the first stands by itself, and is Hume's main argument. That argument rests on the premise that whatever is distinguishable is separable. The premise follows from the observation that impressions and ideas differ only in force and liveliness; thus, since each impression is an independently existing entity (i.e. is separable), each idea can exist by itself. From this premise, it validly follows that there are no abstract ideas. Few commentators have noted that it also validly follows that there is no relation of logical necessity; any two ideas that are necessarily connected cannot be separated.

In the first Enquiry Hume again bases the distinction between impressions and ideas upon experience and again claims ideas are copies of impressions. The arguments for the claims that ideas are copies of impressions are clearly inductive; they are (1) we can in fact analyze any idea into preceding impressions, and (2) we have no idea of any sensation we have never experienced. These arguments differ from the Treatise because the ideas that are the products of analysis are abstract ideas, i.e. they are not separable, e.g. gold and mountain. The Enquiry is inconsistent on this point, sometimes it treats ideas as atoms of experience as in the

Treatise, sometimes it treats them as abstract ideas that cannot exist independently of other ideas. A discussion of abstract ideas in the Enquiry would solve this problem, but the Enquiry lacks any such discussion.

Reid presents a critique of the theory of impressions and ideas of the Treatise. Reid's basic argument is that the theory of the Treatise, when fully explicated, is not English, or any other natural language. Hume, for example, cannot explain as differences in kind the distinction between perception and memory, and dream and reality. Hume's error, says Reid, arises from his failure to note that there are several specifically different operations of the mind; perception is only one such operation. This criticism of Hume is based on two related elements, observation and common language. If we look into our own mind we observe there are specifically different operations; if we note language, we find this distinction in all natural languages.

Reid's appeal to common language and common sense rests on his critique of simple ideas. He denies there any absolutely simple units of thought or experience. Simple ideas are the results of the analysis of complex ideas, but this analysis does not mirror reality. Analysis proceeds by using concepts, a human creation, and continues as long as the process is useful or beautiful, but it has no ultimate resting point. Concepts are not based on simples, they are based on common language. The only way to communicate is through common language, hence, we do not and cannot understand Hume's idiosyncratic philosophy. Common language, and the judgments

(common sense) that lie behind it, does not rest on any esoteric base; common sense is nothing but a set of prescriptions we must learn in order to become members of society.

Among the various operations of the mind, conception has an especially important place in Reid's philosophy. Conception is the only mental operation which does not have an existing object upon which it acts. In conception, the act and the object are one and the same. Conception is different from anything Hume ever describes. Either there is such a thing and Hume's philosophy is inadequate, or there is not and Reid is incorrect. The important point about conceptions for Reid is that we can form conceptions by abstraction, they need not copy anything in nature. A conception of an individual does not give us the real essence of the individual, nor is what we conceive to be the individual necessarily what God conceives it to be. A conception of a universal, on the other hand, is the essence of it; there are, however, no natural kinds. We use universals for utility and beauty, but they do not tell us how God conceives things. The great function of concepts is that they free logic from psychology. Logical concepts, not being existing objects, do not obey the laws of psychology, they obey the laws of logic, e.g. we can conceive logical impossibilities.

The different roles of ideas and conceptions and the advances Reid makes on Hume become clearer if we examine the role of ideas and conceptions in their theories of causation.

Hume's views on causation arise from his views on impressions and ideas. In the Treatise causation is treated

in the discussion of relations. For Hume there are only two relations, resemblance and contiguity in space and time; there are no logical relations in the Treatise--the Treatise excludes the possibility of logical necessity. It follows that causation is not a necessary connection; every impression and idea is logically distinct from every other. Causation then, can only be the association of resembling impressions a andideas that are contiguous. This constant conjunction view of causation, when coupled with the principle that whatever is conceivable is possible, leads Hume to his skepticism about our knowledge of the principles of determinism and induction. The principle that whatever is conceivable is possible follows directly from Hume's theory of impressions and ideas. The principle can only be held in a philosophy that makes ideas identical with the universe, on any other theory what we conceive may not in fact be possible in the world.

In the Enquiry the discussion of causation takes place in a far different context than in the Treatise, and the arguments, though superficially similar, are very different. The Enquiry lacks any discussion of philosophical relations; causation is introduced as an interesting question, not as a subspecies of a more general question. The discussion of causation begins with and depends on the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact, neither of which is compatible with the Treatise's atomism. As in the Treatise, Hume argues that we do not make a priori causal inferences, but unlike the Treatise, the argument is a posteriori.

There is nothing in the nature of causal relata in the Enquiry, whether they are impressions, ideas or matters of fact, to prevent them from having logical relations. The arguments concerning induction are the same in the two works, yet the Enquiry's is not valid. In the Treatise Hume recognizes only one kind of possibility, empirical possibility; hence, anything conceivable, e.g. the sun not rising tomorrow, is empirically possible. In the Enquiry, however he recognizes two kinds of possibility, empirical and logical; our thoughts are limited to logical possibilities, hence, anything conceivable might be logically possible, yet empirically impossible.

The theory of impressions and ideas of the Treatise leads to skepticism concerning our ability to make rational causal inferences and to know the principles of determinism and induction. Reid fully accepts Hume'c conclusions concerning our causal inferences about the physical world; the physical sciences for Reid, as for Hume, rest on observation, not deduction. The difference getween the two arises in their account of action. Hume argues that our actions are not based on propositions known by reason and with certainty hence, our action is based on sentiment. Reid agrees we lack certain knowledge, but that our basic principles are common sense, i.e. social prescriptions, and it is the very meaning of reason in society to act in accord with these prescriptions.

One of the powers common sense assures us we have is active power. This concept is essential to our notions of

ethical and legal responsibility, and is deeply embedded within our language. Reid couples this notion of causation with a belief in a Universal Mind, God. He argues that any solution to the problem of other minds proves there is a God. Since God is a mind, He has active power, as do all other minds. God, then is the ultimate efficient cause of events in the physical world.

With the above view of causation, Reid now argues that it is reasonable for us to act in accord with the principles of induction and determinism. He first argues that one of Hume's key premises in his critique of determinism and induction, conceivability is the test of possibility, is false. Reid argues that we do conceive impossibilities, and that there is no general rule for discovering impossibilities. It is at this point that Reid's theory of conceptions play such a vital role. With them Reid can distinguish logical from empirical possibility, and logical impossibility from inconceivability, i.e. he separates logic from psychology. Along with arguing we do conceive impossibilities, Reid also shows we do not know what is empirically possible beyond the actual; Hume's rejection of induction and determinism rests upon the claim that he knows what is empirically possible beyond the actual. A corollary of the rejection of conceivability as the test of possibility is the rejection of certain knowledge; since the denial of a necessary proposition is still conceivable, there is no proposition of whose truth value we may not be mistaken.

Reid agrees with Hume that all attempts to prove the principles of determinism and induction fail. It is reasonable to believe and act in accordance with the principle of determinism, however, because society is impossible without it, i.e. part of what it means to be a socialized person is to accept the principle of determinism. The principle of induction, Reid claims, is part of our constitution; it is not a common sense belief, nor can it be explained or justified.

In sum, according to Reid, our actions and knowledge claims are reasonable because they occur within the social framework.

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