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INVENTING THE COMMERCIAL CONSUMER:

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF BOOKS I AND II OF DAVID HUME'S *TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE*

Christopher J. Finlay

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.

University of Dublin, Trinity College,

2000.

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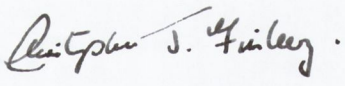

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May 2000.

For Leona

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Summary

The aim of the thesis is to present a contextualised interpretation of David Hume's theory of the individual in Books I and II of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The Introduction (Chapter 1) argues that insufficient attention has been paid to the relationship between Hume's philosophical theory and its original practical and social context. Generally, historical study has looked at the intellectual-discursive context in order to find the origins of Hume's philosophical concerns and ideas. The thesis supplements these approaches by tracing relationships between the content of Hume's theory and the actual practices of individuals as he found them in contemporary society.

Chapter 2 examines Hume's social experience at the time when he conceived and wrote the *Treatise*. His social background, his need for a professional 'settlement', and documents on his peregrinations through Britain and France are examined in order to establish a profile of the type of social context and practices that he encountered, and of his attitude towards them. A range of social contexts in which the consumption of luxury goods became linked to the enhancement of visible social status for individuals is found to have developed in Britain at this time, with particularly English habits being imitated by the Scottish lowland gentry and the lawyers in Edinburgh. Hume's personal worries about his own social and financial status, and his experience of the mechanisms of social mobility in different locations, made him an acute observer of the role of consumption in contemporary society.

Chapter 3 analyses meta-theoretical and methodological remarks found in Hume's works from the late 1730s and early 1740s in order to clarify Hume's ideas on the relationship between philosophy and common life. It is established that he consciously derived his theoretical results from observations of people in their common practices as he found them in his own experience. Hume also made it clear that he believed that philosophy needed to engage constructively with the participants in common life in order to generate meaningful conclusions. Therefore, Hume's philosophy in the *Treatise* was intended to be based on and pertinent to the practices typical of contemporary 'common life'.

The theory of the will in the *Treatise* is analysed in Chapter 4 in order to clarify the relationship between thought and practice in Hume's theory of the individual. It is found that in Hume's view the understanding carries out activities generated by the direct passions and is incapable of acting on its own. These activities are designed to evaluate the

capacity of objects to produce pleasure, the capacities of people surrounding the individual, and the capacity of the individual himself to intervene in given situations on behalf of the direct passions. The constructive parts of the theory of understanding, primarily those concerned with causal induction, are therefore understood to be guided towards practical ends governed by desire.

The fifth chapter explores the treatment of the indirect passions, *pride and humility, love and hatred,* etc., in order to establish clearer insights into the kinds of practical purposes towards which the Humean individual is driven, and the manner in which his capacities are used to achieve his aims. The indirect passions thus supplement the motivation of the direct passions, orientating the human individual towards objects and activities which will enhance his social status in relation to those who surround him. Hume's analysis of these passions focuses primarily on the kinds of objects that cause them. The paradigmatic relationships through which the indirect passions are generated are those between the individual and his property, and between the individual and those who surround him. A key desire of the human agent described by Hume, is to be seen to acquire objects that are known to provide pleasure, and in particular, to be seen to have to power to acquire such objects. Thus, in Hume's analysis, money takes on a considerable importance. The capacity of the understanding to work out causal relationships is found in this chapter to be required by the individual in order to comprehend the relationships between property and pleasure, the individual and his property, and riches and the objects which they can purchase.

Chapter 6 of the thesis narrates the central operation of the understanding, presented in Book I part 3, and points out the connections between this activity and the other aspects of the individual described by Hume. The manner in which the Humean individual forms the beliefs that were seen to operate in the practices relating to desire, acquisition, possession and consumption is presented.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following titles are abbreviated in the footnotes to the thesis:

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, 2nd edition, (Oxford, 1978):	*Treatise*
David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, Eugene F. Miller (ed.), (Indianapolis, 1985):	*EMPL*
W. Y. T. Greig (ed.), *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 vols., (Oxford, 1932):	*LDH*
Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd edition, (Oxford, 1980).	*Life*

References to Book, Part and Section of *A Treatise of Human Nature* use the following notation: Upper case Roman numerals indicate the Book number, Arabic numerals indicate which Part of the Book, and lower case Roman numerals refer to the Section number in the text.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.) Aims and Methods

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between David Hume's ideas concerning the individual and the social context within which they were conceived and developed. Although the subject addressed in the research is a work of philosophy, the aim of the research has been to establish an historical thesis: namely, that the origins of Hume's ideas in the first two books of his *Treatise of Human Nature* are better understood if certain aspects of the social context, i.e. those relating to specific social practices associated with acquiring, owning and consuming, are examined and understood to have been of concern to the philosopher. To this end, it is necessary, on the one hand, to excavate from the philosophical text those philosophical concerns of Hume that relate to social and practical concerns by using textual exegesis; on the other hand, it is also necessary to clarify the nature of the practical concerns themselves by examining the manner in which they appeared historically in the relevant social contexts. In order to achieve this it is necessary to adapt existing methodologies in philosophy and history in an interdisciplinary fashion.

a. Rationale

A fundamental question for the historian in addressing the work of any original thinker is, *why does this person find fault with existing theories of philosophy and why does he come up with new theories*? This can be answered in part by identifying logical flaws found in previous theories, or by suggesting that the particular individual who produced the work was more imaginative, or had more of a taste for philosophy, than his contemporaries.[1] In addition to this, the manner in which *new* philosophical theories are conceived or generated historically tends most often to be answered by considering the influences of other thinkers, or the 'repertoire'[2] of conceptual vocabularies available to the philosopher, all of which are supposed to have been re-synthesised to produce the new work. However, if historians limit themselves to these techniques on their own, they run the risk of lapsing into a formulaic approach which reduces the understanding of historical changes in the

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[1] This is implied, for instance, by T.E. Jessop in his essay 'The Misunderstood Hume', in William B. Todd (ed.), *Hume and the Enlightenment*, (Edinburgh, 1974), p.3. He suggests that one of the aspects of Hume's background which is often neglected by Hume scholars is his Scottishness. Jessop regards the wide dissemination of philosophical ideas and philosophical interests through Scottish society as important for understanding Hume.

[2] This term is used, for instance, by Steven Shapin in his *A Social History of Truth*, (Chicago, 1993). See especially the introductory chapter.

philosophical apprehension of reality to something like a crude mathematical equation. One could get the impression, for instance, that the newness of Hume's philosophy as it was published in 1739-40, may be established according to the following formula: 'Elements of Hutcheson's thought' + 'Elements of Locke's thought' etc. = *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Evidently such a formula would be absurdly reductionistic, and would fail to account for anything which was genuinely new in the history of ideas. Unless recourse be taken to 'philosophical genius' or some such oblique factor, then some further principle must be found through which to answer questions concerning originality.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to suggest that attempts to derive the literary sources which Hume used in formulating his theories have been essentially misdirected. The purpose of the research has been to supplement such work. The nature of the project may be illustrated by borrowing a metaphor from Wittgenstein.[3] It is assumed that even if historians were to establish correctly down to the very last detail, which philosophers 'influenced' a given philosophical work, which provided specific theories that were assimilated, or which traditions of philosophy or theology provided conceptual or linguistic vocabularies for particular parts of the philosopher's work, then all that would have been explained is the range of 'tools' available to the philosopher. Furthermore, the engagement of the philosopher in debate with other philosophers, both living and dead, over specific theoretical problems also occupies a place in the process of selecting the range of philosophical tools that he uses. With Hume, therefore, the specific nature of his disagreements with René Descartes or with Samuel Clarke constitutes a rejection of certain philosophical tools presented by those philosophers. The critical rejection of obsolete tools is itself a vital part of the process of selecting and fashioning the ideas that prove useful in the particular philosophical project. What remains to be explained, and what this thesis helps to explain in the case of Hume's *Treatise*, is the purpose to which the tools, conceptual or linguistic, were intended to be put, whether they were borrowed, or fashioned anew. In order to understand fully why the *Treatise* took the form that it did by the time it was published, it is necessary to establish what it was that Hume intended his philosophical tools to be used for: in other words, what did he seek to understand? Only by establishing this can we fully understand why particular tools were borrowed, and why the philosophical tools that he used were fashioned in the particular way that they were. This provides us with a clear idea of the kinds of 'cause' that are sought in the following

[3] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* 2nd edition, translated by G.E. Anscombe, (Oxford, 1997), remark 11 (p.6e). Wittgenstein writes, "Think of tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. – The functions of words are as diverse as the

analysis. Particular theories are said to have been 'caused' by particular experiences, objects, or phenomena, in the sense that the theories were intentionally developed as tools designed to explain them. Thus, the concept of 'cause' is used in a specific, teleological sense.

It is hypothesised in this thesis that historical changes give rise to a need on the parts of philosophers to come to terms with new phenomena. These changes may be practical, they may be involved in public institutions, or private actions, or elsewhere. In order to explain this process it is provisionally assumed that it would be unwise simply to adopt one of the 'metaphysical' theories of history which offers a more or less universal principle as the agent for change. Hegelian 'Spirit' or the material forces of Marxian historical philosophy present examples of this, but these are provisionally rejected in favour of textual exegesis. By interpreting the philosophical text as an historical document, clear and specific indications are to be found regarding the concerns which gave rise to philosophical revision. This method is used to gain access to the philosopher's intentions in order to answer the question, *what new experiences arose, or new phenomena appeared, which needed new philosophical theories in order to be comprehended*? This thesis attempts to answer questions of this kind with respect to Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*.

Asking questions of this sort in the history of political thought, and to a lesser extent in the history of economic thought, has a long provenance. The 'Cambridge School' in the history of political thought arose on the basis of this. It is salutary to consider the situation of the history of political thought in order to contrast it with the nature of the current project. In the history of political ideas (or economic ideas, or even scientific ideas) the task is relatively easier than that which is undertaken in the present interpretation of Hume. This is the case for two reasons. The first is that when the questions are asked by the interpreter of new political ideas of the past, *why did this particular thinker or group of thinkers find flaws in existing theories, and why did they come up with new theories?* then the relationship between the ideas and a sphere of practical (rather than purely theoretical, 'academic', or logical) activity is self-evident. It is rarely supposed that political theorists dream up their theories in isolation from the world of practical affairs, at least insofar as their theoretical orientations are concerned. It is readily understood by the historian and his public that political ideas must have something to do with actual political institutions and actions, and therefore that *changes* in theories and ideas are likely to have roots in

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functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities.)"

changing institutions and actions.[4] Thus, the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes presented in *Leviathan* is readily associated with the concern for re-establishing political order during the upheavals of the civil war period in England. Likewise, the job of the historian wishing to understand Hume's later essays on economic subjects is to find out what they had to do with the contemporary state of English and Scottish economic development, debt and currency management. However, when an historian is concerned with explaining the origins of a work of epistemology or metaphysics, the ideas are often not explicitly related to a particular domain of action or to a specified sphere of identifiable objects. This makes the task of historical contextualisation more difficult since the historian is faced with the prior question of where to begin the search. The second reason why the historical study of non-political philosophy presents greater difficulties than that of political thought (which occurs as a result of the first reason), is that it cannot rely on a given, tried and tested methodology. The historian of political thought has a relatively easier task because the methodology used in his or her discipline is straight-forward, insofar as the spheres between which the connections must be made are clearly laid out, and therefore tends to be better developed within the strong traditions of scholarship which have grown up around the discipline.

While the history of philosophy concerns itself with the relationship between one set of ideas and another, whether it is between the ideas of a particular philosopher and his antecedents, or between the epistemological theory of a thinker and his political thought, it also has had a readily available methodology. Centuries of research have given rise to a wide range of possible approaches, and the interpretative and exegetical techniques used within the disciplines of philosophy and the history of political thought may be appropriated more or less directly. However, where the historian of philosophy wishes to take interpretation and analysis further, to consider the theory of a philosopher within a broader historical framework, and to take into consideration the kinds of relationships, causal or otherwise, between theory and practice which are accessible to the historian of political thought, then the task is much less clear-cut. Whereas political thought belongs to its own proper sphere of praxis, philosophy does not. At least, philosophy's role in relation to spheres of practice has changed repeatedly throughout its history. Therefore, the kinds of connections which an historian will seek in order to establish the appropriate historical location within which a philosophical theory should be interpreted, will vary much more

[4] In the preface to his *Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1, The Renaissance*, (Cambridge, 1978), Quentin Skinner remarked, with reference to this aspect of his work, "[f]or I take it that political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist, causing a certain range of issues to appear problematic,

from case to case than in the history of political thought.

The starting point for this project was an intuition concerning the nature of Hume's theory of understanding. This occurred on reading through that part of the *Treatise* where Hume describes the individual's means of understanding the operations of cause-effect relations within particular situations (I.3). I had the impression that Hume was not merely putting forward a new theory, or variation on the theory, of the scope and limits of human knowledge, or of the efficacy of logic, etc., in a purely hypothetical way, and divorced from the mundane concerns of everyday life. It seemed that Hume was characterising a certain mentality and was describing the way in which certain kinds of individuals actually think, and that he was describing the thought processes of persons involved in particular kinds of activity. The kinds of activity and the kinds of thought processes which sprang to mind were those involved in the highly numerate and abstract reasoning of someone who was using money to define, evaluate, and manipulate the world in which he found himself (or herself).

While this initial impression was considered purely in terms of the theory of understanding itself, it remained intriguing but unsubstantiated. Firstly, the manner in which the thought processes described in the *Treatise* could be understood to operate within financial transactions, or other such mundane activities, was still oblique. Secondly, the reason why such a process should have been incorporated by Hume into his supposedly universalistic explanation of human nature, was unclear. It could be guessed that since Hume was living in a time of significant development and innovation in commerce and in the use of financial instruments, then he might have come into contact with these, and may have found it necessary to explain how such operations could be understood and operated by human agents. However, without locating the theory of understanding, particularly the constructive (rather than therapeutic) parts concerning the manner in which individuals are actually supposed to think, within broader contexts, nothing serious could be made of the initial observation. However, once part I section 3 was reconsidered in light of Book II, and then in light of other material, something more tangible, and more interesting began to emerge. When the constructive parts of Book I are interpreted alongside the analysis of the passions of Book II, one finds a coherent theory of the human individual; and the specific features of this theory and the way in which it is presented contain elements that need to be explained by locating them within the social contexts within which Hume observed human life.

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and a corresponding range of questions to become the leading subjects of debate." (xi)

The interpretation of books I and II of the *Treatise* presented in this thesis emerged through the interpretation of I.3 in an ever broadening series of contexts. First of all, it was reconsidered in light of other parts of the work in which it is found. This gave rise to a reconstruction of the type of individual modelled within the philosophical theory of the *Treatise*. It clarified the instrumentality of individual thought processes, and established a strong association between a description of emulative, conspicuous consumption in Hume's analysis of the indirect passions, and the terminology of causation, power and probability developed in I.3. Secondly, I.3 was reconsidered in light of Hume's comments on the role and significance of philosophy and its exponents in contemporary society. These comments appear both within the *Treatise* and in other works written soon after its publication, and help to clarify the kind of philosophical theory which Hume was attempting to fashion, and its intended relationship with the mundane practices of everyday life. The third context within which the theory was considered, was that of Hume's biography. By examining Hume's letters from the period in which the *Treatise* was conceived it was possible to find clues about the kind of personal mentality and the worldly concerns which lay behind the theoretical concerns in the *Treatise*. Finally, the contemporary social context in Britain, with its rising emphasis on "getting and spending" provided a characteristic setting within which the individual mentality which was reconstructed from the interpretation of *Treatise* I and II, could be located.

The thesis which has been constructed through this exploration therefore relies on analysis of Hume's philosophical theory as such, analysis of the language used in the philosophical text, analysis of Hume's biography through which themes common to both his theory and his language are established, and finally analysis of the social context within which life, thought, and writing took place. Together, these various dimensions provide the basis for reinterpretation. By drawing the connections between these layers I shall argue that central elements of Hume's theoretical model of the individual were constructed within a broader social context, and produced partly in order to explain the specific mundane phenomena involved in getting, spending and owning in that environment.

2.) The Argument

Chapter two of the thesis presents an analysis of Hume's early biography in order to excavate the nature of his experience of social practices during the 1730s. By identifying the features of Hume's own social background and status, by tracing his movements both geographically, and through different kinds of social milieu, it is possible to ascertain the

kind of social experience from which he drew his 'experimental' observations for the *Treatise.* The particular relevance of themes identified in the social contexts encountered by Hume is specified in the last part of the chapter. The two chapters which follow this are both concerned with the engagement of Hume's philosophy, and of 'the understanding', in common active life, and conversely with the importance of common active life for Hume's philosophy, and for 'the understanding'.

Chapter three examines the important relationship which Hume perceived between his philosophical work and the practices which he encountered in 'common, active life' as he found it, and the role which this played in the 'reformation' of philosophy in which he located his own work. Aside from the *Treatise* itself, there are three texts written by Hume in which he comments on the relationship between philosophy and *common life*. The first is the *Abstract* of the *Treatise* which was published in 1740; the second is the opening piece of the *Essays, Moral and Political* volume 2, published in 1742, and entitled *Of Essay Writing*; and the third is *Of the Different Species of Philosophy* and was published in the *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* in 1748. The comments that Hume made reflect a constant preoccupation which persisted from the composition of the *Treatise* through the 1740s. It is argued that in writing the *Treatise of Human Nature* Hume intended to bridge a gap which he perceived between the philosophical theory of the past and what he called "common life". This determined his agenda in considering the nature of human individuals: it was necessary both to incorporate and explain the intellectual and passional operations involved in common activities, and to present a theory which was relevant to these activities by amplifying and clarifying them.

Having examined the external relationship between the philosopher and his public, and between philosophy and the other activities of life as Hume saw them, it is necessary to consider its internal counterpart. Chapter 4 examines the relationship which Hume established between the understanding and the passions in his treatment of the will in II.3.iii. That chapter analyses the instrumental role given to processes belonging to the understanding in Hume's theory. Reason is found to be the slave of the passions, performing inferential functions concerning existing and possible states of affairs, determined by the desires which form the will. This analysis shows that in Hume's view, reason, or the arrangement of ideas by the understanding, is primarily concerned with human practice, and is therefore understood to be engaged in the common active life with which Hume's philosophy was shown to be concerned in chapter 3. It is therefore possible to argue that the theory of causal inference which Hume presented in I.3 was meant to

describe and explain thought processes required by specific activities which Hume was observing and which he intended to clarify. The chapter which follows discovers specific types of activity with which Hume evidently associated these thought processes in his treatment of the passional aspect of the individual.

Chapter 5 examines the arguments and language of II.1 and II.2, concerning the 'indirect passions' of *pride and humility, love and hatred.* The exemplary importance which Hume gave to riches and power in the development of pride, and the importance of pride in forming an idea of the self, and an end of human motivation are outlined. The language which Hume uses to explain the operations of these passions, and the manner in which external objects (primarily in the form of property and riches) are seen to *cause* them is analysed. It is found that Hume closely associated the concepts developed in I.3 with the operations of the passion of pride and its relation to property and monetary wealth in this part. The terminology of *cause, power,* and *probability*, and the theory of the will and the capacity to act, are seen to be important parts of Hume's explanation of the social phenomena of pride, ownership, purchase, and consumption.

Chapter 6 returns to I.3, and presents an interpretation of the theory of causal inference in light of the chapters sketched above. I.3 is presented as the primary *constructive* part of Hume's theory of understanding, and by showing how it was located within a multi-dimensional theory of the individual, and hence by drawing attention to its relationship with the other parts of the individual, it is argued that it was created in part to explain intellectual operations involved in the social practices observed by Hume, that is the purchase and conspicuous consumption of goods.

3.) Bibliographical Review

The literature on Hume may be divided into two broad categories. The first includes those who treat Hume as a provider of theories relevant to current theoretical problems, e.g A.J. Ayer who treats Hume as an epistemologist who may still 'have something to say about' current problems.[5] The second, includes those who treat Hume as a theorist of the eighteenth century, and who examine the extent to which Hume was influenced by or passed on influential ideas to, other intellectual figures. Norman Kemp Smith,[6] for example, in his treatment of Hume's moral philosophy in Book III, regarded Hutcheson as a key positive influence on the philosopher in this regard, and David Fate Norton is a

[5] See, for example, Ayer's *Probability and Evidence*, (London, 1972), chapter 1, part 1, entitled, 'The Legacy of Hume'.
[6] Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (Edinburgh, 1941), pp. 12-51.

scholar who has shown the importance of sceptical conclusions and implications from 17th century philosophy in the formation of Hume's construction of epistemology, logic, and psychology.[7]

In much, if not all of the historical commentary on the *philosophical* ideas of David Hume, emphasis is placed on the intellectual – philosophical and primarily literary – influences on his thought. With David Fate Norton,[8] James Moore,[9] J.L. Mackie,[10] and others, as with their antecedents starting from Norman Kemp Smith, the philosophers mentioned in Hume's introduction are considered as possible influences – i.e., Hutcheson, Butler, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Locke – alongside key figures of the 17th century not referred to by name in the *Treatise*. As one might expect in the case of a text concerned with epistemology, metaphysics, logic and morals, there has been little work published in which a serious attempt has been made to locate the theory within a *practical* context. In this regard, the historical study of the *Treatise* has been typical in the respects described in the first part of this chapter. Only the third book of the *Treatise* has received anything like this kind of treatment. The nature of its content, concerned with law, government and property, has made it possible for historians to subject it to a similar kind of treatment to that given to works of political theory. In the following section, the broad sweep of historical interpretation with regard to the *Treatise* is briefly considered, and some themes that point in the direction of the present endeavour are identified.

In 1974, T.E. Jessop[11] stated that a philosopher may be misunderstood, "if his texts are treated as entirely objective propositions to be studied merely by formal and empirical logic, with little if any consideration of the particular mind and course of life of the man who thought them out, only the printed words counting; or if only one or two of his range of writings be fastened on, the rest being virtually ignored." In the case of Hume, it is, he says, in these two ways that misunderstanding has "prevalently" arisen. Jessop suggested that the way forward for interpreting Hume was to introduce a "much wider approach" which would reintegrate philosophical exegesis into the biographical and other relevant historical-contextual material, and to take him away from those who have attempted to reduce him to "a label or a standard-bearer for a cause, for subjective positivism". Since

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[7] See Norton's introductory article in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton, (Cambridge, 1994).
[8] David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton, 1982).
[9] James Moore, 'The Social Background of Hume's Science of Human Nature' in David Fate Norton, Nicholas Capaldi and Wade L. Robinson (eds.), *McGill Hume Studies* (San Diego, 1979).
[10] J. L. Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory* (London and New York, 1980), chapter 2.
[11] In W. B. Todd (ed.), op. cit., p.1.

these comments were made as part of the opening piece of a series of papers presented to E. C. Mossner, it is not hard to figure out that there lay an implicit compliment at the centre of Jessop's concern. Mossner is widely acknowledged to have provided an invaluable contribution to the greater understanding of Hume's thought, and of its origins, with *The Life of David Hume*, first published in 1954.[12] Perhaps its greatest significance was the success with which it anticipated the advice of Jessop in resisting the prevailing tendency to abstract parts of Hume's work from their intellectual and broader contexts of origin, and to pigeon-hole him as the early precursor of whatever the current philosophical trend happened to be.

A common complaint of writers on Hume's philosophy in its various aspects with the work which was carried out before the second world war was that it concentrated too much on the epistemological and logical aspects of his thought to the exclusion of, and in isolation from, the rest of his work. Jessop, for example, mentioned the almost exclusive attention which was given to Book I of the *Treatise* in the interpretation of Hume, suggesting that this was one of the reasons why he was misunderstood.[13] The main reason for this tendency in Hume studies appears to have been the rehabilitation of Hume by the logical-positivist and analytic traditions. Hume suffered from neglect during the 19th century, being regarded as a mainly negative influence on philosophical thought who eliminated its highest possibilities through sceptical argument.[14] The negative criteria for eliminating fallacious questions and postulates from philosophy developed by the logical-positivist tradition of the 20th century found in Hume a mind closer to its spirit and tastes. In his introduction to the broader tradition of positivism, Leszek Kolakowski, for instance, dates back much of its substance to Hume himself.[15]

The approach to interpreting Hume which this tradition spawned was one which was primarily concerned with questions of the order, "what has his work still got to say to us?" Bertrand Russell regarded Hume's epistemological position as one which still retained a good deal of validity,[16] and A.J. Ayer continued in the tradition of regarding

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[12] E. C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (2nd ed. Oxford, 1980). In the subsequent footnotes this is referred to as *Life.*

[13] Ibid., p.9.

[14] For an account of Hume's reception and rejection as a destructive sceptic during the late eighteenth and early 19th centuries see the introduction to David Fate Norton, op. cit., (1982), chapter 1.

[15] Leszek Kolakowski, *Positivist Philosophy,* (Harmondsworth, 1972). Kolakowski says of Hume that he was "the real father of positivist philosophy – chronologically the first thinker we may call positivist without any of the reservations we have to make with earlier thinkers", p.43.

[16] See for example, Bertrand Russell, 'Reply to Criticisms' in Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell,* (La Salle, Illinois, 1971), 4th ed., p.727. (Cited by James Moore in 'Hume's Theory of Justice and Property', *Political Studies*, vol.24 (1976), 103-19.)

Hume as 'one of our own' in his own work, and in his independent study of Hume.[17] Questions of this sort retain their validity in the research and teaching of contemporary philosophy departments, but the most that can be expected of such an approach from the point of view of historians of philosophy is that in the hands of the contemporary interpreter, Hume's statements may be clarified by careful reading of the texts. A great deal of literature designed to comment on Hume's philosophy has been generated in this spirit.[18]

The study of Hume's moral theory, and in particular, the attempts which have been made to present integrated accounts of the whole subject matter dealt with by Hume's *Treatise*, have yielded more insight into the historical origins of his philosophy. Norman Kemp Smith wrote the seminal work for this tradition of scholarship. Hume's philosophy was defined in much broader terms than in the positivist-analytic tradition, and emphasis was placed on questions concerning the intellectual or discursive origins of Hume's ideas.

Kemp Smith's magnum opus on Hume's philosophy was published in 1941, and in it he attempted to revise the narrower approach which he had taken in his highly influential articles published in *Mind* in 1905.[19] The two earlier articles were entitled "The Naturalism of Hume". Kemp Smith had argued that "what is central in Hume's philosophy is his contention that reason 'is and ought only to be' the servant of the 'passions'". He argued that this doctrine presented the key to the "non-sceptical, realist teaching" found in I.4 of the *Treatise*. However, his later view arose when he thought that the position of 1905 while still correct, only partly covered the ground. He began to believe that he, "had not yet found a point of view from which his teaching could be shown to be self-consistent, or, failing that, could be made to yield an explanation of the conflicting positions to which he has committed himself."[20] Smith's revision of the earlier view was prompted by three key questions whose answers must affect the understanding of the *Treatise* as a whole, and which were not satisfactorily dealt with in previous interpretations, his own included: The first question asks, "[w]hy is it that in Book I of the *Treatise* the existence of an impression of the self is explicitly denied, while yet his theory of the 'indirect' passions, propounded at length in Book II, is made to rest on the assumption that we do in fact experience an impression of the self, and that this impression is ever-present to us?" The second question

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[17] See note 5 of the present chapter.

[18] For two recently published examples where Hume's philosophical ideas are explained for the purposes of current philosophical concerns see H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism*, (London, 1999) and Georges Dicker, *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics*, (London, 1998).

[19] Norman Kemp Smith, 'The Naturalism of Hume', *Mind*, vol. 14, (1905): 149-73, 335-47.

[20] Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, (Edinburgh, 1941), p. v.

was, "how has it come about that Hume, in treating of the association of ideas, regards the law of causality as an independent law, distinct from that of contiguity, and - what seems even more difficult of explanation - that the instances which he gives of its operation are so invariably taken from blood and social relationships: those of parent and child, of master and servant, of owner and property?" Finally he asked, as his third question, "[w]hy, too, in his first excursion into the fields of philosophy, has he executed his work on so comprehensive a scale, bringing within its range not only a new theory of knowledge - already, one would have thought, a sufficiently ambitious enterprise - but also a theory of the 'passions' and a system of ethics?"[21]

Kemp Smith's attempt to answer these questions in a cohesive way led him to reconsider the structure of the *Treatise* as a whole, and in particular, to reconsider the extent to which Hume had been influenced by his philosophical antecedents. Smith's interpretation places huge emphasis on the importance of Francis Hutcheson's sentimental theory of morals in the generation of Hume's ideas not only in the moral theory of book III, but also in the treatment of the understanding and the passions.

Lately, however, Kemp Smith's interpretation of the historical-intellectual roots of Hume's ideas has been challenged. In fact, it might even be said that the general tendency of scholarship since Smith's work has been subject to revision at least since the early 1990s. A feature which was common both to Kemp Smith's work, and other interpreters who looked at Hume's intellectual sources, was the way in which they attempted to find areas where it could be said that Hume's ideas were *similar* to those of others. Thus, for example, in Norman Kemp Smith's view, Hume's *Treatise* was found to contain a great deal that was the same as what Hutcheson had been writing in the 1720s.[22] Continuity was also the finding of Duncan Forbes in his influential study of the relationship between Hume's philosophy and the work of the natural law theorists.[23] However a collection of essays entitled *Hume and Hume's Connexions* (Edinburgh, 1994) edited by M.A. Stewart and John P. Wright, contains a number of essays which tend to undermine the study of *similarities* between Hume's work and that of other philosophers and philosophical traditions. Some of these studies have begun to resist the homogenising tendency of previous scholarship by stressing the significant differences which distinguish Hume's

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[21] Ibid., p. v.

[22] Since the 1940s a number of other interpreters have continued to argue around the similarity between Hutcheson's and Hume's ideas, for example, D. D. Raphael, *The Moral Sense* (Oxford, 1947), Arthur Prior, *Logic and the Basis of Ethics*, (Oxford, 1949), and David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common-Sense moralist, sceptical metaphysician*, (Princeton, 1982).

[23] Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, (Cambridge, 1975).

work from traditions with which it has been associated. Thus, to an extent the emphasis is shifting towards clarifying our understanding of what was original and new in Hume's work, rather than what was older and borrowed.

With respect to Norman Kemp Smith's argument, a significant challenge has been presented by James Moore. In his article entitled, 'Hume and Hutcheson,'[24] Moore stressed the differences between the respective philosophers' sympathies with different ancient philosophical traditions both directly and through their disciples in the 17th century. While Hutcheson was attempting to derive a system of normative moral philosophy which would harmonise with the precepts of the ancients, and particularly with the Stoics,[25] Hume was attempting to draw up an anatomical map which explains how humans come to make moral judgements. Hume's efforts are seen to have been based on a closer affinity with Epicurean and sceptical philosophy, both of which Hutcheson sternly rejected. Moore underlines his interpretation by pointing out the extent to which Hutcheson himself, and most contemporaries, regarded their philosophies as being fundamentally different. In the same volume, Pauline C. Westerman presented a consonant argument about the putative relationship between Hume's moral theory and the project of the natural lawyers. In her article, 'Hume and the natural lawyers: a change of landscape', she challenges the various commentators who have over-stressed the similarities and continuities between Hume's philosophy and Grotius et al.[26] Westerman argues that many differences are to be found if the respective 'landscapes' of Hume's moral theory and the work of the natural lawyers are examined and compared closely. Her judgement on the basic differences is summarised in the following:

> Natural lawyers used the notion of human nature to find a fixed point of reference, descriptive and normative at the same time, from which laws of nature could be derived; but Hume used it to understand and explain the social world, the establishment of convention, and the way these conventions regulate our lives. Whereas in natural-law theory historical accounts of the development of civilization played a justificatory role, Hume used these accounts to understand how justice itself is estabilised. But this move makes the whole purpose of natural law unrealizable.[27]

The crucial difference in purpose towards which Hume directs his analysis is regarded by Westerman as, at the same time, the culmination of the natural law tradition inasmuch as Hume shifted away from justification and towards pure explanation in a manner which had

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[24] In M. A. Stewart and John P. Wright (eds.), *Hume and Hume's Connexions* (Edinburgh, 1994).

[25] See M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish enlightenment', in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity*, ed. J.Osler, (Cambridge, 1991).

[26] The primary exponents of this view are Duncan Forbes op. cit., Knud Haakonssen, in *The Science of a legislator: the natural jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge, 1981), and S. Buckle, in *Natural law and the theory of property: Grotius to Hume* (Oxford, 1991).

[27] M. A. Stewart and John P. Wright (eds), *Hume and Hume's Connexions,* (Edinburgh, 1994), p.102.

already been suggested by Grotius and Pufendorf. However, the natural lawyers had realised that to follow this path was entirely to supersede the project of natural law, and Hume's deliberate move from *moral painting* to the work of the 'anatomist' which he described to Hutcheson marks a significant break.[28]

Another particularly fruitful approach which has been taken to interpreting Hume's philosophy was initiated by Donald Livingston in *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life*. Livingston's intention was to present a "comprehensive interpretation of Hume's philosophy based on all of his writings, historical as well as philosophical."[29] For present purposes, the most interesting aspect of Livingston's interpretation is his understanding of the centrality of a notion of "common life" to Hume's philosophy as a whole. In chapter 3 of the present thesis a particular reading of parts of Hume's *Treatise* as well as some other texts written soon after the publication of that work, reaches a similar conclusion to that achieved by Livingston's analysis. His interpretation presents an alternative, but not inconsistent, means of achieving a similar idea to that presented below.

In his preface to the book, Livingston observes that the prevalent tendency in the study of Hume's work has been to ask questions of his epistemology while typically supposing that the appropriate "paradigm of knowledge" is a natural-scientific one. While this has been useful, he argues, there is much to be gained from replacing the assumptions which underlie the approach with the understanding that, "Hume, like Vico, was working towards a reform in philosophy that takes history, not natural science, as the paradigm of knowledge". Hume's philosophy, while having "certain affinities with natural science," is primarily "a historical science".[30]

Guiding Livingston's study of Hume's work as a whole is the insight that his philosophical work and his historical work, are "mutually illuminating". Livingston suggests that,

> It is not just that there are traces of Hume's philosophical theories (moral, political, epistemological, etc.) scattered throughout *The History of England.* It is rather that some of Hume's deepest philosophical doctrines of knowledge and existence are structured by historical, narrative categories. Viewed against the background of these categories, Hume's entire philosophical enterprise takes on a different character. Historical thinking is now seen to be an internal part of his philosophical thought. And [...] Hume's historical work may be viewed, in part, as the fulfilment of a demand imposed by his conception of philosophy.[31]

This understanding of the essential continuity of Hume's work throughout its various

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[28] See *LDH*, vol.1, p.32, no.13, from Hume to Hutcheson of 1739, for the use of these metaphors.
[29] Donald Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life*, (Chicago 1984), p.xi.
[30] Ibid., p.xi.

phases is underpinned by a particular interpretation of the kind of philosopher that Hume set out to become through his earlier work. Rather than the theorist of knowledge narrowly defined through trends in twentieth-century philosophy, Hume is thought to have regarded himself as "a moral philosopher, a student of human action in its broadest sense, comprehending aesthetics, ethics, politics, economics, literature, law, religion, and history."[32] The epistemological arguments in the *Treatise* and in the first *Enquiry* are understood to have served the purpose of "convincing the public that a conceptual framework could be established in which a non-arbitrary inquiry into these fields could be carried out."[33] Only in the ten years prior to the publication of his book did Livingston see a growing tendency to review Hume's work in terms of this much broader conception of moral philosophy, and his own contribution was designed to attempt a fully comprehensive revision along these lines.

The need to understand Hume's philosophical enterprise, at least in its earliest phase, in terms of a much broader concept of moral philosophy than has been understood by analytic or positivist philosophy, is recognised, and indeed strongly re-emphasised in the present thesis. The point at which it makes closest contact with Livingston's interpretation is in the role which "common life" is seen to play in Hume's conception of moral philosophy, and the work of the moral philosopher.

In chapter 3 of the present thesis, Hume's comments on the role of philosophy in relation to both its reading and conversing public, and to the common active life which is the source of information, are analysed in order to show the importance of "common life" for Hume. Livingston establishes a similar interpretation but moves from a different starting point. Livingston regards I.4, sections ii-iv, "where he works through the paradigmatic philosophical problem: our knowledge of the external world," as being the proper basis for understanding Hume's conception of philosophy. It is from his interpretation of this part of the *Treatise* that Livingston derives his interpretation of Hume as a philosopher of 'common life'. He finds three "theories of existence" in part I.4. The first is that of the vulgar, ("the world is what we immediately experience"), the second is "phenomenalism (what we immediately experience is in the mind)", and the third is "the doctrine of double existence (what we immediately experience is in the mind but represents a world specifically different from our experience)".[34] In Livingston's view, Hume's engagement with the three theories conditions the methodological importance that

[31] Ibid., p.1-2.
[32] Ibid., p.1.
[33] Ibid., p.1-2.

insight into common life assumes for his philosophy.

According to Livingston's interpretation, Hume believes the three theories to "exhaust all possibilities". Finding each on its own to be inadequate, Hume established a position which resists both the particular theories themselves, and the presentation of a new theory. Livingston calls Hume's fourth position, a "dialectical theory of the nature and limits of theories of experience". This transcendental perspective is what Hume calls "true philosophy", and it is achieved by working through "the dialectic of the three theories".[35]

Livingston argues that Hume's exploration of this dialectic leads him to challenge the hegemony of the "*autonomy principle*". According to this principle, philosophy is given the authority "to command belief and judgement independent of the unreflectively received beliefs, customs, and prejudices of common life". Hume provides a statement in the *Treatise* which appears to recognise such a principle: "Reason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority" .[36] This principle, in Livingston's view, is justified on the grounds that without such independence, philosophy could find itself becoming "the mere handmaiden of theology, science, politics, or whatever, and so would lose its integrity as a self-critical activity." Hume's exploration of the three available theories concerning the putative existence of an external world, however, showed him that adherence to the "*autonomy principle*" leads to total scepticism. As chapter 3 shows, Hume believed that the isolation of philosophy from common life gave rise to a meaningless and barbarous form of thought, and as Livingston points out, philosophy thus becomes "an affair of the closet," and, "merely ridiculous"; worse than this, "when it informs moral, political, and religious thinking, it becomes a threat to the peace and well-being of society."[37] The following conclusion therefore becomes necessary for philosophy to continue at all:

> [Philosophy] must reform itself, abandoning the autonomy principle in its pure form, and recognise common life not as an object of critical reflection but as a category internal to its own critical activity. True philosophy, then, presupposes the authority of common life as a whole. A reformed version of the autonomy principle survives: philosophy may form abstract principles and ideals to criticise any judgement in common life; what it cannot do, on pain of total skepticism, is throw into question the whole order.

Livingston interprets the engagement between the philosopher and common life which ensues as "a dialectical one" in which the philosopher,

> exists both within and without the world of common life. He exists within insofar as he presupposes

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[34] Ibid., p.2.
[35] Ibid., p.3.
[36] Cited from *Treatise* p.186.

> the world of common life. He exists without insofar as his thought is aimed at understanding ultimate reality. No custom or belief in common life however "methodized and corrected" can satisfy this demand of thought to know the real, and yet it is only *through* these customs and prejudices that we can think about the real. Skepticism, then, is internal to true philosophy. The true philosopher recognizes his cognitive alienation from ultimate reality but continues to inquire, though he has nothing but the "leaky weather-beaten vessel" of common life through which to think.[38]

Out of this dialectical engagement, Livingston argues, the true philosophy finds itself with two tasks to perform. The distinction between them is consistent with the division mentioned in part 3 of this chapter. The first task is a "positive" one, and the second, a "therapeutic" one. In the first task, Livingston characterises the philosopher's role as "to explore the structure of common life through empirical and a-priori analysis and to speculate about the real within the confines of common life." The therapeutic role of the philosopher involves "purging" common life of "the alienating effects of false philosophy."[39]

Livingston's approach to Hume's philosophical enterprise as a whole points in the direction of the approach presented in this thesis. By placing the thematic concern with "common life" at the centre of Hume's work, he implicitly reinforces the importance of understanding the specific forms of that "common" life that interested Hume as a philosopher, and the manner in which these would have shaped his philosophy. In a sense, Livingston's work describes the overall form while this thesis attempts to discover the content of that form.

The last work on Hume to be considered on its own at this point, and which has pointed in the direction of the present project is that of Alasdair MacIntyre. In part of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre indicated the importance of a connection between Hume's philosophy in the *Treatise*, and an English social context.[40] His analysis begins with the observation that throughout Hume's life and work there was a profound sense of ambivalence towards his Scottish place of origin. On the one hand, Hume, "consistently discarded everything distinctively Scottish in matters of intellectual attitude and belief," but on the other, he "retained and developed the warmest personal ties with his family, with early friends, and with a variety of figures prominent in Scottish life" with just as much consistency. MacIntyre's interest in the Anglophile tendencies of Hume's intellectual attitudes is driven by his belief that it was through his enamourment with the

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[37] Livingston, op.cit., p.4.
[38] ibid., p.3.
[39] Ibid., p.3.
[40] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose justice? Which rationality?* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1988). See especially ch.XV, 'Hume's anglicising subversion'.

English way of life, and his consequent subversion of Scottish intellectual traditions, that Hume developed his particular theory of human nature. For MacIntyre, the rupture between the two socio-cultural contexts within which Hume moved in the early part of his life holds the key to interpreting the specific emphasis of his philosophy.[41]

MacIntyre observes that when Hume left Scotland in 1734, "he adopted, so far as he was capable of doing, the manner of an Englishman".[42] The degree of awareness with which he adopted this cultural orientation is suggested by comments which he made later in life. At one point, for instance, he remarked that "Scotland is too narrow a Place for me" and that "London is the Capital of my own Country." MacIntyre suggests that the changing of the spelling of Hume's name during his stay in Bristol was more than just a pragmatic ploy to ensure that his name was pronounced correctly. He places the English attitude with which Hume was confronted in the context of "a larger ignorance about Scotland", and suggests that his efforts to Anglicise, or more emphatically to *de-Caledonianise*, the language used in his *History of England* with the help of his Bristol friend John Peach illustrates the attitude behind his attempt to shape his own self-presentation to accommodate the English in 1734.[43] Finally, a remark made by Hume in 1757 in a letter to Gilbert Elliot helps to clarify matters further when he calls the Scots idiom, '"a very corrupt Dialect of the Tongue which we make use of..."'.[44] MacIntyre concludes from this that Hume was strongly inclined to imitate the lifestyle of the English as he saw it, asserting that, "[t]he life in which he lived out his scholarly and philosophical ambition was by design to a large degree an English life, even when lived out in France".[45]

In light of this, the Introduction to the *Treatise* merits some further attention in MacIntyre's view. He draws attention to those passages in which Hume writes about "some late philosophers in *England*, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing," and lauds, "the improvements in reason and philosophy" which bring "honour to our native country". The "native country" to which the author says "we" belong is emphatically England, and as MacIntyre observes, no reader at that time would have thought the anonymous author anything other than an Englishman who was, furthermore,

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[41] Ibid., p.281.
[42] Ibid., p.284.
[43] For an analysis of the self-consciousness of eighteenth-century Scottish people with regard to their use of the English language (including as an appendix, Hume's own list of Scotticisms that he published with the 1752 edition of his *Political Discourses*) see James G. Basker, 'Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher, *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993).
[44] MacIntyre, op. cit., p.284.
[45] Ibid., p.284.

"curiously insensitive to the very existence of Scotland".[46] Even Francis Hutcheson's name is misspelled as "Hutchinson" and placed in the list of *English* philosophers in a footnote.

MacIntyre's interpretation of the philosophical reasoning in the *Treatise* suggests that Hume established basic philosophical problematics in his treatment of ideas in Book I, particularly in the section on self-identity, and then overcame these in the course of book II, in such a way as to make a theory of morality possible. He explains the basic problem which appears in I.4 as follows:

> Since from the standpoint of the way of ideas my account of myself can draw only upon what is presented to and from a first-person standpoint, *my* impressions and *my* ideas, and therefore all socially ascribed conceptions disappear from view, anything which could constitute my personal identity necessarily also disappears from view. Between the different states and episodes of the self a variety of relationships can be discerned, but nothing other than or over and above these. Hence any belief in personal identity which is more than a belief in such a relationship comes to seem a philosophically unwarranted fiction, as it does to Hume in Section VI of Part IV of Book I of the *Treatise*.[47]

In recognising this, Hume recognised a fundamental flaw in both the Calvinist tradition of introspection as "soul-searching", and the Cartesian deduction of the self as the *cogito*. The problem which he then faced, in MacIntyre's interpretation, at least in terms of presenting a reasonable description of the theory of morals, was a means of reintegrating the parts which had separated out from the individual self. He does this in the course of book II by exploring the manner in which perception and the passions operate on one another in a social context. Through Hume's analysis of *pride and humility, love and hatred*, he explains how he understands identity to be imputed to a person, and hence how the grounds of "responsibility and accountability" are established. Taking his cue from David Fate Norton, MacIntyre states that "it was by way of this treatment of the passions and his consequent adoption of a standpoint which the way of ideas could not itself provide that Hume moved from the metaphysical scepticism, even if a mitigated scepticism, of Book I to the non-sceptical moral positions of Book III, a contrast with which it is now clear [...] every interpretation of Hume must come to terms".[48]

MacIntyre's most interesting observations concerning the relationship between the theory of human nature in the *Treatise* and the specific historical context in which Hume

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[46] Ibid., p.284.
[47] Ibid., p.291.
[48] Ibid., p.293. MacIntyre attributes this idea to Norton, op. cit. (1982). The argument of the present thesis tends to agree more strongly with Livingston's interpretation of the relationship between different parts of the *Treatise*. His division of arguments into 'constructive' and 'therapeutic' is a useful one, and supports the present contention that Hume constructed a whole theory of the individual in the course of the *compleat chain of reasoning* in Books I and II.

conceived it focus on Hume's treatment of the passions in II.1. First of all, he recognises that Hume thought his work to follow in the tradition of Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Mandeville and Hutcheson, in its universalistic intentions: it was meant to give an account of the constitution of universal human nature and of human society. But MacIntyre raises an objection to Hume's supposition which is similar to that which forms the starting point of this thesis. He asserts that,

> in fact the social relationships, whose characterisation emerges in the discussion of the passions, and which is then extended and sustained in the discussions of moral judgement and of the virtues and vices of Book III, are specific to one particular type of social and cultural order...[49]

In a sense, the aspiration to produce a theory which could embrace the universal characteristics of mankind proved hubristic, becoming tied up in the historical particularities of its inception. As MacIntyre says, "perhaps it could not have been otherwise." He argues that in social life, the passions must be directed towards objects which are "particularised in some specific cultural and social idiom." This means that,

> [w]hat humiliates is never insult in general, but always an insult of some particular type having some particular significance for the inhabitants of some particular culture; what causes pride is never some good quality in general, but always some particular example of this quality developed, educated, exhibited, and valued in culturally specific ways and socially specific circumstances.[50]

For MacIntyre, the mistake which is perceived in Hume's reasoning, is excusable, but there remains an important question which must be addressed. He asks, "[w]hat then were the highly specific social and cultural forms and attitudes which the Hume of the *Treatise* falsely identified with human nature as such? To what type of social and cultural order did they belong?"[51]

The key characteristics of the social and cultural forms and attitudes which Hume incorporated into the theory of the passions are, according to MacIntyre, concerned with property.[52] In MacIntyre's reading of the theory of the individual in the *Treatise* he finds that,

> [o]ur passions according to Hume are such that they produce in us a definition of our interests in terms of our relationship to property, and it is as propertied or unpropertied in particular ways and to particular degrees that we participate in those social exchanges and transactions whose outcome is either the increase or diminution, or at least the sustaining or the undermining, of the pride and love felt by particular individuals.[53]

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[49] Ibid., p.293.
[50] Ibid., p.293.
[51] Ibid., p.293.
[52] Ibid., p.295.
[53] Ibid., p.295.

In particular, the origin of this concern with property and pride, which Hume imputes to the human individual at all times and in all places, is, in MacIntyre's view, nothing but a reflection the actual particular, and peculiar concerns, of English society in the first half of the eighteenth century. He states that, "[w]hat Hume presents as human nature as such turns out to be eighteenth-century English human nature, and indeed only one variant of that, even if the dominant one …"[54]

For each concept of action and rationality, in MacIntyre's view, there was a proper historical context. Hume's theory marks a direct challenge to, and indeed marks a definitive turning point out of, the Aristotelian philosophy of action, both in general, and in the particular history of Scotland with its Calvinist-Aristotelian tradition of the 17th century. Aristotle's theory of practical reasoning and justice required, according to MacIntyre,

> a society structured in terms of systematic forms of activity, within each of which specific goods are acknowledged and pursued, while within the overall social order the activity of politics provides for the inhabitants of the *polis* ways of understanding and pursuing those goods in an integrated way, so that the good and the best may be achieved.

Hume's account, however, arose from an awareness of and experience in English society, one from which the elements of pride, status, and property were assimilated. The theory of the *Treatise* required a contextual origin consisting of,

> a society structured in terms of modes of satisfaction of desire, within which transactions and exchanges for mutual benefit are organised, while the overall social order provides formally and informally for the sustaining and enforcement of the relationships embodied in such transactions and exchanges.[55]

Finally, MacIntyre makes a crucial observation concerning the kind of society within which the Humean form of evaluation would typically occur. This would be, "one in which evaluation is primarily in terms of the satisfaction of consumers." Whereas the Aristotelian individual acts and thinks simultaneously in his capacity as citizen of the *polis*, the Humean individual "engages in practical reasoning *qua* member of a type of society in which rank, property, and pride structure social exchanges".[56]

The present project begins to fill in the lacuna identified in the first part of this chapter. As was pointed out, the study of historical aspects of epistemological theory, logic and metaphysics, tends to stop after the intellectual sources and targets have been identified. The secondary literature which has built up around David Hume's philosophical

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[54] Ibid., p.295. MacIntyre refers to Roy Porter's *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (Harmondsworth, 1982) at this point.
[55] Ibid., p.298.
[56] Ibid., p.298.

works shows strong signs of the same tendency. Overall, most work is directed towards evaluations of the influence of various philosophical antecedents on his work, or is designed to locate him within a broader tradition of philosophical thought. Three routes have been suggested, however, which point beyond this kind of approach to historical interpretation. The first was that of Ernest Mossner in his biographical study of Hume; the second (chronologically) was Donald Livingston's exploration of the unity of Hume's work which he believes to have been built on the centrality of "common life"; and the third, is the shift from homogenisation of Hume into traditions, or into agreement with his philosophic predecessors, towards differentiation. All three approaches are instructive, although none has yet entirely broken free of the model of historical research which considers the reception of ideas through texts as paradigmatic for understanding the origins of changing philosophical theories. Finally, Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed incidentally towards the kind of link which this thesis explores. The specific manner in which this thesis is intended to follow in the directions indicated by these three approaches is as follows: with those who resist homogenisation, this approach is concerned primarily with explaining what is new in Hume's thought, rather than with explaining away what is older; with Livingston, the thesis agrees that the activities and phenomena of common life were central to Hume's concern as a philosopher, as well as to his experience as a man of the eighteenth century, but goes further by identifying the specific contents of "common life" which most immediately concerned Hume; and finally, with Mossner, the biographical facts of Hume's life are regarded as crucially important – they provide the historian with access to the experiential horizons within which he engaged with common life, and developed a new mode of philosophic apprehension.

4.) The relation of the *compleat chain of reasoning* to the Moral Theory

In chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this thesis, Hume's construction of a theory of the individual is analysed. This theory is understood to have been built upon experience and observation of specific activities as Hume encountered them in the course of his own early life. Before the analysis and interpretation proceeds, it is necessary to clarify two points concerning the way in which the structure of the *Treatise* is understood.

First of all, an important distinction has to be made between different parts of Books I and II on the basis of their functions. Parts I.2 and I.4 perform a different kind of task from that of I.1 and I.3, and the three parts of Book II, according to the interpretation

presented in this thesis. Parts I.2 and I.4 contain *therapeutic*[57] arguments (which is the term used by Livingston), intended to show the fallacious nature of certain concepts and beliefs, thus clearing the way for arguments presented in other parts of the *Treatise*. It is primarily in the other parts of Books I and II that the job of *constructing* a theory of the individual is achieved. The therapeutic arguments are directed primarily against, first, the fallacy of abstract ideas, drawing on Berkeley's substitution of empirically grounded 'general ideas', and particularly as these appear in mathematical reasoning. The second subject to which Hume's critical or *therapeutic* powers are directed, is the metaphysical idea of body as a substance existing externally to the senses. The argument concerning the idea of self-identity also falls into this category, although it has an obvious relevance for a theory of individualism. These arguments are largely restricted to I.2 (general versus abstract ideas and mathematical reasoning), and to I.4 (on the existence of objects beyond the senses, on the immateriality of the soul, and on personal identity). This distinction is an important one because it permits an explanation of how the pieces analysed in the following chapters fit together into a theory of the individual. By presenting analysis of the narrative structure of Books I and II, and by analysing the theory of the will and the relationship of the activities of the understanding and the passions in relation to this, chapter 4 of this thesis in particular shows how the constructive parts of these books describe different parts of the individual human agent.

Secondly, although this thesis does not offer an interpretation of the third book of the *Treatise*, specific aspects of its relationship with the earlier parts need to be clarified at this point in order to justify the present interpretation of the first two books.

Analysis of the relationship between the two published parts of the *Treatise* has given rise to different interpretations. The positivist tradition tended to examine Book I first, and the other two books only later, if at all. The presentation of the *Treatise,* and the running order in which Hume placed its books would appear to bear out an interpretation which regards the epistemological and metaphysical, and then the psychological theory, to precede the moral theory, both logically and chronologically. However, Norman Kemp Smith's interpretation presented a running order which conflicts with the order in which Hume placed the books. Based on the assumption that it was Hutcheson's sentimental theory of morals which spawned Hume's thoughts both on moral theory *and* the other subjects covered by the *Treatise*, Kemp Smith's analysis places the psychological and

[57] The term 'therapeutic' is used in this thesis in a limited sense to indicate where Hume's arguments are designed to remove what he regarded as unfounded and obstructive ideas in order to make way for more viable theories and methods of reasoning.

moral theory first, both chronologically and logically, in the conception of the *Treatise*, and regards the epistemological and metaphysical reasonings last. Rachel M. Kydd's interpretation,[58] which appeared not long after that of Norman Kemp Smith, was designed to penetrate further into the practical and moral dimensions of Hume's philosophy and focused particularly on the relationship between Books II and III. In treatments of Hume's moral theory, as with treatments of his historical and political work, there has been a tendency to interpret his later work first, and then to refer back to the earlier philosophical work afterwards, in order to see how the later theory has been underpinned. The present interpretation thus presents a perspective which is unusual in working within the original form in which Hume published his books on the understanding and the passions.

The key point which must be emphasised for the purposes of the present interpretation is the separation between I and II, and III respectively, which Hume underlined in the prefaces to the two publications. In 1739, Hume advised the reader that it was necessary to observe that, "*all the subjects I have there* [in the introduction] *plann'd out to my self, are not treated of in these two volumes*". The first two volumes deal with the understanding, and the passions, respectively, and Hume's treatment of morals did not appear until late in 1740. However, he adds to this that, "[*t*]*he subjects of the* understanding *and* passions *make a compleat chain of reasoning by themselves*", and between this chain and the further treatment of morals, he discovers a "*natural division*" .[59] It is also worth noting that the further parts which Hume envisaged at this stage were not restricted to the subject of morals alone, but were intended to examine "morals, politics, *and* criticism". The political and critical parts of Hume's project did not appear in the *Treatise* itself, but were continued in the reformed "manner" of essay writing, and arguably, in his historical work. What this short preface tells us, therefore, is that Hume regarded the contents of the first two volumes of the *Treatise* as being both naturally, and intentionally, distinct from what was to follow. Furthermore, what was intended to follow was not yet sufficiently clear in Hume's mind to have wholly determined that which appeared in the first two volumes.[60] The preface which Hume attached to the third book in 1740 is consistent with that of 1739 in its emphasis on the independence of the treatment of morals from those of the understanding and the passions. He wrote that although the book on morals is, "*a third*

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[58] Rachel M. Kydd, *Reason and Conduct in Hume's Treatise*, (New York, 1946; reprinted 1964).

[59] *Treatise*, p.xii.

[60] James Moore's article in M. A. Stewart and John. P. Wright (eds) op. cit., is particularly interesting in reference to this, since he argues convincingly that key passages in Book III were probably added to the draft of the *Treatise* as a result of correspondence with Hutcheson after the publication of the first two books. This tends further to undermine Norman Kemp Smith's argument that it was the moral sense theory of Hutcheson which determined Hume's volume on the understanding, *after* it made its impact on Book III.

volume of the Treatise of Human Nature, *yet 'tis in some measure independent of the other two*", and adds that it should not be deemed necessary for the reader of the moral theory to, "*enter into all the abstract reasonings contain'd in* [books I and II]".[61] Only the terminological distinction between "impressions and ideas" need be taken note of for a reader who does not wish to struggle through books I and II.

Of course, it would be foolish to overstress the point and regard the third volume as being entirely separate in Hume's mind from the previous two. The independence to which he alludes is only partial, and all three were conceived as parts of a greater, unified, project. However, Hume's reference to the "*natural division*" underlined by his deliberate separation of the "compleat chain of reasoning" from the treatment of morals, is sufficient to justify an independent evaluation of the first two books. In any case, the nature of the subject matter, and the perspective from which it is written, make the two parts of the *Treatise* as it was published, naturally separable from the point of view of historical interpretation, even though some continuity between them is presupposed. The primary focus of the first two books is directed towards activities and capacities discovered in human beings as individuals, activities which nonetheless lead towards encounters between individuals, and to the passions which motivate such activities. In the third book, however, Hume's concern is with the manner in which such activities and the persons who carry them out are judged, and his interrogation is increasingly addressed to the community, or society in which the individual is found, particularly in the case of the *artificial virtues*. Hume's analysis of the *natural virtues* in part III.3 is based closely on the analysis of the second category of indirect passions presented in II.2 of the *Treatise*, and analysed in chapter 5 part 2 of this thesis. It is the manner in which individual activities and capacities give rise to shared horizons, in the form of conventional notions of virtue and law, and natural notions of virtue and vice, that forms the primary concern of Hume's treatment of morals.

[61] *Treatise*, page inserted between pp.454 and 455.

CHAPTER 2

CONSUMPTION AND SOCIAL RIVALRY:

SOCIETY AND EXPERIENCE IN THE EARLY LIFE AND WORK OF DAVID HUME.

"Getting and spending was everyone's business -
at least everyone who could afford it"[1]

1.) Introduction: Consumer Culture in eighteenth Century Britain

In David Hume's construction of the individual, the acquisition, possession and consumption of goods, and in particular the possession and use of money, plays an integral part in motivation, thought and action. Surrounding the practices related to this, Hume places great importance on the creation of feelings related to social status, namely *pride and humility, love and hatred, contempt and esteem*. These features had become prominent in the behaviour of actual individuals in the consumer societies of eighteenth-century Britain.[2] The current chapter examines the changing contexts of commerce, society, and consumption in Scotland and England during the first half of the eighteenth century, and shows how it bears on David Hume's experiences as a young philosopher in search of a 'settlement' as well as in search of insight into human behaviour during the 1730s.[3] The objects and practices associated with this kind of society formed vital features of Hume's early experiential horizon, both from a personal and from a philosophical point of view.

During the last two decades, Roy Porter's account of the social history of England in the eighteenth century has become a common point of reference for scholars. What happened during the eighteenth century, according to Porter, was that there arose "a new buzz of activity", with an expansion and acceleration of the market economy, "especially from mid-century", which created "an effervescent atmosphere where individuals could try their fortunes and prosper". By 1700, England already rested on an economic base which had "ceased to supply mere subsistence" perhaps even since Tudor times. A "propertied elite" had been able, within this structure, to harness the labour of wage earners in order to

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[1] Roy Porter, op. cit., ch. 5, 'Getting and Spending'.

[2] The term 'consumer societies', rather than 'consumer society', has been chosen because, in the following analysis, various geographical and social segments of British society analysed separately by historians are examined in order to establish the different kinds of context through which Hume moved during the late 1720s and early 1730s. Consumerism had developed in different ways and to varying degrees between Scotland and England, and between different parts of those societies, by the 1730s, and therefore a term which recognises this heterogeneity is deemed more appropriate.

[3] N.B. Please refer to Chapter 3 which closely examines evidence concerning Hume's methodological reasons for emphasising the need to observe human life and activity as it went on around him.

consolidate their position, and this contributed towards England's potential for new growth in the eighteenth century.[4]

Porter recalls some familiar themes concerning the state of England at that time which provided an environment suitable for such expansion. First of all, the vital raw materials were available, "most on England's doorstep", with others coming from the colonies. Secondly, England's political and legal infrastructure was favourable to economic growth. The absence of significant warfare on British soil (except in 1715 and 1745), the minimal presence of "swingeing internal customs duties" such as were still seen in France and the German states, and as Adam Smith recognised, the absolute legal protection of private property, allowed Britain to become "Europe's biggest common market". Finally, the state "wasn't a clog to trade", and there was no huge standing army or bureaucracy to absorb national wealth. There were no taxes on profits or capital gains, and wars and foreign policy were designed to pursue and protect trade. By contrast with Berlin where a high proportion of the populace was involved in official positions within the state, "in the boom towns of England, few people were not directly involved in the cash economy".[5] In Porter's characterisation, England was "above all, [in] the age of *commercial* capitalism" in which, "[t]he techniques of exchange became faster, cheaper, more reliable".[6]

In the course of the eighteenth century, Porter writes that, "[q]uietly and piecemeal a wide-ranging and flexible credit network took shape". Paper money increasingly moved into the economy with bills of exchange passing into circulation, "from clients to shopkeepers, from retailers to wholesalers, from manufacturers to their raw-material suppliers". The advantage of this for the growing consumer economy was that it enabled businesses to expand using credit to trade upon expectations.[7]

A vital dimension of the growing economy was the rise in the level and variety of commercial consumption. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, England was importing around £6,000,000 worth of legally recorded goods each year and exporting about £6,470,000. The figures had become about £12,200,000 and £14,300,000 by 1770.[8] The effects of this even spread into rural England, according to Porter, with "produce from the corners of the globe" reaching customers in the countryside. Retailing practices in England improved and were complimented by both English and foreign writers. Defoe

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[4] Ibid., p.201.
[5] Ibid., p.203.
[6] Ibid., p.204.
[7] Ibid., p.204.
[8] Ibid., p.205.

"rhapsodised" over the vital role which shops played in distribution, "enabling English householders to obtain goods from the length and breadth of the country". He is quoted as saying that he, "endeavoured to make some calculation of the number of shopkeepers in this kingdom, but [found] it is not to be done – we may as well count the stars".[9] The growing needs of retailing and distribution brought about the increase in the number of middlemen which marked English society at this time.

As for the effects which this changing social and economic landscape had on the lives of people, Porter finds that there were four main currents. First of all, he endorses the idea that there was a "growth of well-being filtering down, however unequally, to improve the standards and quality of living of much of the population...". Secondly, and as a consequence, there was a considerable rise in overall consumption with the additional wealth "being converted into personal goods, raising many households from levels of subsistence to comfort and style". The third consequence was a change in the extent to which cash was spent on "entertainment and enjoyment". He characterises an increasingly common attitude in which, "[e]asy-come, easy-go attitudes towards spending were widespread: people liked to take their pleasures noisily, effusively, and in public". Finally, the cultural aspects of life – "entertainment, art, letters" – came under commercial organisation to an increasing degree, becoming more deliberately orientated towards a market.[10]

To Porter's dramatic portrayal it is necessary to add some comments from Paul Langford in his study of England's 'Polite and Commercial People' between 1727 and 1783. He emphasises the changing economic landscape of England during this period which gave rise to significant changes in its social makeup, with unequal distribution of goods giving rise to a rapidly swelling middle class. This in turn gave rise to increased complexity in the recognition and management of social status. Langford describes, "[a] great body of merchants, moneyed men, and farmers [which] had transformed the face both of urban and agrarian society."[11] While the paucity of contemporary statistical records makes very specific accounts of this phenomenon difficult, other indications survive that show a social scene in which the relations between individuals were being transformed. In particular, Langford interprets the "debasement of gentility", i.e. the blurring of traditional distinctions through the wider appropriation of the symbols of gentility like the use of the titles Mr, Mrs, and Esquire, as, "one of the clearest signs of social change in the eighteenth

[9] Ibid., p.206.
[10] Ibid., p. 232.
[11] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783*, (Oxford, 1989), p.61.

century, the mark of a fundamental transformation."[12] The complexities of social status, mobility and interaction in England during the eighteenth century pose problems not only for historians but posed them for contemporaries as well. Langford cites George Dempster, a Scottish politician, who commented to James Boswell that "£30 per annum in London made its possessor far better off for the 'little wants of life' than the Laird of Col in the Western Isles", illustrating the kinds of problems posed when comparing qualities of lifestyle. Langford adds that it was more complicated even than this:

> Social standing depended on numerous considerations: family (by birth or marriage), property (real and personal), profession or employment, and less definably 'connections', 'politeness', and 'breeding' (which did not necessarily imply good birth or upbringing). All these are familiar difficulties in open societies and they do not normally inhibit historians from venturing on generalizations.[13]

At the time, appearance became a crucial tool both for projecting oneself onto a social scene where, "everyone [was] flying from his inferiors, in pursuit of his superiors who [flew] from him with equal alacrity",[14] and for interpreting the status of those one encountered there. Fashion provided the modes through which such appearances were managed, and as another eighteenth-century writer quoted in Langford's account remarks, "they [were] obliged to change [it] continually, as soon as they [found] it prophaned by any other company but one step lower than themselves in their degrees of politeness."[15]

Thus, for Porter and Langford, the eighteenth century was strongly marked by changes in the patterns of consumer behaviour which were in turn closely associated with changing patterns of social status. This fact is widely agreed upon by the various historians who have analysed eighteenth-century society, economy, and culture in England, although they have tended to disagree over precisely what the nature of this change was, and how it is to be interpreted. The primary feature of rising interest in eighteenth-century consumption in its earlier stages, and one which persists, was the need to explain the foundation of the industrial revolution in a rise in demand for manufactured goods. Drawing on the theories of economic theorists like Thorstein Veblen for a satisfactory explanation of motivation, attention was paid by some to the demand for those kinds of goods which could most obviously account for expanding industrial production. The study of the demand for goods manufactured by Wedgwood in the work of John Brewer, Neil McKendrick, and J.H. Plumb, is an important example of this.[16]

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[12] Ibid., p.65-66.
[13] Ibid., p.62.
[14] Ibid., p.67. Quoted by Langford from Soame Jenyns writing in *The World.*
[15] Ibid., p.67.
[16] John Brewer, Neil McKendrick, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England*, (London, 1982).

Lately, however, there has been a considerable diversification of concerns through which the significance of commercial consumption from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards in Britain, has been considered. English literary studies have focused on the social-contextual background to literature, for example to Defoe, Pope, and others in the 'Augustan Age'.[17] The content of particular works have been shown to have had a close relationship with changing consumer tastes and orientations as Stewart Crehan's analysis of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, for example, demonstrates.[18] In the history of political thought, J. G. A. Pocock's thesis concerning the derivation of conceptual models from the early modern to modern period has re-emphasised the significance of commercial development, and the moral-political concern with the effects of rising luxury, for political actors and writers during the eighteenth century.[19] This has been associated with a large quantity of research into and analysis of the impact on political economy and political theory more widely of growing international trade, and the ambivalence towards domestic demand for foreign imports.[20] Finally, a broad concern with 'cultural history' in England in the eighteenth century has focused on the emergence of 'refined' attitudes towards the 'pleasures of the imagination' and 'consumption and the world of goods'.[21]

It was into the society described by Porter and Langford that David Hume was cast in 1734 to make his trial in a firm of merchants. The features of the consumer society that were visible in England were also to be seen in a nascent and derivative form in landed and professional society in Scotland by the 1730s. The following section examines details of Hume's early life in order to establish the nature of his position in terms of social status and profession during the 1730s, and his consequent attitudes towards wealth, possession, and social esteem. Hume's predicament as the younger son of lesser gentry forced him to try different modes of professional and social life, and also involved geographical shifts in location in both England and France. Having examined the evidence found in his correspondence and memoirs from the period (and from 1775), the following part of the

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[17] For example Colin Nicholson in *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994).

[18] Stewart Crehan, '*The Rape of the Lock* and the Economy of "Trivial Things"', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 31 (1997), 45-68.

[19] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, (Princeton, 1975).

[20] A significant literature has grown up around and out of Pocock's work on early modern and modern political thought. For an important collection of essays on various aspects of commercial development and political and economic thought in the Scottish context, see Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (eds), *Wealth and Virtue: the Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983).

[21] John Brewer, both as sole author, and in co-operation with Porter and others, has published a large quantity of work on the nature of consumption in the early modern period, and on the cultural penumbra of consumer demand in Britain in the eighteenth century. See also John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: the Emergence of English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997.)

chapter (part 3) examines social, economic, and cultural aspects of the contexts in which Hume moved during this period, finding links between his biographical details, and the appearance of a consumer culture based on competition over social status. This context is examined from the various angles which collectively comprehend the complicated perspective through which Hume was compelled to regard social practices at that time. Following this, in section 4, the way in which social experience impacted on Hume's sense of himself is fleshed out through a comparison with James Boswell's adventures in London in the early 1760s, and the manner in which Hume's experience obtained significance for his philosophical thought is considered. The last part of the chapter draws these connections a stage further, indicating how Hume's social experience manifested itself in his construction of a theoretical model of the human individual, impacting on his observations on human life and activities while he researched the *Treatise*.

2.) David Hume's Perspective on Contemporary Society

a. Social and Geographical Locations

In the early letters of David Hume, an important subtext is to be found. On the face of it, the letters appear most often to be concerned primarily with his philosophical ideas and reading, and later with the prospective publication of his work. At one point, there is a lengthy letter giving us intimate details concerning his health, both of mind and body, which was intended to be read by a doctor (who probably never received it). The subtext reveals itself when one considers Hume's material position, and his prospects for financing his life, during the later 1720s and throughout the 1730s. Looking back on the period, in *My Own Life* in 1775, Hume remembered that his family "was not rich, and being [himself] a younger brother, [his] patrimony, according to the mode of [his] country, was of course very slender".[22] However, even where no such direct references are made, one can interpret the signs of a strong underlying anxiety. The reason why this is important for interpreting the *Treatise* is because it determined the perspective from which Hume viewed the phenomena of contemporary life. Hume's social and financial position, and his awareness of his own needs as regards social status, contributed to an acute awareness of the way in which the ownership of riches, and the purchase and consumption of goods, were important in the construction of social identity and status in contemporary society. This and the following section of the current chapter examine hints and comments in Hume's correspondence and memoirs referring to this issue and suggests how this

[22] *EMPL*, p.xxxii.

evidence helps to understand the perspective from which Hume took his *experimental observations* of human behaviour.[23] Following this, the examination of letters which Hume wrote in France in 1734 demonstrates the extent to which the kinds of phenomena, the practices and objects, which concerned him in his treatment of pride in Bk. II of the *Treatise*, shaped his observations on the everyday social life that surrounded him.

Hume's family decided that, given his lack of means, law would be the best avenue through which he could obtain financial independence. However, by 1729, Hume felt that "the Business I design'd to follow, appear'd nauseous to me".[24] By as late as 1737, Hume's position with regard to his professional future was no clearer. In a letter to Henry Home written in December he remarked that he "cannot overcome a certain shamefacedness I have to appear among you at my years [he was born in 1711], without having yet a settlement, or so much as attempted any," and asked, "[h]ow happens it, that we philosophers cannot as heartily despise the world, as it despises us?"[25] From 1729 onwards he had suffered from a psycho-somatic illness which he associated with the lethargy of an inactive and overly contemplative life, and had attempted a complete break with his usual studious routine by beginning work in a firm of merchants in Bristol in March 1734. This endeavour failed and he took himself off to France later that year where he composed the *Treatise,*[26] substantially completing a draft by the end of 1737.

In March or April of 1734, Hume drafted the lengthy and detailed letter which was to be addressed to a learned doctor. In his *Letter to a Physician*, Hume's focus is directed towards symptoms of ill-health, both mental and physical. It is not clear for whom the letter was intended, or whether or not in fact Hume ever sent it. Greig accepts the thesis of Burton that the intended recipient was a Dr. George Cheyne, but this was dismissed more recently by E. C. Mossner, Hume's biographer, who argued that Dr. Arbuthnot would have been a more likely target for both the praise which Hume addresses to the doctor, and the kinds of critical remarks which he makes about certain religious and philosophical schools.[27] In any case, the letter is filled with detail about Hume's symptoms as they appeared over a period running from around 1729 until March or April 1734 when the piece was written. In the course of the letter, Hume presented elements of a diagnosis

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[23] The 'experimental' methodology and the significance which this gave to observing contemporary life in Hume's philosophy is dealt with in detail in chapter 3.

[24] *LDH,* vol.1, p.13. Hume says this in a letter to Dr. George Cheyne (or Dr. John Arbuthnot according to E. C. Mossner in *Life*, p.84) in March or April 1734.

[25] Ibid., p.24.

[26] Chapter 5 analyses the processes through which social status is understood to be established in Hume's theory (i.e. through the *indirect passions* of 'pride and humility, love and hatred, esteem and contempt') and the role of the understanding, analysed in I.3, in these processes.

which he had achieved himself, as well as some suggestions for curative measures. Mossner speculates that Hume's auto-diagnosis and auto-prescriptions, and indeed the cathartic efforts of narrating the psycho-somatic illness in writing, were effective in overcoming his problems, and may have rendered obsolete the need actually to send the letter.[28]

Hume addressed himself to the doctor, proposing to give him "a kind of History of my Life" in order to "open up" to him his present condition of health. The symptoms date back to the period in which Hume encountered serious problems within philosophy, and began to work on a new way to resolve these. He remarked how, "[e]very one, who is acquainted either with the Philosophers or Critics, knows that there is nothing yet establisht in either of these two Sciences, & that they contain little more than endless Disputes, even in the most fundamental Articles."[29] Discovering this before he was 18 years of age, he "found a certain Boldness of Temper, growing in [him], which was not enclin'd to submit to any Authority in these Subjects…". He felt that he was led, "to seek out some new Medium, by which Truth might be establisht." Long "Study, & Reflection", had given rise, at last, when he was around 18 (i.e. about 1729), to a point at which,

> there seem'd to be open'd up to me a new Scene of thought, which transported me beyond Measure, & made me, with an Ardor natural to young men, throw up every other Pleasure or Business to apply entirely to it. The Law, which was the Business I design'd to follow, appear'd nauseous to me, & I cou'd think of no other way of pushing my Fortune in the World, but that of a Scholar & Philosopher.

Discovering his enthusiasm for philosophical meditations was well enough to begin with and Hume was, "infinitely happy in this Course of Life for some Months…". However, by "about the beginning of Septr 1729, all my Ardor seem'd in a moment to be extinguisht, & I cou'd no longer raise my Mind to that pitch, which formerly gave me such excessive Pleasure...".[30] This condition remained with Hume, during its first appearance, for nine months according to this account, and returned in one form or another during successive periods right up to 1734 when he wrote the letter, after which the symptoms appear to have dissipated.

By way of diagnosis, Hume explained the nature of his philosophical and moral reflections, and the kinds of effect which he thought these may have had on his constitution. He claims to have derived a great deal of personal instruction from the

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[27] *Life,* p.86.
[28] Ibid., p.86.
[29] *LDH.*, vol.1, p.13.
[30] Ibid., p.13.

philosophical works which he read, and applied the principles of philosophers to himself rather severely:

> ... having read many Books of Morality, such as Cicero, Seneca & Plutarch, & being smit with their beautiful Representations of Virtue & Philosophy, I undertook the Improvement of my Temper & Will, along with my Reason & Understanding. I was continually fortifying myself with Reflections against Death, & Poverty, & Shame, & Pain, & all the other Calamities of Life.

This kind of introspective exertion is blamed for his condition on the grounds that it was healthy to engage in this only when one's lifestyle is more balanced, i.e. when one is engaged in action as well as thought. Indulging in such exercises without having an outlet in action is deemed, by the young Hume, to be self-destructive. Isolating, contemplative philosophising is supposed by him to produce ill-effects more generally, and some of the symptoms from which he suffered are referred to as the "Disease of the Learned",[31] and Hume likens himself to "French Mysticks".[32] As he remarks, the discipline of the self on the basis of philosophy is,

> exceeding useful, when join'd with an active Life; because the Occasion being presented along with the Reflection, works it into the Soul, & makes it take a deep Impression, but in Solitude they serve to little other Purpose, than to waste the Spirits, the Force of the Mind meeting with no Resistance, but wasting itself in the Air, like our Arm when it misses its Aim. This however I did not learn but by Experience, & till I had already ruin'd my Health, tho' I was not sensible of it.

Further symptoms appeared during the period following: first a "Ptyalism or Watryness in the mouth",[33] and later "a very ravenous Appetite", "a Palpitation of Heart", and, "a good deal of Wind in my Stomach, which comes out easily, & without any bad Gout, as is ordinary".[34]

By the time he wrote the letter, Hume appears to have reached a particularly low ebb due to the persistence of the disease. He remarks that he "began to despair of ever recovering." He attempted to console himself from his *Melancholy* by reflecting peevishly on "the Vanity of the World & of all humane Glory", but found himself wanting in sincerity in these sentiments. He writes, "however just Sentiments they may be esteem'd, I have found can never be sincere, except in those who are possest of them".[35]

Hume's diagnosis of the problem and of its origins, as arising from too contemplative a life, seems somewhat inadequate when considered in light of this last remark, and in light of his retrospective comments on the period when he wrote his short autobiography in 1775. The last comment, where he says that he tried to console himself

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[31] Ibid., p.14.
[32] Ibid., p.17.
[33] Ibid., p.14.
[34] Ibid., p.15.

by reflecting that a concern with the world and with glory was vain, makes one wonder why such thoughts should have reassured Hume. From what part of "the World" did Hume find it reassuring to detach himself? There is no explicit explanation for this in the rest of the letter itself. All that we are told is that he initially tried to isolate himself in Stoic indifference from the world, found that his health suffered in this isolation, and later tried the opposite, going out to work in Bristol. The "World & all humane Glory" were not previously named as sources of anxiety for Hume, so it is important to consider what other reasons there were for this. The probable answer lies in his position as regards personal finances, profession, and social status, i.e. his "settlement". At this point in time Hume still did not have a profession, and neither did he have an adequate patrimony. He had given up law, according to the letter to a doctor, at around the same time as the "new scene of thought" brought him such "infinite" happiness and then extinguished it soon after.

As Hume explains his own prescription, the journey to find an active life in Bristol is designed to pull him out of his contemplative stupor, and by tossing "about the World, from the one Pole to the other", to "leave this Distemper behind me".[36] However, reflecting on the same decision in *My Own Life*, the older Hume remembers his motives a little differently. He wrote,

> *My very slender fortune*, however, being unsuitable to this plan of life [as a philosopher and a man of letters], and my health being a little broken by my ardent application, I was tempted, *or rather forced*, to make a very feeble trial for entering into a more active scene of life. In 1734, I went to Bristol, with some recommendations to eminent merchants, but in a few months found that scene totally unsuitable to me.[37]

The emphasis which Hume placed on the loftier causes of illness, and motives for action, given by philosophy, or an excess of philosophy, as he presented himself to the learned doctor, do not tell the whole story. Hume's situation was genuinely precarious at this time, and in a way which he might well have felt reticent about when it came to introducing himself to a person as distinguished as Arbuthnot. The need to console himself by reflecting that all was merely vanity in the world anyway, and that human glory was worthless, should perhaps be understood to mean something similar to what Hume alluded to three years later in his letter to Henry Home. He was more frank about his "settlement" in that piece, wondering as he wrote, "[h]ow happens it, that we philosophers cannot as heartily despise the world, as it despises us?"[38] Hume's retrospective comment on his

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[35] Ibid., p.17.
[36] Ibid., p.18.
[37] *EMPL,* p.xxxiii. The italics mark my own emphasis.
[38] *LDH*, vol.1, p.24.

provisional means of overcoming the problem while in France shortly after the trip to Bristol underlines the point. He said that, "I resolved to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contempible, except the improvement of my talents in literature".[39]

In short, one may conclude that Hume's anxiety during the early 1730s, and indeed the physiological symptoms of stress, arose in part from the pressures of his material predicament.[40] The lack of means adequate for a life of financial independence, accompanied by a strong urge to devote his time to such non-lucrative activities as philosophical reasoning and writing, placed great pressure on the young man. He needed to commit himself to a professional or commercial career in order to maintain financial independence and to procure the means to support a social status suitable to his background, but was torn by his repulsion from the study of law and the work involved in the firm of merchants, and his predilection for other things. When he left Scotland in 1734, lived and worked in Bristol, and then fled to France, Hume was acutely aware of the risk of losing his social status as a member of the genteel classes, and of failing to find a basis for re-establishing himself in a professional and social position suitable to his sense of pride.

b. Interpreting Hume's Horizons

This interpretation of the significance of Hume's "settlement", or lack of such, and the anxiety which it provoked in him in the 1730s, helps to explain his response to what Alasdair MacIntyre suggested were *English* social mores.[41] These were the practices, objects, and meanings associated with the rising 'consumerism' which marked English society during the eighteenth century. The strong emphasis on pride in the second book of the *Treatise*, and the particular importance of property, money, and the *power* which these bestow, in the formation of a social persona, reflect Hume's beliefs concerning the actual importance of these themes in the common life which surrounded him. His own difficult situation, with a lack of money or property forcing him first to try a discipline which was foreign to his taste, then a career which proved equally unsuited to his temperament (in Bristol), and afterwards driving him first to Rheims, and then to La Fleche, in order to live more economically, gave Hume a strong sense of the importance of such things. In his own travels, as these factors determined his direction, and in his encounters with others, Hume

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[39] *EMPL,* p. xxxiv.

[40] Both Ernest Mossner and Charles Camic have made similar suggestions concerning the pressures of Hume's early career problems. See *Life*; p.71, and Charles Camic, *Experience and Enlightenment: Socialisation for Cultural Change in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 216-7.

[41] See chapter 1 part 3 of this thesis for a summary of MacIntyre's view.

realised that property and the power represented by wealth determined his status in their perceptions, their status in his perceptions, and their mutual ties of dependency. The retrospective comments on his life which he wrote in 1775 show a constant concern during his early life with finding the means to achieve "independence"[42] by making money. His letters written in France in 1734 illustrate the extent to which the power embodied in property, and symbolised by money, marked out the territory of social life in Hume's personal perception of society during the period in which he conceived the *Treatise*, as well as affecting his professional interest in such phenomena as a philosopher.

During his visit to France which began in 1734 Hume characterised the town of Rheims as one which "has in it about 30 families that keep Coaches; tho by the Appearance of the Houses you wou'd not think there was one."[43] He comments at some length on the nature of "French Manners" about which he says, "like their Cloaths, & Furniture, they are too glaring." He makes this remark with reference to the manner in which an "English fine Gentleman distinguishes himself from the rest of the World." [44] To James Birch, Hume explains the character of the town in similar terms referring this time to the habits of the local "People of Fashion". He also comments that "there is not one [family] of 500£ a year in the whole Town," and advises his friend that in this particular place, "we cannot live under 80£ a year, & and that may do". Greig remarks in a footnote that Hume's own income during that year was probably in the region of £40.[45]

These remarks indicate that in his everyday observations on life, Hume was inclined to focus on the same signs of status and power, and the same sources of pleasure, that concerned him in Book II of the *Treatise*. Given the critical nature of his own predicament at this time – after all, his own professional and social identity and status as well as his material well-being were by no means guaranteed – it is not surprising that the manner in which such a society operated would have been a matter of acute concern for Hume, as a philosopher as well as in his everyday life.

It is clear from the letters written in France that Hume was comparing French manners and taste, particularly as they were manifested in their proprietorial self-presentation, with a version, and mainly an English version, which he had experienced earlier in both Scotland and England. In order to understand the phenomena of Hume's experience, and the particular place which Hume gave them in the *Treatise*, it is therefore necessary to examine the specific manner in which the social status of individuals was

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[42] *EMPL*, p.xxxviii.
[43] In a letter to Michael Ramsay, dated Sept.12 , 1734 (no. 4). *LDH*, p.19
[44] Ibid., p.20.

presented, and in particular, the consumer practices with which it was associated, in Britain during the eighteenth century. With Hume's social background and the changes in his status, and the geographical changes in his location during the 1730s in mind, it is possible to establish a series of shifts in his cultural, social and geographical perspective. Mapping these shifts, which were intimately linked to his financial-professional predicament, makes it possible to establish a profile of the kinds of social milieu through which Hume moved, and of the social position from which he viewed these. By analysing these details, it is possible to clarify the nature of the social context within which Hume constructed his model of the typical human individual as he found him. A key feature of these forces and movements is that Hume became an outsider to the social milieus in which he moved in the 1730s. This had the effect of both distancing him from certain social practices, while tantalising him through his own need to participate, and thereby rendering him a peculiarly sensitive observer. In the following list, the shifts in Hume's cultural, social and geographical location are isolated in order to establish a framework for analysing the contemporary social contexts. Hume's significant movements are as follows:

i. *Cultural-Geographical*: Having moved back and forth between Edinburgh and Ninewells during the 1720s and early 1730s, Hume was 'forced' to move to Bristol in 1734, to Rheims later in the same year, to La Fleche, and was in London by 1738. He was a Scot who was therefore 'outside' of the English (and then the French) culture in which he found himself. Hume attempted to adapt to English cultural mores by imitation as well as by suppressing his Scottishness as far as possible.[46]

ii. *Social Class*: Hume's family background was associated with the landed gentry, both by property and through blood links with a title.[47] However, Hume's father was a professional, specifically a lawyer. The lack of an estate, since Ninewells went to his older brother, and the inadequacy of his patrimony, meant that Hume's life would not easily be made to fit into the definition of genteel life which emphasises the ability to be idle.[48] Therefore, he had to make his way among the middle, professional and merchant classes, and the pressure to do so became especially acute in 1734. His connections were reasonably high on the social ladder, with Henry Home helping him to establish links with the great and the good in London in 1738.[49] His financial situation, however, and his need

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[45] In a letter also written on Sept.12, 1734 (no. 5), ibid., pp.22-23.

[46] See the summary of Alasdair MacIntyre's analysis of this aspect of Hume's life in chapter 1.

[47] See *Life*, pp. 7-8: Mossner confirms Hume's claim that, "his father's family was "a Branch of the Earl of Home's or Hume's."" For the source of Hume's remark on this, quoted by Mossner, see *EMPL*, p. xxxii.

[48] See James Rosenheim, *The Emergence of a Ruling Order*, (London and NY, 1998), p.6.

[49] It was Henry Home who provide Hume with a letter of introduction with which to approach Joseph Butler in 1738.

for a "settlement" left him without the independence needed for full acceptance into the landed gentry, and the loss of his job in Bristol after only a few months left Hume outside of the merchant middle class. So in 1735 he finally gave up on genteel society for the time being, fleeing from the expenses of Rheims to the cheaper social environment at La Fleche in order to achieve his immediate literary-philosophical ambitions while saving himself excessive expense. Thus, Hume came from a gentry background, found himself having to pursue a typically middle-class career, but still wished to retain a genteel status. As both outsider and insider to the gentry *and* middle class, he was therefore in a position to observe each from the perspective of the other, and had strong personal motives for doing so.

iii. *Social-Geographical*: Hume found himself flitting between province and metropolis, and therefore moved between differing perspectives on urbanity and fashionable behaviour. This is important for establishing what exactly needs to be known about the location of the social and cultural behaviour that perplexed Hume.

The following section presents a characterisation of the types of social and cultural groups through which Hume was moving during the late 1720s and early 1730s, and of the types of urban centre that he experienced at first hand. In so doing, it profiles the nature of behaviours encountered by Hume that were associated with the conspicuous purchase and consumption of goods and the enhancement of social status in an emulative-competitive, individualistic environment.

3.) Consumer Societies in eighteenth Century Britain: Social and Geographical Locations

Although the portrait of English life in the eighteenth century which Roy Porter gave in the early 1980s is helpful in providing a sense of the dramatic nature of commercial and cultural change, it does so in a rather general way. It is therefore necessary to establish a clearer profile of consumerism than he provides. In order to find concrete links with Hume's movements during the 1730s, it is useful to divide this society up into different parts, and look at them separately. It is also necessary to examine the appearance of similar practices in the Scottish context.

Recent research has reinforced the view that the consumption of non-subsistence goods did increase in a wide range of social ranks throughout the eighteenth century. John Rule, for instance, suggests that the numbers of people who had sufficient cash over and above that which was needed for bare subsistence, permits the use of terms like "rising

expectations", and even the more specific "social emulation" to characterise English society quite widely in the eighteenth century.[50] This supports the assumption that a consumer society of one kind or another may be presupposed in a wide range of contexts within Britain. Despite a steep rise in food prices, and the existence of large groups of poor, there was a sufficient increase in prosperity among the middle-income groups, and a sufficient rise in the numbers who could afford non-subsistence goods in the population as a whole, to maintain demand for manufactured goods throughout the century. Rule also agrees with other scholars that the "bottom line income above which recipients can be presumed to have enjoyed at least the modicum of comfort above subsistence and simple 'decency' [...] need not be drawn very high...".[51] At least in the consumption of higher classes of goods, those which we may loosely term 'luxuries' as opposed to 'necessities' or 'decencies', there was a widely visible increase in the pursuit of fashionable trends. In his study of the history of fashion, Christopher Breward[52] finds a general scholarly consensus that in the course of the eighteenth century,

> the impact of fashionable trends in all areas of production and consumption, from architecture through interior decoration, household furnishings, tableware, food, gardening, print and literature, music, theatre, [and] textiles, underwent something of a metamorphosis. Through innovations in manufacturing techniques, supply structures and retail strategies, a degree of luxury, comfort and fashionability was made available to a market no longer restricted to either the elite or the metropolitan.

He describes "a group of consumers, who although not new, formed the most distinctive segment of a society increasingly identified, not through the sartorial trappings of hierarchies based on status at birth, but on commercial acumen and material possessions which represented worldly success."[53] Through increased contact with England after the Act of Union in 1707 and eventual economic growth, elements of Scottish society got to experience this kind of change too.

In order to establish the nature of Hume's contact with such practices, however, it is necessary to examine a series of narrower contexts, or aspects of the British context, individually. This clarifies the specific form which consumerism took as it developed at different levels of social rank or class, and in different kinds of urban centre.

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[50] John Rule, *The Vital Century: England's Developing Economy, 1714-1815*, (London and New York, 1992), p.256.
[51] Ibid., p.256.
[52] Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress*, (Manchester, 1995).
[53] Ibid., p.110.

a. Scottish Landed and Professional Society in the Early eighteenth Century

With the Act of Union in 1707, it had been hoped by the Scottish elites that closer links with England, and the freeing up of trade, would lead to rapid economic advancement for Scottish society.[54] However, for at least three decades after Union, no such broad development was forthcoming, and Scotland remained mainly an agricultural society with little further development of trade. However, the new links with England did bring some changes, even if these were not those that were expected. These changes were visible in the rural, landed society, and the urban professional society in both of which Hume grew up during the 1720s. While Scotland, and Edinburgh in particular, did not experience a commercial transformation of her own, she did feel the indirect effects of connection with a country whose economic, financial, and social developments were changing the experiential landscape of life in both the metropolis and the provincial towns.

The first of these developments is seen in the practices of the landed classes in lowland Scotland, to which Hume's family belonged. While the overall economic advancement of Scotland remained slow until the 1750s, the propertied classes did manifest changes in their consumer behaviour that were similar, if smaller in scale and milder in drama, than those which could be seen in London, Bristol and the more prosperous English towns, among the gentry and middle class during the first half of the eighteenth century. In fact, T. C. Smout refers to a "revolution in manners" among the Scottish lowland landowners in his *History of the Scottish People*.[55]

Although the rapid development of consumer culture was withheld until later on, there were already significant signs of its penetration of Scotland by the later 1720s and early 1730s. Smout quotes from an *Essay on the Ways and Means for Enclosing* (1729) by a William Mackintosh of Borlum in which the author comments disdainfully on the changing patterns of lifestyle of the landed in Scottish society in late years. Smout summarises Mackintosh's impression, writing:

> He was always hearing, he said, how much the country had been 'improved' in the last twenty years: when he inquired in what way, the answer was always the same: 'how much more handsomely the gentry live now than before the Union, both in dress, table and house furniture'. What does it all amount to, he asks? The gentry were once satisfied with neat homespuns of their 'own sheep's growth and women's spinning'. Now the laird's wife must trick herself out in French and Italian silks, and her husband goes in English broadcloth. At table the family is no longer satisfied with good plain meat courses and honest gravy: 'I see now served up several services of little expensive

[54] See N. T. Phillipson, 'Lawyers, Landowners, and the Civic Leadership of Post-Union Scotland: an Essay on the Social Role of the Faculty of Advocates 1661-1830 in the eighteenth Century', *Juridical Review*, n.s. vol.21 (1976): 97-120.

> ashets with *English* pickles, yea *Indian* mangoes and catchup or anchovy sauces.' Morning visiting has ceased to be a pleasure, and become an ordeal: 'I used to be ask'd if I had had my morning draught yet? I am now ask'd if I have yet had my tea? And in lieu of the big quaigh with strong ale and toast and after a dram of good wholesome Scots spirits, there is now the tea-kettle put on the fire, the tea-table, and silver and china equipage brought in with the marmalet, cream and cold tea... God forbid,' he ends up, 'we should expect no better improvement from the Union' than these apish and extravagant tricks.[56]

Adducing the evidence of changes in design of the houses, furniture, and culinary habits of the gentry throughout the eighteenth century, Smout interprets in the changes derided by Mackintosh, "the early stages of the revolution in the way of life of the eighteenth-century lairds which was to be far-reaching in itself and to have far-reaching consequences for other people."[57] He says that its significance, "went much further than substituting tea for ale or chutney for gravy." The results of this revolution were that,

> [o]n the one hand most of the gentry came to enjoy the material standards which had previously been the privilege of the peers and the greater landowners: on the other, they also became a more intellectual and a more 'polite' class. To that extent they also found themselves further removed from the lives, experience and sympathies of the peasants on whom they depended for a living.[58]

An important additional feature of this change in the behaviour patterns of the land-owning class was marked by the different approaches to education that it produced. Major features of the traditional practices of the gentry remained: younger sons were pushed in the direction of openings in the army, trade and the law, and the heirs to estates were trained for estate management with additional instruction in expertise relevant to success in this field such as law. However, the financial means at the disposal of the landed class permitted their children to become the best educated group in the country, and as Smout says,

> they got the full impact of the changing nature and purposes of Scottish education in the eighteenth century which affected its character from the parish school to the university. [...] The overall effect must have been to break down narrow formality in learning and to broaden the intellectual horizon of the pupil.[59]

Little evidence remains of the contents of the household at Ninewells, although it may be supposed that Hume's family shared in the cultural changes seen in their class more generally. In Mossner's biography, he emphasises the sociable nature of the two sons, David and John, and suggests that they learnt this through the "spirit" that pervaded the family as a whole. He mentions that,

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[55] See T. C.Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830*, (London, 1970), pp.285-291.
[56] Ibid., p.285-6.
[57] Ibid., p.286.
[58] Ibid., p.286.

> [i]n maturity, when they were big and robust men, both David and John displayed a fondness for a large and well-prepared meal, for good drink (claret or port), and for the conviviality that good food and good drink in the proper proportions inspire – the witty anecdote, the spicy story, the friendly raillery, the practical joke. It is pleasant to be able to trace this similarity of taste to their boyhood training.[60]

The two lairds of Ninewells, before David's brother John, are both described as "convivial gentlemen": hence the "spirit" that Mossner attributes to the family. Under the regime of Katherine, Hume's mother, in her widowhood, Mossner speculates that she would,

> want her sons to imbibe as deeply of the traditional family spirit as possible. She would probably go out of her way to plan occasions of good comradeship whenever the opportunity arose and, with a family of such wide connexions, it might arise not infrequently. The lesson was well learned, and both sons later gained the reputation of being genial hosts.[61]

In Smout's reading of the situation of the lowland Scots landed class, the reasons for this change in manners are not entirely to be found in increased rents available for expenditure. A further cultural element was involved in the formation of new manners for the Scots. Smout states that, "[o]bviously, it could not have been sustained (at least in its purely material aspects) unless the gentry as a whole had enjoyed larger real incomes in the late eighteenth century than they did at the beginning." But rents did not rise significantly until decades after 1720, so it is also necessary to bear in mind "the desire to copy England". The root of this desire was two-fold. On the one hand,

> "highly educated Scots felt themselves backward, boorish and uncouth in the company of the wealthier squirearchy of England with whom they came increasingly in contact. Few landed Scots doubted that England began with a more polite and more desirable civilisation than their own, or that it was a duty of patriotism to match and even to outshine the southerners' model whether it was in teacups, in good tone or [...] in farming."

Thus, there emerged a need in the wake of the Union for propertied Scots to imitate and emulate English culture. On the other hand, there were also more immediate models for social and cultural emulation. Smout refers to,

> "the challenge and the influence of the newcomers to the landed classes: colonial adventurers, war profiteers and merchants who not only had a wide experience of the polite world abroad but also capital (accumulated from other sources than rents) which they could splash in ostentatious display. It was painful for an older laird to see this without making at least an effort to match it."[62]

Simultaneously, there occurred a development that is illustrated by the tentative efforts of Hume in England in 1734. There was a "regular and large export of middle-class Scots taking their professional and commercial talents to England, and to other parts of the world

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[59] Ibid., p.290.
[60] *Life*, p.28.
[61] Ibid., p.28.

outside Great Britain," which was facilitated by the sound education available to those who could afford it in Scotland, and was also due to broader economic and social factors.[63]

The second significant area of change in Scottish society after the Union took place in the urban centres, particularly in Edinburgh, and involved the social and political development of the professional classes. The "real leaders of Edinburgh society" were not merchants, as was the case in Glasgow, nor were they tradesmen. They were primarily the lawyers whose role in public life took new forms with the shift in the concentration of political power to London. According to Smout, "among the professions there were none, in numbers, wealth or prestige, to equal the lawyers."[64] These were the people who came first in the first street directories for Edinburgh constructed by Williamson in the 1770s,[65] and their position was, according to John Stewart Shaw, "a stage or two below the nobility in the social hierarchy."[66] The order of priority which Williamson gave to Edinburgh society put the advocates first, the clerks second, the writers to the signet and their clerks third, and then the nobility and gentry with town houses, with the "remainder of the middle class without much further distinction" appearing last.[67]

Typically, the lawyers were to be found in close contact with the country gentry in the Lothians, not with "the 'mercantile interest' of their own city." Land continued to be an attractive source of status and additional revenue for advocates, and the need to find means of support for the younger sons and daughters among the gentry was often answered by training the former in law, and marrying the latter to lawyers. Thus, the connection and indeed interpenetration of landed and professional classes was strong. Smout concludes that, "[s]o general was intermarriage and exchange of personnel between lawyers and gentlemen that they came to treat one another as perfect equals."[68]

The Scottish lawyers provided their society with an intellectual and cultural, as well as professional, elite. They tended to be well read and highly trained, with many, like Hume's father Joseph Home, and like Lord Auchinleck and his son James Boswell, having attended universities abroad, particularly in Holland. They were "politically well-connected", providing essential services to the higher political elites who had taken themselves to London after 1707. Shaw endorses Smout's profile of their role which states that, "the greatest Scottish statesmen in London used great lawyers (like Lord Milton or

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[62] Smout, op.cit., p. 291.
[63] Ibid., p. 364.
[64] Ibid., p. 374.
[65] Ibid., p. 374.
[66] John Stewart Shaw, *The Management of Scottish Society*, (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 19.
[67] Smout, op. cit., pp. 373-4.
[68] Smout, op.cit., p. 374.

Duncan Forbes of Culloden) as their agents in their homeland."[69] At home, according to Smout,

> [t]hey were involved in making and executing economic policy, as members of the Board of Trustees for Manufactures and Commissioners of the Forfeited Estates. Above all they were avidly sociable. They were the backbone of the city's innumerable clubs and societies which existed for every possible purpose from drinking one another under the table to awarding premiums to virtuous manufacturers. In short, they formed a cultural elite.[70]

N. T. Phillipson interprets their role in the post-union society of Scotland as having been crucial to the social life of Edinburgh. The concern with manners, and the risk of "conflict or dishonourable conduct" arising after 1707, led to a greater emphasis being placed on knowledge of the law, and the capacity to implement its civilising effects. Again, this was partly motivated by the desire to emulate the polite achievements of other nations, both ancient and modern.[71] Phillipson regards the mentality which placed such strong value in the knowledge of law as essentially "civic humanist". It was, he says,

> focused on a single-minded campaign to turn Scotland into a trading nation. For it was generally and rightly believed that the future of Scotland as a polite commonwealth depended upon the capacity of the country's political leaders to stimulate the economic growth which was necessary to underpin their expensive tastes for politeness.[72]

It was this tendency, among others, that had culminated in the debates over union leading to the Act of 1707.

The principal urban centre occupied by the lawyers was Edinburgh. In fact, "the quintessence of two streams of middle-class life" were divided between the two largest cities of Scotland. Glasgow was dominated by the commercial and manufacturing interests, while Edinburgh was dominated by professional classes.[73] At Edinburgh, according to Phillipson, social life did not disintegrate after 1707 despite the migration of territorial magnates to the new centre of political power in London. While the townhouses of the peerage at Canongate turned into slums, the vibrancy of city life was maintained by the lesser nobility and landed gentry, as well as the lawyers and, "the city continued to be the resort of a highly aristocractic society around whom much of the political and cultural life of the country revolved." Phillipson compares Edinburgh to eighteenth century Dublin, Philadelphia and Boston, in that it was "the effective centre of the political life of one of

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[69] Smout, op.cit., p. 374, and Shaw, op.cit., pp 18-9.
[70] Ibid., p. 374.
[71] N. T. Phillipson, op. cit., p. 107.
[72] Ibid., p.108
[73] Smout. op. cit., p.364.

the great provinces of the English Crown, and the focal point of the collective life of a provincial elite."[74]

According to Smout, the Old Town of Edinburgh was "an extraordinary place". The plans for the New Town were not accepted until 1767. The Old Town, in 1707, contained more people than any other town in Britain except London and maybe Bristol, with 30,000 inhabiting the city besides the further 5,500 in Leith. From 1730 onwards, the population was greatly increased.[75]

The social and spatial organisation of the populace in Edinburgh is worth comment. As Smout says, English visitors to the Old Town discovered an urban scene that contrasted sharply with the territory of London and other English towns.[76] In the English urban landscape, it was usual to find discrete districts which exclusively housed members of particular social ranks. Thus the urban poor were separated from the wealthy, and distinctions between tradesmen, professionals, and aristocracy, were maintained by topographical separation. In Edinburgh, as with Paris and other continental cities, this was not the case. In the increasingly crowded Old Town, most housing took the form of tenements. The city residence of Hume's father Joseph, was in a tenement house "fronting on the south side of the Lawnmarket in a neighbourhood then much favoured by Edinburgh lawyers."[77] In this terrain, as Smout remarks, "the social division was denoted not vertically, by fashionable and unfashionable streets and areas, but horizontally [sic], according to which floor one lived on." The more affluent and respectable occupants typically placed themselves on the middle floors, usually the second and third, of the tenements, probably because this position avoided both the stench of the street and the effort of large numbers of stairs. Smout cites an example of how the social hierarchy was marked by the layers of the tenements in 1773:

> one tenement in the High Street had a fishmonger's house on the ground floor, the rooms of the dowager Countess of Balcarres on the third floor, Mrs. Buchan of Kelly living above that, the 'misses Elliots, milliners and mantuamakers' above that, and the garrets occupied by 'a great variety of tailors and other tradesmen'. These were in a sense almost all 'middle-class' inhabitants of one kind or another, but nobody would ever have found an English dowager sandwiching herself between a fishmonger and a crowd of tailors and milliners.[78]

This provides an interesting contrast to the urban landscape of English provincial towns, such as Bristol where Hume spent part of 1734. Peter Borsay analysed the creation of new

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[74] Phillipson, op. cit., p.99.
[75] Smout, op. cit., p.366.
[76] Ibid., pp. 369-70.
[77] *Life,* p.6.
[78] Smout, op. cit.., p.369-70.

spaces within which social and cultural display increasingly took place during the eighteenth century in English provincial towns.[79] Efforts were made in the building of walk-ways and town halls, for instance, to provide arenas in which the middle and upper ranks of society could show off their wealth through the display of fine clothing, and of refined and educated taste, in a notionally "open" society.[80] Edinburgh may not have achieved an equivalent development until after 1767, but in the meantime, the distinctions of rank were made visible in a context where all social orders found themselves typically juxtaposed with one another. It is reasonable to speculate that in such an urban context, the deployment of symbols denoting social and economic status would have had an enhanced importance in the absence of geographical separation between members of superior and inferior social orders. In such a context, contact between the higher part of an inferior order, and the lower members of a superior order, would create a greater need to reinforce distinction through self-conscious display of superiority.

Although Edinburgh was not primarily a business town, it did experience some growth in retailing trades during the first half of the century. The growing affluence of its inhabitants, and the consumer power of both professionals and gentry, created an economic environment in which "the strict old guild rules" had to be loosened among the merchants and tradesmen. Smout records that as early as 1729, the same year in which Macintosh remarked sarcastically on the changing consumer habits of the lowland gentry, the council "began to permit retailers in a long list of wares to sell at will in Edinburgh for payment of an annual licence instead of obliging them to become members of the Merchant Company…".[81]

The self-consciousness that arose through the changing terrain of Scottish politics, economy and society, was marked by attempts among the Edinburgh elites to stimulate insight into the enhancement of her situation. Various clubs and societies concerned themselves with the improvement of Scottish life through legal, economic, and cultural refinement, and particularly by cultivating politeness and imitating English manners, throughout the century. The *Easy Club* used the *Spectator* as a guide to concentrate primarily on the latter route to improvement. Formed in 1712, its Secretary declared in a letter to "Mr Spectator" that, "the first thing that induced us to join in a Society was the reading of your *Spectators,* where it is frequently recommended, and the better to make us

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[79] See Peter Borsay, 'The English Urban Renaissance: the Development of Provincial Urban Culture c.1680 – c.1760,' in *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1688-1820*, ed. Peter Borsay, (London and New York, 1990).
[80] See section 3.d of this chapter.
[81] Smout, op. cit., p.372.

acquainted with such fine thoughts, we have observed as one of our fundamental laws, that one, two or more of the *Spectators* shall be read at every meeting."[82] The Rankenian Club lasted from 1716 until 1774, and was designed for, "mutual improvement by liberal conversation and rational inquiry". It aimed to be, "instrumental in disseminating through Scotland freedom of thought, boldness of disquisition, liberality of sentiment, accuracy of reasoning, correctness of taste, and attention to composition."[83] Later on, the Select Society marked the awareness of a changing situation, which needed to change further. Hume was one of the leading members of this society, along with Lord Kames and Allan Ramsay, which was established in 1754. The group, rose to a membership of 162, contained many lawyers (61), and was "bombarded with applications for membership from the men of rank and property". It concerned itself with "the possibilities of improving [Scotland's] politics, economy, manners and literature." It thereby combined the interests of landed and propertied society, the self-consciousness of Scottish society regarding its backwardness in relation to England, and the intellectual elite of the literati, of whom Hume had established himself a member.[84]

The means for obtaining social advancement, or in Hume's case, for retaining a social position, were different in Scotland during the first half of the eighteenth century, than for England at the same time. A crucial feature of the social and professional environment of Scotland since the Act of Union was the importance of political connections relating especially to the two factions that dominated Scotland's links with the central power in the London metropolis. The Argathelians and the Squadrone bound together the higher Scottish landed and titled elites whose connections with, and presence in, London established the major political links, and the individuals who moved within lower ranks – lesser gentry and middling orders – and who required positions within the professions, the church and the universities. Once Hume had abandoned the career of law, he was subject to these forces in any other route that he might plan for himself, as became abundantly clear in 1744-5 when he failed to obtain a post at Edinburgh University, partly through the intrigues of the political factions.[85] It was against this background that Hume made his move to England in 1734 with recommendations to the firm of sugar merchants.

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[82] Quoted in Davis D. McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement: A Survey of Eighteenth-Century Clubs and Societies*, (Washington State, 1969), p.15.
[83] Quoted from contemporary accounts of the activities of this club in ibid., p.22.
[84] Phillipson, op.cit., pp.111-2.
[85] See Roger L. Emerson, 'The "affair" at Edinburgh and the "project" at Glasgow: the politics of Hume's attempts to become a professor', in M.A. Stewart and John P. Wright (eds), *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, (Edinburgh, 1994).

Scotland evidently showed signs of a change in consumer culture among the classes with which Hume had contact by the time he was concerning himself with his new project in the late 1720s. This change is significant in itself and presents an important part of Hume's early experiential horizons. In addition, it is significant because it was modelled directly on the image of commercial civilisation presented by English society. While the Scottish situation may not have matched that of England in the drama of its change, it was nonetheless based on a consciousness of the English model, and on an awareness of the need to emulate English consumer mores. Hume was in a position to experience both the imitation and the model itself having lived in Scotland up to 1734, and then having moved to England during that year. An understanding of the parameters of the English model is therefore vital not only in order to understand the nature of Hume's experience of English consumerism *in* England, but also in order to understand his experience of English consumerism as it was imitated in Scotland.

b. The Landed Gentry in England

A crucial mainstay in the rise of consumerism in eighteenth century English society was provided by the landed gentry, even though it rested on political and economic strengths that are more closely associated with a traditional society. Their wealth and need for prestige in order to distinguish themselves from others, made members of the landed class important in establishing a culture in which fashionable imitation, and social emulation, generated economically and socially significant motives for individuals.

The history of the English gentry was marked by a striking "inflation of honours" from the start of the 17th century onwards. During the reign of James I, the size of the titled nobility was more than doubled[86], a fact which was remarked by David Hume in his *History of England.*[87] James Rosenheim identifies the creation of the hereditary, but non-noble, title of baronet in 1611, and "the continuing accretion of huge amounts of land by gentry," as factors leading to a narrowing of the cultural distance between landed gentry and the peerage proper.[88] The greater landed class exercised a 'domination' over the rest of society, but its hegemony was marked by tensions arising from a lack of self-confidence, which waxed and waned through the second half of the 17th and the first half of the eighteenth century. Land-based wealth, status and power gave rise to a self-awareness on the part of this class which was characterised by "a collective awareness of inherited and

[86] James M. Rosenheim, *The Emergence of a Ruling Order: English Landed Society, 1650-1750,* (London, 1998), p.1.
[87] David Hume, *The History of England*, vol.6, (London, 1773), chapter XLV.
[88] Rosenheim, op. cit., p.1.

unworked-for superiority". This self-awareness was reinforced during the period running from around 1650 to 1750, but Rosenheim observes that its cementing was based more on, "a sense among the landed of anxiety and even fear," than on, "confidence in a future based on [...] persistence through time".[89] Some of the reasons for this uncertainty arose during the difficult period of the mid-seventeenth century. Rosenheim refers to the deep separation which appeared between popular and elite political cultures as a particular source of concern, especially as the possibility of division among the elite could raise prospects of political vulnerability. Increasing awareness of the 'fragility' of the aristocracy's, and the broader landed class's, social and political privileges, manifested itself in the gestures of self-display which marked elite culture at this time. Gestures like, "hanging portraits, landscaping grounds, decorating houses, adorning themselves with *à-la-mode* clothes," marked a need to reinforce a sense of cohesion. He states that, "even though some of them were not highly visible to the lower social orders, [they] are explicable as the deployments of cultural claims to superiority intended to fortify their social position against challenge."[90] Thus, goods produced with artistic self-consciousness had already achieved a new kind of importance in the presentation-of-self by members of this social order by the end of the 17th century, and were adapted specifically to the symbolic display of social status and power.

With regard to differences in social status, Rosenheim emphasises the separation of the landed order from other social ranks. Although this order had little homogeneity, there was no pronounced social division among its own ranks. The primary distinction between social orders, at least from the point of view of the landed, existed between those who were in this order and those who were not. As Rosenheim puts it, "[t]he landed order had its gradations and its common attributes both, and these characteristics of attitude, taste, interest, and material well-being brought landowners together because they set them apart from the rest of society". Although they shared the attribute of owning property with the business community, they retained a strong sense of distinction in terms of rank, and social activity. The key feature of landed, as opposed to business, property and status, was that in the former case, one could "live idly". Rosenheim uses the term "people of leisure" to denote those people who did not have to pursue a single activity in order to maintain themselves or their status. Their primary sources of income came from land-rents, or other "largely conservative, non-commercial investments". [91] The patterns of consumption

[89] Ibid., p.2.
[90] Ibid., p.2.
[91] Ibid., p.6.

which arose from this financial base were "generally predictable", with expenditure being put into land, country seats, and spent on, "personal possessions likely to be wrought with self-conscious artistry rather than just craft". This further distinguished them from members of the business community whose expenditure was not typically directed towards houses and land.

The conservative features of landed spending habits were, however, also accompanied by a more radical role in the rise of consumerism in English society more broadly. Rosenheim states that, "[l]ess clearly, the landed ruled in a high cultural realm," by constituting, "an essential element among the growing body of consumers in an increasingly commercialised world". They did not impose their tastes on the rest of society, and as recent scholarship has tended to argue, they were not simply aped by the lower social orders.[92] However, their wealth made them highly important in the market for consumer goods. Rosenheim describes their role as,

> both appreciative and mercenary, for the artistic creations of master architects and master painters, of poets, composers, essayists, and historians alike. They bought, spoke of, and sought more of the novel porcelains, exotic fabrics, and innovative designs that proliferated in the eighteenth century 'world of goods'. The landed elite may not entirely have ruled this world of consumption – arguably they were ruled by it – but it was in these its early years more shaped by the elites' [sic] presumed desires and putative needs than by those of any other group.[93]

Thus, the habits of expenditure and consumption which evolved with the landed class combined typically conservative features – investment in land, for example – with elements which have become associated with more modern commercial practices in the city, and in provincial urban centres. The cultural experiences made available through increasingly commercialised modes of expenditure – experiences that were increasingly, "more transitory, affordable, and mundane, ones entered into with little necessary planning or self-consciousness of social or cultural position" – helped, nonetheless, to, "bind together elite men and women into a coherent social order". The power to consume was readily associated with the power embodied in landed estate, and represented as social status, and participation in this kind of consumption brought with it, "greater exposure to a world they shared with others like them."[94]

The nature and extent of consumerism among the landed class turned on the need of its members to distinguish themselves from non-members by self-conscious display of

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[92] For a recent account of the historiography of the idea that the middling orders, or middle class, aped their social betters see H. R. French, '"Ingenious & learned gentlemen' - social perceptions and self-fashioning among parish elites in Essex, 1680-1740', *Social History*, vol. 25 (2000), 44-66.
[93] Rosenheim, op. cit., p.8.
[94] Ibid., p.8.

taste. Consumption of foreign goods was understood to signify the tasteful cosmopolitanism and superiority of its members.[95] The visible act of consumption implied riches sufficient to purchase, and education and leisure sufficient for learning to appreciate such refined goods. Rosenheim draws attention to the manuals on politeness which became available to train a superior sense of discernment among elite classes. They were presented as attempts to educate non-members of the landed class, but they tended to set the rules of a game in which membership of the elite caste could be demonstrated through adeptness. In general, Rosenheim finds that individuals of the landed class were prone to demonstrate their sense of social self-esteem,

> by purchasing products of both material and intellectual culture on a vaster scale than other social groups, intimation of their precocious acceptance of the commodification of culture so characteristic of the modern world. Interested in but not so obsessed with novelty as the middle class came to be, aristocrats predominantly consumed to maintain their status and reputation by revealing their fine tastes.[96]

The criticisms which were directed towards the excesses of the landed in their consumption of luxurious items may have tended to reinforce a defensive sense of social "solidarity", with little actual impact on behaviour. In any case, by the mid-eighteenth century, Rosenheim finds that, "a strong faith in their own tastes supported the elite in indulging them."[97]

There was a further "intellectual" counterpart to the self-conscious activities of the landed elite. Besides their paradoxical embrace of commercialised consumption, the landed also "joined and welcomed," other movements that were "redefining acceptable modes of thought and behaviour". In their consumption of books focusing, for instance, on local history and archaeology, there was an impetus to develop and extend the production of print culture, and to move beyond the oral transmission of this material. Rosenheim's study also finds that,

> [i]n the same vein, the turning from astrology, rejection of witchcraft beliefs, and the acceptance of calendar and nascent weights-and-measures reform by educated women and men all marked a slow seeking, neither inevitable nor unimpeded, of experimentally verifiable and rational grounds for (all but religious) beliefs and social practices.

This is named as the foundation for, "the emergence of a pervasive and powerful discourse of science and technology that did much to sustain aristocratic (although also spawning bureaucratic and technocratic) rule."[98] It also parallels developments in the more practical

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[95] Ibid., p.202.
[96] Ibid., p.202-3.
[97] Ibid., p.203.
[98] Ibid., p.8.

and mundane intellectual developments associated with middle class engagement with commerce and credit that are dealt with in the next section.

Finally, the development of commercialised consumer habits among the landed elite was associated with an increasing orientation towards the capital. The norms of fashion emanated from London, with news of the latest designs being eagerly sought in the provinces whether for imitation by local merchants, or by the consumers themselves. As Rosenheim puts it, "[t]he metropolitan corner on expertise and the association of the city with the best also rested on a metropolitan near-monopoly of desirable, status-bestowing, luxurious commodities". He emphasises the importance of concentrated centres for the display of purchased goods, as well as for the production and sale of the same:

> Although [consumer goods] could be purchased by people with sufficient money, they could not be put to proper use in appropriate context by just anyone. It was not a single item that bestowed and sustained status but rather the deployment of many items in the approved manner.

The provinces were sometimes inadequate for this kind of activity, failing to provide the "accessories of life" that would allow the elite consumer, "to act with the decorum and nuanced good taste that set them apart from the rest of society". For the landed gentry, in their self-display through conspicuous consumption, London provided the ideal arena and thus increasingly became the locus for significant parts of their social lives.[99]

Hume's family background was one which appeared to its members, and not without reason, as being closer to the status of the genteel landed (and indeed titled), than to the professional middle classes, although it did not belong to the higher landed elite of the Scottish peerage proper. Mossner infers the "social status" of the family from the "not undistinguished group of country gentry and professional men" who witnessed the baptism of the young David.[100] Hume recalls this background in 1775, in *My Own Life*, saying that he,

> was of a good Family both by Father and Mother. My Father's Family is a Branch of the Earl of Home's or Hume's; and my Ancestors had been Proprietors of the Estate, which my Brother possesses, for several Generations. My Mother was Daughter of Sir David Falconer, President of the College of Justice: The Title of Lord Halkerton came by Succession to her Brother.[101]

Mossner also noticed that in a letter written to supply information for a book on the Scottish peerage, Hume wrote, "I am not of the opinion of some, that these matters [i.e. the concern with lineage, and other traditional modes of social provenance] are altogether to be slighted.... I doubt that our morals have not much improved since we began to think riches

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[99] Ibid., p.234.
[100] *Life*, p.6.
[101] Ibid., p.6-7; *EMPL*, p. xxxii.

the sole thing worth regarding."[102] Hume's father, Joseph Home, pursued a career that combined the best of both worlds when it comes to class identification. Mossner states that it "would seem to have been" the case that Joseph planned to combine the career of "lawyer in the city and gentleman-farmer in the country which was to be carried on so successfully for the last three-quarters of the century by David's friend Henry Home, Lord Kames, and by many others."[103] Thus, the attributes of "gentility" could be claimed, including the social status associated with land-ownership and independent self-sufficiency, while the profession of law provided further social contact and additional income. As Smout has shown, the landed gentry of lowland Scotland had already begun to participate in consumer practices designed to imitate those of the English squirearchy, in what he terms a "revolution of manners".[104] Thus, for Hume, the idea of rural gentility could be strongly associated not only with the values of urban professionals, but also with the consumerist values of the more heavily commercialised English society.

The strong association held by Hume and his family between their lineage and both the land and titles of the gentry and peerage, justify the assumption that Hume's perspective on social practices was moulded in part by the self-awareness and expectations of the minor gentry. However, his participation in this social order was inevitably to be disappointed, since he was the younger son. His elder brother, John, inherited the estate and Hume received a patrimony of between £40 and £50 per annum.[105] As Mossner says,

> under a system of primogeniture, the family was not well enough off to provide more than a very modest portion for a younger son, though they could live comfortably and solidly as highly respected country gentry and educate their children as they desired. Joseph Home was, indeed, not rich, compared with his many friends among the nobility, but he was also far from being poor.[106]

The younger son of such a family, however, faced a situation which had been familiar to members of that class since at least the early 17th century. Without a patrimony adequate for complete independence, Hume was 'forced' to find himself a settlement which would act as substitute. Thus he tried the profession of law, discarding it in 1729, and briefly made his 'feeble' trial in the firm of Bristol merchants in 1734. In an article tracing the circumstances of younger sons of the 17th century, Joan Thirsk echoed Lawrence Stone's diagnosis in *The Crisis of the Aristrocracy*. She observes that,

> in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the eldest son took the lion's share of the estate, while the younger sons were provided either with a small property in land, which reverted to the elder brother

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[102] Quoted in *Life*, p.7, from *LDH*, vol.1., p.276.
[103] *Life*, p.19.
[104] See section 3.a of the current chapter.
[105] The former estimate is made by *LDH*, vol. 1, pp.22-23, and the latter by Mossner in *Life*, p.25.
[106] *Life*, p.25.

> at death, or an annuity which also terminated at death. A career in trade or the professions was open to all with inclination and energy to pursue it, but no one took it for granted that he had to earn his living in this way. Yet paternal benevolence was frequently not sufficient to assure a comfortable living to younger sons who chose to support a wife and children. In consequence, they tended to marry late and have fewer children, or they remained bachelors.[107]

This characterisation of the 16th and 17th century predicament of those disenfranchised by primogeniture closely resembles the situation in which the younger Hume found himself. As section 2 showed, his life was dominated by the need to achieve and maintain financial independence, and his reflections on his success towards the end emphasise the importance of combining this need with the commercial success of publications. In terms of Hume's situation in the 1730s, however, the prospects for success in this were much more oblique, and the pressures of his predicament are strongly felt in his surviving letters. For present purposes, it indicates an important step which must therefore be taken in order to understand the perspective from which Hume took his observations on contemporary life. That is, as a younger son of a gentry family in search of a 'settlement', Hume might well have the sense of self-esteem (albeit wounded self-esteem) of someone from a landed background, but it was necessary for him to enter into a mode of life more typically associated with the middle class. It is therefore important to consider the nature of consumption and social interaction among the other class with whose existence it was closely associated, in order to understand the complexity of Hume's point of view.

c. The Middle Class in England

An excellent study of the transformation of middle-class culture and society in provincial urban centres during the period under consideration was written by John Smail. His *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture*[108] focuses on the Yorkshire town of Halifax, but it is highly instructive both on the subject of middle-class social practices in general, and on the concentration of changes in this group around the provincial urban centres. The general features of middle-class development in Halifax provide insight in the consideration of Hume's experience of Bristol society, although the peculiarities of the latter town are considered in more detail further on in this chapter.

Smail concentrates on two crucial developments in the emergence of middle-class culture that accompanied the economic practices associated with the progress of textile manufacturing in Halifax, but which were also to some extent independent of it. The two

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[107] Joan Thirsk, 'Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century', *History*, LIV (1969): 358-77. See p.362. See also, Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1964), pp.599-60.

[108] John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660-1780*, (Cornell University

developments, which made their impact felt on the lives of merchants and manufacturers, and on professionals, occurred in the money market and in patterns of consumption. Both trends emerged strongly during the late 17th century and the first half of the eighteenth century. Smail stresses that these changes are not entirely derivative from the transformation of practice and culture in the textile industry, although both are related. The changing structure of financial accounting in businesses with their requirements for capital, and the increasing availability of luxury goods accompanied by rising incomes "was a reflection of the wealth of this new commercial elite".[109]

Two primary changes occurred in the financial organisation of businesses, both of which had considerable effects on the culture of the middle class. The first, was the use of more sophisticated and rational accounting than was used formerly, and the second involved the connection of individual and corporate interests into the web of credit which increasingly bound together centres of finance and manufacture throughout the kingdom. The "web of credit" introduced "new attitudes into the parish and reinforced existing developments", while the need for "sophisticated accounting" proved necessary in order to, "keep track of a business that depended on bills of exchange." Together these changes amounted to what Smail calls, "a more rational approach to business finance."[110] He argues that involvement in the national web of credit identified a group of manufacturers and professionals, distinguishing them from those whose interests were not so engaged. The early forms of double entry book-keeping provided a different "worldview" from that of the "simple artisan who kept only rudimentary accounts". The specific impact of such techniques on the mentality of a businessman is not described by Smail, but the reasons are clear why connections into the national web of credit would necessarily reinforce the sense of class difference on the part of the middle class. The Halifax coiner crisis provides an instance where the need to maintain the integrity of local currency in order to keep credit open distinguished the middle classes who were collectively more hostile than the small domestic clothiers who were inclined to support counterfeiting.[111]

On "the other side of the merchants' and manufacturers' account books", changes occurred in the kind of goods to which expenditure was directed. Not all of the profits from industry and trade were redirected by the provincial middle classes back into their businesses. Increasing demand for goods and services in the parish, in which Smail includes the increasing use of solicitors, indicates that a significant proportion of money

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Press, 1994).
[109] Ibid., p.82.
[110] Ibid., p.86.

was, "siphoned off to support a more luxurious lifestyle". Consumer orientation must, Smail argues, be viewed in a national context, as the purchasers of goods typically had their eyes set on the capital in order to identify the fashionable models which were to be imitated, or emulated. However, the imitation of London consumer patterns was often selective, increasing in rapidity through the course of the eighteenth century, and was also subject to the peculiar meanings which it was given in local context. In fact, what Smail suggests is that there was a subtle interaction between the centralised, homogenising tendency of commerce extending from London, and the localised meanings created by the new commercial elites.[112]

The connections between provincial town and metropolis in the trade in consumer goods is exemplified by Smail in his analysis of the accounts of one Jonathan Hall, a local craftsman and trader. The development of his trade between London and Halifax is described in the following:

> As in the case of the money market, this developing material culture has its origins in the world outside of Halifax. The point is perhaps obvious, but it is seen with particular clarity in the accounts of Jonathan Hall. Hall left Halifax for London in 1701 to serve an apprenticeship as an upholsterer, and after taking his freedom of the city he remained in the metropolis into the 1740s. In the 1720s and 1730s, the period for which detailed accounts survive, Hall's business was varied. As well as making and repairing chairs and curtains, he worked as an interior decorator, decking out a church in mourning for the funeral of the "honorable lady Martin" in 1723, or, more mundanely, finishing several rooms in the house of Mr. Robert Rogers. Hall also operated as a merchant, supplying customers in the provinces with the range of goods available in London. Hall maintained contact with his native parish, for one of his accounts was with a William Wood of Halifax. A typical shipment, sent in June 1726, included "a large looking glass in a walnut frame, 6 Dutch tables, 4 square and 2 oval, 12 chairs with India backs, French feet and fine cane bottoms, and three sets of gilt cornices." Some six months later, Hall sent Wood still more chairs, a settee bed, four tea tables, and a large selection of hats.[113]

This example illustrates the manner in which household goods could be provided by someone who was sufficiently in touch with the demands of titled consumers in London to be qualified to advise on their eligibility in terms of status and fashion. Further connections with London were typically maintained through ties of friendship with residents at the capital, and through often regular personal visits justified by business. Rosenheim also stressed the strength of London's pre-eminence in determining provincial consumption, stating that, "even modest Puritan gentle-women bought their clothes" in the city.[114] Other

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[111] Ibid., p.87.
[112] Ibid., p.93.
[113] Ibid., p.99.
[114] Rosenheim, op.cit., p.234.

larger provincial-urban centres also provided more accessible loci where the fashionable goods could be obtained.[115]

The meanings which typically accrued to the consumption of goods purchased in imitation of centres outside of the locality were strongly associated with the enhancement of visible status. In a similar way to that described in the practices of the gentry by Rosenheim, Smail describes a process whereby the possession and consumption of certain kinds of goods could enhance the self-awareness of the social group, in this case the middle class, and could help to distinguish them from their social inferiors. As he says, "the use of certain services and the possession of certain goods helped to define the members of an increasingly distinct group," and, "implicit in the very genesis of the eighteenth-century consumer culture was the attempt by middling people to demonstrate their social worth by purchasing goods associated with a higher status". He states that,

> [t]he possession of certain kinds of consumer goods served an equivalent function [to the use of local professional services] and suggests that new practices and attitudes spread beyond the narrow commercial world of the merchants and manufacturers. The families of doctors, lawyers, and clerks all shared the comforts and refinements that prosperity brought, and they developed, along with the merchant and manufacturing families, new cultural expectations about the goods and services necessary for the life they wished to lead.[116]

Drawing on recent scholarship,[117] he accepts that the middle ranks should not be regarded as simply trying to emulate their social betters. But, even if they did not buy consumer goods in order to become aristocrats, they did purchase, "in part with the intent of establishing their social credentials".[118]

The particular prominence of the professions, and lawyers in particular, in the development of social contexts in which consumerism was increasingly important requires emphasis. Geoffrey Holmes has emphasised the tendency in the professional classes from the Restoration onwards to remove themselves from the metropolis in order to find contexts in which their services were needed, and where they would not be confronted with large numbers of competitors.[119] He remarks that, "[f]ew who journeyed through England between the 1690s and the 1730s and obligingly left accounts of their travels failed to remark on the physical and social presence of members of the professions," and, "[l]awyers perhaps attracted more notice than any."[120] As a whole, the professionals, both

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[115] Smail, op.cit., p.100.
[116] Ibid., p.100-101.
[117] See for instance, Colin Campbell's article in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, (London and New York, 1994).
[118] Smail, op.cit., p.101.
[119] Geoffrey Holmes, *The Professions and Social Change in England, 1680-1730*, (Oxford, 1981), p.314.
[120] Ibid., p.313.

in London and in the provinces, contributed a great deal to the spending power required by consumer society. Increasing numbers, and increasing monetary rewards for the services of professionals through the last two decades of the 17th century, and the early part of the eighteenth, greatly enhanced the consumer powers of the class. On this basis, Holmes states,

> they bought land, stocks, and securities; they built houses (especially town houses[...]); they patronized a host of tradesmen, craftsmen, and other professionals. Not least, they developed the keenest interest in improving the amenities of the places they lived in. Professional men are to be found interesting themselves, and often taking the lead in, for example, town planning; the improvement of water supplies; the promotion of river navigation schemes; the founding of charity schools. But at the same time we also find them patronising local music societies and assemblies; by their own private leisure interests making their neighbourhood a place to be sought out by visiting antiquarians, virtuosi, bibliophiles and collectors; and either delivering, organising, or subscribing to all manner of those courses of public lectures to which the educated Englishman of the early eighteenth century was growing so addicted – lectures on natural philosophy, on trigonometry, mechanics or hydrostatics, on geography, on anatomy (a particular source of fascination), and so on.[121]

In Holmes' view, the transformation of the professional classes during the late 17th and early eighteenth century, in fact, led to their emergence, "as the most active and capacious vehicle of social mobility under the later Stuarts and the first two Georges."[122] Therefore, their visibility as individuals capable of moving towards high social status, and their capacity to consume generated by lucrative services, must be emphasised as forming a vital part of the strength of middle class culture as a whole.

As Smail's analysis of the trading and manufacturing community that emerged in Halifax makes clear, the middle class, like the landed gentry, was already involving itself in the purchase and consumption of goods that had meanings attached to them beyond their immediate practical usefulness; and Holmes' analysis of the professions shows that they contributed a high degree of spending power, as well as a high social profile, to the strength of the middle class as a whole. The conspicuous consumption of such goods was used to identify members of a group whose social status was grounded in economic factors, and it helped not only to mark their rising self-esteem as a group, but also to mark the exclusion of non-members who were associated with lower social orders. Specifically, the kinds of economic and professional activity in which (the male) members of this class were engaged, were those with which Hume was forced to make a trial during the 1730s, having failed to retain the status and independence associated with the elder sons coming

[121] Ibid., p.321-2.

from his type of social background. This middle-class group was typical of the kind of society into which he entered when he headed for England in 1734 to try out the new scene of life that he associated with merchant business. In the section following this one, the nature of life in the English towns outside London is examined in order to establish the manner in which the purchase, possession and consumption of goods was used in the game of social competition and emulation both within the middle and upper classes, that is between individuals, and between groups of differing social status.

d. Metropolis and Provincial Towns

Writing in the 1720s, Daniel Defoe said of Bristol that it was "the greatest, the richest, and the best Port of Trade in Great Britain, London only excepted". Of the merchants of that city, he said that not only are they able to carry out an extensive trade independently of London, but that "they are able to bring the full returns back to their own Port, and can dispose of it there…". He observed that, "they have always Buyers at Home [and] To this Purpose, the Shopkeepers in Bristol who in general are all Wholesale Men, have so great an inland Trade among all the Western Counties, that they maintain Carriers just as London Tradesmen do…".[123] Peter T. Marcy describes Bristol as "first and foremost a city of trade and commerce," whose predominance in this activity, "drew many visitors to the city".[124] It was to this environment that Hume arrived with the intention of making his fortune, and pursuing a new kind of career, in 1734. Its commercial classes were thriving and the city was subject to the same cultural influences – in both its financial aspects and its consumer habits – as the town described by Smail. This section considers the development of a new urban scene within which the conspicuous consumption of goods, and the deliberate use of consumer paraphernalia to enhance individual social status, occurred in Bristol and other urban centres outside of London during the first half of the eighteenth century.

In Peter Borsay's work on the impact of changing and widening commercial practices on the urban landscape of England during the eighteenth century, he found what he called, "an English urban renaissance".[125] Concentrating on the creation of new urban spaces within which the culture and social display associated with the development of the commercial middle-class could take place, he found that the early part of the eighteenth

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[122] Ibid., p.323.
[123] Quoted in 'Eighteenth Century Views of Bristol and Bristolians', by Peter T. Marcy in *Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. McGrath (Newton Abbey, 1972), p.14.
[124] Ibid., p. 14.
[125] Borsay, op. cit..

century was somewhat more dynamic than it was given credit for by economic and social histories still perplexed by the origins of the British industrial revolution. In particular, Borsay focused on the way in which two elements, leisure and luxury, affected the development of provincial towns during the late 17th and the eighteenth century.

A key feature that emerged during the first half of the eighteenth century was the appearance of "leisure facilities designed to cater for the upper and middling groups in society". The primary example which Borsay gives is the town assembly, which became a common feature of the provincial town from the end of the 17th century onwards.[126] The main function of such leisure facilities was "that of personal display". The creation of "walks" on which people could promenade in their best apparel illustrates the relationship which such facilities had with both consumption, and the symbolic value of conspicuous possession in the town. The increasing prominence of sporting activities provided further opportunities for this kind of activity. Like John Brewer more recently,[127] Borsay focused on the arts as a focal point for tasteful consumption as well as a further arena within which one could be seen to enjoy, and to be able to afford, certain kinds of goods. Borsay states that by 1760 provincial theatres were established as regular features of provincial towns as well as the capital, and Bristol itself had its own first permanent establishment from 1729 onwards.[128] The basis for this transformation of the town landscape is to be found in the development of the local economy. Borsay states that the "growing sophistication of provincial urban life" rested on "a shift from an economy almost wholly concentrated on the manufacture and marketing of basic necessities, to one far more concerned with what may be called luxury elements in personal expenditure". Although the emergence of this economic trend probably dates back to the mid-Tudor period, its rapid acceleration occurred from the end of the seventeenth century onwards.[129]

Borsay argues that the social function of the new urban spaces, and of the deployment of status-bestowing consumer goods within these spaces, suggests a picture, "which stands in sharp contrast with the tranquil light some historians have shed over the first half of the eighteenth century". The use of surplus wealth in this way marks, he suggests, "a different style of living," one which he characterises as part of the, "world of social competition". The key feature of this new world is "the pursuit of status" whose

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[126] Ibid., p.161.
[127] See especially John Brewer, op. cit. (1997).
[128] Borsay, op. cit., p.163. For the details on Bristol's own theatre see Kathleen Baker, 'The Theatre Royal, Bristol: the First Seventy Years,' in Patrick McGrath (ed.), op.cit..
[129] Borsay, op.cit., p.164.

extent is marked by the increase in the number of people in possession of surplus wealth.[130] Taken together, therefore, it is clear that the increase in the numbers of people with surplus wealth, the increased manufacture of consumer goods, the rising self-awareness of shifting social-class formations, and the appearance of new urban spaces within which to play out social-competitive rivalries, marked a fundamental transformation of the social and economic context. Borsay states that, "[s]uch a growth unquestionably took place during [this period]. The town was to play a crucial role in servicing the increasing demand for status, and absorbing the pressures being laid upon the social structure".[131]

In fact, Borsay rather dramatically describes the town as having provided "the instruments of battle" required for the new incidence of individualistic social competition over status. In the new arena he observes that,

> physical and mental possessions can be used as a way of transforming wealth into social status. In this sense the new sophisticated urban economy can be seen as a munitions factory in the pursuit of status. When the milliners, drapers, mercers, jewellers, and so forth, dispensed their luxury products, it is hard to imagine their customers were unaware of the uses to which they could put their purchases. [132]

Furthermore, the town also provided the resources and necessary *loci* through which the cultural and practical information required for new social roles could be circulated. This was achieved in theatres, concerts, coffee-houses and other public spaces, where knowledge and insight could be exchanged in Addisonian fashion in order to equip the individual with the means to cultivate "an educated and genteel mind". The guide-lines for such transactions and practices were dictated by fashion, establishing criteria concerning, "the status value of any particular object". And in doing so, "[t]hey also allowed, because of fashion's essentially fluid nature, these guidelines to be changed at a frequency commensurate with the level of demand for status at any given time or place." [133]

Borsay suggests that an important concept in the formation of this urban arena for social-competitive behaviour, was that of the "open society". In order to be effective, the town had to open up competition, at least in appearance, by resisting the fixing of "artificial barriers" that would prevent "a man transferring his wealth into status".[134] The "open society" is contrasted in this respect with the "closed society" of the rural world. However, there were certain necessary limitations to this idea. Borsay rightly resists exaggerating the 'openness' of this world for two reasons: first, because in order to enter

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[130] This is remarked in the studies of both the landed gentry and the middle class considered above.
[131] Borsay, op.cit., p.175.
[132] Ibid., p.176.
[133] Ibid., p.176.
[134] Ibid., p.177.

one had to have money, and second, because in any case, "social distinctions continued to be of immense importance; after all, the acquisition of distinction was precisely what the pursuit of status was about".[135]

Finally, Borsay introduces some useful terms through which the nature of the "urban renaissance" may be understood to have affected the lives of those living in the provincial town. This is based on what he calls a "new concept of space" through which it was made possible for people to escape from the relative enclosure of rural society. He summarises the various aspects of this in the following way:

> Because the town was a meeting place and transit point, it provided contact with 'geographical space'; because it published and sold books, and housed institutions like the theatre, it offered access to 'intellectual space'. But, above all, the town was increasingly the focus of 'social space', the space that separates individuals by status. By providing an armoury and arena in the pursuit of status, the town offered the vehicles by which individuals could traverse social space.[136]

Thus, Borsay paints a picture of the provincial town, with specific reference to Bristol among others, in which the pursuit of status through the conspicuous purchase, possession and consumption of luxury (that is, non-necessary, refined, and preferably expensive) goods, was provided for and accelerated from the late 17th century onwards. The importance of Bristol as a trading port, with a large population of merchants and their social equals in the professions, made it a particularly prominent example. These features of urban life at this time, which have also been seen in the social, economic, and cultural make-up of both the gentry and the middle classes, in the provincial town and elsewhere, and which had begun to appear in Scotland from the 1720s onwards, were at the centre of Hume's presentation of the human individual in the *Treatise*.

4.) Coming to Terms with Consumer Society

It is instructive to examine the case of another Scotsman who made a similar venture to that of Hume into English society, but just under thirty years later. James Boswell's detailed accounts of his travels and encounters provide insights into the manner in which experiences analogous to those of the young Hume could be managed and understood. David Hume's flight to England, in search of new horizons, both professional and cultural, was not by any means unique among eighteenth-century Scotsmen. Indeed, the cultural and psychological impact made by such English horizons on young Scots travellers with literary inclinations, has become an important subject for literary and cultural historians.[137]

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[135] Ibid., p.178.
[136] Ibid., p.181.
[137] For example, the sense of cultural difference and dislocation for the Scots after 1707 has been examined in

Tobias Smollett, Adam Smith, and James Boswell, are just some of the more famous Scotsmen who travelled south at an early stage of their lives, whether for the purposes of pursuing preferment for a career, or for pursuing further learning in the English universities. In terms of the specific aspects of Hume's early life considered in this chapter, Boswell's account of his movements in English society during the early 1760s provides some interesting points of comparison.

Boswell's social background in Scotland was somewhat different from Hume's. First of all, his father was still alive while Boswell tried his fortune in London between 1762 and 1763. Secondly, his father's estate was significantly larger than that which belonged to the Hume family, and Lord Auchinleck, Boswell's father, was sufficiently affluent to be able to support his son with a reasonably generous stipend (£200 per annum while Boswell was in London). Thirdly, Boswell was the heir to his father's estate, so his longer-term financial prospects were more assured than Hume's. Fourthly, Boswell made his trip to England around thirty years later than Hume, and would therefore have moved through somewhat different social landscapes. By the 1760s, Scotland was more advanced commercially than it had been when Hume was in his twenties. However, Boswell was brought up in a rather old-fashioned household with an extremely strict and overbearing father disapproving of faddish behaviour, and a particularly pious Presbyterian mother which made his perspective on the new experiences of the city peculiarly naïve for the time. In a sense, therefore, Boswell's experience may have been closer to that of the young Hume. Finally, Boswell did complete his studies of law, and was therefore provided with the prospect of an independent career, where Hume had abandoned his opportunity to pursue the same route by 1729. As a consequence of these factors, Boswell had a good deal less to worry about regarding at least his longer-term prospects for retaining high social status. Despite this, he did display feelings of insecurity about his immediate position in society while in London. He was an acutely self-conscious observer of the social and cultural scene in which he located himself between 1762 and 1763, and his need to find models of behaviour for imitation through which to assimilate what he saw, and the manner in which he experienced what he saw, provides interesting comparisons with Hume's more fragmentary accounts during the 1730s. In the case of both Hume's experience of social and cultural dislocation in the 1730s, and Boswell's movements in the

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David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*, (Oxford, 1969) and in Kenneth G. Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, (Aberdeen, 1988). See also James G. Basker, 'Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, ed. John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher, (Edinburgh, 1993), and Pat Rogers, 'Boswell and the Scotticism', in *New Light on Boswell*, ed. Greg Clingham, (Cambridge, 1991).

1760s, there was an evident need to reinvent the social and public image of the self, and to re-chart the social terrain surrounding the self.

Although Boswell's social status was reasonably secure, due both to the existence of an estate which could support him in the meantime through his father, and which he could hope to inherit, and to the connections of his family, there is evidence that he was still perplexed by the manner in which he could construct his social identity. In his entry to the *London Journal* for 24th February, 1763 he records his feelings of high-spirits as he indulged in ambitious reverie. He wrote that, "[he] wanted much to be a man of consequence," and pondered on the form that this could take, and the process through which it could best be achieved. First of all, he emphasised the importance of locating himself in "[his] own native country," where he could rely on his "family and connections" to "procure" such a status. The "plain road to preferment" led, he judged, through "the law", the profession which had become so important as a route for social mobility in both Scotland and England. His experience of confinement in London had convinced him that not only could he sustain the effort required to achieve a position in "the Scotch bar", but that he could involve himself in "business" while so doing. Such business would allow him to, "make money which would enable [him] to jaunt about wherever [he] pleased in the vacations." While enjoying the leisured fruits of a lucrative business, he imagined that his efforts in pursuing the law would allow him to construct an active social position that would give him a substantial importance for those around him (including, and especially, his overbearing father). He writes, "I would have an opportunity of being of much real use, of being of service to my friends by having weight in the country, and would make my father exceedingly happy." "Fate" appears to him to have carved the route that lies before him, and this has been manifest through the position of his family: he states that, "the family of Auchinleck had been raised by [the law]." His reverie takes a somewhat indulgent turn as he enjoys the prospects of ever greater success within the profession. Despite the fantastic nature of his reflections, the particular slant that he puts on his narration is revealing. The law, for Boswell, evidently fulfilled, at least in his imagination, a need for social status built not only on wealth and power, but on the appearance (and the substance) of usefulness. But it also promised to fulfil other needs for Boswell's social persona. Imagining that he, "would soon be made Advocate Depute on the circuits and in all probability be made a Baron of the Exchequer," Boswell infers that he would thereby enjoy, "respect and yet an easy life – *otium cum dignitate*." He rejects his former impressions of the figure of an advocate as "false". His impression from a background in

the family of a Scottish lawyer had made him think of advocates as having, "connected with that character low breeding and Presbyterian stiffness…". It occurs to him that, in fact, "many of them were very genteel people." Thus he may indulge the hope that should he attain to a high position within the Scottish legal profession,

> [he] might have the wit and humour of Sir David Dalrymple, the jollity of Duncan Forbes, the whim of Baron Dalrymple, the show of Baron Maule, and the elegant taste of Baron Grant. I thought I might write books like Lord Kames and be a buck like Mr James Erskine. That I might keep a handsome machine. Have a good agreeable wife and fine children and keep an excellent house. That I might show all the dull, vulgar, plodding young lawyers how easily superior parts can outstrip them.

Having achieved and manifested such a high degree of professional usefulness, social refinement, and affable enjoyment of life, Boswell thereby hoped that he could "keep [...] at a distance" the "dull, vulgar, plodding young lawyers", and distinguish himself through "[his] own few select friends". "[I]n short," he hopes that he, "might live in the most agreeable manner."[138] This idea greatly excited Boswell at the time and he considered, for a while, writing to his father and asking that his current £200 per year be continued with the addition of "lodgings of [his] own," so that he may be, "quite an independent man."[139]

Thus, despite the greater affluence and security in Boswell's material conditions, and arising from his social background, his early years did manifest a concern with self-reinvention that resembled Hume's concerns in the 1730s. Boswell was concerned with creating for himself a socially visible persona with which the virtues of usefulness, politeness and wit would be associated, and required that this persona would be graced with the financial capacity for a leisurely, as well as dignified, existence. While Boswell could eventually hope for an independent basis for his existence in the inheritance of his father's estate, he would have to wait much longer than Hume for the demise of his parent. Therefore, both characters needed to find a socially acceptable, as well as lucrative, "settlement" to sustain them. Both Hume and Boswell could rely on an annual contribution to their financial well-being, although Boswell's was significantly higher than Hume's. Both of them were concerned with the distance this contribution could be stretched in sustaining an urbane existence in the more desirable social circles. Hume's concern with this has been considered above, and Boswell has left us with a detailed account of how his more generous income had to be divided in order to keep face, and enjoy life in the city.

Writing on the morning after his arrival in London in 1762, Boswell outlined a "Scheme of Living" in his temporary lodgings at the White Lion Inn, Fleet St.. He records

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[138] James Boswell, *The London Journal*, Frederick ed. A. Pottle, (London, 1985), p.188.

that his father provided him with £25 every six weeks, "in all £200 a year." As he sees it on arrival in London, "[t]o support the rank of a gentlemen with this is difficult." Hume must therefore have found it all the more difficult as he moved through London to Bristol in 1734 with an annual income of between £40 and £50. Boswell proceeds to detail the various trappings of gentlemanly living on which his income must be spent. First of all, "[a] genteel lodging in a good part of the town is absolutely necessary," and he remarks that, "[t]hese are very dear." No decent accommodation is to be had for less than two guineas or a guinea and a half, although he hopes that by taking it for a year he may have it for £50.[140]

Envisaging that he will be "a man who is known to be at large upon the town and to have no home where he can dine," he imagines that he will, "be exposed to the solicitations of expensive company", and will therefore need, "a regular place to dine at." He muses on the possibility that a "decent family who have every day a tolerable dinner, and who should make no difference on my account," might accept him as a paying guest to their table, and that he may provide for his breakfast and other meals by his own means.[141] Thus his dinner should amount to around £18, and his breakfast for the year, to £9. His fire will cost him £7 in the year; his wax candles will amount to £6 per annum; his daily supply of clean linens, £7; his daily, or near daily, hair-dressing, "may come to £6"; having his shoes "wiped at least once a day and sometimes oftener" he reckons at £1 for the year. He remarks that, "[t]o be well dressed is another essential article, as it is open to every body to observe that." Therefore, he says, "I allow for clothes £50", a full quarter of his annual allowance. Stockings are reckoned separately at £10 for the year, bringing his total to £157. This, he says, leaves "just £43 left for coach-hire, diversion, and the tavern, which I will find a very slight allowance," but he hopes, "to conform my method of living to my circumstances [and] they may grow better in time." The specific prospect that he has in mind is a commission in the guards which will provide him with "about £90 a year more, which will make me pretty easy."[142] However, in the meantime he expresses some trepidation, commenting that, "[he] will find [himself] hard put to it to live as [he] could wish without exceeding [his] allowance."[143]

Although Boswell presents us with a rather more comfortable allowance for a young Scot starting to make his way in English society, he still provides insight into the

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[139] Ibid., p.189.
[140] Ibid., p.301.
[141] Ibid., p.301.
[142] Ibid., p.302.
[143] Ibid., p.303.

kind of pressure that was typically felt by someone in his position. Hume's position was less secure and less well-provided-for, and so it must be imagined that he found it even harder.[144] The city evidently placed immediate and unavoidable pressure on the individual to manage personal finance, and achieve further sources of revenue, in order to be able to afford access to sociable life, and to maintain the appearances that were necessary to achieve social visibility and respect in this arena. It is significant that the largest outflow of expenditure that Boswell envisaged, besides the expense of lodgings, was on clothing, the most obvious consumer symbol of social status, and that this even merited a justifying remark to the effect that everyone must recognise how and why it was necessary.

Boswell's account of his experience in London, and later on the European continent, provides further insights into the manner in which life in the modern city could impose certain kinds of demands on the individual, and on how these demands could be met. Literary scholars, among others, have concentrated on the manner in which *narration* came to perform an important function in sustaining a sense of the self in contemporary social life. In Boswell's case, the use of a journal which records day to day problems and ideas provides, it is thought, a means of understanding himself in the various different roles demanded by social mores and expectations, as well as by traditional moral codes, and the pressures of family members and peers. Boswell's life was marked by periods in which depression and debauched behaviour sometimes manifested the conflicts that occurred between different moral and cultural expectations. Susan Manning has concentrated on the significance of melancholy in the lives of both Boswell and Hume,[145] exploring the relationship between this uncontrolled excess of emotion, and the attempt to control the idea of the self through empiricist narrative. In Hume's case, the appearance of melancholy was an early event (dating from 1729 to 1734) and appears to have dissipated from then on. Boswell suffered from a more regular occurrence of the complaint. In fact, it is in Hume's *Treatise* that Manning finds a clue to the importance that this condition obtained in the eighteenth century. Hume had demonstrated how the empiricist way of ideas could not

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[144] An indication of the social situation of each character in the context of eighteenth-century British society is afforded by the tables of income and social structure constructed by King and by Massie. In 1688, according to King, the income range of £40-£50 per annum, which has been attributed to Hume in the 1730s, was typical of lesser clergy, 'farmers', 'artisans and handicrafts', and of the lower end of 'shopkeepers and tradesmen'. This income and expenditure bracket was well below that which King attributed to the gentry which he reckoned at £280 per annum. In Massey's tables of 1759-60, Hume's income would have placed him in the same league as the lesser farmers, clergy, and master manufacturers. For gentlemen, Massey reckons an income of between £200 and £2000, which would place Boswell at the very lowest extreme of the class of gentlemen, or according to King, somewhat below that class. Hume's income was, of course, nowhere near to either estimate of gentlemanly income.

[145] Susan Manning, '"This Philosophical Melancholy": Style and Life in Boswell and Hume', in Clingham (ed.), op.cit..

sustain a clear and consistent idea of the self, providing instead a series of different impressions and ideas out of which the self could only be narrated historically, but not inferred deductively. Boswell's use of journals, particularly during his twenties, is interpreted as an attempt to achieve this narrative sense of self-hood. The appearance of melancholy is understood by Manning to mark the failure of this kind of self-exploration, where certain kinds of emotion cannot adequately be comprehended in the empiricist history, and therefore express themselves obliquely. She explains it in the following way:

> The insufficiencies of the public language of analytic empiricism are nowhere more evident than in its attempts to contain melancholy by naming its manifestations. Resolutely unrecuperable, melancholy was the last refuge of the private self in the eighteenth century's very public world.[146]

In the analysis of the literary aspects of melancholy and the self, the journal represents an attempt to construct individual identity by rendering a public image of the self;[147] with Hume's theory of the individual, the sense of the self is achieved through a feeling of pride or humility which registers the extent to which one's public image is esteemed or held in contempt. Both in terms of self-reinvention, and in terms of literary and philosophical method, Boswell and Hume each found in the essays of Addison an important model. For Boswell, this was articulated explicitly at various points in his life, several times in London, and for Hume, although Addison is not explicitly named as a model in the *Treatise*, his work was deliberately imitated in the attempt to produce more palatable publications from at least 1741 onwards.

In his entry for Wednesday 1st December, Boswell gives an impression of the strength with which the Addisonian model for urbane, polite behaviour was able to grasp his imagination. He was commenting on another "plan" that he had hatched, on this occasion, "a plan of studying polite reserved behaviour, which is the only way to keep up dignity of character." Like Hume, he wished to understand the way in which his fellow citizens of the city behaved, but was more expressly concerned than Hume with the instruction that it could provide for moulding his own character. He explains his motives for these reflections as originating in his "good share of pride, which I think is very proper and even noble…". He explains his feelings of pain when ridiculed, and his dissatisfaction

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[146] Ibid., p.127.

[147] In Boswell's case, although he did not publish the *London Journal*, it was intended to be read by a friend, namely John Johnston of Grange. Boswell was in any case continually aware of his public image, even when he didn't have significant notoriety. This was marked by his publication of some of his correspondence. In *James Boswell: the Early Years, 1740-1769,* Frederick A. Pottle gives an account of how, much to the dismay of his friend Andrew Erskine, Boswell arranged for the "strenuously facetious letters which he had been writing to Erskine since the summer of 1761" to be published as a 156 page book in April 1763. Pottle comments that it was Boswell's first publication to bear his own name and "it was also the first considerable expression of his wish, later recorded in his journal, that nothing that concerned himself should be secret," p.

when he is made to feel anything other than "a superior animal." His desire to distinguish himself as such, he remarks, "has always been my favourite idea in my best moments."[148]

With reference to these feelings of pride, and the need to distinguish himself, Boswell describes the anxiety he felt when his friend Johnston compared him unfavourably to Addison. He recalls that,

> I remember my friend Johnston told me one day after my return from London that I had turned out different from what he imagined, as he thought I would resemble Mr Addison. I laughed and threw out some loud sally of humour, but the observation struck deep.

His friend's remark reminds Boswell of the importance of emulating the Addisonian model of gravity and polite behaviour, and stings his conscience as his signal failure to maintain an appropriate state of mind and behaviour is noticed. He justifies himself by remarking that, "I always resolved to be such a man whenever my affairs were made easy and I got upon my own footing." However, when his affairs were not so settled, and in particular, when he found himself lacking in material independence, he tended to lapse into a less dignified mien. As he despaired of getting himself on his "own footing", he lowered his moral horizons:

> as I despaired of that, I endeavoured to lower my views and just be a good-humoured comical being, well liked either as a waiter, a common soldier, a clerk in Jamaica, or some other odd out-of-the-way sphere.

But now, having received sufficient support from his father to maintain his affairs on an easy and "independent footing", Boswell realises that he is in a position to feel pride once more, and to act in such a way as to support these feelings of pride. He declares,

> [n]ow, when my father at last put me into an independent situation, I felt my mind regain its native dignity. I felt strong dispositions to be a Mr Addison. Indeed, I had accustomed myself so much to laugh at everything that it required time to render my imagination solid and give me just notions of real life and of religion. But I hoped by degrees to attain to some degree of propriety. Mr Addison's character in sentiment, mixed with a little of the gaiety of Sir Richard Steele and manners of Mr. Digges, were the ideas which I aimed to realise.[149]

Thus, for Boswell, the material circumstances of financial independence gave rise to pride, and the lack of these to its opposite; each situation and its correspondent emotion consequently gave rise to a different model for imitation. For Boswell, the essays of Addison provide more than just diversion, and even information, for life in the city. The character of the spectator provides a way of life, a model for imitation, and in particular, he presents forms of behaviour suitable to a man of independent means who measures his

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[148] Susan Manning, op. cit., p.64.

[149] Ibid., p.65.

success by feelings of pride suitable to the status that his success bestows. The Humean individual in the *Treatise* too, constructs his sense of self-identity through the feeling of pride which measures the social perception of his success; and like Boswell, he realises that this success is contingent on his material means for independent and comfortable living. In Hume's perception, the material circumstances of such an individual are therefore manifested through a public display in which fine clothing, equipage, superior cultivation or any other visible sign of wealth are deployed as symbols of social status.

Addison provided for Boswell a model of personality through which he could manage the complex and self-contradictory spectrum of emotions which arose during his period in the metropolis, and the equally complicated relationship that these emotions had with his material circumstances, and cultural and social experience. As John Brewer has remarked in his study of eighteenth-century English culture, "[t]hroughout Boswell's time in London the spectres of Addison and Steele were at his shoulder." Boswell maintained an imaginative relationship with the deceased authors of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* which could be called to mind on any suitable occasion: "On one visit to Drury Land Theatre Boswell imagined 'that it was the age of Sir Richard Steele, and that I was like him sitting in judgment on a new comedy'; during another, he and his companion, William Johnson Temple, 'endeavoured to work our minds into the frame of the Spectator [sic], but we could not. We were both too dissipated.'..."[150]

The significance of Addisonian urbanity for Hume's early work has been hinted at in N. T. Phillipson's analysis of the Anglicisation of Scottish culture.[151] Underlining the traditional elements in Addison's approach to modern urban culture, Phillipson shows how his work provided a bridge between the older form of Scottish society, and the pressures for change coming from projected, and actual, economic transformation after the Union. Hume, he argues, was the pre-eminent literary figure in the adaptation of the Addisonian language to modern conditions. Phillipson states that Hume transformed the language of Addisonian politeness,

> by showing that it could be turned into a vehicle of science and used to derive an entirely new account of the principles of human nature and of the principles of commerce which could, in turn, be applied critically to his own contemporaries' understanding of the public affairs of their country. As such, he was able to show them how to think of their own interests and those of the public in an age of commerce. And he also showed the crucial importance of politeness in preserving them.[152]

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[150] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, (London, 1997), p.33.
[151] N. T. Phillipson, 'Politics, Politeness and the Anglicisation of early Eighteenth-Century Scottish Culture', in R.A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1285-1815*, (Edinbrugh, 1987).
[152] Ibid., p.235.

In Phillipson's interpretation, Addison's achievement had been "to show anxious men and women how to reorganise their conduct by bringing their morals and manners into alignment and becoming adaptable, virtuous agents in the process." Hume admired the literary achievement of the *Spectator*, but regarded its content as somewhat trivial. His grounds for doing so are to be seen in the fundamental reformation of philosophy that he enacted in the *Treatise*. Phillipson says that this was, "no doubt because [the Addisonian prescriptions] failed to take account of the principles of human nature which explained why his prescriptions were so agreeable and easy to follow." Hume raised questions that were metaphysical in nature, following the more "abstruse" route towards insight that he defended in the first essay of the *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1748).[153] According to Phillipson, for Hume it was necessary to perform,

> an enquiry into the nature of the cognitive world. Only then would human beings be able to understand the principles which regulated their behaviour and learn how to control it. For Hume believed that unless men and women were able to bring their manners and morals into alignment with a true understanding of the metaphysical principles on which all thought rested, the revolution in the language of politeness Shaftesbury and Addison had begun would never be completed. And without such a revolution it would be impossible for the citizens of a modern state to comprehend the nature of the transformation through which their civilisation was passing and learn how commerce could serve their interests rather than undermine them.[154]

The link between the Addisonian project to comprehend urbane, polite human life, and Hume's fundamental revision of philosophical metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology, needs to be considered further in order to show the importance which this had in Hume's experience during the 1730s.

It has already been shown that Boswell used the Addisonian model of the spectator as urbane character to help in coming to terms with a complex and demanding urban, and particularly, an English urban, experience. For Hume, the role that was demanded was more sophisticated. In chapter three of this thesis, Hume's comments on methodology are analysed in order to clarify the relationship between philosophy and common life in his project. At the risk of anticipating that argument somewhat, it is illuminating to point out the crucial similarity between the projection of the experimental science of human nature set out in the introduction to the *Treatise*, and the use of Addisonian modes of observation in contemporary life. Hume states that he has found it necessary to apply the experimental mode of observation to the moral domain in order to establish a valid construction of human nature. Specifically he writes that since it is not possible to produce artificially

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[153] See chapter 3 section 4.a of this thesis.
[154] Phillipson op. cit. (1987), p.235.

controlled experiments in this domain, it is therefore necessary to take his observations from human life as he finds it: he declares, "[w]e must therefore glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures."[155] Although Hume associates this approach with an intellectual provenance running from Francis Bacon in natural philosophy through the reforming tendencies of moral philosophers – Locke, Hutcheson, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, and Butler – it is also possible to suggest that his model for investigation is close to that of Addison's spectator-character.

Thus, Hume's approach to understanding the activities, cognitive, emotional, and practical, of individuals in contemporary life bears a strong resemblance, in terms of method, to the basic blue-print of Addison's *Spectator,* even if his conclusions take a different form. Hume found it necessary to take observations in as unobtrusive a manner as possible in order to comprehend the springs and movements which made the contemporary social scene work. Furthermore, a key point of access that underpins the method for investigating human nature is the exploration of one's self as participant in the same scene.

Arguably, for Hume, the more sophisticated philosophical rendition of life-as-he-found-it performed a similar function to Boswell's journal, helping to come to terms with the complexities of a changing social and cultural terrain, and one which made its demands felt directly in the life of the author. For both, the figure of the spectator provided a model through which a dignified detachment could be maintained and used to explore and to judge the phenomena before them; and in each case, there was a high degree of personal involvement in the situation under investigation, which also provided an additional motive for understanding it. For both authors, the impact of the changing situation in Scottish and English social life on the self provided crucial material for the literary narration. The primary differences lie in the manner of investigation and narration. Boswell's narrative focuses on particular individuals, and the particular events which impressed themselves upon him; but Hume sublimates the particular situations of his *experience* (the key word in his investigation), forming a universal theory of human nature through generalisation.

A remark made in the course of modern considerations of methodology in the social sciences helps to cast some light on the way in which Hume's immediate social-personal experiences could be managed through the deployment of observation and philosophical amplification. Sociologists have often been perplexed by tensions between

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[155] *Treatise*, p.xxiii.

"common sense" insight into modes of action in a given life-world, meaning those derived through participation, and the scientific methods which may be applied in order to extract and judge insights into these practices for the purpose of objective narration. A description of some of the basic requirements which are made of the social scientist who wishes to gain insight into a social world of actions and meanings, suggested by Alfred Schutz, is suggestive in interpreting Hume's manner of engagement in a social scene in which he performed the role of both participant and observer. Schutz writes that,

> [i]n order to explain human actions the scientist has to ask what model of an individual mind can be constructed and what typical contents must be attributed to it in order to explain the observed facts as the result of the activity of such a mind in an understandable relation. The compliance with this postulate warrants the possibility of referring all kinds of human action or their result to the subjective meaning such action or result of an action had for the actor.[156]

In the case of David Hume, the scientific project which he sketched in the introduction to the *Treatise* was one in which the observation of human behaviour in common life was supposed to yield insights into the fundamentals of human nature. What was presented in the *Treatise* was an explication of the internal dynamics of the mind (or *understanding*) and of its psychological underpinning (i.e. the *passions*). It may be supposed that Hume's theory of human nature resembled the one described by Schutz in the methodological aspect cited above. Hume explicitly stated that his research findings were based on the observation of human behaviour, in the same way as Schutz, and the theory which he presented on the basis of this may well be described using Schutz's words: he presents a "model of an individual mind [which] can be constructed [with the] typical contents [which] must be attributed to it in order to explain the observed facts as the result of the activity of such a mind in an understandable relation." The fundamental difference between Hume's approach, and that of Schutz, concerns not the methodology, but the expected end of the research. Whereas Schutz expected to discover the meaningful relations in a given social situation in their particularity, Hume hoped to establish a theory about the human mind and emotions which was universal and therefore applicable to any given situation. For Hume, the creation of an ostensibly *objective* philosophical theory helped to make sense of the situation that was placing considerable pressures on him as a participant, both in Scotland and in England.

The specific timing of Hume's research, experience and composition, is considered speculatively by Ernest Mossner in *The Life of David Hume*. He refers to Hume's statements on the subject:

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[156] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers, Vol. 1, The Problem of Social Reality*, edited by Maurice Natanson,

> These three statements represent that that work was *projected* before he left college (aged fourteen or fifteen), was *planned* before he was twenty-one, and was *composed* before he was twenty-five. Translated into dates, this would mean that the *Treatise* was *projected* before 1725 or 1726, *planned* before 1732, and *composed* before 1736.

As he says, "[t]here seems to be no good reason why these statements should not be taken seriously, although it is perhaps not necessary to take them literally."[157] The stages of development which would have corresponded with these dates run as follows. By 1726 at the latest, Hume would have been equipped with a knowledge of Newton and a sense of how significant his method could be for moral philosophy,[158] and at the same time, "[t]he examples set by Locke, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson, and Butler in the experiential approach to the study of human nature were ever before his mind".[159] The post-collegiate period of about 1726-9, "had deepened his conviction that man is the measure of all things, that all knowledge derives in greater or lesser degree, from the Science of Man", and this would have represented the stage at which the *Treatise* was *projected.* The planning stage of the work begins in 1729, and extends, according to Hume, until 1732 but may have lasted until 1733 according to Mossner's interpretation. Finally, composition occurred in France between 1734 and 1737 with the first two books "unquestionably completed, though not finally polished, in France".[160] It is necessary at this point to consider the extent to which Hume's construction of the individual in the first two books was influenced by his direct and personal experience of the social contexts considered in this chapter.

As Smout's analysis of both the lowland landed class and the professionals in Edinburgh shows, Scottish society already manifested some of the features associated with a commercial society by the late 1720s. In particular, this made its appearance in the changing consumer practices associated with propertied classes. The consumption of goods became associated, in Smout's view, with the imitation of an advanced civilisation,

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(Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971), p.43.

[157] *Life*, p.73.

[158] Newton declared at the close of his *Optics*, "[I]f natural Philosophy in all its parts by pursuing the inductive method, shall at length be perfected, the bounds of moral philosophy will also be enlarged". Quoted in Mossner's introduction to Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, (Harmondsworth, 1985).

[159] *Life,* p.74. The following works would have been available to Hume at this time: John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* first published in 1690; Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* first published in 1726; Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* first published in 1725, and *Thoughts on Laughter; and Observations on the Fable of the Bees, in Six Letters* first appeared in the *Dublin Journal* during 1725 and 1726, and were published in *The Hibernicus Letters* in London, 1729 ; Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* appeared in its fullest form in 1723; and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* had appeared in 1711. Francis Hutcheson's *On the Nature and Conduct of the Passions with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* appeared in 1728 and Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* first appeared in 1736.

for which the dominant model was England, and the emulation of new members to the landed class whose money had been made outside of Scotland. It is not, therefore, necessary that Hume's experience of consumer behaviour and its relationship with social status had to be exclusively one that he discovered in England. However, the changes in Scottish society were, in this regard at least, modelled on an idealised image of Englishness, one to which Hume explicitly referred in his letters from France in 1737. The period during which Hume moved in a Scottish society increasingly concerned with imitating English commercial and consumer practices coincides with the time at which he claims to have projected and then planned the *Treatise*. Even while he was in Scotland, the model of conspicuous consumption, and of social-individualistic emulation which Hume would have encountered, was one that bore strongly English features. His move away from Scotland taking him through London to Bristol in 1734 placed him in direct contact with the original, and this was at the time, or just before the time, at which Hume began to compose his work. It also coincides with the difficult point at which Hume gave in to the pressure to find a settlement and attempted to make his own fortune within the competitive environment of Bristol's commercial society.

With regard to Hume's experience of English consumer society and its importance for his construction of the individual, we have three basic layers of evidence. First of all, we have established *motives* for understanding it. In professional philosophical terms, Hume was obliged to use observations of the affairs of men inductively in order to construct his theories;[161] in personal terms, his difficult social position, with its attendant problems of needing a source of finance and hence a career, forced him into an awareness of how one must act in order to engage with contemporary society in such a way as to obtain the necessary accoutrements for genteel life. The latter motive perplexed Hume from at least 1729 onwards. Second of all, we know that Hume had the *occasion* to take such observations for his philosophical work, as well as to make such an engagement in order to improve his personal circumstances, by moving from Scotland through London to Bristol, and by working with a firm of sugar merchants. Finally, it is also known that Hume had acquired the *means* for intellectual engagement with such a society – and these means were indispensable for adequate philosophic engagement – which he acquired through his education and reading during the later 1720s and early 1730s. His intellectual equipment was provided by readings in seventeenth-century natural philosophy, and in the moral philosophy of both the ancients and the moderns.

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[160] *Life*, p. 74.

In order to conclude this analysis, it is necessary to sketch the features of Hume's theory of the individual that he presented in the *Treatise* and highlight the features that he would have found in his social contexts through which he moved in the late 1720s and 1730s.

5.) Conclusion: Consumption, Social Status and the Individual in Hume's *Treatise*

In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume presents a model of the human individual which comprehends the main features of individualistic behaviour seen in the increasingly commercialised contexts of British society during the first half of the eighteenth century. Like a member of the landed gentry whose culture was analysed by James Rosenheim, or the middle class merchant of John Smail's study, and especially like the individuals found in the urban spaces designed for social competition in Borsay's provincial towns, the Humean individual is exceedingly anxious about his social status. At the centre of his self-awareness stands the feeling of pride, or in adversity, the feeling of humility (which translates from Hume's parlance as something more like what is now called *humiliation*). Pride compensates for the inadequacy of the understanding alone to construct a consistent and permanent impression or idea of the self;[162] it relies instead on the individual's awareness of how others regard him, and on the pleasurable or displeasurable feelings which it provokes. The regard, or in Hume's terminology, the love or hatred, esteem or contempt, in which his individual is held by others, depends on the extent to which he can display ownership of certain kinds of object. The objects which cause both pride in one's self, and esteem in the spectators of one's social persona, are typified by property and riches, but also extend through a wide range of personal attributes, or social and familial connections, associated with the possessor in an analogous way to the relation of property. The further attributes which Hume sketches in Book II of the *Treatise* are typical of those which obtained importance in the development of both the gentry and the commercial middle class during the first half of the eighteenth century. The key feature of objects which cause pride and esteem – in short, the sense of social status – is that they possess the power to cause pleasure. Clothes, houses, books, "a fine scritoire",[163] do so directly by providing utilities for the person who possesses them; riches provide pleasure less directly, by representing or measuring the power to acquire objects which themselves embody the power to cause pleasure. Further requirements for the desirability of such

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[161] See chapter 3 section 2.a.
[162] This problem is articulated in *Treatise*, I.4.vi.
[163] Ibid., p. 281.

objects are that they may be owned, or used, conspicuously, as well as exclusively, and that such objects are possessed by as few other individuals as possible. Hume's anatomical portrait of human nature presents man as naturally competitive, or emulative to use the jargon of consumerism; and the stakes in the competitive game are typically those which were found in the social contexts described above. The game is played using emulative-competitive display, and the purpose of winning is to establish visible superiority over rivals in terms of social status. The competitive mentality of the Humean individual is fully consistent with the sense of social rivalry attributed to the people promenading the public walks of Borsay's provincial town. Hume's analysis of this competitive mentality is subtly nuanced, however, in such a way as to appreciate the limited arena within which such instincts for rivalry will occur. The Humean individual competes with those who are sufficiently similar to himself to merit comparison, as well as distant enough to be beyond the reach of familial affections. Beggars do not feel emulative jealousy towards kings, and kings feel no need to put on a show to prove themselves above beggars. The sense of rivalry is typically played out between individuals who are similar, first, in that they respect similar kinds of goods – typically these would include tasteful property in clothes, furnishings etc., or personal attributes relating to education, taste and refinement; and they are similar, secondly, in that the quantity of socially significant property which they each possess is more or less commensurate with that of their rivals. Therefore, the actual observations[164] on which this was based would have drawn on the behaviour of members of the same class emulating one another, or members of different classes – for example, landed and commercial – who were nonetheless sufficiently close in terms of their cultural attributes to feel mutual rivalry. Thus, Hume's analysis of the passions in Book II of the *Treatise*, manifests a strong belief in the central importance of the themes discussed in the earlier part of this chapter for the theory of human nature.[165] However, while the book on the passions bears the imprint of social experience in an obvious way, by providing explicit treatments of concrete objects, feelings, and practices, the relationship between philosophical theory and practical context, has a bearing on the constructive parts of the book on the understanding as well. Each of the first two books presented a different layer of the individual – a different part of the same "compleat chain of reasoning". The association of ideas in the understanding occurs as a result of, and is facilitated by, the prompting of the

[164] Again, the grounds for arguing that Hume drew 'experimental' observations from the actual modes of life that surrounded him are addressed in chapter 3.

[165] The extent to which Hume explicitly refers to these kinds of objects and practices is seen in chapter 5 of

passions; and the passions enlist the powers of the understanding in order to assist in achieving the ends determined by desires and aversions.[166]

What Hume, in fact, presented in the first book of the *Treatise* was an explanation of the intellectual means available to the individual to comprehend the environment in which he found himself, i.e. the means to establish the relations through which its objects typically affect one another, and to discover effective means of intervening amongst them. The understanding presents the intellectual means to achieve the ends determined by the passions, ends which are orientated towards the acquisition of objects that cause pleasure, and the social esteem which can be earned by conspicuously possessing them. In order to comprehend a complex, chaotic and rapidly changing social environment – i.e. one in which individualistic competition played an important role and was related to the intellectual and practical complexities of commerce, both from the point of view of consumer, and of the merchant or other participant – the individual required an efficient intellectual apparatus. The seemingly random wilfulness of individual action, no longer bound by the prescriptive rules of tradition in many areas of life, required renewed attention in the new social scene. Not only the subtleties of polite social interaction between potential social rivals, but the key instrument of social power, i.e. money, in particular required specialised intellectual equipment. With social interaction, and the establishment of social status, closely tied to the possession and consumption of goods, money obtained a new and complex significance in the life of the individual. First of all, it had to be earned in changing working environments, where inherited estates did not yield it without effort on the part of the proprietor; and secondly, it had to be managed effectively in the commercial transactions involved in getting and spending.[167] Smail stressed the importance of changing financial accounting practices, and the increasing use of credit in the formation of communal self-awareness among the businessmen in Halifax. The complexities of such new techniques also made demands on the intellect of the individual, and Hume had opportunity to experience this during his brief spell at the Bristol firm of merchants. His awareness of such matters is reflected in his repeated use of

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this thesis.

[166] Chapter 4 of the thesis demonstrates the extent to which the powers of the understanding are instrumentalised by the passions, and chapter 6 shows how the passions are required in order fully to explain the internal operations of the understanding itself (i.e. in *Treatise* I.3).

[167] Awareness of the practical and intellectual complexities involved in the engagement between the consumer and the merchant can be seen in works concerned with commerce from the late 17th century. See, for example, Nicholas Barbon's *Discourse of Trade*, (London, 1690: reprinted in A. E. Murphy, *Monetary Theory, 1601-1758*, 6 vols., (London, 1996)) vol. 3, pp. 7-9; and *A Dialogue of Diamonds*, ascribed to Willliam Petty and printed in *The Economic Writings of Sir Willliam Petty Together With the Observations*

accounting metaphors to illustrate the capacities of the understanding.[168] More broadly, however, the potency of monetary wealth as a means, not only of conducting effective business and trade, but of conducting a life in which social esteem had to be earned through self-conscious display, required intellectual apprehension. The fluidity of the medium and the increasing extent of its capacity to measure value and to move goods and persons, which now manifested itself increasingly in the everyday life of at least the middle and upper ranks of society, is a change whose demands on the participating individual must not be underestimated.

The capacity for understanding causal relations, and specifically for inferring a sense of the causal link between events which are not readily associated without the benefit of experience, was constructed in the *Treatise* as a key part of Hume's theory of the individual. Chapter 4 of this thesis shows that the understanding was directly under the control of the passions, in Hume's view, and argues that it was therefore constructed in such a way as to be able to forward the ends posited by the passions. The ends are identified and analysed in chapter 5, where it is established that they involve the conspicuous purchase, possession and consumption of goods, with a view to enhancing the social status of proprietors in comparison to their rivals. The intellectual means are provided primarily in the capacity to estimate causal connections and probabilities (analysed in chapter 6), and this is shown to be closely related to the capacity to understand both the motives to act of others (in chapter 4) and their capacity to carry out intentions which is bestowed most importantly by the possession of money (chapter 5).

Chapter 3 concentrates on both the methodological aspect of Hume's work in the *Treatise*, and on aspects of the peculiar rhetorical strategy that he intended to carry out through its publication. Analysing his remarks on philosophical method establishes the importance of observing human affairs as they occurred in contemporary society, while clarifying Hume's intentions with regard to his readers helps to understand the effects which he hoped that his theory of human nature, and of the individual in particular, would have in the lives and actions of his readers.

Upon the Bills of Mortality More Probably by Captain John Graunt, ed. Charles Henry Hull, (Cambridge, 1899).

[168] As he does, for instance, in *Treatise,* II.3.iii.

CHAPTER 3
DAVID HUME AND ACTIVE LIFE: THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHER

1.) Introduction

In order to comprehend fully the nature of the relationship between Hume's construction of a theory of the individual, and the social contexts through which he moved, it is necessary to consider aspects of his rhetorical aims in writing the *Treatise*. By doing this, it becomes clear that the "common life" surrounding Hume, and the particular practices associated with it, had obtained a key importance in the reasonings presented in his theory of human nature. The particular emphasis that Hume placed on the importance of establishing a relationship, both methodological and rhetorical, between his philosophy and the activities of common life, underlines the importance of the particular practices that he encountered for the particular theory of the individual that he presented.

With any work of philosophy, the historian may identify at least one basic rhetorical strategy. The published work of a philosopher may be understood to have been intended to engage in a theoretical debate with other philosophers both living and dead, and the theories that they published. Engagement in this debate typically involves the critical examination of other philosophical theories whereby some are rejected as fallacious, and others are accepted, and sometimes assimilated, on the grounds that they are true or useful. The study of this aspect is important for establishing an understanding of a philosopher's intentions, but will not provide a comprehensive explanation. The argument has already been presented in the introduction to this thesis, that the attempt to uncover both the philosophical-literary sources for a given philosopher's ideas, and the process of rejecting available, but unworthy, ideas, limits itself to understanding the precise nature of the philosopher's chosen range of theoretical tools. What it fails to discover, is the kinds of phenomena, the practices and objects, that the given philosopher attempts to understand by deploying these tools. The present interpretation of Hume's theory of the individual in the first two books of the *Treatise* is limited to investigating the latter issue, and to this end, it is necessary to leave aside the first aspect of his rhetorical strategy (which is presupposed with any published work of philosophy) in favour of examining the new and peculiar role in which Hume projected his philosophical work. Hume was acutely aware of a new purpose and of a new relationship with society in his activity as a philosopher. He believed

that this role contrasted with the activities of philosophers in the past, and that the ideas which he published in his new role were improved by the newly established relationship with other parts of society.

Evidence of Hume's ideas concerning his own function, in particular his social function, as a philosopher is drawn from several sources including the *Treatise* itself. In the *Treatise of Human Nature* he projected an investigation of human nature in a new and comprehensive manner. His references to other thinkers, and his evaluation of what they had achieved yield some insights into the role in which he cast himself. Throughout the *Treatise* there are scattered references to the successes and failings of philosophers in the past, which often comment implicitly on the new role which Hume conceived for himself as the reformed philosopher. The three chapters following this one explore in detail how particular elements of the individual were understood to operate within common active life. In this chapter, however, it is necessary to analyse the more general remarks which Hume made about the activity of philosophy rather than the content of his philosophical theory *per se*. In the *Treatise* there are occasional comments on the need for communication between the philosopher and other people. The first dimension to this originates in the need for the experimental philosopher to ground his theories on observations drawn from common life. To this end, it was necessary for the philosopher to be receptive to communication from the rest of society. The second dimension concerns the nature and purpose of the philosopher's communications *to* society.

The evidence found in the *Treatise* for such a concern on Hume's part up to 1740, is strong, with a methodological rationale for close observation of common life being stated at the beginning of the work. However, the abstract nature of the enquiry presented in Hume's first work left little room for elaboration on ideas concerning the concrete form in which the philosopher should communicate with other social groups. In the two years following the publication of Book III of the *Treatise* some further pieces were published which outlined the form in which Hume envisaged a blossoming of the relationship between philosophy and common life. Their more detailed treatment of the role of the philosopher is therefore important in fleshing out the purposes which Hume had in mind for the philosophy explicated in his first work.

The first of the later texts is *Of Essay Writing* which Hume published in the second volume of his first edition of collected essays in 1742. In this piece Hume explicitly outlined his own philosophical role as he perceived it, and contrasted it directly with the activities of philosophers in the past. Analysis of the relationship between this and an essay

published in the first volume, *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion*, shows the kind of social group to which philosophical learning should address itself, in Hume's view, and the kinds of social and practical concerns which must determine the role of the philosopher in society. The next piece of writing to tackle the question of the usefulness of the philosopher is the introductory essay of the *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* which was the first title of the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, published in 1748. This work was designed to reformulate the ideas which had remained unread in the ill-fated *Treatise*.[1] In the opening essay, Hume outlined once again his vision of how philosophy should establish for itself a socially useful role.

2.) The *Treatise* Project

a. Philosophy and its Sources

A reformed relationship between philosophy and common life appears as a basic methodological requirement in Hume's project for the scientific investigation of human nature. By modelling his own project on the kind of empirical scientific methods associated with natural philosophy, Hume concluded that it would be necessary to observe the everyday life of men in order to gather valid observations. His recognition of the need to observe the mundane was the first principle which distinguished his philosophical project from those which had preceded it.

In the introduction to *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume's opening remarks allude to great trouble within philosophy. He refuses to sell his own discoveries by pointing the finger at the works of others and accusing them of mistakes which his theories are supposed to rectify; but he observes that it has become clear even to "the rabble without doors", i.e. those who are not within the community of philosophers, that "all goes not well within." In relation to this trouble, Hume makes some remarks which became familiar features of his criticism of the philosophical efforts which preceded his. His first target for attack in the sciences was the tendency to award the greatest praise to the most outlandish conclusions, not by virtue of their profound truth, but by virtue of their very outlandishness. He says, "[a]midst all this bustle 'tis not reason, which carries the prize, but eloquence; and no man needs ever despair of gaining proselytes to the most extravagant hypothesis, who has art enough to represent it in any favourable colours." As the first part of a martial metaphor which sustains his introduction to the new philosophical

[1] As Hume recalled in *My Own Life* in 1775, "Never literary attempt was more unfortunate than my Treatise of Human Nature. It fell *dead-born from the press*, without reaching such distinction, as even to excite a murmur among the zealots." *EMPL*, p.34.

project he states, "[t]he victory is not gained by the men at arms, who manage the pike and the sword; but by the trumpeters, drummers, and musicians of the army."[2] It is the activity of the pikemen and sword wielders of philosophy that he claims to present in his investigation of human nature.

The self-satisfied trumpeting of deliberately abstruse and delusory philosophies was a constant target for Hume's incidental polemics in the *Treatise* and in works which appeared after its publication in the 1740s. Hume suggests that because the investigation of metaphysics has comprehended "every kind of argument, which is any way abstruse, and requires some attention to be comprehended",[3] and has tended to laud such arguments for no other reason than that they are difficult, philosophy has tended to be rejected by "common prejudice". In the face of such philosophy, Hume presents the project for the investigation of human nature as the key exploit in the fundamental grounding of all human knowledge and affairs. All the "sciences", he states, "have a relation, greater or less, to human nature." Even "*mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion*" are dependent on the nature of man, and therefore those sciences, "whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate,"[4] must rely even more heavily on the same. Hume lists the members of the latter group as "*Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics*" and states that these comprehend "almost everything, which it can in any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind."[5] It is these four "sciences" which Hume comprehends under the heading of "moral philosophy", and which belong most properly to the science of human nature.

The pursuit of an understanding of human nature concerns itself with, "the cognizance of men,...[and] their powers and faculties,"[6] and according to Hume's metaphor, it constitutes the fundamental military manoeuvre. By researching into the powers upon which all the other sciences rely, Hume proposes "instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or centre of these sciences, to human nature itself," and once the capital has been mastered, "we may every where else hope for an easy victory." Hume establishes a rationale for the pursuit of what may be called a "scientific" project, inasmuch as the intention is to acquire the most certain knowledge possible. This project is justified by the role which it will play in laying firm foundations for further scientific pursuits. However, the remaining part of the introduction

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[2] *Treatise*, p.xiv.
[3] Ibid., p.xiv.
[4] Ibid., p.xv.
[5] Ibid., p.xvi.
[6] Ibid., p.xv.

to this project underlines some other elements which must, as Hume thinks, become important for a philosopher engaged in this pursuit. First of all, he follows his remark on the "military" effectiveness of the campaign by indicating the layout of the territories which might be occupied on the strength of the human nature project. The first field in which advances will be made lies in "those sciences, which more intimately concern human life," after which it may be possible to "proceed at leisure to discover more fully those, which are the objects of pure curiosity."[7] The distinction which Hume reinforces at this point, and the priority which he places on the first is significant.

The remainder of this chapter, and those which follow, argue that for Hume, it was into those areas of human knowledge or "science" which most intimately concerned "human life" as he says here, or "common life" as he calls it elsewhere (for example in *Of Essay Writing*), that his philosophical researches were driven. For Hume, the life activities of men, in contra-distinction to purely contemplative scientific pursuits, constituted both the source for his philosophical research in the *Treatise*, and the ends towards which his theoretical results were orientated.

The remarks which make up the rest of Hume's introduction to the *Treatise* emphasise the centrality of human life to the philosophical project, as the source for observations, and the focus of concern. First of all, Hume locates his project in the history of sciences. His project is perceived as a part of the modern British version of developments that previously occurred between the discoveries of Thales and the moral explorations of Socrates. Hume finds himself in the company of "Mr. *Locke*, my Lord *Shaftsbury*, Dr. *Mandeville*, Mr. *Hutchinson*, Dr. *Butler*, &c.", being "those late philosophers in *England*, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing, and have engaged the attention, and excited the curiosity of the public."[8] Comparison with the Greek philosophers implies that Hume's work is parallel to that of Socrates, in nature since they share a concern with human activity and the good life, and in chronology since they both worked at about the same length of time after the founder of a school of natural philosophy. For Socrates the founding figure is taken to be Thales, and for Hume the father of modern science is Lord Bacon.

In the pursuit of the new philosophy of human nature, Hume emphasises the need for "reformation", which is necessary if it is to honour his "native country". It is the nature of this reformation which determines the close relationship which he establishes between the science of human nature and the observation of common life. He states that, "it seems

[7] Ibid., p.xvi.

evident, that the essence of the mind being equally unknown to us with that of external bodies, it must be equally impossible to form any notion of its powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations." In making inferences from the results of such experiments, Hume states that it will be impermissible to "go beyond experience".[9] The methodology associated with Baconian natural science in the introduction to the *Treatise*, and which Hume appropriates for the purposes of his science of human nature, imposes the need to ground knowledge on the observation of experience. For the science of human nature, this experience must be the experience of human beings in whatever form that naturally takes.

Once the project for the investigation of human nature which Hume outlines has been given a foundation in empirical observations, the target for his attack becomes more specific. Attempts to discover the "ultimate principles" either of body or of the human mind, are rejected in favour of the experimental approach, carried out through the observation of experience. Hume envisages a prospect for discovery which will *not* achieve a knowledge of such "ultimate principles", but which *does* establish definite limits to the capacity of human nature to know and restricts itself to these boundaries. He describes the ultimate goal for the new moral philosophy as being that point where, "when we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality…". The form of intelligence that is to be achieved "is the reason of the mere vulgar, and what it required no study at first to have discovered for the most particular and most extraordinary phenomenon." Thus, by replacing the speculation of metaphysicians with the gleaning of experience for insights into human nature, Hume finds himself returning to a philosophical method which runs closer to the experience of common life. The mistake of trying to explain "ultimate principles" which has been the fundamental "defect in the science of man," is described as being, "common to it with all the sciences, and all the arts,

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[8] Ibid., p.xvii.

[9] Ibid., p.xvii. Hume's familiarity with Newton's work is generally supposed to have provided him with some impetus in the shaping of the *Treatise*. Mossner refers to this in his *Life*, pp.73-4, pointing out a significant remark that Newton made at the close of the *Optics*, which pointed towards the implications of a perfected natural philosophy, for the prospects of improving the understanding of moral philosophy. Norman Kemp Smith examined the sources to which Hume had recourse in Newton's works in op. cit. (1941), and Nicholas Capaldi has concentrated on this aspect of Hume's work in *David Hume: The Newtonian Philosopher*, (Boston, 1975). For an important and more recent study of Hume's training and reading in natural philosophy at Edinburgh during the 1720s, see Michael Barfoot, 'Hume and the Culture of Science in the Early Eighteenth Century', in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M. A. Stewart, (Oxford,

in which we can employ ourselves, whether they be such as are cultivated in the schools of the philosophers, or practised in the shops of the meanest artizans."[10] The scope of the field of relevance that Hume describes for the philosophical project therefore expands beyond the isolated and abstract philosophy of the schools by means of the method of observing experience, and thus incorporates a broader spectrum of human moral knowledge ranging from knowledge which is pursued out of mere curiosity to that which "more intimately [concerns] human life."[11]

The method that Hume recommends for the pursuit of human nature in philosophy presents problems which did not occur for those who founded the science of nature. The empirical bias of Hume's method derives from Baconian and Newtonian emphasis on the need for observation.[12] In the activities of natural philosophy the tendency had been to recommend the production of controlled and artificially contrived experiences through experiment. In the investigation of human nature, however, this would evidently pose problems. Hume contrasts the scope for observation between the two approaches by suggesting that, "when I am at a loss to know the effects of one body upon another in any situation, I need only put them in that situation, and observe what results from it." In his project to understand human nature, however, problems would occur if he "[endeavoured] to clear up after the same manner any doubt in moral philosophy, by placing myself in the same case with that which I consider," because, "'tis evident this reflection and premeditation would so disturb the operation of my natural principles, as must render it impossible to form any just conclusion from the phaenomenon." The field of human nature is not one within which the scientist can manipulate his objects. The answer to the need for method therefore pushes the focus of the philosophy of human nature even more strongly in the direction of common life. Hume states that, "we must therefore glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures."[13] Thus, Hume's project to imitate the methods of Baconian science,

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[10] Ibid., p.xviii.

[11] Ibid., p.xvi.

[12] James Noxon is sceptical, in his *Hume's Philosophical Development: a Study of his Methods* (Oxford, 1973), of the validity of interpreting Hume's philosophical method as 'experimental' in a properly Newtonian sense since mathematics form no serious part of Hume's solutions to problems in the *Treatise*. (p. 112) For a study that is more positive about the Newtonian ideas in the *Treatise*, see N. Capaldi, op. cit. (1975), especially chapter 3, entitled, 'Hume's Newtonian Paradigm'. For the importance of experimental observations, see p. 62.

[13] *Treatise*, p.xix. James Noxon notes that Hume's idea of 'experiment' was more limited than the meaning given to it by the Royal Society, for example. He writes the following: "For conducting 'experiments of this kind'(T xxiii), Hume was favoured by a sociable disposition, a humane and unsentimental interest in others,

as far as possible, in an exploration of the subject at the centre of all scientific exploration, led his project in the direction of observing, and then seeking to explain, the occupations and practices of men, without any interference, as they occur in the common life surrounding the philosopher.[14]

The kind of importance that Hume actually gives to the category of "common life" in the course of the *Treatise* may be illustrated by referring to the last part of the first book. Part I.4 of the *Treatise,* for example, is devoted to reflections on the nature of Hume's philosophical conclusions concerning the understanding, and the relationship between these and other systems of philosophy. In this part, further remarks were made concerning the relationship between the task of the philosopher and common life. In section i, Hume continues from the treatment of *Knowledge and Probability* (in I.3) with his consideration of the importance of probability in the proper functioning of reason, and with his emphasis on the need to recognise areas of doubt in our reasonings. What is particularly interesting about this section is the manner in which the problems which confront the philosopher in his intellectual life, are regarded as being essentially the same as those which confront a non-philosopher acting in common life. A close relationship between the science of human nature was suggested in Hume's introduction to the work as a consequence of the need for empirical data which could only be gleaned from the observation of common life. The activities of common life were seen to provide the source for philosophical insights. The development of the philosophical argument by I.4 takes this relationship a step further by suggesting that the very insights gained from this observation find their greatest relevance and usefulness in the conduct of these common activities.

The example which Hume adduces to illustrate the need for constructive doubt in our reasonings indicates the pragmatic orientation of reason that he had in mind. The figure of the merchant, and the activity of constructing and checking financial accounts presents itself as an instance of an activity occurring in common life where the use of probability

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and by a shrewd but tolerant perceptiveness. But 'experiment' in this sense is a synonym for 'experience', and conforms to the usage of Thomas Hobbes and of John Locke rather than to that of Robert Hooke or of Robert Boyle. Observant, reflective, introspective, Hume was no experimenter in the modern sense given the term by the Royal Society. In an age when experimental work made scientific reputations, and even amateurs delighted in repeating the experiments reported by professionals, Hume remained a philosophical thinker, a stranger to the 'careful and exact experiments' which he extolled." Noxon, op. cit., p. 117. While Noxon is correct to emphasise the reasons why Hume's 'Newtonianism' should not be exaggerated, he does not follow up on the positive and peculiar significance that 'experimental' observation retains for Hume that is emphasised in this chapter.

[14] There are instances in the *Treatise* where Hume alludes to the possibility of using experiments of a certain kind to prove theorems concerning human nature. See, for example, pp.301-2, where he recommends that the reader attempt experiments with objects that produce feelings of pride. An important argument which also emphasises the centrality of "common life" to Hume's philosophy was made by Livingston op. cit., (1984) and is summarised in the first chapter of this thesis.

has been observed. Hume comments that, "[i]n accompts of any length or importance, Merchants seldom trust to the infallible certainty of the numbers for their security." They require further reassurance of the efficacy of the account and this is provided when, "the artificial structure of the accompts, produce a probability beyond what is deriv'd from the skill and experience of the accomptant. For that is plainly of itself some degree of probability; tho' uncertain and variable, according to the degrees of his experience and length of the accompt."[15]

The example of a merchant figuring out his financial accounts is used more than once in the *Treatise* to illustrate the use of reason.[16] The importance of doubt, and the heavy reliance on the probability of truth in the use of reason, brings the philosophical employment of the mind closer to that which occurs in common life, since the use of working hypotheses based on limited evidence is understood to be typical of the latter. Hume states in this section that, "all knowledge resolves itself into probability, and becomes at last of the same nature with that evidence, which we employ in common life." This is why it was necessary for Hume, the philosopher of human nature, to "examine this latter species of reasoning, and see on which foundation it stands."[17] The nature of the questions which must therefore be asked by the scientist of human nature, is such that they must equally be addressed both to philosophy in general, and to common life. He states that, "'[t]is therefore demanded, *how it happens, that even after all we retain a degree of belief, which is sufficient for our purpose, either in philosophy or common life.*"[18] Thus, for Hume the fields of concern for philosophy and for common life became practically co-extensive.

b. Philosophy and its Public

In the text of the *Treatise* Hume made occasional remarks which shed light on his vision of what philosophy should do especially in relation to its audience. One such occasion appears at the beginning of I.2. This part of Hume's treatment of understanding is one of the more polemical passages in the *Treatise*, despite the apparent neutrality of its subject matter. In his analysis of *the ideas of space and time* Hume reveals himself to be eager to deflate those notions of past philosophers which he believes to be unfounded and absurd. His opening remarks set the tone for the rest of this part, and continue in a similar vein to

[15] *Treatise*, p.181.
[16] See Ibid., II.3.iii, p.414.
[17] Ibid., p.181.
[18] Ibid., p.185.

his comments on the tendencies of the "trumpeters, drummers and musicians of the army" of philosophers .[19]

At the outset, Hume states that "[w]hatever has the air of a paradox, and is contrary to the first and most unprejudic'd notions of mankind is often greedily embrac'd by philosophers, as showing the superiority of their science, which cou'd discover opinions so remote from vulgar conception."[20] In a similar vein to his comments in the introduction, on philosophers who present outlandish conclusions and expect them to be admired simply because of their outlandishness, Hume sees fit to attack the practice of those philosophers who worked prior to the proper scientific study of human nature. The success which this inferior kind of philosophy has enjoyed is attributable to a susceptibility in its audience. Hume comments that the "surprise and admiration" which such paradoxical ideas produce creates such a "satisfaction to the mind" that the reader of such theories is apt to indulge the theory of the philosopher rather than reject it as absurd. In a manner consistent with his theory about the foundation of reason in the promptings of the passions, Hume explains the human propensity to be fooled by the bizarre pretences of an irrelevant philosophy. The dual propensities which Hume describes, with philosophers selling themselves through surprise tactics, and the readers of philosophy being taken in by enjoyment of the same surprise, gives rise to a dysfunctional relationship between philosophy and its public. Hume summarises the relationship which ensues, commenting that, "[f]rom these dispositions in philosophers and their disciples arises that mutual complaisance betwixt them; while the former furnish such plenty of strange and unaccountable opinions, and the latter so readily believe them."[21] Therefore, what results from the kind of philosophy produced prior to those attempts to understand nature in general, and human nature in particular, described by Hume in the introduction, is a fruitless exercise through which nothing is really gained either from the production or the consumption of philosophy.

Hume's remarks at this point are interesting in themselves inasmuch as they betray the sense of improvement which inspired his first and fundamental attempt to place the philosophical sciences on a new and sound footing. When they are evaluated in the context of remarks made on similar matters in essays written by Hume shortly after the publication of the *Treatise*, their significance in providing indications of what the positive role of the philosopher should be, is reinforced. These and the essays that followed, show that while writing the *Treatise*, and increasingly from 1739 onwards, Hume was deeply concerned

[19] Ibid., p.xiv.
[20] Ibid., p.26.
[21] Ibid., p.26.

with cultivating his relationship with the reading public. In particular, there are two essays whose arguments are in significant respects complementary, that tell a great deal about the functions which Hume believed his kind of philosophical project would serve. The first essay which needs to be examined is entitled *Of Essay Writing* and was published in 1742. It deals directly, and in greater detail than in the *Treatise*, with the proper functioning of the relationship between the philosopher and his public, as well as with the prevailing tendency in the past for this relationship to fail. The second essay to be examined, although the first to be published, is *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion* (1741). This piece deals with different issues, but does so in a way which establishes a problematic that is fundamental to questions concerning the correct relationship between philosophers and their the public. In the *Treatise*, Hume had identified fundamental problems in the engagement of philosophy with its audience. His own effort at publication was intended to remedy this, at least by introducing sound philosophy if not actually by adjusting the method of presentation. The nature of his project demanded a closer engagement with common life and practice, and so the hitherto over-blown aspirations of philosophy had to be rejected. Whereas the *Treatise* established that there was a need for a renewed relationship between philosophy and common life, the essays examined below addressed the further question of *how* philosophical ideas should be presented in communication with those who are immersed in the common life surrounding David Hume.

3.) The Role of Philosophy in the *Essays Moral and Political*

a. In Conversation: *Of Essay Writing* (1742)

The first edition of Hume's *Essays, Moral and Political*, appeared in Edinburgh in two volumes, published in 1741 and 1742 respectively. Given the concern of the present thesis with the *Treatise of Human Nature,* a question immediately arises concerning the extent to which these pieces may be understood to reflect considerations which arose during the writing of the *Treatise* as opposed to new concerns arising after its composition. Ernest Mossner is dismissive of some of the essays written at this time, and *Of Essay Writing* in particular, for their "frivolous" nature, a view which appeared to be born out by the removal of the latter from subsequent editions of Hume's essays.[22] One may plausibly speculate, with regard to *Of Essay Writing*, that the passing of the immediate circumstances that gave rise to Hume's concern with effective publication, i.e. those relating to his need for a career, and to the failure of the *Treatise* to make a significant

[22] *Of Essay Writing* appeared only in the second volume of the *Essays, Moral and Political*, in 1742.

impact on the public, rendered the essay obsolete later on.[23] This does not, however, by any means bring their importance as documents of Hume's thinking at this time into question. Insight into the further issue of when they were conceived, and how close their concerns ran to those of the *Treatise*, is given by comments which Hume made during 1739-40 on his worries over his effectiveness in the difficult task of penetrating the public mind. Mossner shows that Hume was already at work with this issue while the *Treatise* was being prepared for publication. At this time Hume was "actively laying plans to reach a more popular audience", by composing papers with a view to publication in a weekly journal similar to those of Addison and Steele. It was this project which finally reached the press in the form of the *Essays Moral and Political* in 1741.[24] The *Treatise* offers evidence that Hume was concerned with the relations between the philosopher and his public, both as observer and communicator, before he moved on to the composition of his first essays. The attempt to discover new means to publish philosophical ideas by achieving a more effective medium for writing, which preoccupied Hume immediately after completing the *Treatise,* therefore reflects a continuous concern on Hume's part with the effectiveness of his relationship with a society of readers, rather than the emergence of an altogether new concern.

Of Essay Writing was the first piece in the second volume of essays published in 1742. In this essay, Hume writes about the "elegant Part of Mankind," those who "are not immers'd in the animal Life, but employ themselves in the operations of the Mind…".[25] He divides this group of people into two parts, distinguished by their roles in the activities associated with learning and refinement. The first is the "*learned*" and the second, the "*conversable*".[26] This marks a division of labour in the process of intellectual life. The *learned* are those who involve themselves in the more arduous activities of intellectual exploration in philosophy and other disciplines. They are described as having, "chosen for their Portion the higher and more difficult Operations of the Mind, which require Leisure and Solitude, and cannot be brought to Perfection, without long Preparation and severe

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[23] Hume found employment in 1745, after failing to obtain the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, as tutor to the Marquess of Annandale (lasting for a year), and between 1746 and 1748 he performed a secretarial role for General St. Clair. He recalled in 1775 that, "These two years were almost the only interruptions which my studies have received during the course of my life: I passed them agreeably, and in good company; and my appointments, with my frugality, had made me reach a fortune, which I called independent, though most of my friends were inclined to smile when I said so; in short, I was now master of near a thousand pounds." *EMPL,* p. xxxv.

[24] *Life*, p.138.

[25] *EMPL*, p.533.

[26] Hume spells his term 'conversible', but since this may now be misunderstood it will be spelled 'conversable' in the rest of the chapter.

Labour."[27] The second category is that of the more worldly, who have neither the opportunity nor the inclination for such difficult and time-consuming pursuits, but who have nonetheless some need for the fruits-of-labour of the learned. They are the people who "join to a sociable Disposition, and a Taste of Pleasure, an Inclination to the easier and more gentle Exercises of the Understanding…".[28]

The purpose of Hume's essay is to clarify the nature the philosopher's endeavour and its relationship with the other part of refined society. At the outset, Hume defines the kind of group with which he believes it necessary for philosophy to communicate. He explains that the "conversable" group includes those who are, first of all, immersed in "the Duties of common Life". The second characteristic activity of the conversable is the "Observation of the Blemishes and Perfections of the particular Objects, that surround them."[29] Together, these characteristics imply that the public to which Hume addressed himself was one which he envisaged as active in the practices of common life, and in particular, active in a variant of the social contexts discussed above in chapter 2. The latter characteristic, indicating a concern with tasteful consumption, is given greater significance when considered in relation to another problem explored by Hume at this time. Later in the current chapter the social make-up of this group, and the activity with which philosophy is to engage through contact with the "conversable World", is inferred from a reading of an essay published in the first volume of essays of 1741, *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion.* There the need to develop criteria for distinguishing the qualities of higher objects of taste from lower is addressed. The question may be formulated in this way: how may higher objects of aesthetic or moral value, be distinguished from lower objects of luxurious taste? Hume presents an effective answer to the question in *Of Essay Writing* by outlining the communicative activity whereby a group of refined individuals can converse in order to establish evaluative criteria for that group. *Of Essay Writing* clarifies and complements the answers given in the essay *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion.* For present purposes it is sufficient to point out that the duty of philosophers as Hume saw it in 1742, was to engage in 'conversation' with those who were immersed in the activities of common life and these included the performance of "duties" and the evaluation of objects. In *Of Essay Writing,* Hume suggests that an increasingly constructive relationship between the two parts of refined society has emerged in recent times. A symbiotic process has developed whereby philosophers on the one hand, and the more worldly conversants on the other, have begun

[27] Ibid., p.533.
[28] Ibid., p.533-4.
[29] Ibid., p.534.

to learn from one another. The conversable world has begun to borrow its topics of conversation from the books of the learned, and the learned have begun to acquire a beneficial worldliness through their contact with the manners and information of the conversable world.

Hume encourages the philosophically inclined to develop this relationship, asserting that the separation of the philosophical and conversable spheres from one another in the past age, led to defects in both. The nature of the conversable sphere and its concerns is therefore highly significant in interpreting Hume's understanding of the work of the philosopher. He implies that philosophers have not, and could not, perform their task in a meaningful and useful way if they were unaware of the concerns of the worldly conversants. These concerns are evidently mundane and practical, and involve the evaluation of the objects which commonly surround such people. Therefore, it may be inferred that philosophy has something to gain from contact with the activities and objects of everyday life of a refined social group. Chapter 5 examines in detail, the kinds of practices which this involved, and the importance of these in Hume's construction of the theory of the individual.

Hume illustrates the development of the current relationship between the philosophically learned and the worldly conversants by using a metaphor of commerce. He describes a trade between two states, that of the learned and that of the conversable, whereby each is in a position to gain. Neither will have a problem with its "Balance of Trade" by importing from the other, because each exports according to its respective specialisation. He explains that it is in "Conversation and common Life" that the "Materials of this Commerce" are produced, and in the Learned state that "[t]he manufacturing of them belongs...".[30] He implies that through communication with the worldly, i.e. through a commerce in ideas, the learned acquire useful or relevant information on which to apply the higher powers of philosophy and learning. The conversable state gains from philosophy by acquiring topics of conversation, "fit for the Entertainment of rational Creatures" which will save them from "a continued Series of gossiping Stories and idle Remarks." The world of conversation is the place where "every one displays his Thoughts and Observations [...], and mutually gives and receives Information, as well as Pleasure,"[31] and it is this activity which reinvigorates philosophy, and removes it from its "barbarous" isolation. Hume states that his publication of essays is a deliberate attempt to engage in this mutually beneficial process with the communicative

[30] Ibid., p.535.

apparatus of common life. He says, "I know nothing more advantageous than such *Essays* as these with which I endeavour to entertain the public."[32] This description of an ideal exchange of information helps to clarify Hume's understanding of the task of philosophy in general, and of his own philosophical project in particular. The essays which were published after the *Treatise* were designed to extend the study of human nature whose first instalment appeared in 1739, but in a manner better suited to facilitate communication with the public.

The backdrop against which Hume proposes this constructive engagement between philosophy and conversation is the communicative breakdown which he perceived in the previous age. He states that, "[t]he Separation of the Learned from the conversable World seems to have been the great Defect of the last Age, and must have had a very bad Influence both on Books and Company…". The conversable world was a great loser since it was bereft of satisfactory topics for discussion having received no input from learned study. Hume believed that without contact with learning, they would fall into irrelevant and trivial conversation, and asks, "[f]or what Possibility is there of finding Topics of Conversation fit for the Entertainment of rational Creatures, without having Recourse sometimes to History, Poetry, Politics, and the obvious Principles, at least, of Philosophy?"[33] Therefore, conversation lacked seriousness and penetration in its perusal of affairs and the objects of common life. Hume's implication is that he perceives a need for the greater insights of a philosophical mind in order to make the practices of common life intelligible and effective.

The learned world has been just as much a loser by its isolation. Hume states that, "[o]n the other Hand, Learning has been as great a Loser by being shut up in Colleges and Cells, and secluded from the World and good Company." The consequence of lack of contact with the mundane practitioners was that philosophy became "barbarous", because the philosophical practitioners were men "without any Taste of Life or Manners…".[34] This led to a philosophy which "became as Chimerical in her Conclusions as she was unintelligible in her Stile and Manner of Delivery." It was only to be expected since these men had no opportunity to consult "Experience in any of their Reasonings" that they would

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[31] Ibid., p.534.
[32] Ibid., p.535.
[33] Ibid., p.534. Hume's efforts to penetrate this domain of the conversable in 1741-2 and subsequently, covered an increasing range of subjects with his analysis of political, commercial and cultural issues fulfilling his initial aims for the *Treatise* by extending his philosophical project into politics and criticism. The publication of the *History of England* which first appeared between 1754 and 1762 extended Hume's work to the full range of subjects listed above.
[34] Ibid., p.534.

have nothing to say which could have a bearing on experience; and the experience which is so necessary to sound philosophy is only to be found in "common Life and Conversation."[35] Therefore, philosophy failed in its task of producing theories which would be both meaningful, i.e. useful, interesting or otherwise relevant, to common life, and which would be intelligible to those immersed in common life. This comment on the state of philosophy when kept in isolation from the activities and concerns of common life draws on the methodological first principles of Hume's philosophy stated in the introduction to the *Treatise*, and discussed above in section 2.

The concern with taste, and with the more pragmatic "affairs and duties of common life", implies that the social group to which Hume addressed himself consisted of the wealthier consumers in contemporary society. These would include members of the landed gentry, but more especially, the middle class merchants and professionals whose non-landed sources of wealth required a more intimate knowledge and insight in the practical affairs of the day. The metaphor of international trade hints at the constructive relationship which goes somewhat beyond the entertainment of the otherwise idle through polite repartee. Consideration of the models for this essay, and for the form of communication which it recommends suggests that the concrete concerns that underpin its argument are closely related to the very manufactures and commerce which help to illustrate it.

In order to understand this piece in context it is necessary to refer briefly to a number of other texts which had a bearing on its ideas, as well as on its construction. It is useful, first of all, to consider the relevance of another source of polite and useful conversation which was widely read at the time and as N. T. Phillipson has shown, had obtained a particular importance for post-union Scotland:[36] that is, the essays of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. A contrasting work which also has relevance to this subject is *The Fable of the Bees* by Bernard Mandeville. Both works formed significant landmarks in the background against which the essays by Hume were composed, but they are important in different ways. Mandeville's work is important because in his portrayal of modern commercial society in *The Grumbling Hive* (1705), he illustrates the central importance of the desire for luxury which had shown itself in England during the early eighteenth century. In this, he echoed the ideas of Nicholas Barbon in his *Discourse of Trade* (1690) where it was argued that "wants of the mind" or luxuries were the basic form of all the things which were desired in a commercial society.[37] Mandeville went further in his work,

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[35] Ibid., p.535.
[36] See Chapter 2, part 4, of this thesis.
[37] See Antoin E. Murphy (ed.), op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 9-10.

arguing that there were in fact no higher values to which a society could legitimately aspire once it had accepted the norms of commerce. His argument exemplifies a basic problematic which is addressed in Hume's essays, *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion*, and *Of Essay Writing*. This issue centres on the question of how a category of superior goods may be established and discerned in a commercial society concerned with consumption. Hume's theory of communication, through which the philosopher engages with the actors in common life in a process of mutual enlightenment, provides an answer to the problem which Mandeville inferred from contemporary social and commercial conditions.

The accelerated commercial development of England from the 1690s into the early eighteenth century gave rise, according to Jurgen Habermas, to a need for new forms of social communication which would service the information needs of individuals involved in commerce, as well as providing channels through which social and cultural cohesion could be sustained. The underlying impetus for the rising "Public Sphere" was economic. This development manifested itself in the increasing focus of worldly conversation in the coffee houses and other meeting places in the urban centres of Britain, and in the increasing number of journalistic publications concerned with political, commercial and financial current affairs, as well as with cultural information such as the details of currently fashionable tastes.[38] The archetypal examples of this kind of communication in England after the turn of the eighteenth century are the essays of Addison and Steele. These provided models for Hume to imitate in his remodelling of the role of the philosopher in society as he presented it in *Of Essay Writing*.[39]

b. Evaluating Objects: Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion (1741)

In *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion*, Hume addresses questions concerning the objects which surround and affect individuals in common life. The problem which he addresses is raised on the basis of a methodological individualism, although its solution requires a context of social interaction. At the centre of the essay lies Hume's theory of the passions, in which objects are said to be desirable or not according to their impact on the passions.

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[38] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated by T. Burger, (Polity; MIT, 1989).

[39] The following passage from the beginning of a dedication prefixed to the collected *Tatlers*, vol. 1, published in July 1710, addresses similar concerns to those of Hume in *Of Essay Writing*: "The State of Conversation and Business in this Town having been long perplexed with Pretenders in both Kinds, in order to open Men's Eyes against such Abuses, it appeared no unprofitable Undertaking to publish a Paper which should observe upon the Manners of the Pleasurable, as well as the Basic Part of Mankind. To make this generally read, it seemed the most proper Method to form it by Way of a Letter of Intelligence, consisting of such Parts as might gratify the Curiosity of Persons of all Conditions, and of each Sex." Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Tatler [1709-11]*, ed. D. F. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1987), vol. 1, p. 7.

Reading this essay helps to uncover Hume's meaning when he said that the *conversable* part of refined society was involved in "the Observation of the Blemishes or Perfections of the particular Objects, that surround them," as well as the "Duties of common Life."[40] It therefore affords clear insights into which aspects of "common life" concerned Hume as a scientist of human nature.

Hume opens the piece by characterising a certain type of person as being "subject to a certain *delicacy* of *passion*," by which he means that this kind of person is "extremely sensible to all the accidents of life."[41] Essentially what he describes is the kind of person whose emotional response to both good and bad fortune is more acute than most, and who is therefore more vulnerable to events which are beyond his or her control. Hume describes this person as experiencing, "a lively joy upon every prosperous event, as well as a piercing grief, when they meet with misfortunes and adversity." Specifically, this kind of person is also susceptible to the advances of persons who do them any small favours, as well as to any alterations in their own social status. Hume states that, "[f]avours and good offices easily engage their friendship; while the smallest injury provokes their resentment. Any honour or mark of distinction elevates them above measure; but they are as sensibly touched with contempt." While this disposition affords greater pleasure for the sensitive when they experience joy, there is a serious drawback. Hume states that "[g]ood or ill fortune is very little at our disposal", and since, "[g]reat pleasures are much less frequent than great pains," those who are subject to a passional sensitivity are prone to much more unhappiness than those who are not. Furthermore, such people are inclined to act imprudently as a result of their passions: "men of such lively passions are apt to be transported beyond all bounds of prudence and discretion, and to take false steps in the conduct of life, which are often irretrievable."[42] The purpose of Hume's essay is to outline the means to overcome the handicaps associated with this disposition through the cultivation of *taste*. This task demands that he establish criteria for distinguishing between those objects which are the proper domain of taste, and those which fall into a lower category of *luxury* as he calls it in this essay, and "the animal life"[43] which he mentions in *Of Essay Writing*.

Delicacy of taste is a disposition which is in one essential respect similar to *delicacy of passion*. The degree of sensibility to certain objects is the same in each case inasmuch as the subject enjoys or suffers to a much higher degree than someone without

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[40] *EMPL*, p.534.
[41] Ibid., p.3.
[42] Ibid., p.4.

such a delicate disposition. However, the nature of the objects which provoke a response in those who have delicacy of taste is significantly different from those which merely affect the passions. The delicate of taste are possessed of a greater sensitivity to objects of *beauty*, or *deformity*. The kinds of objects which Hume names are "a poem or a picture", and "[a] polite and judicious conversation."[44] The kind of person who possesses this disposition is susceptible to a larger sphere of happiness and misery, experiencing pains and pleasures, "which escape the rest of mankind."[45] The language in which this is couched implies the existence or formation of an exclusive group. Hume alludes to a group which resembles what he called "the elegant Part of Mankind", similar to the one analysed in *Of Essay Writing.*[46]

That the latter disposition is as desirable as the former is undesirable is supported by the issue of control over objects. Hume points out once again that fortune is little to be controlled, "but we are pretty much masters what books we shall read, what diversions we shall partake of, and what company we shall keep." His analysis affords a moral maxim for human happiness: "But every wise man will endeavour to place his happiness on such objects chiefly as depend upon himself: and *that* is not to be *attained* so much by any other means as by this delicacy of sentiment."[47] Thus, the advice which Hume's moral philosophy offers to the member of "the elegant part of mankind" concerns not only the choice of effective means to procure or otherwise intervene amongst objects,[48] but to choose the objects most suitable for procurement.

Since delicacy of taste affords the same kind of enjoyment as sensitive passions, but with the benefit of being able to control its objects to a much higher degree, it is possible for Hume to suggest that the cultivation of the former is a good remedy for the excesses of the latter. He says that, "nothing is so proper to cure us of this delicacy of passion, as the cultivating of that higher and more refined taste." It is recommended that taste be cultivated by developing "a knowledge of human nature" and "the soundest judgement". This "improves our sensibility for all the tender and agreeable passions; at the same time that it renders the mind incapable of the rougher and more boisterous emotions."[49] It is this refinement of the sentiments through a training in the appreciation of

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[43] Ibid., p.533.
[44] Ibid., p.4.
[45] Ibid., p.5.
[46] Ibid., p.533.
[47] Ibid., p.5.
[48] See Chapter 4 of this thesis.
[49] *EMPL*, p.6.

certain objects that improves the individual and increases his control over the objects which affect him.

The advice that Hume offers to the individual in *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion*, concerning the identification and evaluation of objects suitable for tasteful enjoyment or consumption, is directed at the second activity of the conversable world which he describes in *Of Essay Writing*. In the latter essay, Hume had identified this group by saying that they were concerned with "the Observation of the Blemishes or Perfections of the particular Objects, that surround them", as well as with discussing "Affairs, and the Duties of common Life".[50] The evaluation of the objects which surround these people occurs in conversation and this is the process through which objects are selected for the consumption which occurs among the tasteful in *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion*. The two essays complement each other in their respective treatments of different dimensions of similar practices commonly occurring in the lives of "the elegant part of mankind". Hume argued that the philosopher's role should be closely involved in the conversation which concerns itself with these objects, and so it must therefore be concluded that the issues treated in the earlier essay are among those which concern the philosopher.

A closer review of the need for evaluation which occurs in *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion,* and the evaluative process described in *Of Essay Writing,* sheds light on an important reason why the philosopher is needed in common life. There is an underlying problem in the normative dimensions of the two essays. The difficulty arises implicitly when Hume says of the person who has achieved a refinement of taste, that "he is more happy by what pleases his taste, than by what gratifies his appetites, and receives more enjoyment from a poem or a piece of reasoning than the most expensive luxury can afford."[51] This statement rests on the assumption that an adequate distinction has been made between objects of taste, and those objects which come under the heading of *luxury*.[52] The distinction appears to be unfounded inasmuch as no explicit criterion is given for evaluating, and then distinguishing between, objects. The basis on which individuals prefer one object to another is a subjective one originating in passional responses, whether it is a tasteful object or not. Therefore, since the subjective and individualistic basis upon which

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[50] Ibid., p.534.

[51] Ibid., p.5.

[52] Hume uses the word 'luxury' in a narrower and more pejorative sense in *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion* than he does later on in *Of Luxury* (1752) (this title being changed to *Of Refinement in the Arts* from 1760 onwards). In the later essay, he wrote the following: "Luxury is a word of uncertain signification, and may be taken in a good as well as in a bad sense. In general, it means great refinement in the gratification of the senses; and any degree of it may be innocent or blameable, according to the age, or country, or condition of the person."(268)

preferences are decided is the same for both kinds of objects, a further criterion is needed in order to clarify the value status of *taste* and its objects. This further criterion is to be found in Hume's comments on the social dimension of tasteful refinement, because it is only through the formation of groups unified by a shared enjoyment of certain objects, and their involvement in communication concerning these objects, that a consensus may be formed on what exactly may be called tasteful.

In *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion*, Hume makes no explicit statement about the role that communication between individuals plays in identifying objects appropriate for the cultivation of taste. The individualistic basis on which the passions create subjective evaluations of objects is clearly insufficient on its own to establish normative criteria for taste that can be effective outside of the sphere of each particular individual. In fact, the theory of the passions can go no further than the fragmentary world described by Hobbes where each merely pursues the dictates of his own particular desires.[53] The argument concerning moral epistemology in III.1 of the *Treatise of Human Nature* is as pertinent to the aesthetic evaluations associated with taste, as to moral evaluations of virtue and vice, insofar as it argues that the moral qualities are not to be found in the objects to which moral judgements refer, or to the relations between such objects. Therefore, Hume could not argue in a manner consistent with the *Treatise* that such values could be objectively embodied. It was necessary to establish a third term in the equation of value which would unlock it from individual subjectivity without locating inherently tasteful qualities in the objects themselves. Hume elaborated on this third term in the theory of informed communication which he explicated in *Of Essay Writing*. The select groups of friends which appear at the end of *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion* are shown to play a decisive role in the formation of value norms in *Of Essay Writing*. Not only does the trade in ideas and information between the land of the learned and the land of the conversable give insights into the most effective ways to perform the "duties of common Life", but it is also the medium through which criteria are created by the group in order to assess, "the Blemishes or Perfections of the particular Objects, that surround them."[54]

The importance of group formation in the evaluation of objects, and thus for discovering the means to establish a sphere of objects to be controlled, is given as the second benefit which Hume attributes to the formation of a delicacy of taste. He observes that "a delicacy of taste is favourable to love and friendship, by confining our choice to few people, and making us indifferent to the company and conversation of the greater part

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[53] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Richard Tuck (ed.), (Cambridge, 1994),. See Part I, Chapter vi, pp.37-46.

of men."[55] He explains that the cultivation of good taste reduces the number of persons who can be viewed as suitable companions. The exclusivity of taste, focusing as it does on "pains as well as pleasures, which escape the rest of mankind,"[56] forces the individual who possesses such a taste to choose companions of a similar disposition, since it is only with these that he may communicate about such things. Hume states that, "one that has well digested his knowledge both of books and men, has little enjoyment but in the company of a few select companions."[57] Thus, a two way process occurs between the formation of consensual standards for the judgement of taste, and the formation of groups capable of generating the consensus. The simultaneity of the two parallel developments presents itself as a dialectic through which neither the social group nor the consensual principle can subsist alone. The process through which the two developments are formed is one which demands the input of the philosopher of human nature. It is the contribution of a philosopher such as David Hume to the informed communication occurring in polite conversation that establishes principles through which both the standards for judgement, and the social group which accepts them, are created.

Thus, Hume's concept of the role of the philosopher had developed around the idea of a relationship with another group in society. The task of philosophy was one through which it engaged with this group, the *conversable* part of the *elegant part of mankind*, in a mutually beneficial exchange of insights and information. Philosophy would gain by contact with this group, observing and obtaining information on the current issues relevant to common life, and thus allowing it to develop ideas that were no longer removed from polite and active society. Just as importantly, the conversable part of society is assisted by this communication in two of its own activities. The first activity is the discussion, and consequently the performance, of the "Duties of common Life" which required exchange of information and insight. The second activity, which is intimately involved in the first, is that of evaluating "the particular Objects, that surround [the conversable]."[58] In this latter mode, the philosopher assists in the formation of groups of individuals, which bind themselves together through the formation of consensual norms for evaluating objects appropriate for tasteful consumption by philosophically informed conversation. Both forms of activity are treated in the chapters following this one where it is shown that in Hume's

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[54] *EMPL*, p.534.
[55] Ibid., p.7.
[56] Ibid., p.5.
[57] Ibid., p.7.
[58] Ibid., p.534.

construction, the capacities of the individual were orientated towards effectiveness in this domain.

It is clear from his reflections on the nature and purposes of philosophical communication, that Hume envisaged two objectives being appropriate for the philosopher's engagement in society. The first was to inform thought and conversation on action in society, which concerns the performance of "Duties", and the second, was to identify and evaluate the objects which typically concerned individuals in the same domain.

4.) Further Reflections on the Role of Philosophy.

a. Of the Different Species of Philosophy

It is evident that the issues concerning the relationship between the philosopher and common life, considered both in terms of the source of observations, and the end towards which insights were directed, continued to occupy Hume's mind both during and after the writing of the *Treatise*. The *Treatise* itself presented a philosophic attitude towards the rationales of both methodology and rhetorical purpose through which the activity of philosophical research into human nature could construct a useful and progressive relationship between different spheres. Philosophy, in Hume's view, could not sustain a viable enquiry into its subject without a close and careful observation of human beings engaged in their everyday pursuits. Likewise, the development of the vice of "complaisance" was to be avoided in the relationship between the philosopher and his public. Instead of pandering to a taste for the surprising and the paradoxical, philosophy required a more pragmatic criterion for selecting a proper subject matter to present to its reading public. In fact, the standards which Hume envisaged as emerging from the polite conversation between the learned and the "conversable" implied a criterion for judging the relevance of philosophy and learning. The term "disciples" was loaded with a pejorative connotation in Hume's comments on complaisance. The new social arena described in outline in *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion* and *Of Essay Writing* established a discursive process through which participants could pick and choose between good and bad philosophical inputs, in a similar way to that in which they could select other objects suitable for tasteful consumption.[59] The essay *Of Delicacy of Taste and Passion* explored the need for a cultivation based on philosophical knowledge of human nature. *Of Essay Writing* explored the manner in which the philosopher should assist in this and other tasks

[59] In I.3, Hume argues that the judgements of the understanding operate in a similar way to those of taste.

necessary to the improvement of life and conversation through communication with the conversable part of mankind. Comments on the role of philosophy which appeared in the *Treatise*, and the fuller explanation which were given to this activity in the essays of 1741 and 1742, were given a further development in the first essay of Hume's reformulation of the theory of human understanding which was published in 1748. *Of the Different Species of Philosophy* was the first piece in the *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding,*[60] and it presents explicit comments on the role of philosophy. In this piece, Hume's view was expressed in a more mature writing style, but his opinions show no fundamental changes, nor do they introduce anything inconsistent with what went before. The task of his introductory essay was to clarify the nature and role of *moral philosophy.*

Hume opens his discussion with the statement that, "[m]oral philosophy, or the science of human nature, may be treated after two different manners." Each treatment has its own peculiar merit, but both share a virtue in that they, "may contribute to the entertainment, instruction, and reformation of mankind." The first treatment of the science of human nature, "considers man chiefly as born for action; and as influenced in his measures by taste and sentiment; pursuing one object, and avoiding another, according to the value which these objects seem to possess, and according to the light in which they present themselves."[61] "Virtue" is esteemed to be the most valuable of these objects, and therefore, these philosophers tend to concentrate on presenting this in the best light possible, using striking examples to make virtue appealing, and to seem worth emulating. Hume states that the practitioners of this philosophy, "make us *feel* the difference between vice and virtue; they excite and regulate our sentiments; and so they can but bend our hearts to the love of probity and true honour, they think, that they have fully attained the end of all their labours." By targeting their precepts at the sentimental heart of man, these philosophers ignore the reasonable capacities of the understanding, but their accessible style makes them more agreeable than those who address the intellect more directly. It is in this respect that the other species of philosophy contrasts with the first. Hume defines the second group of philosophers as those who, "consider man in the light of a reasonable rather than an active being, and endeavour to form his understanding more than cultivate his manners."[62]

Treatise, p.103.

[60] David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, P.H. Nidditch (ed.), (Oxford, 1992). The *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* were republished after the first edition of 1748 under the title *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* as it appears in this edition.

[61] Ibid., p.5.

[62] Ibid., p.6.

Hume's attitude to both is one of ambivalence. The need to reconcile the two approaches runs parallel to Hume's need to reconcile the apparent tension within his own project between a philosophical, and therefore intellectual, investigation with positive conclusions which tend to present the human agent as fundamentally sentimental and practical. Hume's judgement on the two species of philosophy is therefore one which aims at common ground. He states that, "[t]he most perfect character is supposed to lie between those extremes." The human agent, who is the subject of enquiry, and whose improvement is its end, is supposed to retain multiple capacities, and to avoid specialisation into a particular dimension of his nature. He is expected to retain, "an equal ability and taste for books, company, and business." These activities present him in his intellectual, sociable, and practical, roles. His intellect flourishes as he is found, "preserving in conversation that discernment and delicacy which arise from polite letters," an activity which marries the overlapping needs of intellectual and social refinement which were explored in *Of Essay Writing*. The practical dimension of human nature is developed through an improvement of prudence which gives in, "business, that probity and accuracy which are the natural result of a just philosophy."[63] What Hume presents at this point, is a perfect balance between the two extremes of abstract and sentimental philosophy. The relationship of each to a common life practice, with science and learning on the one side, and consumption, conversation and business on the other, is married in a vision of the human agent who develops his character in all possible directions.

The tone of the essay is deliberately subtle, and Hume's argument should not be stated in overly bald terms. The first half of his discourse concerns the need to find this golden mean. But it serves a purpose which is only explained clearly in the second half. It becomes clear that part of Hume's intention is to present a mild rebuke to that spirit of the age which tends to throw out the baby with the bath water when it rejects the whole of metaphysical philosophy, instead of jettisoning only that which is unfounded. Thus, when Hume accepts the need to modify the style of philosophy to make it palatable to the public, he does so in anticipation of his defence of the useful parts of difficult philosophy. He states that,

> in order to diffuse and cultivate so accomplished a character, nothing can be more useful than compositions of the easy style and manner, which draw not too much from life, require no deep application or retreat to be comprehended, and send back the student among mankind full of noble sentiments and wise precepts, applicable to every exigence of human life.

[63] Ibid., p.8.

By introducing this easy style it is possible to bring science into acceptance alongside the other activities which were addressed by the first kind of philosophy: he says that, "by means of such compositions, virtue becomes amiable, science agreeable, company instructive, and retirement entertaining."[64] The voice of nature herself is invoked to establish the foundation upon which Hume's idea of the role of philosophy is based. The passage in which nature speaks is particularly striking both for its stylistic quality and for the clarity which it gives to Hume's articulation of the kind of individual which human nature unfolds. Hume introduces the description saying that,

> Man is a reasonable being; and as such, receives from science his proper food and nourishment: But so narrow are the bounds of human understanding, that little satisfaction can be hoped for in this particular, either from the extent or security of his acquisitions. Man is a sociable, no less than a reasonable being: But neither can he always enjoy company agreeable and amusing, or preserve the proper relish for them. Man is also an active being; and from that disposition, as well as from the various necessities of human life, must submit to business and occupation: But the mind requires some relaxation, and cannot always support his bent to care and industry.[65]

It is clear that Hume was intent upon resisting any attempt to pigeon-hole the activities of the human subject. Although his scientific project itself rested on the human capacity to discover nature by reason, it was not intended to represent its human subject matter as being primarily destined to repeat this task. The sources for the enquiry were the observations of men acting in common life, and as the beginning of the essay of 1748 shows, the end of philosophy was also to improve the performance of these activities. Scientific enquiry, the activity of knowing, was just one of three dimensions to the human subject. The other two were the sociable and the practical, typically the practices of tasteful consumption, conversation, business and affairs. The voice of nature speaks in order to dictate to man the need to maintain all three dimensions, and to resist over-specialisation into any one. Hume goes on to say that,

> It seems, then, that nature has pointed out a mixed kind of life as most suitable to human race, and secretly admonished them to allow none of these biases to *draw* too much, so as to incapacitate them for other occupations and entertainments. Indulge your passion for science, says she, but let your science be human, and such as may have a direct reference to action and society. Abstruse thought and profound researches I prohibit, and will severely punish, by the pensive melancholy which they introduce, by the endless uncertainty in which they involve you, and by the cold reception which your pretended discoveries shall meet with, when communicated. Be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man.[66]

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[64] Ibid., p.8.
[65] Ibid., pp.8-9.

b. The *Treatise* Project, in Retrospect.

The threats which are directed by Nature to the philosopher who may be tempted to indulge in "[a]bstruse thought and profound researches" sounds out a strong echo from the *Treatise* itself. In his treatment of his sceptical conclusions and their relationship with other philosophies in the last part of Book I, Hume inserted a section which reveals much more about his personal experience of philosophical doubt and intellectual innovation, than about the actual content of his theories. In the conclusion to the first book of the *Treatise*, Hume reflected on the "voyage" that he had undertaken.[67] The cold reception that can be expected by difficult and profound reasonings is vividly described. Hume explains that,

> I am at first affrighted and confounded with that forlorn solitude, in which I am plac'd in my philosophy, and fancy myself some strange uncouth monster, who not being able to mingle and unite in society, has been expell'd [sic] all human commerce, and left utterly abandon'd and disconsolate. Fain wou'd I run into the crowd for shelter and warmth; but cannot prevail with myself to mix with such deformity.[68]

In light of the words which Hume puts in the mouth of Nature in the essay of 1748, the earlier work betrays an acute ambivalence. On the one hand, Hume left himself open to the very punishment which Nature has set aside for abstruse and difficult philosophers. On the other hand, it is the deformity of the crowd which repels Hume, suggesting that the fault lies not with himself, but with the other members of the community of philosophers. In the *Treatise*, the solution to the problems of a melancholic disposition arising from the overly-intellectualised tasks of philosophy is consistent with the idea of the individual suggested by the voice of nature in 1748. In fact, at the earlier time it was also nature which suggested the answer. Hume said that,

> [m]ost 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 sense, which obliterate all these chimeras.

By leaving behind the tasks demanded by philosophical reason, and indulging the sociable side to human nature, the clouds of melancholy are dispelled: "I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter them any farther." The gaze of the philosopher is once again drawn in the direction of common life where Hume finds himself, "absolutely and necessarily determin'd to live, and talk and act like other people

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[66] Ibid., p.9.
[67] Hume, *Treatise,* p.264.

in the common affairs of life."[69] The subtlety of the argument in the essay of 1748 where the presentation of the well-rounded subject of the science of human nature is a prelude to the defence of some kinds of abstruse reasonings, mirrors the ambivalence which Hume felt while he wrote the first book of the *Treatise*.

The task which presented itself to Hume by the late 1730s was one designed to remove the "deformity" of the crowd, but the work which this involved led to the alienation of its practitioner. For Hume, the task of abstruse, intellectual and specialised reasoning, was not ideally suited to the many-sided human frame, but it was a task which had to be done in order to achieve the very well-roundedness that nature had prescribed for man; and it also reflected his personal need to achieve stability in the various aspects of his own life at that time as chapter 2 shows. His sociability, his enjoyment of tasteful consumption, and his business prudence, had to be developed alongside informed thought and judgement.

The remainder of the essay on the different species of philosophy makes a plea for the acceptance of the more difficult and profound parts of philosophy. While it was necessary to correct in philosophy the mistake of over-emphasising the capacity for abstract reasoning in the human agent, it also proved necessary to rehabilitate the more abstruse pursuits of useful philosophy. Hume cites a number of uses and virtues on its behalf. Among these he includes its indirect importance in the improvement of active life. He states that, "though a philosopher may live remote from business, the genius of philosophy, if carefully cultivated by several, must gradually diffuse itself throughout the whole society, and bestow a similar correctness on every art and calling."[70] This recalls Hume's argument that philosophy is not supposed to operate in isolation, but should play its role in a manner that is relevant to practices in life in general.

5.) Conclusion:

Evidence from the *Treatise of Human Nature* and from essays written by Hume during the late 1730s and the 1740s, shows that during the early stages of his philosophical project he was constantly preoccupied with the relationship between his philosophical theory and common life. The introductory material attached to the *Treatise* asserts that a close relationship between the philosopher and people in common life is necessary in order to provide the material for experimental investigation. Further passages in the *Treatise*

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[68] Ibid., p.264.
[69] Ibid., p.269.
[70] Hume, *Enquiries*, p.10.

suggest that at this time Hume was concerned with the importance of cultivating a relationship with a polite public. His reflections on the role of the philosopher which appeared in *Of Essay Writing* in 1742 give a more complete picture of the concrete processes through which this relationship could and supposedly did develop in contemporary society. Both aspects of the relationship between philosophical learning and its public are shown to operate through a close communication between the learned and the conversational worlds, with philosophy gaining insights into the realities of common life,[71] and with common life gaining an education in principles of judgement which inform their discussions of the duties and enjoyments proper to everyday affairs. The essay *Of the Different Species of Philosophy,* published in 1748, underlines the importance of maintaining the well-roundedness of the human subject through a philosophy which is adaptable not only to the intellectually curious dimension of the mind, but also to the moral, which comprehends the activities of business and affairs, as well as the enjoyment of leisurely pursuits.

The abstract nature of the *Treatise* and of its subject matter afforded little opportunity to expand on the more concrete aspects of public communication. However, by the time Hume was preparing the *Treatise* for publication in 1739 and 1740 he was already worried that his ideas would fail to reach a wide audience, and to have the impact on practical life which he hoped for. His immediate attempts to adapt the style and form of his writing at this time in order to address the problems of communication which he had identified in "abstruse" philosophy, indicates that this was a concern which perplexed him during the composition of the *Treatise*. Although the *Treatise* tackled abstruse philosophical questions, it did so in a way that was designed to clarify them, showing how their solutions had a bearing on 'common' modes of thought and action. When considered as part of the rhetorical intention of the author, the attempt to engage with life and its common activities provides grounds for arguing that Hume's construction of a theory of the individual in the *Treatise* was designed to engage with specific practices that he found in the society that surrounded him. The focus on 'observing the blemishes and perfections' of objects, and on the tasteful choice of goods, evidently had a bearing on the type of social context elaborated in chapter 2 of the thesis. The relevance of his philosophical method and conclusions to the practices of common life is borne out by the specific nature of his theory of the individual. The orientation of both into practical-instrumental intentions

[71] See *Treatise*, II.2.v for an example of this rhetoric of common life and converation in the early work. He bases his observations at this point on "those phaenomena that occur to us in common life and conversation." p.361.

governed by the passions brought the nature of philosophical conclusions themselves into a direct and purposive relationship with the practices of common life. Aspects of this are explored in the two chapters following this one. Chapter 4 shows that in Hume's theory, the individual's use of reason, and in particular, his reasoning concerning particular causal relationships, was integrated into a theory of passional motivation, and was therefore orientated towards practice. Chapter 5 explores the nature of such practices as are associated with the direction of the passions and the operations of the understanding in Hume's treatment of the indirect passions.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRAGMATIC FOUNDATIONS OF DAVID HUME'S THEORY OF UNDERSTANDING

1.) *Passions* and the motivation of thought in the *Understanding*

The abstract dryness of Hume's analysis of the understanding in Book I of the *Treatise* contrasts strongly with the treatment of the passions in Book II (and indeed, of morals in Book III), which contain a larger quantity of examples from everyday life. This contrast is not surprising given the nature of subject matter treated by the respective books. Hume's treatment of the passions, however, has nonetheless suffered from neglect in the interpretation of Hume's philosophy until relatively recently. Commentators have tended to dismiss it as merely tedious, unoriginal, and largely irrelevant to the other parts of the *Treatise*.[1] Philosophers concerned with ideas on epistemology have tended to find the more arid terrain of Book I, or its comparatively chatty reformulation in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* more interesting. This has given rise to a tendency to read this first book of the treatise either in isolation, or with scant reference to Book II. It is this which produces interpretations of David Hume as a clever sceptic, highly effective in destroying the foundations of traditional metaphysics and other putative targets, but not as a philosopher given to more constructive intellectual efforts.

What may appear as a misreading from the point of view of historians makes sense, no doubt, in the context of contemporary disciplinary specialisation. And, indeed, Hume's own distillation of what might appear to be the more purely 'philosophical' (in our contemporary sense) conclusions of the *Treatise*, in the new set of *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* in 1748, might initially appear to merit this approach. However, a close reading of Hume's text of 1739, reveals a more closely structured relationship between Books I and II, than such readings of Hume have allowed. The following analysis examines three sections in Hume's work at this time. The first is the *Abstract* of the *Treatise* which outlines the gist of his argument and indicates its relationship with some philosophical works which preceded it. The second is the treatment of the first elements of the understanding in I.1, in which Hume indicates the central

[1] Páll S. Ardál was the first to look closely at the links between Books II and III. In his *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise*, (Edinburgh, 1966), he wrote, "The main purpose of this book is to show that some aspects of Hume's discussion of the passions in Book II of the *Treatise* are both philosophically interesting and of vital importance for the correct interpretation of Hume's views about the evaluation of human character."(1) For a list of commentators and their respective positions with regard to the neglect of Book II, see Annette

importance of the passions to the operations of thought. The third, is II.3 in which Hume analyses the will, arguing that the processes of the understanding do not arise independently of the motivations of the passions. The interpretation of Hume's treatment of volition given in this chapter shows how the treatment of the activities of the understanding (given particularly in I.1 and I.3), and his theory of the passions taken together, present the characteristics of an individual who is orientated towards practice.

a. The Abstract of the Treatise

An Abstract of a Book lately Published, entitled, A Treatise of Human Nature, &c., was published anonymously in 1740 and is now believed to have been written by Hume.[2] Although it may not have been designed to be read as an accompaniment to the text itself, it nonetheless provides an interesting commentary on its contents. In this short summary of the whole work, David Hume gives some important clues as to how his intentions as the author of the *Treatise* may be interpreted. He explains the relationship which he sees between his work and some earlier works concerned with epistemology and logic, citing a criticism which Leibniz made of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Malebranche's *Le Recherche de la Verite* and Arnauld and Nicole's *L'Art a Penser*. According to Leibniz these works had presented logic as a discipline concerned primarily with demonstrative certainty, and had said too little of the importance of probability in the search for truth. The emphasis which Hume placed on probability with respect to the knowledge of causes is well known, but something which needs re-emphasising is the active, everyday role for which he intended it. Hume underlines his understanding of the significance of Leibniz's criticism by remarking that probability is one species of "those other measures of evidence on which life and action entirely depend...", besides having importance in "our philosophical speculations."[3] In the present reading of Hume's early philosophical work, this remark stands as an important support for the many scattered references to practical or active approaches to common life: it underlines the pragmatic import of much that he says in the *Treatise*, including the seemingly abstract theorising of the first book.

The dynamic of social discourse within which Hume's philosophical work was to be placed, with thinkers and actors in a position to gain from one another, was counter-

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Baier, *A Progress in Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise*, (Cambridge MA, 1991), note 1, p.295.

[2] For an account of the questions concerning the authorship of this pamphlet, and of the evidence that shows that it did in fact come from Hume's hand, see J. M. Keynes and Piero Straffa (eds), *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature*, (Cambridge, 1938; reprinted Bristol, 1990).

[3] *Treatise*, p.647.

balanced by a new formulation of human nature, and the human subject. As the philosopher was seen to become more worldly and pragmatic, and the public actor more philosophical, so the human subject of the *Treatise* was given features suitable to both roles. Hume decisively rejected the contemplative, and as he saw it, reclusive and frivolous (or socially useless), model of philosophical thought, as the *Abstract* implies.[4] Hume's human subject could neither throw himself into mindless, self-interested behaviour; nor could he hope to isolate himself from the commercial and other modernising tendencies, by retreating either into blessed contemplation, or lofty public participation. Instead, Hume presented a model of human nature, through which it would be possible to develop in all three directions at once. The centrality of the passions (desires either in positive or negative form) to cognition and action, implied an acknowledgement of self-interest as only the most rudimentary form of human motivation. The setting of natural limits to the scope of philosophy presented an accessible model for human thought, and the pragmatic orientation of that thought gave philosophy a usefulness in everyday life. In short, Hume's *Treatise*, presented a model of human activities in which thinking, wanting, and acting, were integrated through mutual dependence. Hume cannot be properly understood according to his own intentions if he is read merely as an epistemologist or logician, concerned above all with the nature and extent of human knowledge capabilities. It is the purpose of the following analysis of the *Treatise*, to show that Hume was describing all the facets of the human agent as an integral, functioning whole, designed to master its environments through intellectually calculated, practical action.

b. *Understanding* and the *Passions* in Book I of the *Treatise*

In his description of the understanding, Hume was concerned primarily with the principles which govern the arrangement of ideas by the imagination in order to induce an understanding of objects and their relations. However his basic clarification of the manner in which perception occurs, bringing ideas to the memory and imagination, immediately indicates a crucial outer dimension to the understanding. A close reading of I.1 shows that the understanding relies on the prompting of the passions in a complex and integral way. This indicates that Hume's concept of understanding is pragmatically orientated, and designed to mediate between a subject with interests, and a world of objects which may be desired.

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[4] Ibid., p.647; for another example where Hume refers to this, see ibid., p.26.

In part I.1, Hume explains the basic distinctions between ideas and impressions, and between impressions of sense and impressions of reflexion, and shows how these tie emotive impulses into thought. The first distinction is presented as an important modification of Locke's treatment of ideas in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Whereas Locke had used the term 'Idea' to signify all mental concepts, including those immediately intuited,[5] Hume introduced a distinction between the "impressions" of the senses, by which the initial experience reaches the agent, and the residual mark which this leaves in the memory. It is only the latter, a fainter image than the *Impression*, which Hume designated an *Idea.*[6] *Ideas*, so defined, constitute the material on which the processes of understanding operate. However, an additional clarification is introduced, this time presenting a different concept of impression.

The further division of the subject occurs with the addition of *impressions of reflexion*. Hume explains that these are the *passions* of *desire and aversion, hope and fear*. The insertion of passions to the cognitive process at this early stage is vital to the structuring of the relationship between the passions and the understanding. Not only does this explain how passions initially arise, but it also introduces a motivation for thought. Firstlyl, Hume states that the passions arise, in the first place, in response to the perception of objects. Thus the only mental events which occur prior to the emergence of an emotive orientation towards objects, is the simple reflection of experience in the mind as idea. Secondly, it becomes clear that no further thought occurs without the prompting of the passions of desire or aversion with respect to objects perceived. Therefore, in Hume's view, thought about objects is motivated by a desire, either positive or negative, with respect to objects.

It may be contended that, in Hume's analysis, some thought processes may occur without the intervention of passions of desire and aversion in any case. Thus not all of the activities of the understanding, i.e. reason, would be understood to be controlled by the prior impulse of passions in Hume's anatomy of the individual. Such activities could include, for example, purely theoretical uses of the understanding, or cases where we instinctively infer fire from smoke but without any fear of danger, or need for warmth, etc.. In the first instance, the theoretical activities of a scientist may be said to satisfy the passion of *curiosity*, i.e. the desire for knowledge. As regards the second seemingly unmotivated activity of the understanding, it may be argued that such activities of the

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[5] See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P. H. Nidditch (ed.), (Oxford, 1979), Book 2, *Of Ideas*.
[6] See *Treatise*, I.1.i.

understanding are comprehensible only in the context of a wider understanding of the function of the instinct to understand our environment. Such an instinct should be regarded as the "habit or custom" of making connections between the events which surround us. The habit or custom may be understood as itself being passionally motivated (since it consists not of relations between ideas or of matters of fact) and while no particular end or good is achieved in each situation where this occurs – e.g. where the individual barely notices the events and their interconnections – it still may be regarded as serving the generally useful purpose of maintaining a familiarity with the surrounding environment. When we think of individuals as being motivated to think and act by things with which they want to engage, or by things that they wish to avoid, we would also suppose that they would look around them and explore their environment in order to identify such things as would be of interest – i.e. benefits and dangers.

What this implies is that there are two stages in the series of impressions of reflection in the understanding. The first, and the simplest is as follows. The human subject perceives an object by deriving *ideas* from those *impressions of sense* which have presented themselves. As a result, a second impression arises, this time, an *impression of reflection*. The *impression of reflexion* is a passion of desire or aversion which refers to the object, and which may prompt further reflection concerning the object:

> "An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflexion, because derived from it."[7]

At the beginning of Book II, Hume clarifies the nature of these secondary impressions which arise in response to the ideas in the understanding: "Secondary, or reflective impressions are such as proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea."[8] What follows *The division of the subject* in the remainder of part I.1, and then in part I.3, is a description of the intellectual process whereby the relationships between the object perceived and other surrounding objects is made intelligible. Already, we might suppose, the subject has conceived the basis for a practical encounter with the object. At least, the intellectual attitude which has been achieved is what we might call *appetitive*, insofar as the cognitive apprehension of the object has built into itself a motivational element originating in *desire*.

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[7] Ibid., I.1.ii, p.8.
[8] Ibid., p.275.

The second stage in the series introduces a higher degree of reflection to the first. It follows from the series which includes an impression of sense, an idea derived from that impression, and an impression of reflection (in the form of desire) which refers to the object thus perceived. Hume continues in I.1.ii, saying, "[t]hese [*impressions of reflexion*] again are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas; which perhaps in their turn give rise to other impressions and ideas. So that the *impressions of reflexion* are only antecedent to their correspondent ideas; but posterior to those of sensation, and deriv'd from them."[9] Thus, after we feel a desire with reference to the idea of an object, we conceive an idea of that desire. This is not an unimportant point: if the *impression of reflection* is a desire, then the idea of this desire marks a step into subjective *self-awareness* with respect to desire. What Hume presents is a description of processes whereby the self-awareness of the human subject may be explained.

These processes are complicated and, for analytic purposes, possess two dimensions. The first is intellectual, involving reflection on ideas. In section i, Hume indicated that the subject may become intellectually self-conscious since *ideas* are capable of further reflection – this occurs as the subject derives ideas which refer to those ideas which it is already thinking. He says, "as our ideas are images of our impressions, so we can form secondary ideas, which are images of the primary; as appears from this very reasoning concerning them."[10] The second dimension, is a process of intellectual reflection on desire. In the case of the passions, this self-awareness has the specific form of an awareness of one's own self-interest, i.e., an awareness of one's own desire for objects, or of one's propensity to desire certain kinds of object, when the ideas which refer to one's desires are stored in the memory.[11] Comments which appear later on in the first book of the *Treatise*, imply that the capacity of the understanding to comprehend these desires in oneself is as extensive as its capacity to understand other facts. The principal activity of the understanding with respect to its objects, is to perceive relations between them, particularly those of causation, thereby learning habitually to understand how objects have obtained their present form from past events, and to understand how similar events will give rise to objects with similar forms in the future. This method of reasoning is seen by Hume to occur in the reflection of the subject on its own tendency to desire certain objects:

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[9] Ibid., p.8.
[10] Ibid., p.6.
[11] The problem of self-identity arises from this. Hume argues that our idea of self is a complex one composed of all the ideas which we associate with ourselves, and which refers to all the ideal and passional content of which we are composed. His notion of reflection with regard to self is based purely on the processes described above, and is therefore conditioned by the varying quantity of ideas contained in the memory referring both to external objects, and internal passions and passional dispositions.

> I shall only observe before I proceed any farther, that tho' the ideas of cause and effect be deriv'd from the impressions of reflexion as well as from those of sensation, yet for brevity's sake, I commonly mention only the latter as the origin of these ideas; tho' I desire that whatever I say of them may also extend to the former. Passions are connected with their objects and with one another; no less than external bodies are connected together. The same relation, then, of cause and effect, which belongs to one, must be common to all of them. [12]

With these two levels in the human individual in mind, it is possible to suggest that the basic form of human thought which underpins Hume's concept of understanding is that of a capacity for rational-instrumental control. For Hume, subjective desire prompts thought concerning an objective world. This desire initially arises in a rudimentary, and inexplicable form in direct response to the objects of experience. The capacity of the subject to reflect on such desires by thinking about them, and remembering them, provides the capacity to develop a rationale with respect to desirable objects and objectives in general. "Desirable objects and objectives" should be understood in the broadest possible sense, e.g. to include *knowledge* as the *desirable objective* suitable to the passion of *curiosity,* as well as more venal objects and objectives suitable to other forms of desire. On the other side, the capacity to think about the nature of these objects, and about the causal relations within which they occur, permits the human subject to survey the prospects for realising such desires. Hume provides a clear indication that his concern is not so much with the causal relations between objects in the non-human universe, but with the capacity of human agents to effect their volitions on one another. The capacity to reflect on causation as the mode through which external objects interact, is given an extensive significance in I.1.iv, where Hume explains that understanding causation as the relation between objects is centred on the notion of "power". This *power* is a relation which concerns not the objects of natural philosophy, but the human objects encountered in common experience: "And this we may observe to be the source of all the relations of interest and duty, by which men influence each other in society…". He adds, "[w]hen a person is possess'd of any power, there is no more required to convert it into action, but the exertion of the will…".[13] Thus, the human subject is given a capacity for reflecting on itself with particular regard to its propensity to desire, to the objects which give rise to such desires, and to its capacity to achieve such desires, i.e. its power.

The structure of Hume's study of human nature suggests that he perceives two levels in the cognitive process which operate simultaneously in the understanding and the passions. The first is a process through which *objects* are perceived and significant

[12] Ibid., p.78.

relationships between them are understood. The second, is a process through which *passions* are understood in their significant relations to one-another, and in relation to their respective objects. Given the need to understand objects, in order to understand their correlative desires, and given the fact that desires arise in the preliminary stage of cognition, it would appear that these processes are to a large extent mutually reliant, and would be integrated in practice. They are separable for the purposes of analysis, but in *common life*, they would co-operate with one another. Hume's individual learns first of all about the existence of objects and second of all about his passional dispositions towards particular objects; then through the prompting of the passions, he explores the relationships surrounding whichever objects his passions deem interesting. By knowing about the effective relations between objects (i.e. causal relations) on the one hand, and the interests or passional disposition of the self in relation to these objects on the other, and then by mediating between the two, the human subject can orientate itself through practical life.

c. The organisation of the human subject, and the organisation of the *Treatise*.

The *division of the subject* which appears near the beginning of Book I shows that, although the passions are not to be examined in detail in the treatment of the understanding, they nonetheless underpin its functions. It appears that Hume presented an integrated picture of wanting, thinking and acting but that this posed problems for constructing an adequate narrative structure in his book. The earliest stage of the treatment of the understanding refers directly to the second book of the *Treatise*; and the opening sections of the book on the passions divides the subject into two, and then proposes to treat them starting with the complex and indirect, and then moving on to the simple and direct rather than moving from simple and direct, to complex and indirect as one might have expected. However, by interpreting the subject of Hume's first two books as constituting a complete theory of the individual in which the theory of knowledge is interpreted as being orientated towards practice, a coherent schema may be presented that comprehends the logical order of the different parts of Hume's work:

[13] Ibid., p.12.

UNDERSTANDING	2. ideas (of objects). (Bk.I, Part 1)	4. instrumental thought processes (estimating powers of causal factors). (Book I, especially Part 3.)	5. ideas referring to one's passions (awareness of interests). (Bk.II, Parts 1-2.)
PASSIONS (STIMULI WHICH INCLUDE IMPRESSIONS OF SENSE)	1. impressions of sense. (Bk.I,Part 1)	3. impressions of reflexion (desires, or direct passions), (Mentioned in Bk.I, Part1, but analysed in Bk.II, Part 3)	6. Impressions of .reflexion which refer to 5 (i.e. to feelings of interestedness or selfishness). (Bk.II, Parts 1-2)

In this table, the numbers signify the order in which these perceptions and stimuli occur in the human subject. The appearance of impressions of sense, and the imprints left in the form of ideas; then the response of the passions in the form of *impressions of reflexion*, were outlined in the first part of book I. The *division of the subject* in book I implied that an extrapolation of impressions of reflexion, and ideas, into a series would give rise to awareness of one's interests, and to an emotive response based on this awareness.

In II.3, the treatment of the direct passions elaborates on the impressions of reflexion which were first mentioned in I.1.ii.. These are the direct passions, and it is these which form the immediate emotive response to objects presented by experience. In Book II, they are examined in relation to the will. It is in their relation to the will by causing the actions of human agents that they are of interest both to the philosopher of human nature, and to the ordinary person who needs to understand the factors which motivate other people in order to intervene effectively in society. In other words, this topic is of considerable philosophical importance, being central to the concept of human nature, and having implications for key problems dealt with by other philosophers; but it is also highly important for the human being active in common life, since it is by understanding these passions, and their role in causing actions, that they can make the world of other human beings intelligible, predictable, and so controllable for themselves.

2.) Passions, Understanding and the Human Will in Book II of the *Treatise*

The foregoing analysis of I.1 of the *Treatise* showed how the direct passions were given a vital role in the motivation of the understanding. This implied that in Hume's model of human nature, thought could, and perhaps generally would, be motivated by a rationale governed by desire, and therefore one which originated outside of the understanding proper. In effect, the division of the subject which appears at the beginning of the first book appears like a footnote, referring the reader to the analysis of the passions which are understood to operate in parallel with the understanding. The narrative of the first two books of the *Treatise* covers the various aspects of the active individual: on the one side,

those that involve ideas, and on the other, those that involve passions. Taken together, the ideas and the passions provide the intellectual tools, and the motives, for practical action.[14] Action is initiated by the will, and occurs as the outcome of interaction between both the passions and the understanding. It is therefore appropriate for Hume to deal with the will last of all in Book II, as it is in a sense the culmination of the processes described in the two books. Analysis of II.3 helps to clarify the nature of the role of the passions in the thought process, and the part which this plays in generating modes of action.

In his analysis of the passions, Hume makes use of a "vulgar and specious division" into the "*calm* and *violent*" passions. A clearer distinction is made between the "direct and indirect" passions. The "direct passions" are the impressions of reflexion referred to in Book I. Hume explains that, "[b]y direct passions I understand such as arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure. By indirect such as proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities."[15] He postpones any explanation for this distinction, but gives an outline of the emotions which the categories might contain: "This distinction I cannot at present justify or explain any farther. I can only observe in general, that under the indirect passions I comprehend pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependants. And under the direct passions, desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair and security."[16] The indirect passions are dealt with first, while the direct ones are examined in the last part, with reference to the subject of the will, and the question of liberty and necessity. This may have been done in order to dispense with the more complex and refined indirect passions, so that the treatment of the will could immediately precede the treatment of morality. However, given the fact that Books I and II were published independently of the book on morals, it is possible to interpret this last part of the first publication as that part which Hume wished to present as the culmination and lynchpin of the "compleat chain of reasoning" alluded to in the Advertisement.[17]

In Hume's description of the human subject, the will arises as an effect of the direct passions, that is, "the impressions, which arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure. Of this kind are, *desire and aversion, grief and joy, hope and fear*." He states that, "[o]f all the immediate effects of pain and pleasure, there is none more remarkable

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[14] Thought, or the exercise of reason, should itself be regarded as an activity in Hume's theory. It requires motivation and pursues ends like other forms of activity. See section II.3.x *Of curiosity, or love of truth.*
[15] Ibid., p.276.
[16] Ibid., p.276-7.
[17] Ibid., p.xii.

than the WILL...".[18] This concept of the *will* comprehends all actions of the human agent including both actions of body and actions of mind:

> I desire it may be observ'd, that by the *will*, I mean nothing but *the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind.* [19]

In his analysis of the factors which motivate the will, Hume strongly states his conviction that reason, or the activity of the understanding, cannot be considered as an activity which occurs independently of the will. In all cases, and at all times, the activities of the mind are motivated by passions; and these passions orientate the understanding towards reflection on objects desired, and on the possible means of obtaining them. As Hume states in II.3.iv, "[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[20]

It is in the section entitled, "*Of the Influencing Motives of the Will,*" that Hume presents his clearest statements regarding the understanding in its relationship with the will. Hume's intention at this point is to refute the argument that there is or can be an essential conflict between the reason of humans and their passions. Since his theory of the will insists that the understanding is always a function subservient to the passions, this notion of a conflict between two faculties cannot but be fallacious in his view. His method of argumentation is, "to prove *first*, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and *secondly*, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will."[21] In effect, the clarification of the theory of will and understanding which Hume presents at this point, presents human reason as a function of cognitive-instrumental rationality. It becomes clear that the mental events of the understanding occur in the formulation of action-orientated responses to desired objects.

Hume explains that the point at which we start to reflect on objects and their relations to one another, is when we anticipate some pleasure or pain which will result from those objects. This anticipation is what is called *desire* or *aversion*, and it is this passion which first prompts the idea of an act which will intervene in the situation of the objects. He says, "'[t]is obvious, that when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from

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[18] Ibid., p.399.
[19] Ibid., p.399.
[20] Ibid., p.415. The question of whether Hume meant this statement to cover all activities including those involved in what we would now call purely *theoretical* modes of reasoning may be raised at this point. In response to this, one should consider 'curiosity' as a form of passion which motivates such activities. This passion is explained by Hume as the *love of truth* in II.3.x (entitled *Of curiosity, or love of truth*). As noted above, Hume make the following comparison at this point: "...there cannot be two passions more nearly resembling each other, than those of hunting and philosophy, whatever disproportion may at first sight appear between them."(451) The comparison allows Hume to point out that in each case there is an objective to the activity, but that while such objectives animate us, the activities involved in the pursuit may become enjoyable themselves.

any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction." Once the idea of acting on the objects occurs to the understanding, in response to this desire, a further process of intellectual reflection is required. This is the point at which the capacity of the understanding to infer the relations between the objects of experience comes into play. The passional need to effect a desire on the object gives rise to a need to understand the conditions of the object's existence, and the prospects for a successful intervention: "'Tis also obvious, that this emotion rests not here, but making us cast our view on every side, comprehends whatever objects are connected with its original one by the relation of cause and effect." The "emotions [of desire and aversion etc.] extend themselves to the causes and effects of that object, as they are pointed out to us by reason and experience." Once the conditions within which the object is situated have been discovered, the understanding adjusts its ideas on how the intervention might be effected: "Here then reasoning takes place to discover this relation; and according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation."[22] Therefore, Hume is able to conclude that rather than prompting action, reason is called upon to direct it by providing an understanding of the pertinent objects, ideas, and their relations.

In this part of Hume's argument, the exact meaning which is attached to causation, the most extensive relation, is made very clear. It is not something which is merely of interest to the intellectually curious in their search for the secrets of non-human nature. However central the causal concepts afforded by the study of the physical universe may have been in shaping the eighteenth-century "classical"[23] notions of necessity, Hume is adamant that his theory of causation and its epistemology, is drawn from a mundane, human universe. It is in fixing our attention on desirable objects and calculating means of obtaining these, as well as in the observation of others who do the same, that we generate our habits of assuming causal relations. In fact, without such mundane objectives, we would have no reason to consider these things:

> It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us. Where the objects themselves do not affect us, their connexion can never give them any influence; and 'tis plain, that as reason is nothing but the discovery of this connexion, it cannot be by its means that the objects are able to affect us.[24]

This underlines the theory that those intellectual processes described in Book I would not

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[21] Ibid., p.413.
[22] Ibid., p.414.
[23] See Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Age of Enlightenment*, (Princeton, 1988).
[24] *Treatise*, p.414.

take place in any instance without some external motivation, and explains exactly why it is that reason is just a "slave to the passions."

Hume illustrates his argument concerning the use of reason and its role in the will with examples drawn from mathematical reasoning. His purpose is to undermine those theories which would place the source of the will in the understanding itself and his examples demonstrate the manner in which the understanding is orientated towards ends determined by the passions even in its more complex activities. He states that,

> Mathematics, indeed, are useful in all mechanical operations, and arithmetic in almost every art and profession: But 'tis not of themselves they have any influence. Mechanics are the art of regulating the motions of bodies *to some design'd end or purpose*; and the reason why we employ arithmetic in fixing the proportions of numbers, is only that we may discover the proportions of their influence and operation.[25]

Thus, the operation of the understanding in working out the relations of ideas, and in its refined form in mathematics, is given a practical relevance where it can be called upon to perform tasks determined by the passions. It allows the subject to calculate the relations between desired objects, and those which surround them, and this with a view to intervening in the situation of those objects. Hume's second example, designed to clarify the first, gives an even clearer picture of the kind of activities in which reason might be employed:

> A merchant is desirous of knowing the sum total of his accounts with any person: Why? but that he may learn what sum will have the same *effects* in paying his debt, and going to market, as all the particular articles taken together. Abstract or demonstrative reasoning, therefore, never influences any of our actions, but only as it directs our judgement concerning causes and effects...[26]

The example of a merchant is particularly interesting because it gives a clear indication of the manner in which Hume's notion of reason is found useful according to the motives of common, active life. The highest forms of understanding, operating with abstractions, and generating demonstrative proofs through mathematical reasoning, find their usefulness in the mundane mathematics of financial calculations. The notion of cause, understood as a power or potential to give rise to effects, is discovered in the effectiveness of financial abstraction.

Hume gives some explanation for the fact that reason has often been supposed to act on its own, and without stimulation from the passions. This error occurred, he explained, when passions effected themselves on the consciousness of the subject in so soft a manner, that they were mistaken for perceptions of reason; as a consequence, they were

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[25] Ibid., p.414.
[26] Ibid., p.414.

not differentiated from activities of the understanding itself. He says, "[r]eason, for instance, exerts itself without producing any sensible emotion; and except in the more sublime disquisitions of philosophy, or in the frivolous subtilties of the schools, scarce ever conveys any pleasure or uneasiness."[27] Likewise, there are some passions which occur, that do not register in the mind of the subject because they do not seem to present any change in his emotional state. This gives rise to a misunderstanding as the passions which have prompted thought in the understanding, are mistaken for determinations of reason itself:

> Hence it proceeds, that every action of the mind, which operates with the same calmness and tranquillity, is confounded with reason by all those, who judge of things from the first view and appearance. Now 'tis certain, there are certain calm desires and tendencies, which, tho' they be real passions, produce little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation [...] When any of these passions are calm, and cause no disorder in the soul, they are very readily taken for the determinations of reason, and are suppos'd to proceed from the same faculty, with that, which judges of truth and falshood. Their nature and principles have been suppos'd the same, because their sensations are not evidently different.[28]

In fact, Hume argues, these passions must always be present if the understanding is motivated to do anything, and any contrary impression is merely a mistake of the vulgar understanding. It is to the question of whether or not it is possible for reason to operate in a purely abstract manner that Hume's argument is most relevant. The common misperceptions might be expected to occur, for instance, where knowledge itself is considered to be the end of understanding. It might be supposed that the reclusive philosopher or theologian who withdraws from the world in philosophic or ascetic isolation in order to contemplate questions without reference to immediate mundane concerns, is in fact operating his understanding without the promptings of desire and aversion with respect to objects perceived. This however would be a fallacy in Hume's view, and it is one which he explored with particular emphasis in his essay *Of Essay Writing* (1742). While knowledge may become an end in itself for a particular individual, it is still subject to the normal rules of the understanding and particularly in the need for passional motivation. Although the passional cravings which give rise to this kind of thought may be dimmer or subtler, they are still essential to the operation of the mind. As Hume states, "[t]he mind, when left to itself, immediately languishes; and in order to preserve its ardour, must be every moment supported by a new flow of passion."[29] Therefore, if the reclusive philosopher still manages to think while in isolation, he must still be subject to some form

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[27] Ibid., p.417.
[28] Ibid., p.417.
[29] Ibid., p. 421-2

or other of passion, although as Hume's reflections on such characters in *Of Essay Writing* shows, the kind of thought which takes place is not likely to be the most useful.[30]

Thus, Hume shows that *reason* is always governed by an orientation given to it by the passions which may be directed towards a wide range of ends, including knowledge. In his analysis of the *will*, Hume does not fail to realise the consequences which this has for the evaluation of passions, and for the courses of action which they generate. Since reason applies only to the relations between objects, and between the ideas derived from these objects; and since the passions occur prior to and after the operations of the understanding, there is no way in which reason can pass judgement on the passions in themselves. If the passions could be judged reasonable or unreasonable by the understanding, then it could conceivably direct action towards the more reasonable goals projected by the passions. This would tend to undermine the argument that reason is entirely subject to the passions. However, in the Humean psychology, the passions are not subject to such rules. A passion is described as "an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence". It is itself, Hume argues, a condition of the subject which simply is the case. This condition or state of the subject is described at times as an "impulse", and since it exists simply as a matter of fact, and since it does not refer to anything else (even though it might arise in consequence of something else), Hume says that it "contains no representative quality". It is, he says, "impossible, therefore, that this passion can be oppos'd by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider'd as copies, with those objects, which they represent."[31] Therefore, reason has no capacity to judge the passions, or by so judging them, to control action through choosing which passions to follow. As Hume states, "[s]ince reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition, I infer, that the same faculty is as incapable of preventing volition, or of disputing the preference with any passion or emotion."[32]

Ultimately, the power of the understanding to exercise judgements in relation to passions and actions, is reduced to the capacity to evaluate the prospects for effective intervention in the situation of desired objects. The passions can only be called

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[30] See *EMPL,* pp.533-37. Hume makes the following comments regarding the learned practice of self-isolation from the common and "conversable" world: "...Learning has been as great a Loser by being shut up in Colleges and Cells, and secluded from the World and good Company. By that Means, every Thing of what we call *Belles Lettres* became totally barbarous, being cultivated by Men without any Taste of Life or Manners, and without that Liberty and Facility of Thought and Expression which can only be acquir'd by conversation. Even Philosophy went to Wrack by this moaping recluse Method of Study, and became as chimerical in her Conclusions as she was unintelligible in her Stile and Manner of Delivery. And indeed, what cou'd be expected from Men who never consulted Experience in any of their Reasonings, or who never search'd for that Experience, where alone it is to be found, in common Life and Conversation?" (534-5)

[31] *Treatise*, p. 415.

unreasonable in two cases: firstly, when they are founded on something which is supposed to exist but doesn't, and secondly, "[w]hen in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects"; and as Hume points out, this is not really a judgement concerning the passion itself, but merely a judgement concerning those reflections which accompanied the passion: "In short, a passion must be accompany'd with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then 'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment."[33]

Since these passional impulses are not subject to the judgement of reason, they are equally not subject to a set of prior rules which would predetermine the general orientation of human subjects. Hume explains that in the motivation to act, the will may follow impulses which do not follow the kinds of patterns which would be expected if the subject were supposed to be entirely self-interested. In analysing the more subtle refinements of this emotive model of action (including thought), Hume includes comments to the effect that this comprehends selfless motivations: "Men often act knowingly against their interest: For which reason the view of the greatest possible good does not always interest them." In fact, the passions are susceptible to such complexity in their permutations that no single principle may account for all human motivation: "Men often counter-act a violent passion in prosecution of their interests and designs: 'Tis not therefore the present uneasiness alone, which determines them." The psychology to which this gives rise is more complex than that conceived by previous thinkers. Hume explains that "[t]he common error of metaphysicians has lain in ascribing the direction of the will entirely to one of these principles, and supposing the other to have no influence." [34] For Hume, however, the basic motivation of human agents arises with an attitude of desire in response to an object; this basic response may then be countervailed by a different passion which motivates the agent towards a different course of action. The formation of individual characters, and the mutual interference of divergent motivations, give the Humean subject a greater variety of rationale, than one who is supposed to be governed wholly by pure self-interest or any such single principle.

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[32] Ibid., p.414-5.
[33] Ibid., p.416.
[34] Ibid., p.418.

3.) Observing the Will: necessity and prediction in *common active life*

In his treatment of the will, Hume expends much effort in explaining how the relation of causation and the notion of necessity operates in human motivation. In his discussion of this question, Hume explains the relationship between our comprehension of causation in the relations between natural phenomena, and the comprehension of the causes of human action. First of all he shows that human motivation is susceptible to the same kinds of reasoning used in understanding natural events; second of all, he explains that it is our understanding of human motivation which occurs prior to the understanding of non-human events.

Hume states, "'[t]is universally acknowledg'd, that the operations of external bodies are necessary, and that in the communication of their motion, in their attraction, and mutual cohesion, there are not the least traces of indifference or liberty." Furthermore, "whatever is in this respect on the same footing with matter, must be acknowledg'd to be necessary." The same reasoning grounds his argument that the will is in fact based on necessity and not on liberty. This necessity arises in the causal relation between passional motive and action, and more generally, between character and action. The first section of II.3 opens with a refutation of the idea that there can be liberty in the will. Hume's intention is stated as follows:

> That we may know whether this be the case with the actions of the mind, we shall begin with examining matter, and considering on what the idea of a necessity in its operations are founded, and why we conclude one body or action to be the infallible cause of another.

In order to do this, he reiterates the argument that causal necessity is not inferred from a source discoverable in objects or their relations, but "their constant union alone, with which we are acquainted...".[35] His argument with respect to the motivation of human actions runs along the lines that the constant conjunction, or union in appearance which occurs between character, motivation and act, are as susceptible to epistemological associationism as natural events. Therefore, he argues, the apprehension of causal relations between human agents and their actions, is as strong as the perception of physical causation.

Hume's unequivocal answer to the question of whether or not the will is subject to necessity is that in the will "there are not the least traces of indifference or liberty."[36] In order to illustrate the nature of this necessity, and to demonstrate its truth, Hume makes two kinds of inference. The first involves a reiteration of the theory of causal induction

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[35] Ibid., p.400.
[36] Ibid., p.400.

which was articulated in Book I. The rules which were established in that book are shown to be the same as are used in ascertaining the motives which *cause* human actions. The second inference proves to be the more important. This is the inference from human behaviour in "the common course of human affairs".[37] From this kind of observation of human nature in action, Hume derives his description of how individuals actually infer such concepts of cause in common life. Hume regarded this kind of causal inference as being the primary form, with more general inferences made with reference to inanimate objects occurring on the basis of this. We are reminded once again of Hume's description of the extensiveness of the causal relation in I.1.iv,[38] as Hume outlines the spheres in which necessary causes are understood to operate in human motivation:

> To this end a very slight and general view of the common course of human affairs will be sufficient. There is no light, in which we can take them, that does not confirm this principle. Whether we consider mankind according to the difference of sexes, ages, governments, conditions, or methods of education; the same uniformity and regular operation of natural principles are discernible. Like causes still produce like effects; in the same manner as in the mutual action of the elements and powers of nature. [39]

This passage invokes both forms of inference. It is in the observation of human affairs that we may confirm the practice of inferring causal relations in the will, and this confirmation is compared to the efficacy of causes in nature.

Hume clarified the nature of causes which are supposed to operate in the human will, stating that, "[n]o union can be more constant and certain, than that of some actions with some motives and characters; and if in other cases the union is uncertain, 'tis no more than what happens in the operations of body...".[40] As has already been shown, Hume understood human action and thought to arise in response to passions which themselves arise in response to real or imagined objects. The passions which drive the will are beyond the powers of the understanding to interrogate or control, and they determine human volition according to their respective strengths. This establishes a basic form of human volition arising in response to objects which resembles Hobbes's treatment of "the interior beginnings of voluntary motions" in book I of *Leviathan.*[41] Since the passional response to the object arises prior to that of the intellect, it may be said to determine the response of the subject in a necessary manner. However Hume's treatment of this form of necessity is more complex. The human subject which he describes is not simply blown from one object

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[37] Ibid., p.401.
[38] Ibid., p.12.
[39] Ibid., p.401.
[40] Ibid., p.404.
[41] Thomas Hobbes, op. cit., p. 37.

of desire to the next in an unpredictable manner by its immediate appetites. In Hume's view, human subjectivity attained a high degree of regularity through the formation of character. Partly on the basis of his analysis of the indirect passions in the earlier parts of Book II, he discussed a notion of "character" which comprehends the subject's propensity to desire certain kinds of objects, and to be averse to others, with a great deal of regularity. In a given person, or type of person, similar motives will arise repeatedly and lead to similar modes of action, giving that person, or those persons a predictability from the point of view of the outside spectator.

The notion of predictability, and that of probability more generally, was treated in Book I of the *Treatise*, where Hume had taken to task received notions of causal induction. In the *Abstract* of the *Treatise* he indicated that uncertainty, or non-demonstrable probability, was to be given a much more central role in his treatment of human understanding than it had been in previous works of this kind, due to the importance of such reasonings in common active life. In his argument concerning the will, the manner in which this notion of probability appears in the reasonings of common life is given a fuller treatment. For it is in the apprehension of cause as it appears in the understanding of other people's motives to act, that this non-demonstrative reasoning finds its use; and it was from observing this kind of reasoning in practice that Hume derived his theory of the habit of believing in causal necessity. He began by invoking the manner in which our understanding of inanimate objects is supposed to occur:

> ...in judging of the actions of men we must proceed upon the same maxims, as when we reason concerning external objects. When any phenomena are constantly and invariably conjoin'd together, they acquire such a connexion in the imagination, that it passes from one to the other, without any doubt or hesitation.[42]

However, what is connected in the objects themselves, may not, and often is not known to the spectator. Hume reiterates his argument concerning epistemological uncertainty. The causal relations are supposed by the subject to have complete efficacy, but due to incomplete knowledge, the subject is left in a state of uncertainty:

> But [...] there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind ballances contrary experiments, and deducting the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance or evidence, which remains. Even when these contrary experiments are entirely equal, we remove not the notion of causes and necessity; but supposing that the usual contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and conceal'd causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgement on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally

[42] Ibid., p.403.

necessary, tho' to appearance not equally constant or certain.[43]

Thus Hume establishes that the probabilistic reasoning described in I.3 finds its applications in the attempts of the spectators of human behaviour to ascertain either the motives which gave rise to given actions, or the actions which are likely to arise from the motives typical of a certain character. Knowledge of this will necessarily be incomplete, as "a slight and general view of the common course of human affairs"[44] shows, hence the crucial importance of being able to estimate probabilities.

In support of this argument Hume calls upon the concept of "moral evidence", which he believes to be accepted as a valid basis for reasoning among philosophers and non-philosophers alike. He asserts that there exists, "[n]o philosopher, whose judgement is so riveted to this fantastical system of liberty, as not to acknowledge the force of *moral evidence*, and both in speculation and practice proceed upon it, as upon a reasonable foundation." *Moral evidence* is defined as, "nothing but a conclusion concerning the actions of men, deriv'd from the consideration of their motives, temper and situation."[45] He believes this kind of evidence to be in common use, needing only to be observed in the normal course of human affairs in order to be accepted.

Besides the doctrines of other philosophers, there is one essential point of view from which Hume needed to defend the thesis of volitional necessity. This is the point of view of the individual who feels as if his volitions are his own in such a way as to suggest that he is not subject to any cause external to his own decision to act. Hume says that, "[w]e may imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves," but the perspective of the actor himself is misleading. Hume's counter-move is to invoke the character who becomes central both to Hume's and later to Adam Smith's moral theory; this is the "spectator". In Hume's argument he is the external observer of an individual's behaviour who always perceives motives for action better than the active individual himself. Hume argues that

> "a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and disposition. Now this is the very essence of necessity, according to the forgoing doctrine."[46]

Thus, Hume's theory of causal induction appears to be derived from the common person's perception of the actions and motives of others, as well as his own, as he encounters them in "common active life." It is in this *social* activity, of pursuing one's motives, and

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[43] Ibid., p.403-4.
[44] Ibid., p.401.
[45] Ibid., p.404.
[46] Ibid., p.409.

observing the effects of other people's, that the principal activities of the understanding occur. The understanding is motivated by the desire to intervene effectively amongst objects found in a social context, and the task of the understanding is to estimate the motives and powers of others in doing the same.

4.) Human Nature and Society

Hume's treatment of the necessity of the human will does not stop at the purely logical aspects. In the course of his argument, Hume indicates that the understanding of human motivations is important for the exploration of human sociability, and for various spheres within which human activity operates. Given the nature of the *Treatise* as a philosophical work, and the particular tasks performed by its respective books, a detailed and concrete treatment of these aspects of human life in their external appearances would not have been appropriate. However, Hume does indicate the areas in which his philosophical understanding of human nature may be applied. This is important for two reasons. The first is that it indicates the spheres of *common life* from which the theory of the will is derived; and the second, is that it helps to explain just what kinds of subject matter he had in mind for persons schooled in his philosophy.

In II.3.i, Hume traces the steps from the reasonings given in Book one concerning the knowledge of objects in general, to the particular understanding of society in terms of human motivation. He states that, "[w]e must certainly allow, that the cohesion of the parts of matter arises from natural and necessary principles, whatever difficulty we may find in explaining them…". This reiterates the assumption underlying the epistemology of causation from Hume's treatment of the understanding. The application of this theory, and also its source, is given as the human propensity to form societies. Hume asserts that, "for a like reason we must allow, that human society is founded on like principles; and our reason in the latter case, is better than even that in the former; because we not only observe, that men *always* seek society, but can also explain the principles, on which this universal propensity is founded…"[47] In this passage, Hume both derives his evidence for a theory of regular causes from the observable fact of human sociability, *and* proposes that it is in this area that the explanatory power of his theory can be applied.

Hume then goes on to explain where and how it is that these principles are seen to operate. The theory of the human understanding of cause in relation to motivation is one which tends to be ineffective when it comes to the particular acts of individuals. In this part

[47] Ibid., p.402.

of the *Treatise*, as well as later on in the essays on political subjects,[48] Hume makes use of typologies of people in showing how motivation and its causes may be understood. In the case of an individual, he makes use of the notion of *character* in order to indicate the regularity with which certain motivations may occur to a person. However, given the extent to which the many passional and other factors which give rise to action may be unknown to the observer, this general notion of the identity of an individual may still give rise to difficulties. Therefore, in order to make human actions intelligible it is necessary to know which factors are shared by certain groups or types of individuals. Hume states that, "[t]here are also characters peculiar to different nations and particular persons, as well as common to mankind. The knowledge of these characters is founded on the observation of an uniformity in the actions, that flow from them; and this uniformity forms the very essence of necessity."[49] His first example of the use of such a typology of person is one which concerns the "quality" or social status of persons. He says, "[t]he skin, pores, muscles, and nerves of a day-labourer are different from those of a man of quality: So are his sentiments, actions and manners."[50] The differences between the two classifications of person, are also the shared characteristics of members of the respective groups. These are the "sentiments, actions and manners" which tend to characterise particular members, and it is these which give the groups their general intelligibility:

> The different stations of life influence the whole fabric, external and internal; and these different stations arise necessarily, because uniformly, from the necessary and uniform principles of human nature.[51]

It is through this kind of reasoning, where individuals are understood within general classifications of status, type, activity, etc, that Hume suggests it is possible to build up a general profile of how society is formed, and how it is variegated into its different active parts. He says,

> [m]en cannot live without society, and cannot be associated without government. Government makes a distinction of property, and establishes the different ranks of men. This produces industry, traffic, manufactures, law-suits, war, leagues, alliances, voyages, travels, cities, fleets, ports, and all those other actions and objects, which cause such a diversity, and at the same time maintain such an uniformity in human life.[52]

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[48] See especially, *The Rise of the Arts and Sciences*, in *EMPL*, pp111-112. Hume states a general rule to guide efforts to understand the motivation of persons: "...if I were to assign any general rule to help us in applying this distinction, it would be the following, *What depends upon a few persons is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to chance, or secret and unknown causes: What arises from a great number, may often be accounted for by determinate and known causes.*"(112, Hume's emphasis).

[49] *Treatise*, p.403.

[50] Ibid., p.402.

[51] Ibid., p.402.

[52] Ibid., p.402.

Thus, it is in the experience of men as social beings who involve themselves in a highly varied collection of activities in common life that the notions of cause and the will arise for the individual. Hume's explication of the principles which govern human volition, and of the intellectual method through which these may be understood gives rise to a science of man which appears to lead towards a sociology rather than a purely abstract treatment of human nature. Since man appears everywhere in a society, the science of human nature projected in the introduction to the *Treatise of Human Nature*, becomes a science concerning the engagement of the individual in human society when put into practice. The 'understanding' of an individual as described by Hume, finds itself grappling with objects which become comprehensible within the context of other individuals in the form of a society.

Hume's understanding of the scientific task was not intended to deviate in its principles from the manner in which human beings operate in common life. Although his perspective on human volition in a social context implies a broader project of scientific exploration, it is also closely linked to the perceptions of individuals involved in common life activities. Within the various spheres of life activity, Hume adduces a series of examples which show how the behaviour of persons is governed by the same reasoning as founds his philosophical argument. He states:

> The same kind of reasoning runs thro' politics, war, commerce, oeconomy, and indeed mixes itself so entirely in human life, that 'tis impossible to act or subsist a moment without having recourse to it. A prince who imposes a tax upon his subjects, expects their compliance. A general, who conducts an army, makes account of a certain degree of courage. A merchant looks for fidelity and skill in his factor or super-cargo. A man, who gives orders for his dinner, doubts not of the obedience of his servants. In short, as nothing more nearly interests us than our own actions and those of others, the greatest part of our reasonings is employ'd in judgments concerning them.[53]

Thus, the principles which are shown to ground an understanding of human nature in general, and of human beings in society, are believed by Hume to operate in the spheres of active life *within* society. The *common active life* to which he refers in the *Abtract* of the *Treatise* provides the empirical source for his theory of knowledge and logic, and is also understood to be the place where the theory operates in practice.

In the part of the *Treatise* concerning the human will (II.3), Hume makes an interesting statement concerning the origins of his theory of causation and the human understanding. Although he had shown that the human will is subject to necessary causes by comparing it to the causal principles governing body in II.3.i, he states in II.3.ii that the

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[53] Ibid., p.405.

general theory of causal necessity arose from the observation of human action in the first place. He says:

> Let no one [...] put an invidious construction on my words, by saying simply, that I assert the necessity of human actions, and place them on the same footing with the operations of senseless matter. I do not ascribe to the will that unintelligible necessity, which is suppos'd to lie in matter. But I ascribe to matter, that intelligible quality, call it necessity or not, which the most rigorous orthodoxy does or must allow to belong to the will. I change, therefore, nothing in the receiv'd systems, with regard to the will, but only with regard to material objects.[54]

This underlines the priority of the world of human over the world of non-human natural phenomena in determining the construction of causal intelligibility. It supports the contention that his theory of the understanding was strongly concerned with the manner in which the individual understands human behaviour and thought processes in society. Having worked out his epistemological arguments from this stand point, he then went on to a level of generality which had implications beyond the sphere of human action – i.e. his concern with human thought and behaviour, was then extended into those areas of human thought which were concerned with other things in politics, history, commercial subjects, theology, etc, and could be extended into natural philosophy.[55] Hume's approach towards the question of human motivation inverts that of Hobbes. Hobbes started out from a theory of matter and causation drawn from natural philosophy, and applied this to the understanding of the human mind, whereas Hume argues that the human understanding of cause arises from the observation of the human will in the first place, and applies only secondarily to material causation. Hume's reference to Hobbes's *Leviathan* in this part of the *Treatise* shows that it was at least present to mind at the time of writing.[56]

So, it would appear that the first two books of the *Treatise* do indeed form a *compleat chain of reasoning*, as Hume claimed in the *Advertisement,*[57] inasmuch as the constructive activity of the understanding is bound into those of the passions in the form of an individual's will. However, it would appear to be a mistake to read Book II as a purely secondary argument which adds to Book I. The explanation of the understanding in Book I relies heavily on observations whose explication was postponed to the second book. The argument in Book II concerning the will bears a close relationship with the arguments concerning understanding in Book I. Hume not only integrates the direct passions directly into the processes of the understanding (as their indispensable motivational structure) but he also takes the common and philosophical understanding of volition to be paradigmatic

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[54] Ibid., p.410.
[55] In fact, Hume did not himself write on natural-scientific subjects in the whole course of his career.
[56] Ibid., p.402.

for the understanding of causes in general. The discussion of the direct passions in II.3 presents an elaborate argument which is merely summarised in that passage in I.1.iv. where Hume sketches the extent of the sphere within which causation is understood to operate.

5.) Conclusion

As the analysis of I.1 has shown, the passions were given an important role in motivating human thought in Hume's theory of the individual. The division of the subject (I.1.ii) suggested that the treatment of the passions should be read as a set of processes running parallel to those of understanding. In Book II, moreover, the relationship between these parallel processes was clarified. The understanding, insofar as this is the sum total of mental processes dealing exclusively with ideas, is shown to be a reflex of passional drives, which orientate the human agent towards action. This action may be practical or mental, but always involves the positing of an end by the passions rather than by reason. As Hume states in section III.3.iv, "[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[58]

Furthermore, analysis of Hume's theory of will and cognition shows that it was designed to understand the human capacity to understand objects which are desired in a social context. The processes of understanding are called into action in order to comprehend such desired objects in their relation to human and other factors which condition their current states, and in relation to the means available for intervention in such situations. The means for intervention are likewise conceived in terms of causal relations.

By analysing the relationship between the understanding and the will as it is presented in the *Treatise*, it is possible to clarify Hume's remarks on the importance of non-demonstrative reasoning in the *Abstract*. In the latter, Hume explained that "probabilities" were among those forms of evidence "on which life and action entirely depend",[59] and echoed Leibniz in his chastisement of other philosophers for having neglected to explore probabilities adequately. The significance of Hume's observation that uncertainty is the more important form of evidence than demonstrative certainty in active life is reinforced by the arguments which he presents in the *Treatise* concerning the relationship between reason and action. It is clear that Hume did not include "probabilities" merely because these had been neglected hitherto, but because in his theory of the understanding, cognition could never occur without some impetus towards action; and

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[57] Ibid., p.xii.
[58] Ibid., p.415.
[59] Ibid., p.647.

since in his view, action usually operated on the basis of uncertain evidence, uncertainty would have to be integrated into the human subject's capacity to reason.

Hume's treatment of the will clarifies much that is only alluded to in the treatment of the understanding. Often Hume appears to give a more detailed treatment to aspects of the human subject, which for reasons of brevity, he had excluded from the discussion of mental activities concerned only with ideas in Book I. In particular there are two interrelated points which he raises in Book II which have a direct bearing on the interpretation which may be given to Book I. First of all, it is strongly re-emphasised that his philosophical project was prompted in the first place by observation of human behaviour, rather than by a concern with what can be known in the study of non-human nature. In this regard, his *Treatise* may be read as a descriptive work based on contemporary human practices. The habitual inference of causes from effects described in Book I is not something which Hume derived paradigmatically from natural philosophy, but is something which is necessary to human social life first and foremost. The second point, running in a similar vein, is that the activities in which Hume's human subjects were engaged, are those which involve understanding, not of non-human causal relations, but of the relations between humans, their motives, and their actions.

CHAPTER 5

DESIRE AND ACQUISITION:

THE HUMEAN INDIVIDUAL AND THE CONSUMPTION OF GOODS.

1.) Pride and Humility: the Humean Individual's Self-Regard

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the construction of the passions in Hume's theory of the individual with a view to ascertaining what kinds of practices and what kind of social objects it was shaped around. The performance of this task of contextualising the *Treatise* rests on the premise that Hume's theory of understanding was built into a theory of motivation and practice, as chapter 4 showed; and that the theory of motivation and practice was built on the observation of activities in contemporary society, which was explored in chapter 3.

The primary impulse in the Humean subject is *desire* (or *aversion, hope or fear*). According to chapter 4, it is this kind of emotional drive which initiates the intellectual activities of the understanding and the practical activities of the individual; and such drives span a wide range that includes such gentler passions as curiosity, being a desire for knowledge. Therefore, the first question which must be addressed in order to establish the contextual meaning of Hume's model of human nature, must seek to clarify the manner in which the passions, and desire in particular, establish objectives. By analysing Hume's treatment of *pride* and the *indirect passions*, it is possible to infer what kinds of objects were sought by the individual through the operations of Hume's model of human understanding. Thus the first question which must be addressed concerns the *ends* which govern the rationality of the Humean subject.

The second question concerns the *means* used by Hume's individual, in order to achieve the ends, or to acquire the objects, desired by the passions. Having established the ends towards which the activities of the understanding are supposed to have been directed, it is necessary to establish the manner in which his subject might have been designed in order to achieve these goals. Having presented an answer to the question, *to which ends is the understanding driven by the passions?*, it is necessary to answer the question, *what intellectual, and by extension, what practical means does the human understanding provide for the purposes of achieving these ends?* Since the central operation which Hume gives to the human understanding is the evaluation of causal relations, it is a matter of establishing how this capacity is endowed with a usefulness in Hume's work. The term

cause, for instance, becomes interchangeable with the word *power* in some parts of the *Treatise*; and the word *power* is used to explain the belief in human capacities to act in general, and particular, forms such as in the use of money II.1 and II.2 and in the drawing up of financial accounts II.3. Of course, as the comprehensive treatment of human nature Hume's theory was intended to help explain any and all forms of human activity. The fact that certain specific kinds of practice received particular attention and emphasis in his analysis suggests that they had some prominence in Hume's experience and perhaps required explanation since they were increasing prominent as social phenomena. In Hume's treatment of the passions, the desire to be seen acquiring or in possession of certain goods has an exemplary importance for his explanation of pride. This should not be understood to imply that such activities and their attendant passions underlie all human desires and practices, but Hume does give such motives as pride and acquisitiveness a general importance in explaining the human activities surrounding him.

In this chapter, the analysis of Hume's treatment of *property and riches* in relation to the indirect passions of *pride and humility* demonstrates the exemplary importance of money and commodities for Hume's theory of the will and the understanding. Accordingly, the chapter carries out two tasks. First, the theory of passions from II.1 and II.2 of the *Treatise* is analysed in order to establish what nature of motives drive the understanding and the activities of the subject, i.e. it establishes the ends of practice. Second, a further analysis of passages from that part of Book II reveals the kind of means available to the subject for achieving these ends; and, furthermore, it reveals the manner in which the theory of cause and probability expounded in Book I, and the theory of the will presented in part 3 of Book II, are implicated in this form of practice. Part 1 of the chapter focuses on II.1 and on pride and humility; part 2 continues by examining II.2 and Hume's analysis of love and hatred.

a. 'The Pleasures of the Imagination': desire and its ends

The first part of the passional life of the individual which Hume analyses in the *Treatise* is the sense of pride (and its opposite humility). Although Hume generally recognises the efficacy of curiosity as well as selfless, other-directed motives such as benevolence, neither of which necessarily require pride for their emotive force, Hume's analysis of the human passions gives pride a central place in his systematic treatment of the passions.

It is in Hume's treatment of this sentiment, that he presents the clearest and most explicit treatment of the human desire for objects. The second part of Book II presents

Hume's analysis of the more sociable passions which generate feelings with respect to other individuals. However, the subject of the second part of Book II hinges fundamentally on the subject of part 1; this is because it is through sympathy that Hume's subject evaluates the other people surrounding it, and this sympathy primarily involves the empathetic imagination of the other person's feelings of pride and humility. Therefore, the treatment of *pride* and its opposite, is doubly interesting; for the purposes of this part of the chapter, it establishes clearly the emotive relations between Hume's individual and the objects which it desires, and for the purposes of part 2 of this chapter it establishes the basis upon which this individual can comprehend the feelings of others.

Book II of the *Treatise* presents an elaborate analysis of those "impressions of reflexion" to which Hume referred in *The division of the subject* in Book I. That section, I.1.ii, had indicated the close inter-relationship between the operations of the passions and the operations of ideas in the understanding; essentially it was indicated that Book II charted part of the human subject which is chronologically and functionally parallel to that described in Book I. Therefore, much of the material contained in the Book *Of the Passions* underpins what was said in Book I, and must be incorporated into the interpretation of Hume's theory of the understanding.

At the beginning of Book II, Hume establishes a series of distinctions which determine the structure of his analysis of the passions. The first distinction clarifies the one which he had made between different kinds of impression in I.1.ii.. He says that "the impressions admit of another division into *original* and *secondary*. This division of the impressions is the same with that which I formerly made use of when I distinguish'd them into impressions of *sensation* and *reflexion*." The original impressions are the impressions of sense which "without any antecedent perception arise in the soul, from the constitution of the body, from the animal spirits, or from the application of objects to the external organs." The impressions which are to be analysed in Book II are the, "secondary, or reflective impressions [which] proceed from some of these original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea." These are the "passions, and other emotions resembling them."[1]

The second distinction which Hume makes, divides the passions into two kinds, "*viz.* the *calm* and the *violent*." He remarks that this division is not quite exact and admits of exceptions but since the subject of "the human mind" is "so copious and various," he writes that he, "shall here take advantage of this vulgar and specious division, that I may

[1] *Treatise*, p.275.

proceed with the greater order...". In the category of *calm* passions he finds, "the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition, and external objects," and in the second, "are the passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility."[2]

Finally, Hume observes that, "[w]hen we take a survey of the passions, there occurs a division of them into *direct* and *indirect*." This is the distinction which separates off those passions which make up the human will, treated in II.3, and which *directly* motivate human actions. Hume states that, "by direct passions I understand such as arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure. By indirect such as proceed from the same principles, but by the conjunction of other qualities."[3] The explanation for this distinction is postponed at this stage but the manner in which the indirect passions provide complex webs of association through which the direct passions obtain their force is clarified in II.3.[4] In part 1, the distinction is sufficient to justify Hume's giving a list of the passions under each heading. He writes that, "I can only observe in general, that under the indirect passions I comprehend pride, humility, ambition, vanity, love, hatred, envy, pity, malice, generosity, with their dependants. And under the direct passions, desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, fear, despair and security."[5] He proposes to begin with the former although, as the passage II.3.ix indicates,[6] the indirect passions should also be understood to have a strong impact on the will. Accordingly, the first two parts of Book II present the primary forms of the indirect passions under the headings, *Of Pride and Humility*, and *Of Love and Hatred*, respectively.

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[2] Ibid., p.276. For a discussion of the division of the subject of the passions in relation to previous interpretations, see Louis E. Loeb, 'Hume's Moral Sentiments and the Structure of the *Treatise*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy,* vol. 15 (1977), pp. 395-403. Loeb writes the following: "According to Norman Kemp Smith and Thomas Hearn, Hume classified moral sentiments as direct passions. According to Páll Árdal, Hume classified the basic moral sentiments of approval and disapproval of persons as direct passions." Loeb, however, contends, "on the contrary, that Hume's moral sentiments are neither direct nor indirect passions. Consequently, the connection between Books II and III of the *Treatise* is much less intimate that Árdal and Hearn have recently suggested."(395) Loeb argues that, "the only natural reading of paragraph three and the first sentence of paragraph four of [II.1.i]," understands the *direct* and *indirect* passions to exhaust the category of the *violent* passions; in the calm passions, Loeb finds two types, the one being the "sense of beauty and deformity" and the other being the "moral sentiments".(396) In his review of the structure of the *Treatise* as a whole, Loeb suggests on the basis of this, that the "calm" passions form the subject of Book III. This is true to an extent; certainly, the latter category of calm passions forms the subject of Book III. However, the subject of sentiments regarding objects of beauty and deformity would have been intended, presumably, for the unwritten fifth book on criticism, and was in fact addressed in the *Essays, Moral and Political* during the 1740s and in the *Four Dissertations* in 1757. Furthermore, the calm passions are not entirely excluded from examination in Book II. Judgements concerning beauty are considered in section II.1.viii, where it appears in the analysis of indirect (and thus according to Loeb's categorisation, violent) passions with reference to personal beauty and deformity. For Hume's introduction of the 'moral sense' see III.1.ii.

[3] *Treatise*, p.276.

[4] See note 13 of this chapter.

[5] Ibid., p.276-7

[6] See Treatise, p. 439.

At the beginning of his analysis Hume makes an interesting observation on the susceptibility of these passions to observation and analysis. He says that these passions cannot be described in themselves due to their inherent simplicity: "The utmost we can pretend to is a description of them, by an enumeration of such circumstances, as attend them...".[7] For Hume, the emotions themselves cannot be described any further than to say that they exist. He therefore admits that the underlying emotional-psychical life of man can only be accessed through its attendant circumstances. This combination of accepting the immediate inaccessibility of mental life, while continuing to attempt a reconstruction of mental life, by modelling its operations in a manner consistent with its external manifestations (i.e. objects and actions), resembles the methodological observation cited from Alfred Schutz in Chapter 2. It supports the argument that although Hume's goal may have been the construction of a universalistic model of human nature, his actual endeavours had to be based on observing individuals in his given historical context. Furthermore, his theory of human nature must therefore have been limited and shaped by the kinds of things which he was observing.

In Hume's analysis, there are two basic dimensions to the circumstances surrounding pride. The first, is the relation which pride has to its *object*, and the second is its relation to *causes*. The *object* of pride (and humility) is always the same, whereas the cause varies from case to case. Hume states that, "'[t]is evident, that pride and humility, tho' directly contrary, have yet the same OBJECT. This object is self, or that succession of related ideas and impressions, of which we have an intimate memory and consciousness. Here the view always fixes when we are actuated by either of these passions."[8] He explains that the variation between the polar emotions of pride and humility occurs as the result of the advantages (or disadvantages) which the relation between our idea of our*self* and *other objects* which are in some way associated with it. He says that,

> [A]ccording as our idea of ourself is more or less advantageous, we feel either of those opposite affections, and are elated by pride, or dejected with humility. Whatever other objects may be comprehended by the mind, they are always consider'd with a view to ourselves; otherwise they wou'd never be able either to excite these passions, or produce the smallest encrease or diminution of them. When self enters not into the consideration, there is no room either for pride or humility.[9]

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[7] Ibid., p.277.
[8] Ibid., p.277. In Alasdair MacIntyre's analysis of Hume's philosophy in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Hume's idea of pride, through which a *self* is constructed in society, presents the solution to the problem of self-identity in Book I part 4.
[9] Ibid., p.277.

Thus, the self is placed right at the centre of these indirect passions in such a way that *objects* only obtain a significance when *consider'd with a view to ourselves.*[10] The strength of Hume's conviction concerning the basic egocentricity of the passions (and therefore implicitly the understanding since it is motivated by them), is presented emphatically in his argument that this orientation towards the self is a fundamental and universal *natural* principle. He states that,

> 'Tis evident in the first place, that these passions are determin'd to have self for their *object*, not only by a natural but also by an original property. No one can doubt but this property is *natural* from the constancy and steadiness of its operations. 'Tis always self, which is the object of pride and humility; and whenever the passions look beyond, 'tis still with a view to ourselves, nor can any person or object otherwise have any influence upon us.

The orientation towards the interests of the self is the "distinguishing characteristic of these passions." It is one of the "original qualities to the mind, [without which] it cou'd never have any secondary ones; because in that case it wou'd have no foundation for action, nor cou'd ever begin to exert itself." Finally this is among the qualities which, "we must consider as original,[...] such as are most inseparable from the soul, and can be resolv'd into no other...".[11]

While the self is the object of the passions of pride and humility, it cannot be their cause according to Hume's argument. In order for the emotion of pride to arise, the individual requires some *other* objects which have a suitable relation to the self. Hume's proposition that the *cause* of pride and humility cannot be the *self* is based on the argument that if both of these contrary emotions could be attributed to the same cause, then they would both arise at the same time and would therefore cancel each other out. His reasoning on this is implicitly quantitative: if contrary passions arise, then the smaller is subtracted from the larger to find the effective remainder of the larger. This is analogous to the calculation of the probability of causes described in I.3, and to the exemplary activity of accounting which he describes in II.3.i. Therefore, Hume argues, "we must[...] make a distinction betwixt the cause and the object of these passions; betwixt that idea, which excites them, and that to which they direct their view, when excited." In order for one of these emotions to arise, a further element is required which is peculiar to one of the passions. This will operate through the association of both ideas and passions: "The first idea, that is presented to the mind, is that of the cause or productive

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[10] This need for egocentric motivation is reflected in the activities of the understanding as well as in the indirect passions: "It can never in the least concern us to know, that such objects are causes, and such others effects, if both the causes and effects be indifferent to us." *Treatise*, p. 414.

[11] Ibid., p.280.

principle. This excites the passion, connected with it; and that passion, when excited, turns our view to another idea, which is that of self. Here then is a passion plac'd betwixt two ideas, of which the one produces it, and the other is produc'd by it. The first idea, therefore, represents the *cause*, the second the *object* of the passion."[12] It is this complex and indirect relation of object, ideas and emotions, which Hume calls the "double relation of impressions and ideas", and which grounds his analysis of the indirect passions.

It is therefore the *causes* of pride which are the more historically contingent part of Hume's analysis. The *object* remains the same at all times and in all cases; but the *causes* of pride are many and will vary from case to case. Although Hume considered the basic types of cause to be natural, and in some sense universal, his treatment of the specific objects which can cause pride were conditioned by the nature of his observations of the exterior characteristics of contemporary life. It is in his categorisation and enumeration of these causes that the historian can find clues concerning the motivational orientation and practical powers which Hume's model incorporates from his historical context. The principal characteristic of the causes of pride, Hume observes, is, "that their most obvious and remarkable property is the vast variety of *subjects*, on which they may be plac'd." Hume lists the various types of cause which can prompt pride which moves in relation to the self from the closest to the farthest. The first two groups of causes include attributes of the person and skills:

> Every valuable quality of the mind, whether of the imagination, judgement, memory or disposition; wit, good-sense, learning, courage, justice, integrity; all these are the causes of pride; and their opposites of humility. Nor are these passions confin'd to the mind, but extend their view to the body likewise. A man may be proud of his beauty, strength, agility, good mein, address in dancing, riding, fencing, and of his dexterity in any manual business or manufacture.

The third kind of object which can cause pride is not the last in importance since it defines the relation which is felt between the subject and his other attributes. Hume says, "[b]ut this is not all. The passions looking farther, comprehend whatever objects are in the least ally'd or related to us. Our country, family, children, relations, riches, houses, gardens, horses, dogs, cloaths; any of these may become a cause either of pride or of humility." Thus, property – the possession of things – is included in Hume's analysis of pride. [13]

The close relationship which must be understood to exist between Hume's theory of the indirect passions, and the theory of motivation and the will with which the treatment of the passions culminates is illustrated by the example which Hume presents in

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[12] Ibid., p.278.
[13] Ibid., p.279.

II.3.ix.. He gives the following to illustrate the manner in which hope and fear operate in the will, and prompt action towards objects, saying that the,

> indirect passions, being always agreeable or uneasy, give in their turn additional force to the direct passions, and encrease our desire and aversion to the object. Thus a suit of fine cloaths produces pleasure from their beauty; and this pleasure produces the direct passions, or the impressions of volition and desire. Again, when these cloaths are consider'd as belonging to ourself, the double relation conveys to us the sentiment of pride, which is an indirect passion, returns back to the direct affections, and gives new force to our desire or volition, joy or hope.[14]

This section shows clearly the tight functional relationship through which the indirect passions, the direct passions, the will, and the understanding, complement each other in the formation of a practical attitude towards manipulable objects. The choice of example supports the argument that it is in the acquisition of commodities that these activities would be most effective. Through these mutually reinforcing operations of the passions with regard to the suit of clothes, the understanding is prompted to calculate the prospects for a successful acquisition, and the expectation of increased feelings of pride:

> When good is certain or probable, it produces joy. When evil is in the same situation there arises GRIEF or SORROW.
>
> When either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to FEAR or HOPE, according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side or the other.
>
> DESIRE arises from good consider'd simply, and AVERSION is deriv'd from evil. The WILL exerts itself, when either the good or the absence of the evil may be attain'd by any action of the mind or body.[15]

Thus, Hume's subject appears to be motivated towards the procurement of consumer goods (which range from cloaths or "a fine scritoire", to the beautiful house mentioned below).[16] The indirect passions provide the further motivational purpose – the end of the individual's activity – through the feeling of pride that is enhanced by the beauties or other merits which become associated with the individual through acquisition.

In the context of a pragmatic interpretation of his theory of understanding and the will, Hume's treatment of property and its relationship to pride obtains a much greater importance than the other causes of pride. Although the passions, as Hume presents them, can attach themselves to a wider range of objects or causes, the interpretation of the will and its role in motivating the human actions presented in chapter 4 suggests that objects become of interest to the human subject primarily when they may be controlled or manipulated through practice. Chapter 4 showed how the human will is orientated

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[14] Ibid., p.439.
[15] Ibid., p.439.
[16] See for example, ibid., p.282.

towards altering the states of affairs which it finds in the world, and the understanding merely assists it in this task. Therefore, from the point of view of the will and the understanding, the sphere of objects associated with pride, which are most important are those which can be acquired. It would therefore appear that the most artificially contrived factors (i.e. property) would be the most important, from the point of view of control, because they are subject to further contrivance; whereas, the natural endowments of mind and body, are less susceptible to the efforts of the will.

The particular importance of *property*, and the means to acquire property, is emphasised by the depth of analysis which Hume gives to it in section II.1.x, and the regularity with which illustrative examples are drawn from this category to explain the basic operations of pride. For instance, in order to explain a distinction, "betwixt that *quality*, which operates, and the *subject*, on which it is plac'd" in the creation of feelings of pride, the example which is used as an illustration is one of a man who is proud of his house for its great beauty. [17] In the *Treatise*, the purpose of analysing the indirect passions is to establish those psychological principles through which constant and consistent propensities to desire particular types of object, or objectives, are maintained; and to establish clearly how it is that external objects, and types of objects, are causally linked into the chain of motivation which gives rise to plans of action. That the form which this motivational structure takes - in terms of both ends and means - is closely related to the practice of a society concerned with individualist consumption and status becomes clearly evident in the course of his analysis.

b.) Nature and Artifice: the origins of pride in objects

In Hume's analysis of the indirect passions, a key question which he addresses is, *to what extent, and in what sense, should the indirect passions be regarded as natural?* This question is divided into two narrower questions. The first is, *does the relation of pride to its* object *(i.e. the self) arise from a natural principle?* The second question is, *do the* causes *(i.e. the objects desired) of pride arise from natural principles?*

In answer to the first question, Hume reinforces the point that the relation to the self in the operations of the passions of pride and humility proceeds, "from an *original* quality or primary impulse." In relation to this he states that, "unless nature had given some original qualities to the mind, it cou'd never have any secondary ones; because in

[17] Ibid., p.279.

that case it wou'd have no foundation for action, nor cou'd ever begin to exert itself."[18] Thus the centrality of pride to the formation of social identity is taken as a natural fact. The second question is addressed to the more extensive and populous realm of causes. Hume suggests that, "we may, perhaps, make it a greater question, whether the *causes*, that produce the passion, be as *natural* as the object, to which it is directed...".[19] The sphere of objects to which Hume addresses himself is primarily that of commodities, those objects which can best be controlled through acquisition and possession. The question becomes one of, "whether all that vast variety proceeds from caprice or from the constitution of the mind."[20] In other words, Hume asks whether the desirability of objects associated with pride is created artificially and placed in the object itself by its manufacturer, or arises as a basic principle of human nature, for which the object must be fashioned if it is to be desirable. Hume answers the question as follows:

> This doubt we shall soon remove, if we cast our eye upon human nature, and consider that in all nations and ages, the same objects still give rise to pride and humility; and that upon the view even of a stranger, we can know pretty nearly, what will either increase or diminish his passions of this kind. If there be any variation in this particular, it proceeds from nothing but a difference in the tempers and complexions of men; and is besides very inconsiderable. Can we imagine it possible, that while human nature remains the same, men will ever become entirely indifferent to their power, riches, beauty or personal merit, and that their pride and vanity will not be affected by these advantages?[21]

Hume's answer to this question is interesting and subtle. In this he addressed an issue which had arisen as early as 1690 in debates on commerce,[22] when Nicholas Barbon had challenged the dominant mercantilist view that *luxury* was inimical to trade, the nation

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[18] Ibid., p.280.
[19] Ibid., p.281.
[20] Ibid., p.281.
[21] Ibid., p.281.
[22] In Book III Hume observes the following: "Of all the animals, with which this globe is peopled, there is none towards whom nature seems, at first sight, to have exercis'd more cruelty than towards man, in the numberless wants and necessities, with which she has loaded him, and in the slender means, which she affords to the leaving these necessities."(484) In society the wants increase perpetually, but man develops artificial means to overcome his native weakness, and to service his desires: "'Tis by society alone he is able to supply his defects, and raise himself up to an equality with his fellow-creatures, and even acquire a superiority above them. By society all his infirmities are compensated; and tho' in that situation his wants multiply every moment upon him, yet his abilities are still more augmented, and leave him in every respect more satisfied and happy, than 'tis possible for him, in his savage and solitary condition, ever to become. When every individual person labours a-part, and only for himself, his force is too small to execute any considerable work; his labour being employ'd in supplying all his different necessities, he never attains a perfection in any particular art; and as his force and success are not at all times equal, the least failure in either of these particulars must be attended with inevitable ruin and misery. Society provides a remedy for these *three* inconveniences. By the conjunction of forces, our power is augmented: By the partition of employments, our ability encreases: And by mutual succour we are less expos'd to fortune and accidents. 'Tis by this additional *force, ability,* and *security*, that society becomes advantageous."(485)

and its people. [23] Barbon argued that virtually everything which was desired by human beings could be called "wants of the mind" as opposed to natural "needs", and that in fact, the category of *needs* was so small as to be irrelevant to any consideration of trade or human desire in general.[24] This argument found its most famous and controversial expression in Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*,[25] and it is likely that Hume would have encountered it through the latter work. In Hume's analysis of the indirect passions of pride and humility, he is essentially addressing the desire for objects which are not needed in the manner postulated by natural law theorists as the minimal requirement for self-preservation. The objects which give rise to pride are indeed *wants of the mind*, which are unnecessary by any such naturalistic standard. However, whereas Barbon, in rejecting the naturalistic distinction between needs and wants as effectively useless, argued that almost all of human desires are artificial and based in pure acts of imagination whose range is infinite Hume instead re-appropriates the term "natural" but in a different manner. Hume assimilates Barbon's and Mandeville's observation of the propensity of humans to desire luxuries, and attributes this basic attitude of desire and its general orientation towards, "power, riches, beauty or personal merit" (or at least the perception of these) to underlying principles of human nature. However, he also accepts that the minute variations on these - the kinds of fashionable adjustments made to standard commodities such as clothes and domestic furnishings which Barbon regarded as the most prone to lucrative variation - are artificial. He admits that there is a particularity to the objects which *cause* these indirect passions and this is, in a sense, historical; it changes with circumstances and is therefore not original to human nature as such. Thus Hume argues that,

> "but tho' the causes of pride and humility be plainly *natural*, we shall find upon examination, that they are not *original*, and that 'tis utterly impossible they shou'd each of them be adapted to these passions by a particular provision, and primary constitution of nature. Beside their prodigious number, many of them are the effects of art, and arise partly from the industry, partly from the caprice, and partly from the good fortune of men. Industry produces houses, furniture, cloaths."

Like Barbon and Mandeville, Hume finds that the many variations to be found in the causes of pride are based on free creative imagination, not determined by the laws of human nature: "Caprice determines their particular kinds and qualities. And good fortune frequently contributes to all this, by discovering the effects that result from the

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[23] For analysis of the way in which the meanings associated with the term 'luxury' changed during the first half of the eighteenth century in Britain, see Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, (Cambridge).
[24] See A. E. Murphy, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 7-9.
[25] For Bernard Mandeville's comments on the subject of luxury see *The Fable of the Bees,* ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1924; reprinted Indianapolis, 1988), volume 2, Remark *L,* pp. 107-23.

different mixtures and combinations of bodies." To argue that such minute particularity and variation could arise directly from principles of nature, Hume realised, would entail postulating many different laws of nature:

> 'Tis absurd, therefore, to imagine, that each of these was foreseen and provided for by nature, and that every new production of art, which causes pride or humility; instead of adapting itself to the passion by partaking of some general quality, that naturally operates on the mind; is itself the object of an original principle, which till then lay conceal'd in the soul, and is only by accident at last brought to light.

Instead, Hume achieves a compromise between attributing the desirability of such objects either to determining laws of nature, or purely to artificial imagination on the part of their producers, by suggesting that there are some common, underlying principles shared by all these objects. The manufacturer therefore produces the particular variations through caprice, while following the general rules of human desire in the type of object which he produces, and the type of passion which he attempts to excite:

> Thus the first mechanic, that invented a fine scritoire, produc'd pride in him, who became possest of it, by principles different from those, which made him proud of handsome chairs and tables. As this appears evidently ridiculous, we must conclude, that each cause of pride and humility is not adapted to the passions by a distinct original quality; but that there are some one or more circumstances common to all of them, on which their efficacy depends.[26]

Hume concludes with a comment on the need for the "naturalist" to find common principles which underlie the multiplicity of phenomena, rather than "to invent without scruple a new principle to every new phaenomenon, instead of adapting it to the old..."[27] This is the goal which he achieves through his compromise between natural laws, and imaginative caprice, in explaining the production of luxurious commodities, which are the socially and culturally manufactured objects of the direct, and causes of the indirect, passions.

c. Pride and property

In order to explain the occurrence of pride and humility, Hume had to perform two further tasks in his analysis: first he needed to clarify the reasons why a strong relationship arises between a "self" and an object external to the self which causes pride; second, he needed to clarify the manner in which such objects as cause pride achieve significance for the individual, which Hume poses as the question, "*Whether nature produces the passion immediately, of herself; or whether she must be assisted by the cooperation of other*

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[26] Ibid., p.281-2.
[27] Ibid., p.282.

causes?"[28] An examination of the manner in which Hume presents these problems, and of the kinds of examples which he uses to illustrate them shows that it was around proprietorial relations between individuals and objects that these reflections on the causes of pride arose. The analysis reveals a particular concern with the manner in which proprietorial acquisition gives rise to a greater sense of self-worth on the part the individual in a social context.

It is in the basic movement of ideas in the understanding that Hume finds the solution to the first of his problems, i.e. through the principle of association. In the same way as ideas were associated along the lines set by certain relations, so are the impressions of reflection. The effectiveness of this principle in the operations of the passions is stated as follows:

> "All resembling impressions are connected together, and no sooner one arises than the rest immediately follow [...] 'Tis evident, then, there is an attraction or association among impressions, as well as among ideas; tho' with this remarkable difference, that ideas are associated by resemblance, contiguity, and causation; and impressions only by resemblance."[29]

Furthermore, "'tis observable of these two kinds of association, that they very much assist and forward each other, and that the transition is more easily made where they both concur in the same object."[30] This gives rise in section II.1.v to the classic statement of the full set of objects, causes and their relations which act on one another to produce the complex impressions of pride and humility:

> "If I compare, therefore, these two *establish'd* properties of the passions, *viz.* their object, which is self, and their sensation, which is either pleasant or painful, to the two *suppos'd* properties of the causes, *viz.* their relation to self, and their tendency to produce a pain or pleasure, independent of the passion; I immediately find, that taking these suppositions to be just, the true system breaks in upon me with an irresistible evidence. That cause, which excites the passion, is related to the object, which nature has attributed to the passion: from this double relation of ideas and impressions, the passion is deriv'd. The one idea is easily converted into its cor-relative; and the one impression into that, which resembles and corresponds to it: With how much greater facility must this transition be made, where these movements mutually assist each other, and the mind receives a double impulse from the relations both of its impressions and ideas?"[31]

In this constellation of psychological movements, the feelings which the subject has towards himself are given the same status as the feelings of other passions towards their proper objects. As each passion has its own peculiar object (Hume's examples being lust and hunger) so it is with pride: "'Tis evident we never shou'd be possest of that passion,

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[28] Ibid., p.287.
[29] Ibid., p.283.
[30] Ibid., p.283-4.
[31] Ibid., p.286-7.

were there not a disposition of mind proper for it; and 'tis as evident, that the passion always turns our view to ourselves, and makes us think of our own qualities and circumstances."[32] The question which remains concerns the second problem which is, *whether nature produces the passion immediately, of herself; or whether she must be assisted by the co-operation of other causes?*[33]

Hume observes that, in contrast to hunger and thirst, pride requires some foreign object in order to arise. There are two grounds upon which this may be asserted. The first originates in the *observations of common life*: "for *first*, daily experience convinces us, that pride requires certain causes to excite it, and languishes when unsupported by some excellency in the character, in bodily accomplishments, in cloaths, equipage or fortune."[34] The second involves a logical inference: Hume points out that, "*secondly*, 'tis evident pride wou'd be perpetual, if it arose immediately from nature; since the object is always the same, and there is no disposition of body peculiar to pride, as there is to thirst and hunger...".[35] Therefore, it must be from the other side of the system that the *other causes* which assist nature in producing pride arise. These *causes* are to be found in the things which the subject possesses, whether in the attributes of character or body, or in the external objects attributed to him through property:

> Accordingly we find, that a beautiful house, belonging to ourselves, produces pride; and that the same house, still belonging to ourselves, produces humility, when by any accident its beauty is changed into deformity, and thereby the sensation of pleasure, which corresponded to pride, is transform'd into pain, which is related to humility. The double relation between the ideas and impressions subsists in both cases, and produces an easy transition from the one emotion to the other.[36]

However, before Hume's treatment of this is examined, it is necessary to consider the "limitations" which he put on his "system" of the indirect passions.

In section II.1.vi Hume lists the *limitations* of his *system, "that all agreeable objects, related to ourselves, by an association of ideas and of impressions, produce pride, and disagreeable ones, humility...".*[37] What these amount to is a series of observations on the manner in which individuals develop the pride which they feel through their close, proprietorial, and conspicuous relationship with certain objects or qualities. The first is that there needs to be a particularly close relation between the object

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[32] Ibid., p.287.
[33] Ibid., p.287.
[34] Ibid., p.288.
[35] Ibid., p.288.
[36] Ibid., p.289.
[37] Ibid., p.290.

and the proud self. Hume observes that "'tis only the master of the feast, who, beside the same joy [as his guests], has the additional passion of self-applause and vanity."[38] The guests will experience joy, but not the same pride as the host, despite the close proximity of the object to themselves. Therefore, the first limitation which Hume places on his initial system, "*that every thing related to us, which produces pleasure or pain, produces likewise pride or humility,*" is that, "there is not only a relation requir'd, but a close one, and a closer than is requir'd to joy."[39] The peculiarly close relation by which the host is associated with the feast, but not the guests, is evidently a proprietorial one.

The second limitation, is that the object must be peculiar to ourselves, "or at least common to us with a few persons." Hume observes that people, "likewise judge of objects more from comparison than from their real and intrinsic merit; and where we cannot by some contrast enhance their value, we are apt to overlook even what is essentially good in them."[40] Hence, the objects which are owned or otherwise closely associated with the self will enhance the possessor's pride to the extent that they distinguish him from those who possess no such thing. In this sense the motivation which pride gives is emulative. *Pride* is strongest when the person feeling this passion finds himself a member of an exclusive proprietorial group.

The third limitation stipulates that the possessive relationship with the cause of pride be a conspicuous one. Hume states that it is necessary that, "the pleasant or painful object be very discernible and obvious, and that not only to ourselves, but to others also."[41] Membership of this small group of owners must be evident if it is adequately to distinguish its members from those who do not possess such attributes or objects. Both the fourth and the fifth limitations relate closely to an issue discussed in part II.3. In Hume's treatment of the will and the understanding, he observes that in society, individuals engage their intellects in evaluating the motives and powers of the other people whom they encounter. Due to the inconstancy of human volition, he argues, it is necessary to use general rules in order to categorise individuals into classes of person. The attributes of a person are generalised on the basis of their constant repetition into a notion of character and the general attributes or habits of a number of people may be understood under a broader grouping defined by its status or its typical activities. The fourth limitation to the system of the indirect passions addresses the first method of attributing general characteristics to a person: this limitation states that there must be some degree of

[38] Ibid., p.290.
[39] Ibid., p.291.
[40] Ibid., p.291.

constancy in the relation between the cause of pride and its possessor. Hume observes that, "what is casual and inconstant gives but little joy, and less pride."[42] The final limitation presents the wider importance of developing general rules through which the status of possessors, is evaluated. As an "enlargement of this system," Hume adds that,

> "*general rules* have a great influence upon pride and humility, as well as on all the other passions. Hence we form a notion of different ranks of men, suitable to the power or riches they are possest of; and this notion we change not upon account of any peculiarities of the health or temper of the persons, which may deprive them of all enjoyment in their possessions. This may be accounted for from the same principles, that explain'd the influence of general rules on the understanding. Custom readily carries us beyond the just bounds in our passions, as well as in our reasonings."[43]

Thus, the general rules through which the understanding is shown to achieve beliefs in Book I, and the typical activity in which this operation is applied according to II.3, are given concrete concerns and a context in which to operate in Hume's treatment of social status (and as we shall see, social powers) in II.1. The focus on objects and attributes that can be acquired in society, and the parameters within which these will affect social standing (felt as pride) bear obvious similarities with the individualist mentality found in the consumer societies of chapter 2 of this thesis.

Hume continues his analysis by examining the particular kinds of causes which give rise to pride under the headings of *vice and virtue, beauty and deformity*, *external advantages and disadvantages*, and *property and riches*. While all of these can become effective in producing pride through their social and cultural meanings, it is on the relation of a person to his property that the most interesting parts of Hume's argument focus. In section x, Hume states that, "the relation which is esteem'd the closest, and which of all others produces most commonly the passion of pride, is that of *property*."[44] Given the importance of action and control, and the greater susceptibility of this cause to the intellectual and other powers of the individual (than, for instance, nationality, breeding, etc), it might be expected that this *proprietorial* relation should have the

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[41] Ibid., p.292.
[42] Ibid., p.293.
[43] Ibid., p.293. Following this there are some general remarks on the importance of general rules and maxims, formed through custom: "For 'tis evident, that if a person full-grown, and of the same nature with ourselves, were on a sudden transported into our world, he wou'd be very much embarrass'd with every object, and wou'd not readily find what degree of love or hatred, pride or humility, or any other passion he ought to attribute to it. The passions are often vary'd by very inconsiderable principles; and these do not always play with a perfect regularity, especially on the first trial. But as custom and practice have brought to light all these principles, and have settled the just value of every thing; this must certainly contribute to the easy production of the passions, and guide us, by means of general establish'd maxims, in the proportions we ought to observe in preferring one object to another," pp. 293-4. Hume's final remark is that feelings of pride do not necessarily make their object happy: there are evils which will prevent its enjoyment which are quite separate from the causes of pride.
[44] Ibid., p.309.

greatest importance for Hume insofar as he is concerned with the primary springs of action among the passions. The empirical observation concerning the common perception of property adds a second support to this argument. Analysis of section x further substantiates this argument by showing how Hume's understanding of the desire for property, its relationship with pride, and the manner in which power and the means to acquire property, are structurally related to the argument concerning causation in I.3, and the analysis of the will in II.3.

On the whole, proprietorial relations and the activities and motives involved in achieving them required a particularly detailed analysis in Hume's investigations of pride, esteem and desire, and they, in turn, helped to illustrate more general intellectual and passional processes that occurred in other kinds of activity.

d. Riches and Power: desire and its means

Hume's analysis of pride stands at the centre of his theory of human motivation. The first part of Book II sets out not only the abstract principles – primarily associative relations which bind together ideas and emotions into motive, character, and the sense of self-worth – but also presents the types of object which are associated with the passional drives of individuals. Thus, the text of Book II presents a great deal of insight into the kinds of concrete practical orientation around which Hume modelled his theory of desire, thought, motivation and action; and perhaps the phenomena which Hume felt most needed explanation. If an answer is sought to the question, *on what behavioural characteristics of human beings did Hume base the observations from which he drew his theory in the* Treatise*?*, then it is particularly in this part of the book that the work of excavating insights into these forms of life must concentrate. At the centre of Hume's theory of pride stands his theory of property, acquisition and commercialised desire. This is structured around a notion of power which is the same as that constructed in the epistemological study of I.3, and the psychological study of the will in II.3. The particular modes of practice around which this notion of power – and the notion of probable causes – is constructed in the treatment of pride is the *power to cause pleasure*; and the application of this notion is found in the treatment of money and riches as socially recognised representations of the *power to acquire things which cause pleasure*. As these *things* can themselves cause pride by virtue of their power to produce pleasure, so *money* causes pride by virtue of its power to procure the things which produce pleasure.

The centrality of the notion of property to Hume's theory of pride is underlined at

the start of his section *Of property and riches.* Hume states that, "the relation, which is esteem'd the closest, and which of all others produces most commonly the passion of pride, is that of *property*."[45] The idea of property analysed by Hume is the epitome of the kind of passional and intellectual association between objects and the self found in the "double relation of impressions and ideas" which constitutes pride. Hume defines property as "*such a relation betwixt a person and an object as permits him, but forbids any other, the free use and possession of it, without violating the laws of justice and moral equity*".[46] This definition builds on the first limitation – of exclusivity – that he had put on his system in section vi.[47] The full explanation of this relation is postponed until he comes "to treat of justice and the other moral virtues"[48] in Book III.[49] But the analysis of property in relation to pride that appears in II.1 is crucial for the interpretation of Hume's theory of understanding and his theory of the will, in relation to practices, and hence for his theory of the individual.

In linking the concept of property to the concept of justice (the subject of the third book), Hume makes an important link between ownership and the theory of cause set out in the first book. He states that justice, and its particular sub-species, property, is to be considered as an instance of *cause*. Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that Hume's construction of the theory of the individual, and in particular his theory concerning causal inferences, was structured into a close relationship with current human practices. Here it is possible to see exactly how the theory of cause is to be found in the perceptions of individuals operating in *common life*. He says that, "if justice, therefore, be a virtue, which has a natural and original influence on the human mind, property may be look'd upon as a particular species of *causation*; whether we consider the liberty it gives the proprietor to operate as he please upon the object, or the advantages, which he reaps from it."[50] Thus, the very institution of property is an instance of the relation of *causation*

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[45] Ibid., p.309.
[46] Ibid., p.310.
[47] Ibid., p.290.
[48] Ibid., p.310.
[49] Hume's theory of property in Book III centres on the need to explain how rules, and in particular laws, concerning ownership and the transference of property, have arisen. This is achieved primarily in III.2.2 where he rejects social contract theories of government in favour of a theory of legal conventions (i.e. one that stipulates that lawsf are agreed in the first instance without a prior, explicit contract). The laws, which establish "artificial virtues", are established on the basis of their usefulness which is discovered through societal trial and error. For an account of Hume's treatment of law and property and his position on alternative theories, see especially James Moore, 'Hume's Theory of Justice and Property', *Political Studies,* vol. 24 (1976), 103-19; see also S. T. Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume* (Oxford, 1991).

[50] Ibid., p.310.

which was elaborated in Book I. The practical-social origins of the concept of cause is developed in an intricate and even more revealing way in the course of section II.1.x.

Hume proceeds to develop the link between the notion of cause and the concept of property in a more comprehensive way. The theory of cause which was presented in Book I was based on the theory of mental associationism. This is also made the explicit basis of the understanding of property. Hume says, "the mention of the property naturally carries our thought to the proprietor, and of the proprietor to the property; which being a proof of a perfect relation of ideas is all that is requisite to our present purpose."[51] Thus the psychological principle of *association* which underpins the capacity of the understanding to organise its ideas is made the epistemological ground for the perception of property relations. The association of ideas has a passional motivation, as Hume points out, in a parallel association of passions. He says that, "whenever any pleasure or pain arises from an object, connected with us by property, we may be certain, that either pride or humility must arise from this conjunction of relations; if the forgoing system be solid and satisfactory." He adds that whether or not the system be satisfactory, "we may soon satisfy ourselves by the most cursory view of human life."[52] Thus, the motivational element is established: property that gives pleasure is desirable and is doubly desirable by being esteemed so. Thus, "all objects, in a word, that are useful, beautiful or surprizing, or are related to such, may, by means of property, give rise to this passion [pride]."[53] Hume illustrates this relation between the idea of a cause of pleasure, and the passion of pride, with the example of a vain man for whom all property is, "the best that is any where to be found. His houses, equipage, furniture, cloaths, horses, hounds, excel all others in his conceit; and 'tis easy to observe, that from the least advantage in any of these, he draws a new subject of pride and vanity..."[54] Referring once again to empirical observation as a source, Hume boasts that, "as every new instance is a new argument, and as the instances are here without number, I may venture to affirm, that scarce any system was ever so fully prov'd by experience, as that which I have here advanc'd."[55] Clearly, for Hume the significance of such conspicuous property in the social make-up of his contemporaries was beyond doubt.

If the perception of causal relationships was important for Hume's interpretation of the social evaluation of property – the source of *pride* in part II.1, and the reason for

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[51] Ibid., p.310.
[52] Ibid., p.310.
[53] Ibid., p.311.
[54] Ibid., p.310.
[55] Ibid., p.311.

esteem or *love* in part II.2 – it is even more important for his analysis of the epistemological and motivational grounds for esteeming monetary riches. Hume moves his analysis onto the capacity to obtain property, i.e. monetary power, asserting that, "if the property in any thing, that gives pleasure either by its utility, beauty or novelty, produces also pride by a double relation of impressions and ideas; we need not be surpriz'd, that the power of acquiring this property, shou'd have the same effect."[56] The way in which the theory of causal beliefs from I.3 presents the crucial underpinning for his explanation of the effectiveness of money, and its esteem value, is through the assimilation of the belief in the probable effectiveness of a cause under the term *power*. He explains that, "riches are to be consider'd as the power of acquiring the property of what pleases; and 'tis only in this view they have any influence on the passions."[57] That the meaningfulness of this medium arises through the epistemological generation of a representational belief is emphasised by his appropriation of a non-bullionist conception of money. He observes that,

> paper will, on many occasions, be consider'd as riches, and that because it may convey the power of acquiring money: And money is not riches, as it is a metal endow'd with certain qualities of solidity, weight and fusibility; but only as it has a relation to the pleasures and conveniences of life. Taking then this for granted, which is in itself so evident, we may draw from it one of the strongest arguments I have yet employ'd to prove the influence of the double relations on pride and humility.[58]

There are a number of things to observe about Hume's presentation of the essentials here. First of all, the key thing is the *power* to acquire things, which is a particular instance of power in general. Money is the specific form which power takes in relation to "the pleasures and conveniences of life" which are essential to the self-regard embodied in pride, and the motivational force embodied in desire. In II.3, the external observer was concerned with estimating the capacity of other individuals to cause things, and it was this activity which Hume indicated was the origin of the habit of inferring causal relationships; and in this section on money, we are provided with an explanation of

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[56] Ibid., p.311.
[57] Ibid., p.311.
[58] Ibid., p.311. While Hume recognises the possibility of using paper for financial transactions in the *Treatise*, he would later deny that the use of paper for currency was viable from the point of view of national policy. His principal argument against the use of paper currency appears in *Of Money* which was first published in his *Political Discourses* in 1752. For analysis of Hume's commercial and monetary theory see the introduction to David Hume, *Writings on Economics*, ed. Eugene Rotwein, (London, 1955); Istvan Hont, 'The rhapsody of public debt: David Hume and the voluntary state bankruptcy'; in Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (eds), *Political Discourse in Early-Modern Britain*; (Cambridge, 1993) and Istvan Hont, 'The "Rich Country - Poor Country" Debate in Scottish Classical Political Economy', in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (eds), *Wealth and Virtue: the Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, 1994).

how this causal power is attributed to individuals in the social context.[59] Finally, and fundamentally, the identification of money with power in relation to property, property having been described at the beginning of the section as "a particular species of *causation*", and hence in relation to causes of pride and joy, establishes the close relationship between the theory of causation and money.

Property has power, and is a species of cause, by virtue of its capacity to produce pleasure; money has power, and is a species of cause, which is all the more potent for being able to obtain any other cause of pleasure. It is furthermore a cause of pride in itself, based on the power which it measures; and from the point of view of the observer, or the social rival, it epitomizes the manner in which the notion of causation is built on the social practice of measuring one another's powers. In the same way as this activity of sizing one another up was discussed in the treatment of the will in II.3, so here, in the context of Hume's analysis of how individuals do this sizing up (or rather, reflect the supposed measurements made by others in their sense of pride), Hume moves on to a discussion of *free will*. For Hume, the theory of causation and power, with its roots in probability, the theory of the will and the psychology of desire, and the specific association of property and the power to acquire represented in monetary riches, are shown to be closely related in this part of the *Treatise*. The theory of cause is taken from the observation of humans in their estimation of the capacities of others to cause things to happen; and the treatment of property, and money, presents the clearest instance of how this capacity, or *power*, or *power to cause*, effects itself, and appears to the human observer. Significantly, he explains these by drawing on the common experience and the way in which experience is commonly understood.

The exemplary importance of the section on property and money in explicating human motives and the passional-practical orientation towards objects which confer admiration, is indicated by Hume's insertion of a long parenthetical explanation of how the doctrine of power presented in I.3 operates in the common engagement with property, money and the concept of free will. This parenthesis suggests that there are strong grounds for interpreting the concern with property and acquisition as crucial to Hume's analysis of common life, since it ties together two of the most philosophically important

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[59] Secondly, he makes it clear that he was aware of the operations of different types of media in the operations of money- i.e. metals and paper, and that it was not the intrinsic value of the metal which was important, rather the nominal value. This places his concept of money in line with the observations which he made of peoples' opinions of the value of things being comparative rather than based on intrinsic worth in the preceding sections of this part. He states that, "[w]e likewise judge of objects more from comparison than from their real and intrinsic merit".(291)

parts of the first volume of the *Treatise*, namely I.3 and II.3. Hume recalls the point which he made in Book I where he says that "the distinction, which we sometimes make betwixt a *power* and the *exercise* of it, is entirely frivolous, and that neither man nor any other being ought ever to be thought possest of any ability, unless it be exerted and put in action."[60] However, he explains that while this is correct to the philosophical way of thinking, when it comes to the passions and their logic, by which we may understand the motivational and pragmatic structure of thought, the idea of a latent power has a certain cogency. He says that to the philosophy of the passions, "many things operate upon them by means of the idea and supposition of power, independent of its actual exercise. We are pleas'd when we acquire an ability of procuring pleasure, and are displeas'd when another acquires a power of giving pain." Hume comments that this tendency to feel happiness or anxiety about powers is "evident from experience," but proceeds to consider the philosophical implications.[61]

Hume's next move is to address the issue of free will. The question which arises is, *how can it be correct when the passions act as if a man may have potential power, i.e. power which he is not actually using at that time?* The issue at stake is one which arises in relation to the intellectual activity of estimating one another's power and the likelihood that it will be used which is placed at the centre of the theory of causal induction in II.3.ii. Hume recognizes that the possession of riches or money, which amounts to the power to acquire possessions, will give pleasure despite the fact that the power is not being excercised at the time. To illustrate this point he gives the example of a miser who never spends his money, but always enjoys it.[62] Hume states that the scholastic doctrine of free will according to which "motives deprive us not of free-will, nor take away our power of performing or forbearing any action[...] enters very little into common life, and has but little influence on our vulgar and popular ways of thinking," and therefore offers no help in explaining this. In contrast to this, he defines the principle through which power is *commonly* understood: "according to common notions a man has no power, where very considerable motives lie betwixt him and the satisfaction of his desires, and determine him to forbear what he wishes to perform".[63] Two examples then follow which allow him to explain his understanding of the problem:

> I do not think I have fallen into my enemy's power, when I see him pass me in the streets with a sword by his side, while I am unprovided of any weapon. I know that the fear of the civil magistrate

[60] Ibid., p.311.
[61] Ibid., p.312.
[62] Ibid., p.314.
[63] Ibid., p.312.

> is as strong a restraint as any of iron, and that I am in as perfect safety as if he were chain'd or imprison'd. But when a person acquires such an authority over me, that not only there is no external obstacle to his actions; but also that he may punish or reward me as he pleases, without any dread of punishment in his turn, I then attribute a full power to him, and consider myself as his subject or vassal.

The two cases are compared to find out what distinguishes them. Hume suggests that "we shall find, according to the philosophy explain'd in the foregoing book, that the only *known* difference betwixt them lies in this, that in the former case we conclude from *past experience*, that the person never will perform that action, and in the latter, that he possibly or probably will perform it."[64] Thus the understanding of the power, or of its absence, appears to lie in the probability of action, based on the assessment of motives. The issue of predictability with respect to the motives, and probability of action in others is then commented upon:

> Nothing is more fluctuating and inconstant on many occasions, than the will of man; nor is there any thing but strong motives, which can give us an absolute certainty in pronouncing concerning any of his future actions. When we see a person free from these motives, we suppose a possibility either of his action or forbearing; and tho' in general we may conclude him to be determin'd by motives and causes, yet this removes not the uncertainty of our judgement concerning these causes, nor the influence of that uncertainty on the passions.[65]

The need to predict the outcome of motives in actions on the part of other persons is the central concern attributed to the individual in common life in II.3. Hume is able to resolve the problem of making this common notion of power dependent on some concept of its exercise:

> Since therefore we ascribe a power of performing an action to every one, who has no very powerful motive to forbear it, and refuse it to such as have; it may justly be concluded, that *power* has always a reference to its *exercise*, either actual or probable, and that we consider a person as endow'd with any ability when we find from past experience, that 'tis probable, or at least possible he may exert it. And indeed, as our passions always regard the real existence of objects, and we always judge of this reality from past instances; nothing can be more likely of itself, without any farther reasoning, that that power consists in the possibility or probability of any action, as discover'd by experience and the practice of the world.

Having shown that such reasoning is consistent with the operations of the understanding given in Book I, Hume states that the passions will follow suit: "The passions are not only affected by such events as are certain and infallible, but also in an inferior degree by such as are possible and contingent."[66] This kind of anticipation by the passions increases when

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[64] Ibid., p.312.
[65] Ibid., p.313.
[66] Ibid., p.313.

obstacles to enjoyment are removed, and the subject is in a position to take some pleasure:

> But we may farther observe, that this satisfaction encreases, when any good approaches in such a manner that it is in one's *own* power to take it or leave it, and there neither is any physical impediment, nor any very strong motive to hinder our enjoyment. As all men desire pleasure, nothing can be more probable, that its existence when there is no external obstacle to the producing it, and men perceive no danger in following their inclinations. In that case their imagination easily anticipates the satisfaction, and conveys the same joy, as if they were perwaded of its real and actual existence.[67]

Thus, Hume's doctrine concerning the habitual inference of causal relations presented as an activity of the understanding in Book I, and then as a practically orientated activity motivated by desire in II.3, is concretely located in the common habit of pursuing pleasure through purchasing possessions, and in estimating others by their capacity to do the same.

This brings the parenthesis to an end, and Hume returns to the subject of riches. The problem of the miser who hoards without spending his riches, but still enjoys the implicit power which they bestow is solved when Hume points out that,

> tho' he knows he has enjoy'd his riches for forty years without ever employing them; and consequently cannot conclude by any species of reasoning, that the real existence of these pleasures is nearer, than if he were entirely depriv'd of all his possessions. But tho' he cannot form any such conclusion in a way of reasoning concerning the nearer approach of the pleasure, 'tis certain he *imagines* it to approach nearer, whenever all external obstacles are remov'd, along with the more powerful motives of interest and danger, which oppose it.[68]

At this point, Hume refers the reader to his account of the will in II.3, for further satisfaction on this head.[69]

Hume's conclusion from his consideration of both the common and the philosophical forms of reasoning unites his theory of causal induction, his theory of the will, and his analysis of the motives for obtaining possessions and monetary riches. He states that

> 'twill now be easy to draw this whole reasoning to a point, and to prove, that when riches produce any pride or vanity in their possessors, as they never fail to do, 'tis only by means of a double relation of impressions and ideas. The very essence of riches consists in the power of procuring the pleasures and conveniences of life. The very essence of this power consists in the probability of its exercise, and in its causing us to anticipate, by a *true* or *false* reasoning, the real existence of the pleasure. This anticipation of pleasure is, in itself, a very considerable pleasure; and as its cause is some possession or property, which we enjoy, and which is thereby related to us, we here clearly see all the parts of the foregoing system most exactly and distinctly drawn out before us.[70]

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[67] Ibid., p.314.
[68] Ibid., p.314.
[69] Ibid., p.314.
[70] Ibid., p.315.

Hume's final move is to comment briefly on the more general concept of power in relation to the individual, using monetary power as the particular example. He states that, "for the same reason, that riches cause pleasure and pride, and poverty excites uneasiness and humility, power must produce the former emotions, and slavery the latter. Power or an authority over others makes us capable of satisfying all our desires; as slavery, by subjecting us to the will of others, exposes us to a thousand wants, and mortifications."[71]

e. The "Other" causes of pride

Hume's analysis of the causes of pride is not, of course, restricted to property as such, and to monetary riches. Although these obtain a central importance in the passions of the individual, particularly since they are most subject to practical intervention, there is a wider range of objects that can give rise to pride. These objects, which include nationality, physical beauty, virtue and politeness, are ostensibly less subject to instrumental control. However, as the literature on consumption and social status in eighteenth-century Britain shows, some such personal attributes, particularly those associated with taste and refinement, had obtained an importance to consumers as demonstrations of social and financial power. They were regarded as significant signs of social status due to their putative origin in education and breeding, and also due to their importance in providing the individual with the equipment needed to discern the subtler pleasures of artistic or literary goods. In Hume's analysis of the various attributes which may give rise to pride on the part of the individual, the regard for these other qualities – i.e. those not usually defined as property or wealth as such – is seen to be analogous to that of property and riches. All such attributes are esteemed, whether in oneself or in others, because they are believed to consist in a power to cause pleasure.

In his treatment of vice and virtue as causes of pride, Hume makes reference to the philosophical arguments concerning the basis of moral judgements in which there were disagreements over "*whether these moral distinctions be founded on natural and original principles, or arise from interest and education.*"[72] The proper consideration of this theme has, as he says, its proper place in Book III, and is irrelevant for present purposes. The concern with pride and its causes is apparently not affected by the result of that debate, since Hume argues that whatever its actual origins, the appearance of *virtue* will give rise to pride, and the appearance of its opposite will likewise give rise to *humility*. He also adds the significant point that the feelings which thus arise, and which also arise from

[71] Ibid., p.315.

other good or bad attributes of the individual, are not to be judged, in the "style of the schools and pulpit", as being themselves moral or immoral. Hume clarifies his definitions in order to show that *pride* and its opposite, both key motivators of human thought and action in society, are morally neutral: "not to dispute about words, I observe, that by *pride* I understand that agreeable impression, which arises in the mind, when the view either of our virtue, beauty, riches or power makes us satisfy'd with ourselves: And that by *humility* I mean the opposite impression."[73] He then argues that, "'tis evident the former impression is not always vicious, nor the latter virtuous. The most rigid morality allows us to receive a pleasure from reflecting on a generous action; and 'tis by none esteem'd a virtue to feel any fruitless remorses upon the thoughts of past villainy and baseness."[74] The kind of social pride which was thought to be characteristic of modern commercial society, as well as beneficial in some senses, is thereby neutralised by Hume.

In Hume's analysis of the second species of cause which give rise to pride, the notion of beauty and its opposite are assimilated under the heading of *power*. The notion of *power* is central to the interpretation of Hume's concerns. The basis of beauty and deformity is understood to lie in the subjective response of the observer: "Pleasure and pain, therefore, are not only necessary attendants of beauty and deformity, but constitute their very essence."[75] In order to show how this notion of beauty should be considered as a kind of power, and indeed how all the causes of pride should be understood in this way, Hume proposes the use of thought experiments. The common experience of the reader is expected to allow him to prove for himself that the ability to produce feelings of pride in a cause is understood as a "power", and that this takes place through the association of ideas which Hume proposed in relation to the theory of *cause*. Hume indicates that, "by one of these experiments we find, that an object produces pride merely by the interposition of pleasure; and that because the quality, by which it produces pride, is in reality nothing but the power of producing pleasure."[76] Thus, it is suggested that the power of an object to cause pride in its owner, is the same as its power to cause pleasure. The second thought experiment shows that it is through the *association of ideas* that this idea of *power* emerges: "By the other experiment we find, that the pleasure produces the pride by a transition along related ideas; because when we cut off that relation the passion is

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[72] Ibid., p.295.
[73] Ibid., p.297.
[74] Ibid., p.298.
[75] Ibid., p.299.
[76] Ibid., p.310.

immediately destroy'd."[77]

In section II.1.ix, Hume begins the analysis of the kinds of objects external to the person which can give rise to pride. His analysis includes examples like one's country, county or parish which may give rise to pride in some instances. However, this section also presents certain elements in the causation of pride which relate to property, especially the manner in which the possession of property gives rise to social groupings of persons who feel that they have comparable status in this respect. The degree of status thus felt is measured and to some extent controlled by the feelings of pride. The manner in which pride, culture, property and social status combine is sketched as follows:

> "The beauty, address, merit, credit and honours of their kindred are carefully display'd by the proud, as some of [the] most considerable sources of their vanity.
>
> As we are proud of riches in ourselves, so to satisfy our vanity we desire that every one, who has any connexion with us, shou'd likewise be possest of them, and are asham'd of any one, that is mean or poor, among our friends and relations. For this reason we remove the poor as far from us as possible; and as we cannot prevent poverty in some distant collaterals, and our forefathers are taken to be our nearest relations; upon this account every one affects to be of a good family, and to be descended from a long succession of rich and honourable ancestors."[78]

Hume underlines the importance which the tracing of family, and its association with the continuity of property, especially in land, has for maintaining this sense of pride. Thus, "'tis evident, that when any one boasts of the antiquity of his family, the subjects of his vanity are not merely the extent of time and number of ancestors, but also their riches and credit, which are suppos'd to reflect a lustre on himself on account of his relation to them."[79] Once again, to explain this tendency to feel pride, and especially to feel pride when the line passes through males alone, Hume relies on his theory of how individuals use "general rules" of the understanding,[80] and this feeling is closely related to property and riches by association.

f. Conclusion

Having established in Chapter 4 that thought and action were motivated by passional drives; the analysis in this chapter of Hume's treatment of pride and humility provides clear indications of the kinds of ends or purposes towards which the individual may be found projecting his or her plans in thought and in action. Aside from servicing the basic and animal needs of the human being, the individual is likely to be orientated towards the

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[77] Ibid., p.301.
[78] Ibid., p.307.
[79] Ibid., p.308.
[80] Ibid., p.309.

achievement of objects which bestow pride. These objects range from personal attributes of virtue to luxurious possessions. Pride reflects the social esteem expected by the individual, which is based on the perception of his power. This power concerns the capacity to produce pleasure and is represented in the strongest form, in Hume's analysis where he turns his attention to the subject of money, which bestows the socially recognised power to acquire things. It is in Hume's treatment of the use of money that we find the strongest indication of *what means are available* to the Humean subject in order to achieve the ends which have been identified. Thus it appears of the elements of current social practice which Hume incorporated into his model of human nature, those involved in the use of money to purchase objects which bring pleasure were exemplary; and the more conspicuous and exclusive these objects are the better. The typical Humean individual is likely to be a consumer of the kind described in chapter 2, using acquisition, possession and consumption as a visible indication of social status and power.[81]

2. Love and Hatred: the Humean Individual's Regard for Others

In part 1 of Hume's treatment of the passions in the *Treatise* he analysed the manner in which individuals develop a sense of self-regard by estimating the impression which their attributes or possessions will make on other people; in the second part, he explains the manner in which individuals are supposed to develop feelings towards other individuals. In fact part II.2 presents little insight into the human psychology that was not already outlined in some form in the treatment of pride and humility. This is because, in Hume's view, the perception of the self, and the perception and evaluation of others, operates through analogy. The feelings which we have for others mirror the feelings which we develop for ourselves under similar circumstances; and the feelings which arise concerning ourselves in a particular situation mirror the feelings which we typically associate with our perception of others when they find themselves in comparable, or analogous, conditions. Therefore, the insights concerning the model individual which were drawn in the previous chapter from Hume's treatment of pride form the core of the activities which Hume describes in part 2. The perception and evaluation of others through the indirect passions is based on estimating the same powers - visible, for example, in riches and property, as well as in personal attributes, and familial connections - through which pride was constructed.

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[81] A similar conclusion is reached in Alasdair MacIntyre, op. cit., ch. XV. He states that, "Hume's [presupposed social context] is one in which evaluation is primarily in terms of the satisfaction of consumers."(298)

This section becomes, in turn, the basis for Hume's analysis of the operation of the moral sense in III.3.i which introduces Hume's analysis of the *natural* virtues, i.e. those which give rise to sentiments of approbation without the prior establishment of social conventions. The section opens with a brief summary of the manner in which the different kinds of passion operate in volition and the operation of the mind. He begins, "[t]he chief spring or actuating principle of the human mind is pleasure or pain; and when these sensations are remov'd, both from our thought and feeling, we are, in a great measure, incapable of passion or action, of desire or volition." The pleasure and pain give rise to "the propense and averse motions of the mind", and these are diversified into the direct passions as determined by the way in which, "the pleasure or pain changes its situation, and becomes probable or improbable, certain or uncertain, or is consider'd as out of our power for the present moment." Finally, as the objects giving rise to this pleasure or pain, "acquire a relation to ourselves or others," they give rise, in addition to further pleasure or pain, the indirect passions of "pride or humility, love or hatred...". The manner in which the indirect passions arise from the pleasure or pain associated with objects or qualities and, given a relation between the object and the individual self or someone who appears to that person, is the same, according to this section, as that in which the moral sentiments of approbation or disapprobation arise. Hume states in III.3.i that,

> moral distinctions depend entirely on certain peculiar sentiments of pain and pleasure, and that whatever mental quality in ourselves or others gives us a satisfaction, by the survey or reflection, is of course virtuous; as every thing of this nature, that gives uneasiness, is vicious. Now since every quality in ourselves or others, which gives pleasure, always causes pride or love; as every one, that produces uneasiness, excites humility or hatred: It follows, that these two particulars are to be consider'd as equivalent, with regard to our mental qualities, *virtue* and the power of producing love or pride, *vice* and the power of producing humility or hatred. In every case, therefore, we must judge of the one by the other; and may pronounce any *quality* of the mind virtuous, which causes love or pride; and any one vicious, which causes hatred or humility.[82]

In Book II, Hume explains the dialectic of self-regard and regard for others by articulating, for the first time, a notion of 'sympathy'.[83] Specifically, he constructs the model of a human agent who is passionally interested in objects which it doesn't need but wants, in order to produce sensations of pride. He then uses the second part of this book to show how our feelings for others are built on a sympathetic reflection into ourselves, of the enjoyment of objects, and the power to acquire them. In this way we are understood to reconstruct the feelings of pleasure and power experienced by others imaginatively. Thus,

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[82] *Treatise*, pp.574-5.
[83] Sympathy later forms the basis, in Book III, for the judgements of the moral sense.

the whole edifice of pride, love, and sympathy, is built around a model of self-directed passions, which focus on objects and qualities which have the power to produce pleasure, and secondary objects, which give the power to procure the first objects.

Throughout his treatment of human passions, Hume repeatedly reminds the reader of the mundane and common nature of his subject matter. In a manner consistent with the comments on common life as his source (e.g. in the Introduction to the *Treatise*) and with the purposes of philosophy which were interpreted in chapter 3 of the thesis, Hume discourages the idea that what he describes should be taken as a blueprint of how the human subject should be, should feel or should think. As the sources of his observations were to be found in common life, so the phenomena which he explains should not be any different from those which commonly appear. Hence he remarks that "these passions of themselves are sufficiently known from our common feeling and experience. This we have already observ'd concerning pride and humility, and here repeat it concerning love and hatred...".[84]

a. Sympathy

It is in the treatment of pride and humility that Hume introduces his concept of *sympathy*. This system of ideas and passions forms the basis of both pride and self-regard on the one hand, and esteem for others or *love* on the other. Towards the end of part II.1, Hume states that,

> Our reputation, our character, our name are considerations of vast weight and importance; and even the other causes of pride; virtue, beauty and riches; have little influence, when not seconded by the opinions and sentiments of others. In order to account for this phaenomenon 'twill be necessary to take some compass, and first explain the nature of *sympathy*.[85]

The manner in which the understanding achieves this sympathy with others, is through the operations of association, and primarily through the relation of *resemblance*. Hume points out that,

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[84] *Treatise*, p.329.
[85] Ibid., p.316.

> 'tis obvious, that nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves. The case is the same with the fabric of the mind, as with that of the body. However the parts may differ in shape or size, their structure and composition are in general the same. There is a very remarkable resemblance, which preserves itself amidst all their variety; and this resemblance must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others, and embrace them with facility and pleasure.[86]

This general similarity which Hume observes in human nature, as existing between all individuals, is further developed through cultural and social assimilation and the formation of group identities. He remarks, for instance, on the importance of sympathetic thought and feeling in the formation of nations and cultures.[87] Equally, the common attitudes, practises and turns of mind which are found among particular cultures, provide further resemblances through which sympathy is reinforced. It is stated that,

> we find, that where, beside the general resemblance of our natures, there is any peculiar similarity in our manners, or character, or country, or language, it facilitates the sympathy. The stronger the relation is betwixt ourselves and any object, the more easily does the imagination make the transition, and convey to the related idea the vivacity of conception, with which we always form the idea of our own person.[88]

The manner in which sympathy is seen to operate in social interaction, and the way in which self-regard reflects analogous feelings for others and *vice versa*, is explained later on in part II.2, with this metaphor: "In general," Hume explains, "we may remark, that the minds of men, are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments and opinions may be often reverberated, and may decay away by sensible degrees."[89] This metaphor binds together, with the help of Hume's explication of *sympathy*, the egotistical self-regard of the individual driven by pride, to his emulative counter-part whose esteem for beauty, virtue and riches he desires and imagines to be similar to his own.

In Hume's presentation of the principles of sympathy in part II.1, he provides a clear explanation of how this requires the operations of the understanding and the imagination. Furthermore, this requires the specific relation of cause and effect which was elaborated in Book I. He states that, "[w]hen any affection is infus'd by sympathy, it is at

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[86] Ibid., p.318.
[87] In II.1.ii, Hume remarks that, "to this principle we ought to ascribe the great uniformity we may observe in the humours and turn of thinking of those of the same nation; and 'tis much more probable, that this resemblance arises from sympathy, than from the influence of the soil and climate, which, tho' they continue invariably the same, are not able to preserve the character of a nation the same for a century together".(316-17)
[88] Ibid., p.318.
[89] Ibid., p.365.

first known only by its effects, and by those external signs in the countenance and conversation, which convey an idea of it."[90] The ideal representation is then converted through the epistemological process described in I.1, into a further impression of reflection: "This idea is presently converted into an impression, and acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection."[91]

Hume reflects once again on the slight difference between the theory of the philosopher and the perception of the common man acting in everyday life. He indicates that, "however instantaneous this change of the idea into an impression may be, it proceeds from certain views and reflections, which will not escape the strict scrutiny of a philosopher, tho' they may the person himself, who makes them."[92] The complex process through which passions and ideas are reflected between the otherwise isolated perceptions of individuals requires inputs from the imagination, to which Hume attributed the power to reconstruct complex ideas out of simple ones without basing the construction on the order of ideas stored in the memory. The "affections" which are transferred through the mirrors of sympathy, "depend more upon ourselves, and the internal operations of the mind, than any other impressions; for which reason they arise more naturally from the imagination, and from every lively idea we form of them". He says, "this is the nature and cause of sympathy; and 'tis after this manner we enter so deep into the opinions and affections of others, whenever we discover them."[93] Thus the piecing together of a representation of another person's perceptions and feelings, is attributed to the faculty of imagination, which rests on the images given to it by the memory.

Hume's reflections on the intellectual aspects of sympathy give further evidence for a strong relationship between his concerns with epistemology, especially those found in I.3, and his concern with how individuals interact in society. He remarks that, "what is principally remarkable in this whole affair is the strong confirmation these phenomena give to the forgoing system concerning the understanding, and consequently to the present one concerning the passions; since these are analogous to each other". The movement from ideas to impressions of reflection is confirmed:

> 'Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in *our* mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv'd to belong to another person, as we conceive any other matter of fact. 'Tis also evident, that the ideas of the affections of others

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[90] Ibid., p.317.
[91] Ibid., p.317.
[92] Ibid., p.317.
[93] Ibid., p.319.

> are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images of them.[94]

In keeping with Hume's methodology for empirical investigation, he states that, "all this is an object of the plainest experience, and depends not on any hypothesis of philosophy. That science can only be admitted to explain the phenomena; tho' at the same time it must be confest, they are so clear of themselves, that there is but little occasion to employ it."[95] But the alterations in the state of the passions are seen to operate in a much more direct analogy with the movements of ideas. In fact, the passions exhibit precisely the same characteristics as the understanding in the use of the relations of resemblance and contiguity, and cause and effect; and furthermore, in the conversion of ideas into passions, which was the manner in which Hume explained the formation of a belief concerning causation in I.3:

> For besides the relation of cause and effect, by which we are convinc'd of the reality of the passion, with which we sympathize; besides this, I say, we must be assisted by the relations of resemblance and contiguity, in order to feel the sympathy in its full perfection. And since these relations can entirely convert an idea into an impression, and convey the vivacity of the latter into the former, so perfectly as to lose nothing of it in the transition, we may easily conceive how the relation of cause and effect alone, may serve to strengthen and inliven an idea. In sympathy there is an evident conversion of an idea into an impression. This conversion arises from the relation of objects to ourself. Ourself is always intimately present to us. Let us compare all these circumstances, and we shall find, that sympathy is exactly correspondant to the operations of our understanding; and even contains something more surprising and extraordinary.[96]

The theory of understanding which Hume presented in Book I of *Treatise* is thus shown to be further implicated in the passional life of the individual. As the analysis of the will and of pride in chapters 4 and 5 part 1, and the analysis of Hume's theory of knowledge and probability in chapter 6, seek to demonstrate, the activities of the passions and those of the understanding should not be interpreted separately from one another. Together, they constitute the two principal aspects of the individual as described by Hume. Chapter 4 showed that the principal intellectual activity described in I.3 cannot operate without the motivation of the will (II.3) or the cementing of associated ideas into beliefs by passion. Conversely, the development of esteem both for the self and for others, is built on a notion of *power* which is rooted in the very belief in the efficacy of *causes* which was explained in I.3 (and will be analysed in chapter 6 of this thesis). The estimation of the self and of others in comparison, is shown in the current chapter to be rooted in the practical

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[94] Ibid., p.320.
[95] Ibid., p.320.
[96] Ibid., p.320.

and intellectual activities associated with the acquisition of conspicuous possessions, and in the use of monetary riches. At the centre of this web of interconnected activities in the individual, is Hume's observation on how individuals construct their identity through imaginative sympathy on the basis of esteem. He summarises this by saying that,

> We may observe, that no person is ever prais'd by another for any quality, which wou'd not if real, produce, of itself, a pride in the person possess'd of it. The elogiums either turn upon his power, or riches, or family, or virtue; all of which are subjects of vanity, that we have already explain'd and accounted for.[97]

Thus, Hume's theory of sympathy provided an explanation of how individuals construct their self-awareness out of their perceptions of others, and their awareness of others through their perceptions of themselves and their own circumstances. In terms of the desire of the individual to gain control over the objects that bestow pleasure and status in a social context, sympathy provides the means both to understand how others will perceive him, and thus underpins his degree of pride, and to estimate their motives for action.

Hume's analysis of the operations of human passions was aimed at discovering a small number of principles through which the whole of human nature could satisfactorily be explained. He said that "if love and esteem were not produc'd by the same qualities as pride, according as these qualities are related to ourselves or others, this method of proceeding wou'd be very absurd, nor cou'd men expect a correspondence in the sentiments of every other person, with those themselves have entertain'd". It is peculiarly the task of the Humean philosopher to discover the exact system through which the passions operate, but a more rudimentary understanding of these things occurs, and is essential to, the common conduct of life. Thus Hume admits that, "'tis true, few can form exact systems of the passions, or make reflexions on their general nature and resemblances," and furthermore, that the absence of such insights would not seriously damage the conduct of ordinary affairs. Therefore Hume could state that, "without such a progress in philosophy, we are not subject to many mistakes in this particular, but are sufficiently guided by common experience, as well as by a kind of *presensation*; which tells us what will operate on others, by what we feel immediately in ourselves."[98] The philosopher's role is thereby limited simply to explaining how the common understanding operates in everyday life - based on observation - and not on prescribing a perfected or more specialised mode of thought.

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[97] Ibid., p.320.
[98] Ibid., p.332.

The sections on the passions of *love and hatred* follow roughly the same agenda as those on *pride and humility* which are essentially the other side of the same coin. Accordingly Hume divides his presentation into considerations of the *object of the passions*, and of the *causes of the passions*. The distinguishing characteristic of *love and hatred* lies in their *object*, while the *causes* or the attendant circumstances which give rise to love or hatred are the same as for the other indirect passions. Hume states that, "since then the same qualities that produce pride or humility, cause love or hatred; all the arguments that have been employ'd to prove, that the causes of the former passions excite a pain or pleasure independent of the passion, will be applicable with equal evidence to the causes of the latter."[99] In fact, such is the resemblance between these two sets of passions that he begins his analysis of love and hatred, with what he calls "a kind of abridgement of our reasonings concerning the former, in order to explain the latter."[100]

b. The Object of Esteem

With feelings of pride, the object of the passion was the same as the person who was moved by the passion. The sole difference in the structure of the second set of indirect passions in Hume's argument is that they focus on a different person. Thus, "as the immediate *object* of pride and humility is self or that identical person, of whose thoughts, actions and sensations we are intimately conscious; so the *object* of love and hatred is some other person, of whose thoughts, actions, and sensations we are not conscious". This is something which Hume expects the reader to find "sufficiently evident from experience".[101] The question which remains to be answered is what kinds of things cause this second pair of passions. Drawing on the arguments developed in II.1, Hume asserts that the object of love and hatred cannot also be their cause in the same way as the object of pride and humility cannot also be their cause. If it were, the consequence would be that both passions would arise equally and at the same time as the result of the object, and would cancel each other out. Therefore, the causes must lie elsewhere and Hume finds them in the circumstances which attend the object. The types of object which can act as causes of passion are the same as those which give rise to pride:

> If we consider the causes of love and hatred, we shall find they are very much diversify'd, and have not many things in common. The virtue, knowledge, wit, good sense, good humour of any person, produce love and esteem; as the opposite qualities, hatred and contempt. The same passions arise from bodily accomplishments, such as beauty, force, swiftness, dexterity; and from their contraries;

[99] Ibid., p.322.
[100] Ibid., p.329.

> as likewise from the external advantages and disadvantages of family, possessions, cloaths, nation and climate. There is not one of these objects, but what by its different qualities may produce love and esteem, or hatred and contempt.[102]

Hence, the feelings which individuals have for other people are stimulated, in Hume's view, by the same attributes or possessions which give rise to feelings of pride in the individual perceived. They range from the most immediate virtues in the person himself, to the more distant attributes in his property and situation. The example which Hume gives, of a person who provokes "esteem", is one in which property is the cause of the passions. He describes, "a prince, that is possess'd of a stately palace, [who] commands the esteem of the people upon that account; and that *first*, by the beauty of the palace, and *secondly*, by the relation of property, which connects it with him". And for this prince, "the removal of either destroys the passion…".[103]

The relation of property is, in one sense or another, requisite before either passion can be felt towards another person. Thus, "virtue and vice, when consider'd in the abstract; beauty and deformity, when plac'd on inanimate objects; poverty and riches, when belonging to a third person"[104] do not excite the passions of love or hatred, esteem or contempt towards those, who have no relation to them. As an example, Hume imagines himself being observed by someone looking out a window who "sees me in the street, and beyond me a beautiful palace, with which I have no concern". Hume states his belief that "none will pretend, that this person will pay me the same respect, as if I were owner of the palace".[105]

c. The Causes of Esteem: Perceiving Riches and Power

Hume's opening statement in the analysis of the role of riches and power in part II.2 of the *Treatise* stresses its centrality to the formation of esteem in society. He says that, "nothing has a greater tendency to give us an esteem for any person, than his power and riches; or a contempt, than his poverty and meanness".[106] As money was subsumed under the concept of causal power, and made the foundation stone for a person's self-regard, so it is placed in the perception of other individuals.

The question which Hume raises concerns the manner in which this power operates in the prompting of love and hatred. He says that, "it happens most fortunately, that the

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[101] Ibid., p.329.
[102] Ibid., p.330.
[103] Ibid., p.330.
[104] Ibid., p.331.
[105] Ibid., p.331.
[106] Ibid., p.357.

greatest difficulty is not to discover a principle capable of producing such an effect, but to choose the chief and predominant among several, that present themselves".[107] He names three different causes to which "the *satisfaction* we take in the riches of others, and the *esteem* we have for the possessors" may be ascribed. First of all, this may be attributed to the objects which individuals possess, "such as houses, gardens, equipages; which, being agreeable in themselves, necessarily produce a sentiment of pleasure in every one, that either considers or surveys them."[108] The second cause is "the expectation of advantage from the rich and powerful by our sharing their possessions."[109] Finally, there is the principle of "sympathy, which makes us partake of the satisfaction of every one, that approaches us."[110] Since all three principles may be thought to concur in producing the phenomena of love and hatred, Hume's question becomes, *to which of them should we principally ascribe it?*

The first principle has, Hume suggests, "a greater influence, than what, at first sight, we may be apt to imagine."[111] Such objects usually give rise to "an emotion of pleasure or uneasiness; and tho' these sensations appear not much in our common indolent way of thinking, 'tis easy, either in reading or conversation, to discover them."[112] However, this is neither the sole nor the principal cause of the respect which is paid to the rich and powerful. The further circumstances of their belonging to or being available to another sentient being brings the further element of sympathy into the relation, which may further enhance the sensation. Hume argues that,

> if we consider the nature of that faculty, and the great influence which all relations have upon it, we shall easily be perswaded, that however the ideas of the pleasant wines, music, or gardens, which the rich man enjoys, may become lively and agreeable, the fancy will not confine itself to them, but will carry its view to the related objects; and in particular, to the person, who possesses them.

The pleasure which the object itself generates in the observer further assists the third principle of sympathy, it is therefore natural that the idea of the object is closely associated with the passion which it is expected to give to its possessor. Thus, Hume insists, the *third* principle is "more powerful and universal than the *first*."[113]

The operations of sympathy give rise in the observer to an understanding of the beliefs and feelings surrounding the power which the possessor finds in his ownership of money (or objects which cause pleasure). This brings Hume's attention back to the issues

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[107] Ibid., p.357.
[108] Ibid., p.357-8.
[109] Ibid., p.358.
[110] Ibid., p.358.
[111] Ibid., p.358.
[112] Ibid., p.358.

surrounding the esteem held for money, whether as the proud possessor, or as the admiring observer, and to the role of the will in the effectiveness of monetary power. Money, for Hume, presents a special case among the many possible of objects which can cause pride and esteem. This is because "riches and power alone, even tho' unemploy'd, naturally cause esteem and respect" despite the fact that the realisation of their power may not be effective at a given point in time. Where money is owned but not spent, the passions of pride and esteem "arise not from the idea of any beautiful or agreeable objects," since they are only a distant prospect. Although money "implies a kind of representation of such objects, by the power it affords of obtaining them; and for that reason may still be esteem'd proper to convey those agreeable images, which may give rise to the passion," Hume argues that it is, "more natural for us to take a contiguous object, *viz.* the satisfaction, which this power affords the person, who is possest of it."[114] It is the *power* of procuring pleasure-giving objects embodied in the *representative* medium of money that gives rise to pride and esteem. The monetary medium represents a belief in the power which would, or could, be exercised by the possessor if he were so motivated by his will. Hume confirms this argument by observing that, "riches represent the goods of life, only by means of the will; which employs them; and therefore imply in their very nature an idea of the person, and cannot be consider'd without a kind of sympathy with his sensations and enjoyments."[115] In this way, Hume stresses the centrality of the idea of the *will* to the building of social esteem – both as pride and as love. And as the analysis of his theory of the will in chapter 4 showed, Hume perceived the operations of the human understanding and the passions in common life to be centred on the estimation of other people's propensity to act. The understanding focuses on their characteristic tendencies, motives and powers to act, and uses this information in the formation of beliefs concerning the probability that other individuals will act in a certain way.

As in the analysis of pride and humility, Hume's presentation of the sympathetic esteem for another person's power requires an application of the causal thinking described in I.3. In the treatment of probability and knowledge, Hume argued that, "power, as distinguish'd from its exercise has either no meaning at all, or is nothing but a possibility or probability of existence; by which any object approaches reality, and has a sensible influence on the mind". Hume observed that, "this approach, by an illusion of the fancy, appears much greater, when we ourselves are possest of the power, than when it is enjoy'd

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[113] Ibid., p.359.
[114] Ibid., p.359.
[115] Ibid., p.359-60.

by another". When we perceive ourselves to possess this power, "the objects seem to touch upon the very verge of reality, and convey almost an equal satisfaction, as if actually in our possession". When it comes to other individuals, whom we esteem on account of the powers which they appear to possess in the form of money, Hume argues that "we must enter into this sentiment of the proprietor, and that without such a sympathy the idea of the agreeable objects, which they give him the power to produce, wou'd have but a feeble influence upon us."[116] Once again, it is the example of the miser who demonstrates the effectiveness of the belief in the probability of an exercise of power embodied in money.

Hume's conclusion from this is that the first principle, through which esteem was seen to be generated by the pleasurable perception of a person's possessions, "resolves itself in a great measure into the *third*, and becomes a *sympathy* with the person we esteem or love."[117] While the objects which have been acquired by the esteemed person may give pleasure to the observer and thus enhance the feelings of esteem, the concept of esteem cannot be exhausted by this principle, primarily due to the importance of monetary wealth in the construction of social status. Money embodies only the probability that such objects will exist for its possessor, and its power to represent these things (which are not yet directly perceived) is represented in its strongest form to the possessor, being the person who imagines the future possession of beautiful objects, and feels their imminence most strongly. Therefore, it must be primarily through sympathy with this person's imagination, and with the passions that the imaginary objects provoke, that the observer is impressed by his riches, and the power which they represent.

With regard to the second principle, "*viz. the agreeable expectation of advantage*,"[118] Hume finds that only in some special cases can we expect to gain from such persons as we esteem. Such advantages would only be expected were "a friendship and good-will to be conjoin'd with the riches," because otherwise, "'tis difficult to conceive on what we can found our hope of advantage from the riches of others."[119] Hume observes that "there is nothing more certain, than that we naturally esteem and respect the rich, even before we discover in them any such favourable disposition towards us,"[120] and that in fact, we even esteem them when "we lie so much out of the sphere of their activity, that they cannot even be suppos'd to be endow'd with that power."[121] The correct understanding of

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[116] Ibid., p.360.
[117] Ibid., p.360.
[118] Ibid., p.360.
[119] Ibid., p.361.
[120] Ibid., p.361.
[121] Ibid., p.361.

those passions through which a person is esteemed, Hume argues, will be established by drawing, "from the influence of *general rules*."[122] The argument that "it may be pretended, that being accustom'd to expect succour and protection from the rich and powerful, and to esteem them upon that account, we extend the same sentiments to those, who resemble them in their fortune, but from whom we can never hope for any advantage"[123] is not tenable. The inference would be incorrect because,

> if we consider, that in order to establish a general rule, and extend it beyond its proper bounds, there is requir'd a certain uniformity in our experience, and a great superiority of those instances, which are conformable to the rule, above the contrary. But here the case is quite otherwise. Of a hundred men of credit and fortune I meet with, there is not, perhaps, one from who I can expect advantage; so that 'tis impossible any custom can ever prevail in the present case.[124]

It must therefore be the case that this second explanation for esteeming wealth and power is only effective under exceptional circumstances.

Thus, Hume deploys the principle of sympathy to explain the way in which property and monetary power, or riches, give rise to an estimation of the rank and value of any person, irrespective of acquaintance, or expected gain on the part of the observer. Close associations with persons who have obtained a high social status through such property and riches can also contribute to pride and social esteem. Hume explains that all those who are respected for, and take pride in, their lineage, base their status and esteem on a relation to the power bestowed by riches. A man of birth is "one who is descended from a long succession of rich and powerful ancestors, and who acquires our esteem by his relation to persons whom we esteem" and, "his ancestors, therefore, tho' dead, are respected, in some measure, on account of their riches, and consequently without any kind of expectation."[125] Prisoners of war provide another example of people who are esteemed for their wealth and power even where there can be no expectation of advantage since they are enemies rather than friends. The status of strangers is established according to the same criterion of monetary power: "A man, who is himself of a competent fortune, upon coming into a company of strangers, naturally treats them with different degrees of respect and deference, as he is inform'd of their different fortunes and conditions…".[126] However, in Hume's view, one need "not to go so far as prisoners of war and the dead to observe with a little attention those phaenomena that occur to us in common life and

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[122] Ibid., p.362.
[123] Ibid., p.362.
[124] Ibid., p.362.
[125] Ibid., p.361.
[126] Ibid., p.361.

conversation."[127] The observation of men in the regular conduct of life affords ample data demonstrating that "the different ranks of men are, in a great measure, regulated by riches, and that with regard to superiors as well as inferiors, strangers as well as acquaintance".[128] Hume therefore concludes that, "[u]pon the whole, there remains nothing, which can give us an esteem for power and riches, and a contempt for meanness and poverty, except the principle of *sympathy*". It is through sympathy that we are supposed to "enter into the sentiments of the rich and poor, and partake of their pleasure and uneasiness".

It was in the context of his explanation of the esteem for wealth that Hume wrote one of his most important evocations of the principle of sympathy. In order to comprehend its extensive influence, he urges his reader "to take a general survey of the universe, and observe the force of sympathy thro' the whole animal creation, and the easy communication of sentiments from one thinking being to another". He observes in most creatures "a remarkable desire of company, which associates them together, without any advantages they can ever propose to reap from their union". It is man who exhibits this tendency most prominently, "being the creature of the universe, who has the most ardent desire of society, and is fitted for it by the most advantages". This notion of "society" forms the horizon within which the desires and complex passions of man become intelligible – Hume says that,

> we can form no wish, which has not a reference to society. A perfect solitude is, perhaps, the greatest punishment we can suffer. Every pleasure languishes when enjoy'd a-part from company, and every pain becomes more cruel and intolerable.

Within this world of sociability, "whatever other passions we may be actuated by; pride, ambition, avarice, curiosity, revenge or lust," in all cases "the soul or animating principle" is sympathy. The passions would have no force "were we to abstract entirely from the thoughts and sentiments of others". Finally, without the operation of these indirect passions, and their role in constructing the identity and self-regard of the individual, and his emulative sense of esteem towards others, the fulfilment of other desires ceases to satisfy the individual. Hume declares,

> let all the powers and elements of nature conspire to serve and obey one man: Let the sun rise and set at his command: The sea and rivers roll as he pleases, and the earth furnish spontaneously whatever may be useful or agreeable to him: He will still be miserable, till you give him some one person at least, with whom he may share his happiness, and whose esteem and friendship he may enjoy.[129]

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[127] Ibid., p.361.
[128] Ibid., p.362.
[129] Ibid., p.363.

Thus, the desire for objects, and for the power to acquire objects, is activated to the full only within society, and it is the manner in which such things can contribute to an externally recognisable social identity – measured by both pride and esteem – that gives them their meaning.

d. Riches, Power, and Sympathy

The basic principle through which Hume's individual's esteem for the rich is established is sympathy and it is sympathy which is given as the ground upon which the sociable disposition of man rests. It is through his sympathy with those whom he esteems or loves that he chooses his company, and it is through his sympathy with the power associated with money that he gives rank and status to men according to their financial condition. Thus the sociability and amicability of Hume's idea of man becomes structured around "credit and fortune".[130]

In a similar manner, the idea of beauty is reduced through sympathy to a nexus of utilitarian value. The appreciation for a house shown to us by someone is achieved by sympathising with the convenience which is offered thereby to the owner and it is through this that we achieve a notion of its "beauty". Thus the aesthetic value of the object becomes a measure of its usefulness in relation to the desires of its owner which it satisfies.[131] In Hume's view,

> this observation extends to tables, chairs, scritoires, chimneys, coaches, sadles, ploughs, and indeed to every work of art; it being an universal rule, that their beauty is chiefly deriv'd from their utility, and from their fitness for that purpose, to which they are destin'd. But this is an advantage, that concerns only the owner, nor is there any thing but sympathy, which can interest the spectator.[132]

This notion of utility evidently resembles the ideas of power and causation as they were unfolded through the treatment of pride, power and money in the previous part of this chapter. In all cases – from the aesthetic beauty of objects, through the general notion of physical causes, to the power of money to procure objects – the merit of objects, and the feature of their relationship with an owner, is one which implicates the term *power* (or

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[130] Ibid., p.362.

[131] See also p.299 for the importance of utility in the idea of beauty, and the following: "'Tis evident, that nothing renders a field more agreeable than its fertility, and that scarce any advantages of ornament or situation will be able to equal this beauty. 'Tis the same case with particular trees and plants, as with the field on which they grow. I know not but a plain, overgrown with furze and broom, may be, in itself, as beautiful as a hill cover'd with vines or olive-trees; tho' it will never appear so to one, who is acquainted with the value of each. But this is a beauty merely of imagination, and has no foundation in what appears to the senses. Fertility and value have a plain reference to use; and that to riches, joy, and plenty; in which tho' we have no hope of partaking, yet we enter into them by the vivacity of the fancy, and share them, in some measure, with the proprietor".(364)

[132] Ibid., p.364.

utility) in the capacity to produce pleasure for the owner.

It is in the context of a further analysis of money, riches and power, and their relationship with esteem, that Hume introduces his metaphor for social perceptions and interactions, i.e. the image of human mirrors through which the operations of sympathy communicate ideas and feelings associated with the possession of power. The riches of a person provide the example for Hume to demonstrate the way in which this works:

> Thus the pleasure, which a rich man receives from his possessions, being thrown upon the beholder, causes a pleasure and esteem; which sentiments again, being perceiv'd and sympathiz'd with, encrease the pleasure of the possessor; and being once more reflected, become a new foundation for pleasure and esteem in the beholder.[133]

In fact, Hume's present concern with the feelings held by individuals for others, leads him back to the analysis of monetary power, and its centrality to social identity, in a similar manner to that which appeared in II.1. Once again, Hume stresses the centrality of *power* to the significance which people have given to wealth. He states that there, "is certainly an original satisfaction in riches deriv'd from that power, which they bestow, of enjoying all the pleasures of life," and it is this which gives them a strong appeal for the passions: "as this [power] is their very nature and essence, it must be the first source of all the passions, which arise from them."[134] In the same way as the possession of power in the form of riches had been a central support for pride, Hume stresses that, "one of the most considerable of these passions [arising from the power bestowed by riches] is that of love or esteem in others, which therefore proceeds from a sympathy with the pleasure of the possessor."[135] Furthermore, Hume observes that the person who is seen to have wealth, "has also a secondary satisfaction in riches arising from the love and esteem he acquires by them, and this satisfaction is nothing but a second reflexion of that original pleasure, which proceeded from himself."[136] The importance of esteem in the construction of the self gives conspicuous wealth its important place in the appearance of pride. As a result the "secondary satisfaction or vanity becomes one of the principal recommendations of riches, and is the chief reason, why we either desire them for ourselves, or esteem them in others." All this serves Hume's purpose of demonstrating the infinite replication of feelings through the mirror of sympathy whereby self-esteem and esteem for others is generated in society. The reflections are continuous, but after a while, "'tis difficult to distinguish the images

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[133] Ibid., p.365.
[134] Ibid., p.365.
[135] Ibid., p.365.
[136] Ibid., p.365.

and reflexions, by reason of their faintness and confusion."[137]

e. Conclusion

This chapter was directed towards two primary objectives. The first, was to build up a profile of the kind of individual which Hume had in mind while developing the theories presented in the *Treatise*. The ends which typically motivated this individual, and the means available to him for the attainment of these ends were particularly of interest. In the first part of the chapter, concerning II.1 of the *Treatise*, it was established that Hume's individual was deeply concerned with the perception of himself in a social context. It was through his awareness of the ways in which other persons perceived and esteemed him that he was able to construct a strong sense of his own worth. It is this sense of worth which is signified by Hume using the terms *pride and humility*. This self-perception was shown in the second part of this chapter, and in II.2 of the *Treatise*, to be directly *mirrored* in his perception of other individuals. In the cases of both pride and love or esteem, it was evident that the concept of *power* – in the form of the power to produce pleasure – was central to the evaluation of persons. This *power* is embodied in any objects or commodities that can produce pleasure for their owner, but is particularly exemplified in the medium of money: hence the importance of riches and power as *causes* of pride and esteem. Money is believed by its owner to bestow upon him a *power* to procure further objects which themselves possess the power to produce pleasure; and a third party who observes and evaluates the owner of money, accepts the owner's belief in its power by sympathising with him.

A second objective which has been achieved by this analysis has been to clarify the links between the concrete particulars of Hume's individual – his desire for money and commodities, or his desire to be seen as a person of taste and breeding, etc. – and the parts which are analysed in a more abstract, or 'abstruse', way elsewhere in the *Treatise*. It is particularly through Hume's explanation and use of the term *power*, and especially his concentration on the role of the notion of power in practices concerning money and possession, which is most revealing. Hume's use of the term power in II.1 and II.2 of the *Treatise* is closely interrelated to two other parts of the work. The first is the notion of *causation* and its foundation in calculations of probability articulated in I.3; and the second is the theory of the will presented in II.3. Chapter 4 showed how the activity of the understanding in estimating the efficacy, or probable effectiveness, of causes was

[137] Ibid., p.365.

motivated by the passions through the will, and primarily focused on desirable objects or objectives, on one's own powers, and on the characters, powers and motives of other individuals. In chapter 5 it has become clear that the kind of mutual assessment and evaluation by individuals in society analysed in chapter 4, was related in Hume's theory of the individual to specific practical concerns and instruments: namely, to the concern with acquiring commodities and property (and other personal attributes where possible), and on the use of money as an instrument of power.

Hume's probabilistic theory of causal inference and his theory of the passions are both built on a concept of *power*; and chapters 2 and 3 argued that the manner in which he structured them around the concept of power was built on his experience and observation of human interaction in actual social contexts. Chapter 3 showed how Hume intended to use the data acquired through experience of common life as he found it to ground his analysis of human nature; and chapter 4 showed how the central concerns of the understanding, driven by the will, were with estimating the powers and propensities of oneself and of the people surrounding oneself. Analysis of Book II of the *Treatise* in all its parts shows that the theory of probabilistic causal induction is designed to describe the intellectual processes whereby the individual achieves a pragmatic understanding of his own powers and the powers of others. His concern with these powers centres on the motivational structures described by Hume in his analysis of the passions. According to Hume, there are two layers of motivation in the individual. The first consists of what Hume calls the *direct passions* and the second of what he calls the *indirect passions*. In the first category, we find the individual being drawn towards objects that are believed to promise pleasure and being repelled by those that it is believed will produce pain. The forces compelling the individual are *desires* and *aversions, hopes* and *fears*. In Hume's description of the human agent, the desires direct the individual towards goods designed, or discovered, to be effective for pleasurable consumption. The understanding is required by these passions to estimate the capacity of objects to bestow pleasure or pain, first of all; and secondly, it is called upon to measure the prospects for successful intervention among these objects. In this second task, the understanding must estimate the capacity of the individual himself to act, and the capacity of surrounding persons and objects to prevent successful intervention. In this role, the use of money obtains importance as a representation of the individual's power to procure objects or otherwise intervene in a given situation.

With the second layer of the passions, the *indirect* passions, the understanding is called upon to measure similar powers, but for different reasons. At this level, the individual is concerned with the manner in which he may be compared with other individuals in terms of two things: first of all, in terms of his success in acquiring objects which bestow pleasure which, as Hume explains, are understood to embody the "power" to bestow pleasure; the second aspect of the individual on which he compares himself to others concerns his power to acquire further objects that will provide pleasure. Once again, in the first aspect, the role of the understanding is largely taken up with estimating the powers embodied in objects to cause pleasure for those that possess them; and in the second aspect, the understanding is concerned with the powers possessed by the individual to acquire such objects as will bestow pleasure. Again, the common form that the latter task takes in the social context, and one to which Hume gives particular attention, is money. As Hume says, "[t]he very essence of riches consists in the power of procuring the pleasures and conveniences of life."[138] In Hume's theory, the passions register the comparative success or failure of the individual self in relation to others through indices of *pride / humility* and *love or esteem / hatred or contempt*. Through the estimation of the self in terms of pride and of others in terms of esteem, the individual measures the relations of power and success, and thus establishes the relative status in society of himself and the other individuals surrounding him.

The following chapter follows up these connections by analysing the theory of causal epistemology which Hume presented in the part of Book I of the *Treatise*, entitled, '*Of Knowledge and Probability*'.

[138] Ibid., p.315.

CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETING THE UNDERSTANDING: HUME'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND PROBABILITY

1.) Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the theory of knowledge which Hume presented in I.3, based on insights drawn from the chapters presented above. The abstract philosophical theory of Book I is shown to have been shaped to some extent around the concrete and mundane practical concerns identified in chapter 5, which were shown to focus and orientate the understanding in the use of its powers, in chapter 4.

In chapters preceding this the following conclusions were established: first, Hume's philosophical project was orientated towards a notion of *common life*, which was conceived as a sphere of affairs and duties with which the philosopher should be involved in constructive communication. Second, it was established through an examination of Hume's treatment of the will, that he believed that the intellectual activities associated with the understanding were driven towards practical goals by the direct passions. Third, having established that in Hume's opinion, thought and the use of reason were always orientated towards the purposes established by desire, and would therefore be implicated primarily in forms of practice, it was necessary to uncover clues which suggest the specific nature of the practices which Hume had in mind. This was achieved in chapter 5 where Hume's exploration of the indirect passions revealed a complex psychology through which pride in oneself and esteem for others were seen to be built on maximising one's property, riches, power and personal attributes in the most conspicuous manner possible. Further analysis of Hume's treatment of these issues revealed that within his notion of power the key theories of causal epistemology from Book I, and of the will from II.3, were required in order to make sense of the exemplary human belief in the potency of money. In fact, money is the only fully analysed example which Hume presents of the combination of causal potential, the human will, and the object of probable knowledge.

It is evident from Book II of the *Treatise*, that in Hume's perception, the capacity of the human subject for understanding the relationships between objects and events in terms of causation, performs a key function in the engagement of individuals with the objects with which they are most concerned. Arguably, it forms the most important part of the understanding. These objects are primarily the things which they want to possess or

consume, and each other. It is apparent in the treatment of the passions that in common *experience*, it is this capacity to think in terms of causality that predominates. In the treatment of probability and knowledge, in Book I, Hume presents philosophical arguments concerning why the other logical relations through which human beings think are less relevant for the philosopher of human nature than those involved in probable causation; and how this specific facility for understanding the world in terms of causation emerges and operates.

The prelude to Hume's elaboration of the principles of causal induction consists in the elimination of the other capacities of the human mind as fit subjects for analysis. Hume sketches the various relations through which the understanding might be supposed to reason in its engagement with experience. "There are," he reminds the reader, "seven different kinds of philosophical relation, *viz. resemblance, identity, relations of time and place, proportion in quantity or number, degrees in any quality, contrariety, and causation.*"[1] Of these, he writes, three, "are discoverable at first sight, and fall more properly under the province of intuition than demonstration," namely resemblance, contrariety and degrees in quality.[2] He eliminates those belonging to mathematical logic, i.e. *proportions in quantity or number*.[3] Identity and contiguity are dismissed since they involve mere intuitive perception and require no real thought. This leaves Hume with cause and effect, the outstanding relation. This is the relation which, as Hume tells the reader in I.1, is the most extensive and which in II.3 he said is primarily involved in the probabilistic reasoning of common life, concerned with character, will and motive.

His next move is to demonstrate how the general notion of cause is not in any way built on deductive or demonstrative reasoning, but arises purely through the engagement with experience. Inferences concerning causality occur as the result of a habit. This is a

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[1] *Treatise*, p.69.

[2] Ibid., p. 70. Hume explains, "When any objects *resemble* each other, the resemblance will at first strike the eye, or rather the mind; and seldom requires a second examination. The case is the same with *contrariety*, and with the *degrees* of any *quality*. No one can once doubt but existence and non-existence destroy each other, and are perfectly incompatible and contrary. And tho' it be impossible to judge exactly of the degrees of any quality, such as colour, taste, heat, cold, when the difference betwixt them is very small; yet 'tis easy to decide, that any of them is superior or inferior to another, when their difference is considerable. And this decision we always pronounce at first sight, without any enquiry or reasoning." p.70.

[3] Of these, Hume writes, "I have already observ'd, that geometry, or the *art*, by which we fix the proportions of figures; tho' it much excels both in universality and exactness, the loose judgements of the senses and the imagination; yet never attains a perfect precision and exactness. Its first principles are still drawn from the general appearance of the objects; and that appearance can never afford us any security, when we examine the prodigious minuteness of which nature is susceptible. Our ideas seem to give a perfect assurance, that no two right lines can have a common segment; but if we consider these ideas, we shall find, that they always suppose a sensible inclination, of the two lines, and that where the angle they form is extremely small, we have no standard of a right line so precise as to assure us of the truth of this proposition. 'Tis the same case with most of the primary decisions of the mathematics." Ibid., pp.70-71.

habit of prediction, i.e. a habit through which the subject develops a general expectation that the future will resemble the past. Hume argues that by the general notion of a belief in causation, which is based on *feeling* or the passions, is understood no more than a tendency to expect certain regularities in the future.

After he has established the basic principle of the belief in causation, Hume presents the means belonging to an individual, and based on this basic predictive habit, of assessing the prospects for change in existing states of affairs, based on the quantitative evaluation of past experiences stored in the memory. It is in this part of the theory of understanding that the reader finds the species of reasoning which belongs to the common active life to which Hume alluded in the *Abstract* and whose features he fleshed out in Book II. It is in the treatment of knowledge and probability that Hume presents the intellectual tools available to the human subject for understanding, anticipating, and intervening, in his environment. The attitude of the subject towards this environment is driven by desire (and aversion), in particular, a desire to be esteemed more highly than others, and other human subjects are the objects that surround and affect the things that are desired. In short, the environment in which the subject is equipped to intervene is a social one, and in particular, it appears to be a commercial one.

2.) Investigating the Idea of *Cause and Effect*

a) The Elimination of Mathematical Thought[4]

The purpose of part I.2, in which Hume analysed the understanding of space and time, was to undermine the highest claims of the mathematical sciences. The focus of philosophers on demonstrative certainty which he criticised in the *Abstract*,[5] was to some extent based on the faith in mathematics either as the basis of sound reasoning, or at least a reassuring analogue to logic and knowledge. By showing that geometry can never really live up to its pretence at representing exact proportions – for example, the geometrician can never be confident in producing exactly parallel lines – Hume exploited his version of the theory of ideas (and impressions) as a tool to pull philosophy back from the pretence to absolute certainty, and back to the probabilities which are more common in real life. His concern with corroding the edifice of philosophical certainty and its epistemological self-

[4] Hume may not necessarily be interpreted as having himself 'eliminated' these ideas. David Fate Norton interprets Hume as a 'post-sceptical' philosopher, who merely accepted the explicit and implicit consequences of the Cartesians and of Locke and Berkeley, who had themselves already undermined the security of mathematical and metaphysical certainties. See Norton's position as he summarises it in his introductory article in Norton (ed.), op. cit., (1994).

[5] See ch.4 section 1.a of this thesis.

confidence shows itself in the introductory section of I.3. Hume recalls the conclusions which he drew with regard to geometry: "I have already observ'd, that geometry, or the *art* by which we fix the proportions of figures; tho' it much excels both in univerality and exactness, the loose judgements of the sense and imagination; yet never attains a perfect precision and exactness."[6]

Hume's second observation concerning "our demonstrative reasonings" also suggested "by the same subject of the mathematics" echoes the comments made in the Abstract concerning the relative lack of importance of demonstrative reasoning in comparison to probable reasoning. Hume attacks the pretensions which philosophy has borrowed from mathematics. He says that,

> "'tis usual with mathematicians, to pretend, that those ideas, which are their objects, are of so refin'd and spiritual a nature, that they fall not under the conception of the fancy, but must be comprehended by a pure and intellectual view, of which the superior faculties of the soul are alone capable. The same notion runs tho' most parts of philosophy, and is principally made use of to explain our abstract ideas..."[7]

Hume's scepticism is targeted at vain theories such as these, which simply hide the failures within philosophy. "'Tis easy to see," he says, "why philosophers are so fond of this notion of some spiritual and refin'd perceptions; since by that means they cover many of their absurdities, and may refuse to submit to the decisions of clear ideas, by appealing to such as are obscure and uncertain."[8]

Hume's agenda for undermining these ideas is to explore and clarify the manner in which experience yields knowledge. In order to "destroy this artifice" it is only necessary to consider "that principle so oft insisted on, *that all our ideas are copy'd from our impressions*." On this basis, Hume argues, it is possible to 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 any thing so dark and intricate." An idea "cannot imply any very great mystery" because although it is weaker by nature than its correspondant impression, it is "in every other respect the same". If the weakness of an idea renders it obscure, then the *business* of the philosopher is "to remedy that defect, as much as possible, by keeping the idea steady and precise." Until ideas have been clarified in this way it is, in Hume's view, "vain to pretend to reasoning and philosophy."[9]

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[6] *Treatise*, pp.70-71.
[7] Ibid., p.72.
[8] Ibid., p.72.
[9] Ibid., p.73.

Hume establishes a distinction between those relations which "depend entirely on the ideas, which we compare together," and those which, "may be chang'd without any change in the ideas."[10] The former belong to that category which Hume calls (as he does in the *Abstract*) "our demonstrative reasonings".[11] The latter are those which are discovered through experience, and which can never be discovered merely from reasonings concerning ideas *a priori*. In the former category are the relations of "*resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number*".[12] In the latter category are the relations of "*identity, the situations in time and place, and causation.*"[13] Hume explains that these relations are accessible only through experience since "the relations of *contiguity* and *distance* betwixt two objects may be chang'd merely by an alteration of their place, without any change in the objects themselves or in their ideas; and the place depends on a hundred different accidents, which cannot be foreseen by the mind."[14] The same is the case with identity and causation since,

> two objects, tho' perfectly resembling each other, and even appearing in the same place at different times may be numerically different: And as the power, by which one object produces another is never discoverable merely from their idea, 'tis evident *cause* and *effect* are relations, of which we receive information from experience, and not from any abstract reasoning or reflexion. There is no single phaenomenon, even the most simple, which can be accounted for from the qualities of the objects, as they appear to us; or which we cou'd foresee without the help of our memory and experience.[15]

Hume stresses that in causal reasonings the mind considers objects which it cannot perceive directly since the relation is not part of the objects themselves. In order to understand causation it is therefore necessary to deploy the imagination.

Hume dispenses with "those four relations, which are the foundation of science,"[16] which are *resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number*. This leaves a further three – *identity, situations in time and place, and causation* – which require experience in order to be perceived or understood. As a philosopher concerned with interpreting the manner in which human beings understand their experiential encounters – i.e. the kinds of reasonings which he described in the *Abstract* as "probabilities, and those other measures of evidence on which life and action intirely depend" – Hume rejects "the operations of the understanding in the forming of

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[10] Ibid., p.69.
[11] Ibid., p.72.
[12] Ibid., p.70.
[13] Ibid., I.3.ii, p.73.
[14] Ibid., p.69.
[15] Ibid., pp. 69-70.
[16] Ibid., p.73.

demonstrations"[17] as the proper subject to be studied. In fact, out of the remaining three relations through which the understanding may be supposed to operate, only one has any real significance in the reasonings of common life and action. This is causation which is singled out since the relations of identity and situations in space and time are always established merely as matters of fact through perceptual intuition and without any further thought.[18] Hume states that,

> it appears, that of those three relations, which depend not upon the mere ideas, the only one, that can be trac'd beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel, is *causation*. This relation, therefore, we shall endeavour to explain fully before we leave the subject of the understanding.[19]

The criterion for deciding which kind of thought qualifies as *reasoning* is that it must involve thinking "beyond what is immediately present to the senses, either to discover the real existence or the relations of objects." Therefore, Hume argues, "[a]ccording to this way of thinking, we ought not to receive as reasoning any of the observations we may make concerning *identity*, and the *relations* of *time* and *place*..."[20] It is only in the act of comprehending relations of cause and effect that the mind "produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas follow'd or proceeded by any other existence or action".[21] The relations of *identity* and *relations of time and place* can only be made use of in *reasoning* as it is defined by Hume insofar as "they either affect or are affected by" reasonings concerning causation.[22]

b) Hume's preliminary delineation of The "Idea" of Causation

Hume's agenda therefore requires that he interrogate this "idea" of causation in order to "see from what origin it is deriv'd".[23] He proposes that we "cast our eye on any two objects, which we call cause and effect, and turn them on all sides, in order to find that impression, which produces an idea of such prodigious consequence."[24] First of all, he finds that the idea of cause is not derived from any of the qualities of the objects, even

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[17] Ibid., p.647.
[18] Hume makes a distinction between what he calls "perception" and what he calls "reasoning": he says that "All kinds of reasoning consist in nothing but a *comparison* and a discovery of those relations, either constant or inconstant, which two or more objects bear to each other," whereas, "When both the objects are present to the senses along with the relation, we call *this* perception rather than reasoning…", ibid., p.73.
[19] Ibid., p.74.
[20] Ibid., pp.73-74.
[21] Ibid., pp.73-74.
[22] Ibid., pp.73-74.
[23] Ibid., p.74.
[24] Ibid., p.75.

though the object "falls under the denomination of cause and effect."[25] In fact, he says, "there is nothing existent, either externally or internally, which is not to be consider'd either as a cause or an effect; tho' 'tis plain there is no one quality, which universally belongs to all beings, and gives them a title to that denomination."[26] In order to achieve an adequate explanation of this phenomenon of the human mind – i.e. that it can derive an intelligible picture of things which is explained in terms of causation – he seeks, first, to present a preliminary delineation of what it is that must be explained. Secondly, he examines the manner in which philosophical questions concerning the nature of causation were posed previously, and thirdly, he presents his own version of the question, modified to accomodate the criticisms which he has made of the previous endeavours of philosophers.

In order to achieve a preliminary definition of what is to be understood, Hume proceeds to consider the nature of the relation involved in this concept of cause. He states that, "[t]he idea, then, of causation must be deriv'd from some *relation* among objects; and that relation we must now endeavour to discover."[27] The first relation which is always present in instances of causation, he says, is contiguity and therefore he assumes that we may "consider the relation of CONTIGUITY as essential to that of causation."[28] The second relation involved is that "of PRIORITY of time in the cause before the effect."[29] As for anything further which might be discovered in the notion of causation beyond these two relations, Hume says that he is "stopt short, and can proceed no farther in considering any single instance of cause and effect."[30] He warns that it is futile to try to proceed beyond this through reasoning (i.e. *a priori* reasoning) alone. Furthermore, any attempt to circumvent the problem of defining cause by substituting another term to explain it, such as "production", is denounced as tautologous. "Shou'd any one leave this instance," he argues,

> and pretend to define a cause, by saying it is something productive of another, 'tis evident he wou'd say nothing. For what does he mean by *production*? Can he give any definition of it, that will not be the same with that of causation? If he can; I desire it may be produc'd. If he cannot; he here runs in a circle, and gives a synonimous term instead of a definition.[31]

A further observation which Hume ventures to make at this stage, and one which proves to be fundamental, involves another relation commonly supposed to reside in the

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[25] Ibid., p.75.
[26] Ibid., p.75.
[27] Ibid., p.75.
[28] Ibid., p.75.
[29] Ibid., p.76.
[30] Ibid., p.76.

relation of cause and effect. This is "a NECESSARY CONNEXION" and it proves to be "of much greater importance, than any of the other two [relations] above-mentioned."[32] But, once again, there is a problem when it comes to finding the origin of the idea. Hume's question is essentially, *what impression (or which impressions) give rise to this idea of necessary connection?* Like the idea of cause, it cannot be found in the qualities of the objects themselves, nor can it be found in the relations of contiguity or succession. Hume asks rhetorically, "[s]hall the despair of success make me assert, that I am here possest of an idea, which is not preceded by any similar impression?" Answering in the negative, he proposes that it is necessary to "beat about all the neighbouring fields," in order to find this illusive construct.[33] Hume determines that "'[t]is necessary for us to leave the direct survey of this question concerning the nature of that *necessary connexion*, which enters into our idea of cause and effect; and endeavour to find some other questions, the examination of which will perhaps afford a hint, that may serve to clear up the present difficulty."[34] The first question is, "[f]or what reason we pronounce it *necessary*, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, shou'd also have a cause?", and the second is, "[w]hy we conclude, that such particular causes must *necessarily* have such particular effects; and what is the nature of that *inference* we draw from the one to the other, and of the *belief* we repose in it?"[35]

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[31] Ibid., p.77.
[32] Ibid., p.77.
[33] Ibid., p.78. It is interesting to note that Descartes used a similar metaphor when discussing the causal relation between ideas in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Rule 12. He wrote that, "the whole of human knowledge consists uniquely in our achieving a distinct perception of how all these simple natures contribute to the composition of other things. This is a very useful point to note, since whenever some difficulty is proposed for investigation, almost everyone gets stuck right at the outset, uncertain as to which thoughts he ought to concentrate his mind on, yet quite convinced that he ought to seek some new kind of entity previously unknown to him. Thus, if the question concerns the nature of the magnet, foreseeing that the topic will prove inaccessible and difficult, he turns his mind away from everything that is evident, and immediately directs it at all the most difficult points, in the vague expectation that by rambling through the barren field of manifold causes he will hit upon something new. But take someone who thinks that nothing in the magnet can be known which does not consist of certain self-evident, simple natures: he is in no doubt about how he should proceed. First he carefully gathers together all the available observations concerning the stone in question; then he tries to deduce from this what sort of mixture of simple natures is necessary for producing all the effects which the magnet is found to have. Once he has discovered this mixture, he is in a position to make the bold claim that he has grasped the true nature of the magnet, so far as it is humanly possible to discover it one the basis of given observations." *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* vol.1, translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 49-50. It is quite possible that Hume had this passage in mind as he wrote about looking for the nature of causation in the *Treatise*, and Hume's argument that it is necessary to look outside and beyond the simple ideas or "natures" in order to discover the principle or gentle force which binds them together into a causal relation is clearly and directly opposed to Descartes. Thus, the metaphorical search in the neighbouring fields has the opposite value for each philosopher.
The *Rules* were first published in a Dutch translation in Holland in 1684, and were published in their original Latin in Amsterdam by P. and J. Blaeu in 1701 (Cottingham et al, p.7).
[34] *Treatise*, p.78.
[35] Ibid., p.78.

Hume concludes what amounts to a problematisation of the idea of causation with a significant remark on the bearing which these reasonings have outside the realm of ideas. He observes that,

> tho' the ideas of cause and effect be deriv'd from the impressions of reflexion as well as from those of sensation, yet for brevity's sake, I commonly mention only the latter as the origin of these ideas; tho' I desire that whatever I say of them may also extend to the former. Passions are connected with their objects and with one another; no less than external bodies are connected together. The same relation, then, of cause and effect, which belongs to one, must be common to all of them.[36]

As was pointed out in chapter 4 of this thesis, I.1.ii indicates that the first two books of the *Treatise* should be understood to describe two parallel, and interconnected, domains within human nature and within the activity of the human individual. Hume does not allow the reader to forget that these domains remain inseparable in their operations, with the combination of ideas in the understanding being as reliant on the cementing of the passions, as the passions are on the associations of ideas with impressions of reflection. In fact, such is the interpenetration which operates between the two domains in Hume's theory that Books I and II may be understood to describe two sides of the same coin in most instances.

c) The Need for a Concept of *Cause and Effect*

Having problematised the notion of *cause and effect*, Hume proceeds to reinforce the significance of the question concerning the nature and origin of causal associations, both for his own philosophical project, and for the work of his predecessors in philosophy. From the points of view of philosophers, the importance of the idea that there is necessity to causes arises from "a general maxim in philosophy, that *whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence*," which, Hume says, "is commonly taken for granted in all reasonings, without any proof given or demanded..."[37] However, he finds that "if we examine this maxim by the idea of knowledge above-explain'd, we shall discover in it no mark of any such intuitive certainty." On the contrary, Hume suggests that it is found that "'tis of a nature quite foreign to that species of conviction."[38] Hume specifies the arguments presented by Mr. Hobbes, Dr. Clarke[39] and Mr. Locke,[40] as examples where it was attempted to explain the understanding of causation with reference to ideas alone.[41] In

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[36] Ibid., p.78.
[37] Ibid., p.78-79.
[38] Ibid., p.79.
[39] Ibid., p.80.
[40] Ibid., p.81.
[41] Ibid., p.80.

fact, Hume argues, since it is possible to conceive situations in which such a principle of causation would not be effective, it may be concluded that the idea of necessity cannot be established *a priori*, and without reference to something beyond the ideas present in the understanding.

Therefore, it is necessary to conclude that, "since it is not from knowledge or any scientific reasoning that we derive the opinion of the necessity of a cause to every new production," then, as Hume argues, this opinion "must necessarily arise from observation and experience." His analysis of the notion therefore moves towards the question of "*how experience gives rise to such a principle?*" or to put it in a more "convenient" form, "*Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?*" This strongly indicates that the philosophical question concerning the nature of human thought on the subject of causation must seek its answers by recalling the manner in which individuals appear to use the idea of cause, and necessary connexion, in common experience. The previous chapter suggested, that this experience, in Hume's view, typically involved the purchase and consumption of desirable objects, and the use of institutionalised power in the form of money. Power, for Hume, is a species of cause, and according to II.3, the beginning of habitual causal induction appears when one individual assesses the likelihood that other individuals (or he himself) will excercise their capacity to cause certain events. In fact, the failure of *a priori* reasoning and of the substitution of new terms such as *production* for *causation* calls for something more radical in Hume's treatment than the mere substitution of a new arrangement of the philosophical pieces.

Hume's analysis takes its most fundamental turn at this point. For Hume, the philosopher's reason alone cannot possibly provide any new answers. It is therefore necessary to revert to his version of the experimental method which he describes in the Introduction. Since the idea of causation or necessary connection does not, and cannot arise from ideas alone, the only remaining grounds for justifying further consideration of this matter are *that human individuals commonly think in terms of cause anyway*. It is only through the philosopher's observation of his own and others' typical modes of thought that he can have access to this problematic idea and it is only the results of such observations which can convince him that there is something coherent to be understood in the idea of causal relations. Instead of providing a methodical construction of a complex idea, Hume therefore provides a clarification of mental phenomena which he has observed. The Cartesian 'method' for deducing ideal relations therefore had to be rejected.

It is the pursuit of an answer to this question of how and why the common experience of individuals gives rise to the idea of a necessary causal connexion which Hume makes "the subject of our future enquiry."[42] On this basis, Hume establishes a specific agenda for his investigation. He breaks up "*the component parts of our reasonings concerning cause and effect*" in order to clarify exactly what it is that the investigation is to explain. To begin with, he reminds the reader that, although abstract ideas are not themselves sufficient to explain how it is that the human agent achieves a notion of causal necessity, it is still only the ideas which the subject absorbs in the manner described in I.1 which provide the information which it has to work with. "Tho'," he says, "the mind in its reasonings from causes or effects carries its view beyond those objects, which it sees or remembers, it must never lose sight of them entirely, nor reason merely upon its own ideas, without some mixture of impressions, or at least of ideas of the memory, which are equivalent to impressions."[43] While the evidence adduced for the notion of cause in a particular situation must be achieved using the ideas derived from that situation, the subject himself must provide some further principle, which is either derived from past experience (and is therefore constituted by empirically derived ideas), or from some principle other than ideas.

In fact, Hume argues that in causal reasoning concerning experience,

> we employ materials, which are of a mix'd and heterogeneous nature, and which, however connected, are yet essentially different from each other. All our arguments concerning causes and effects consist both of an impression of the memory or sense, and of the idea of that existence, which produces the object of the impression, or is produc'd by it.[44]

He finds that in order to explain the operations of the human understanding in its attempts to establish causal intelligibility, there are three things to explain, "*viz. First*, the original impression. *Secondly*, The transition to the idea of the connected cause or effect. *Thirdly*, The nature and qualities of that idea."[45] With reference to the first, he reminds his reader of the impossibility of using metaphysical arguments to sustain the idea of a necessary cause:

> As to those *impressions*, which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind, or are deriv'd form the author of our being. Nor is such a question any way material to our present purpose. We

[42] Ibid., p.82.
[43] Ibid., p.82.
[44] Ibid., p.84.
[45] Ibid., p.84.

> may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses.[46]

The answer to the question must be achieved through the "way of ideas", i.e. through material furnished by the philosopher's experience of his own method of thinking, and through his sympathetic understanding of the thought processes of others which he sees displayed externally by their behaviour.

At this point in the argument, Hume's purpose is to arrive at the principle upon which he understands causal thought to be based – i.e. on a habit of believing which requires an input from the passions in order to gel together ideas. In order to do so he eliminates other explanations which either have in the past, or might in the mind of the reader, present themselves as plausible alternatives. *En route* to discovering what he believes to be the principle through which the human individual *actually* reasons, Hume distinguishes between the memory and the imagination.

Hume argues that this distinction cannot originate either in the simple, or in the complex ideas which these faculties contain. He explains that "tho' it be a peculiar property of the memory to preserve the original order and position of its ideas, while the imagination transposes and changes them, as it pleases; yet this difference is not sufficient to distinguish them in their operation, or make us know the one from the other." He argues that it is impossible to test this distinction simply by recalling past impressions and comparing them with our present ideas in order to "see whether their arrangement be exactly similar." The only way in which these two operations of the understanding establish a difference between their respective contents is through the "superior force and vivacity"[47] of the ideas stored in the memory, to those constructed by the imagination. Since this distinction rests on no verifiable difference, it is subject to the possibility that in particular instances the difference may degenerate, and the ideas of the two faculties would become indistinguishable. Hume observes that "as an idea of the memory, by losing its force and vivacity, may degenerate to such a degree, as to be taken for an idea of the imagination; so on the other hand an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory, and counterfeit its effects on the belief and judgement."[48]

The sole buffer which divides up the respective arrangements of ideas contained in memory and imagination is "the *belief* or *assent*, which always attends the memory and

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[46] Ibid., p.84.
[47] Ibid., p.85.
[48] Ibid., p.86.

senses," and which, "is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; [...] this alone distinguishes them from the imagination." This superior *force and liveliness* "constitutes the first act of the judgement," and it is this principle which in fact "lays the foundation of that reasoning, which we build upon it, when we trace the relation of cause and effect."[49] It is the notion of a *belief* identified by its *force and liveliness* which provides the foundation stone for Hume's explanation of how the notion of causation occurs in the thought of a natural human agent in his engagement with experience.

d) Reconstructing the Process of Causal Thought

For Hume, reasoning concerning causes and effects is the kind of thought which involves "*the inference from the impression to the idea*".[50] The "impression" is the object or event immediately present to the senses, or of which the subject is otherwise aware; the inference concerns the idea of a further object which is understood to be related to the first by way of a *causal relationship* as either its cause or its effect. It is evident from the argument which Hume presented that "in tracing this relation, the inference we draw from cause to effect, is not deriv'd merely from a survey of these particular objects, and from such a penetration into their essences as may discover the dependance of the one upon the other."[51] This would simply involve the comparison of ideas, and such an explanation which had been presented by Descartes, Hobbes, Clarke and Locke has already been dismissed.

In its place, Hume substitutes a new basis for understanding this kind of inference, one in which the thought process of the individual is described in the manner of what we may call a chronological or historical process (in a somewhat similar sense to the way in which Locke had used the word 'historical' in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*) through which the form of future events is inferred from that of past experiences. Hume describes this process thus:

> 'Tis therefore by EXPERIENCE only, that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another. The nature of experience is this. We remember to have had frequent instances of the existence of one species of objects; and also remember, that the individuals of another species of objects have always attended them, and have existed in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them. Thus we remember to have seen that species of object we call *flame*, and to have felt that species of sensation we call *heat*. We likewise call to mind their constant conjunction in all past instances. Without any further ceremony, we call the one *cause* and the other *effect*, and infer the existence of the one from that of the other. [52]

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[49] Ibid., p.86.
[50] This is the title to section I.3.vi, hence the italics.
[51] Ibid., p.86.
[52] Ibid., p.87.

The relations through which events or objects appeared in the experience of the past, are discovered as mere matters of fact, and are therefore objects of *perception* rather than *reasoning*. Their relationships are typically those of spatial and chronological proximity. Hume states that, "[i]n all those instances, from which we learn the conjunction of particular causes and effects, both the causes and effects have been perceiv'd by the senses, and are remember'd."[53] The discovery of a causal relation in reasoning is different. With respect to this, Hume writes that, "in all cases, wherein we reason concerning them, there is only one perceiv'd or remember'd, and the other is supply'd in conformity to our past experience."[54] Between the perception of relations in the past, and the reasoning which establishes a causal relation in the present or future, Hume discovers a further element which is necessarily assumed in order to explain the inference. This is the necessary discovery on the part of the reasoning subject of a "CONSTANT CONJUNCTION". It is observed that, "[c]ontiguity and succession are not sufficient to make us pronounce any two objects to be cause and effect, unless we perceive, that these two relations are preserv'd in several instances."[55] What remains to be explained within this history of reasoning concerning causal relations, is the nature of "that *necessary connexion*, which makes so essential a part of it."[56]

Hume observes that without some further discovery it is impossible to show how the new element of *constant conjunction* in the past, can give rise to a belief in a *necessary* connection between objects and events. The evidence of constant conjunction, he says, "seems to advance us but very little in our way." The relations described so far imply "no more than this, that like objects have always been plac'd in like relations of contiguity and succession," and can present no *new* idea to the mind such as that of a *necessary* connection. The elements given to the human subject so far simply enable him to "multiply, but not enlarge the objects of our mind." Hume adds that

> what we learn not from one object, we can never learn from a hundred, which are all of the same kind, and are perfectly resembling in every circumstance. As our senses shew us in one instance two bodies, or motions or qualities in certain relations of succession and contiguity; so our memory presents us only with a multitude of instances, wherein we always find like bodies, motions, or qualities in like relations.[57]

Even if the conjunction between objects and events were constant through an infinite number of repetitions, there can be nothing new introduced to the reasoning either from the

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[53] Ibid., p.87.
[54] Ibid., p.87.
[55] Ibid., p.87.
[56] Ibid., p.87.
[57] Ibid., p.88.

particular ideas or from their multiplication. In such a case, the number of impressions, Hume writes, has "no more effect than if we confin'd ourselves to one only."[58] But of course the human subject does draw an inference from one object to the next, so it is necessary to find some further element which will solve the riddle. Hume finds the key to a solution in the idea of inverting the putative priority of the objective relation over the subjective process of reasoning. He suggests that, "[p]erhaps 'twill appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference's depending on the necessary connexion."[59]

The question which Hume poses on this basis is, like most of his questions, somewhat loaded. He asks, "[w]hether experience produces the idea by means of the understanding or of the imagination; whether we are determin'd by reason to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perceptions." The answer to the question ultimately proves to be the latter – causation *is* established by "a certain association". The alternative possibility was that a rule of causality might be discovered as a law which is innate to reason, or to logic, prior to the activity of the individual subject. This is the last possibility for an objectivistic explanation of cause and effect relations which Hume explodes. This putative explanation for causation which is based on objective reason is stated as follows:

> If reason determin'd us, it wou'd proceed upon that 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.*

This proposition follows the apparent logic whereby the subject orders his perceptions from the past in such a way as to suggest a causal relation between events in the present and future. Hume dispenses with this theory by considering "all the arguments, upon which such a proposition may be suppos'd to be founded".[60]

For Hume, it is of the essence of causal thought that the mind moves from present impressions to the ideas of things which are not, or not yet, present to the senses. It is therefore regarded as impossible that a clear explanation of this kind of thought can be given in terms of ideas alone. Hume reminds the reader that ideas alone cannot produce the belief in causation as there can be no demonstrative arguments to the effect that our future experiences will resemble our past experiences.[61] Therefore, the probability of particular causal relations being effective "discovers not the relations of ideas, consider'd as such,

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[58] Ibid., p.88.
[59] Ibid., p.88.
[60] Ibid., p.89.
[61] Ibid., p.89.

but only those of objects, [which] must in some respects be founded on the impressions of our memory and senses, and in some respects on our ideas." Hume argues that, "[w]ere there no mixture of any impression in our probable reasonings, the conclusion wou'd be entirely chimerical: And were there no mixture of ideas, the action of the mind, in observing the relation, wou'd, properly speaking, be sensation, not reasoning." Therefore, in Hume's view, there must be some mixture of impressions *and* ideas before such a notion of causal effectiveness can be achieved. It is, he argues, "necessary, that in all probable reasonings there be something present to the mind, either seen or remember'd; and that from this we infer something connected with it, which is not seen nor remember'd."[62]

If probable thought was, in Hume's view, the kind of intellectual activity which was most typical of common active life, then this is the manner in which he believed that it operated. The individual in his intellectual engagement with the objects, and other individuals, which commonly surrounded him, was largely concerned with estimating the likelihood that a given set of circumstances would give rise to a certain effect – as well as with assessing the likelihood that a certain cause, not present to the senses, was responsible for a certain effective outcome. The treatment of the will in II.3 seems strongly to suggest that the usual, or the primary, object with which individuals were concerned in this kind of thinking was another individual, whose motives and powers were estimated in order to assess the likelihood of certain outcomes. The powers and outcomes, according to the analysis of II.1 and II.2, would seem to be most closely associated with the power embodied in or represented by money, and the outcome of the power to cause, seems to be the acquisition of desirable objects.

e) Of the nature of the idea of belief

Hume proceeds to construct his own positive *description* of causal inferences and belief. He observes that, "all reasonings from causes or effects terminate in conclusions, concerning matter of fact; that is, concerning the existence of objects or of their qualities,"[63] and it is the manner in which the human agent comes to believe in these, rather than simply to conceive them, which must be explained. First of all, it is necessary to determine the nature of a belief. Hume states that, "the idea of an object is an essential part of the belief of it, but not the whole."[64] There is something further in a belief beyond its constituent ideas, and it is this extra element which would give us the very idea of a

[62] Ibid., p.89.
[63] Ibid., p.94.
[64] Ibid., p.94.

necessary connection which demonstrative reasoning had failed to supply. "I therefore ask," Hume declares, "[w]herein consists the difference betwixt believing and disbelieving any proposition?"[65]

In order to find the answer to this question, Hume pursues the wayward route which he suggested when he decided that it was necessary (despite Descartes' warning to the contrary) to beat around the "neighbouring fields". It was necessary to search for some principle which was neither contained in the ideas present to the mind, nor in their relations to one another. Hume points out the direction as follows:

> But as 'tis certain there is a great difference betwixt the simple conception of the existence of an object, and the belief of it, and as this difference lies not in the parts or composition of the idea, which we conceive; it follows, that it must lie in the *manner*, in which we conceive it.[66]

It is in identifying the *manner* in which the individual conceives a true causal relation which distinguishes it from the conception of an imaginary and false causal relation. With regard to demonstrative reasoning, Hume finds that answering the question of how belief rather than disbelief arises is easy. He argues that,

> In that case, the person, who assents, not only conceives the ideas according to the proposition, but is necessarily determin'd to conceive them in that particular manner, either immediately or by the interposition of other ideas. Whatever is absurd is unintelligible; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive any thing contrary to a demonstration.[67]

The uncertain reasoning concerning the likely effectiveness of causal relations in common experience proves more difficult for Hume to explain. This is because, "in reasonings from causation, and concerning matters of fact, this absolute necessity [associated with demonstrative reasoning concerning propositions] cannot take place, and the imagination is free to conceive both sides of the question…" Therefore, the question remains unanswered for Hume, "[w]*herein consists the difference betwixt incredulity and belief?* since in both cases the conception of the idea is equally possible and requisite."[68] The infinite flexibility of the imagination in combining and separating ideas requires some further principle if there can be any effective method for judging matters of fact concerning experience. Hume points out that,

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[65] Ibid., p.95.
[66] Ibid., p.95.
[67] Ibid., p.95.
[68] At this point, Hume's prose is not at its clearest. It appears that he means (ultimately) that it is this "manner" of conceiving which distinguishes belief from disbelief in both demonstrative logic, and in dealing with experience. However, he also seems to imply at this point that the "manner" of conceiving is irrelevant to demonstrative reasoning since in this kind of thought there is always absolute proof one way or another. However, it would seem more plausible that belief is always distinguished by this "manner" of conceiving – the difference lies in the way in which this "manner of conceiving" is achieved. The way in which demonstrative reasoning achieves this "manner of conceiving" is clear; but the way in which probable reasoning does so remains for Hume to explain. Ibid., p.95.

> We may mingle, and unite, and separate, and confound, and vary our ideas in a hundred different ways; but 'till there appears some principle, which fixes one of these different situations, we have in reality no opinion: And this principle, as it plainly makes no addition to our precedent ideas, can only change the *manner* of our conceiving them.[69]

The answer to the question is provided when Hume observes that, "as belief does nothing but vary the manner, in which we conceive any object, it can only bestow on our ideas an additional force and vivacity." Thus he is able to state that, "an opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defin'd, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION."[70] It is only by placing an extra term in the equation that belief in causal necessity can be explained. The *feeling* of extra *liveliness* or *force* must be associated with the conception in order to judge it as having more truth than its opposite. This is the extra principle which Hume found in the "neighbouring fields".

Having thus established the *nature* of belief, it remains for Hume to explain the *causes* of belief. His stated intention is to "examine from what principles it is deriv'd, and what bestows the vivacity on the idea."[71] The explanation which Hume presents rests on the principle of association which was first elaborated in part 1 of the book on the understanding. Hume proposes "a general maxim in the science of human nature," which states "*that when any impression becomes present to us, it not only transports the mind to such ideas as are related to it, but likewise communicates to them a share of its force and vivacity.*"[72] As examples, Hume observes the manner in which the resemblance between a picture and the image of an absent friend which brings the idea of the actual friend to mind. He also observes the use of pictorial images in the Roman Catholic religion to evoke religious ideas. These kinds of example prove, for Hume, "that a present impression with a relation of causation may enliven any idea, and consequently produce belief or assent, according to the precedent definition of it."[73]

Hume treats the manner in which beliefs are caused "as a question in natural philosophy".[74] In order to do so, he initiates a series of thought "experiments" through which the particular order in which the elements of belief emerge are brought to light. First of all, he points out that although the content of the belief may concern the "particular powers or qualities" of the objects in question, and may regard these as causes, the same

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[69] Ibid., p.96.
[70] Ibid., p.96, Hume's emphasis.
[71] Ibid., p.98.
[72] Ibid., p.98.
[73] Ibid., p.101.
[74] Ibid., p.101.

"powers and qualities" cannot be regarded as the causes of that "manner of conceiving" which is called a belief. The philosopher who analyses human nature as a subject of "natural philosophy" must realise that "as the phaenomenon of belief, which we at present examine, is merely internal, these powers and qualities, being entirely unknown, can have no hand in producing it."[75] Hume perceives that it is, "the present impression, which is to be consider'd as the true and real cause of the idea, and of the belief which attends it." Thus, while the "powers and qualities" of the objects may prove to be the cause of certain observed effects, the belief which occurs to the observer must have been caused by some other principle.

The first thing which Hume observes about the emergence of a given belief is that the single and isolated "present impression" is never sufficient to generate a belief on its own. However, he finds that "an impression, from which, on its first appearance, I can draw no conclusion, may afterwards become the foundation of belief, when I have had experience of its usual consequences."[76] In order to be capable of generating a belief, the present impression must have been preceded by observations of "the same impression in past instances," and it must have been found to have been, "constantly conjoin'd with some other impression."[77]

The second observation which Hume makes, is that when the impression is repeated in this manner, and thus gives rise to a belief, it does so without any new or additional operation of reason in the understanding. "[T]his belief," Hume says, "arises immediately, without any new operation of the reason or imagination."[78] This leads him to introduce the idea that *custom* forms an essential part of the process which generates belief. He says,

> Now as we call every thing CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition, without any new reasoning or conclusion, we may establish it as a certain truth, that all the belief, which follows upon any present impression, is deriv'd solely from that origin.[79]

It is the manner in which one becomes "accustom'd"[80] to seeing two impressions regularly in conjunction that produces a habit whereby "the appearance or idea of the one immediately carries us to the idea of the other."[81]

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[75] Ibid., p.102.
[76] Ibid., p.102.
[77] Ibid., p.102.
[78] Ibid., p.102.
[79] Ibid., p.102.
[80] Ibid., p.102.
[81] Ibid., p.103.

From "a third set of experiments" Hume tests the theory to see whether or not there is anything further required in order to generate a belief. He finds that while the customary transition from one idea to an associated idea will occur when he merely conjures up the initial idea to himself, no belief is generated unless the initial idea were given to him from a *present impression*. "A present impression then," he remarks, "is absolutely requisite to this whole operation" because this produces a greater degree of "force and vivacity" which leads him to conclude, "upon the whole, that belief is a more vivid and intense conception of an idea, proceeding from its relation to a present impression."[82] This is consistent with the argument that for the Humean subject, thought only occurs when an object, or objective, is desired; therefore, the impression of the object must register with both the understanding and the passions. The strong implications which Hume's explanation of the mental phenomenon of *belief* has for epistemology are stated strikingly in the passage which follows his analysis. He observes,

> Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we can draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another.[83]

In Hume's view of the world of common experience and active life, demonstrative certainty rarely has a chance to emerge, but neither does a sense of certainty concerning objective phenomena. The kind of experience with which Hume's individual engages is one in which the extreme uncertainty of outcomes in particular cases, forces the individual to examine the regularities of past experience in order to achieve a *feeling* about what is likely to happen.

It is to this capacity of the subject to generate beliefs concerning ideas which have been put together by the imagination on the basis of customs given by repeatedly similar experiences that Hume attributes the division between two intellectual capacities and two worlds. He observes that the mind, on

> finding, that with this system of perceptions, there is another connected by custom, or if you will, by the relation of cause or effect, it proceeds to the consideration of their ideas; and as it feels that 'tis in a manner necessarily determin'd to view these particular ideas, and that the custom or relation, by

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[82] Ibid., p.103.
[83] Ibid., p.103.

> which it is determin'd, admits not of the least change, it forms them into a new system, which it likewise dignifies with the title of *realities*.[84]

The first of the two "systems" which become "realities" to the mind is "the object of the memory and senses," and the second is that of the "judgment". It is by means of this capacity to *judge* that the subject projects its sense of belief in the efficacy of causal relationships into areas of reality which are invisible to it, whether because they are hidden within the mind of another individual, because they have yet to materialise, or more often than not, both. It is this principle of judgement, and the manner in which it is crystallised by the mind into a *reality*, Hume says, "which peoples the world, and brings us acquainted with such existences, as by their removal in time and place, lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory."[85]

In his section on *the influence of belief*, Hume draws the reader's attention to the interconnectedness of the whole conception of human thought and motivation which is presented through the first two books of the *Treatise*. He presents what "may both serve as an additional argument for the present system, and may give us a notion after what manner our reasonings from causation are able to operate on the will and passions."[86] Anticipating "a little what wou'd more properly fall under our consideration afterwards, when we come to treat of the passions and the sense of beauty" he sketches the consequences of those principles of belief which he elucidated previously. The consequence which he wishes to remark on is the fact, scarcely believable as he suspects, "that the far greatest part of our reasonings, with all our actions and passions, can be deriv'd from nothing but custom and habit."[87] His phrasing underlines the interconnectedness of thinking, wanting, and acting, in Hume's conception of the individual.

f) Thought and Motivation

Hume's concern is to show how the process of understanding mediates between desires for real and imagined objects, and the actions which would be required in order to obtain these. He states that, "[t]here is implanted in the human mind a perception of pain and pleasure, as the chief spring and moving principle of all its actions," a principle which is fully developed in II.3. However, these feelings have "two ways of making their appearance in the mind; of which the one has effects very different from the other."[88] The

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[84] Ibid., p.108.
[85] Ibid., p.108.
[86] Ibid., p.120.
[87] Ibid., p.118.
[88] Ibid., p.118.

first form of appearance is as an immediate impression, and the second is as an idea to the imagination. Thus one may either see a source of pain or pleasure before one, or one may imagine such a source to oneself. Hume states that, "the influence of these upon our actions is far from being equal." While the impact of impressions is of "the highest degree" and never fails to "actuate the soul", ideas do not necessarily have the same effect. Hume suggests that, in this respect, "[n]ature has proceeded with caution" and avoids "the inconveniences of two extremes."[89] If either form of perception could influence the will on its own, dangers would arise. If impressions were uppermost, then, "we should every moment of our lives be subject to the greatest calamities; because, tho' we foresaw their approach, we should not be provided by nature with any principle of action, which might impel us to avoid them."[90] In other words, there would be no intelligence to guide the subject in its actions in order to achieve the desired end. If, on the other hand, it were the ideas which had a sole and direct control over the will, then, "such is the unsteadiness and activity of thought, that the images of every thing, especially of goods and evils, are always wandering in the mind; and were it mov'd by every idle conception of the mind, it would never enjoy a moment's peace and tranquility."[91] In this argument, *the understanding* in Hume's model of human nature appears to operate much like the ego in Freud's conception of human psychology. Its function is to mediate between inarticulate drives and the external world of which they have little or no apprehension.

In Hume's theory, the natural compromise which appears in human desire, thought and action, "has neither bestow'd on every idea of good and evil the power of actuating the will, nor yet has entirely excluded them from this influence." In human perception, there is a sliding scale of probability applying to objects of desire and the prospective ends of action. At one end there is "an idle fiction [which] has no efficacy". Then, "we find by experience, that the ideas of those objects, which we believe either are or will be existent, produce in a lesser degree the same effect with those impressions, which are immediately present to the senses and perception." The manner in which the probability of existence on the part of desired objects affects the passions and the will to act is through belief. "The effect, then, of belief," Hume writes,

> is to raise up a simple idea to an equality with our impressions, and bestow on it a like influence on the passions. This effect it can only have by making an idea approach an impression in force and vivacity. For as the different degrees of force make all the original difference betwixt an impression and an idea, they must of consequence be the source of all the differences in the effects of these

[89] Ibid., p.118-119.
[90] Ibid., p.119.

perceptions, and their removal, in whole or in part, the cause of every new resemblance they acquire. Wherever we can make an idea approach the impressions in force and vivacity, it will likewise imitate them in its influence on the mind; and *vice versa*, where it imitates them in its influence, as in the present case, this must proceed from its approaching them in force and vivacity. Belief, therefore, since it causes an idea to imitate the effects of the impressions, must make it resemble them in these qualities, and is nothing but a *more vivid and intense conception of any idea.*[92]

The most important consequence of this passage for interpreting Hume's theory of human nature, is that it demonstrates clearly that the mode of thought described by Hume in his treatment of *knowledge and probability* was one which he had located and observed in an *active* mode of life. It underlines those passages in II.3 where Hume had called reason the "slave of the passions." The second consequence is that it shows how the understanding operates between the desires and the external world of the impressions through the *judgement*. This passage suggests that the understanding operates primarily as a kind of guidance mechanism, which assesses the prospects for an effective realisation of particular desires, and develops rational means for attaining successful results. It is within this broader role that the concern with other individuals, their status, power, character and inclinations, and motives to act, is located (described in II.2 and II.3); and conversely, it is also within this operation that the assessment of the self through pride might be located, inasmuch as it is in this activity of the passions that the extent of one's own power to intervene in the world, especially through acquisition using money, is measured.

g) The Probability of Chances

Hume draws out the consequences of these arguments in his explanation of probabilistic causal induction "in order to bestow on this system its full force and evidence."[93] The commonest form of human knowledge comes in the form of greater or lesser probabilities. While the mathematical sciences could rely on a firm basis for truth in their demonstrative deductions, the more *active* forms of life usually deal with objects which are known in a less certain manner. Between the two, philosophers, "have divided human reason into *knowledge and probability*." Hume writes that they "defin'd the first to be *that evidence, which arises from the comparison of ideas*," leaving the new scientist of human nature to "comprehend all our arguments from causes or effects under the general term of probability."[94] In order to avoid misunderstanding, Hume adapts the terminology to be used to distinguish different kinds of knowledge and degrees of certainty. Although he has

[91] Ibid., p.119.
[92] Ibid., p.120.
[93] Ibid., p.124.

used the conventional philosophical terminology of *probability*, he admits that it has certain limitations. "[I]n common discourse," he observes, "we readily affirm, that many arguments from causation exceed probability, and may be receiv'd as a superior kind of evidence."[95] Once demonstrative certainty has been marginalised to the extent that it has been in the course of this part of the *Treatise*, it is necessary to develop a terminology that will allow distinctions to be made between types of knowledge within the sphere of probabilities, given that it is so large. Hume's emphasis in his explanation of this is on the need to "preserve the common signification of words"[96] which is consistent with the need to bring philosophy into closer engagement with common life. The adapted terminology marks, "the several degrees of evidence," in order, "to distinguish human reason into three kinds, viz. *that from knowledge, from proofs, and from probabilities.*" By *knowledge* is understood "the assurance arising from the comparison of ideas", by *proofs*, "those arguments, which are deriv'd from the relation of cause and effect, and which are entirely free from doubt and uncertainty"; and, finally, by *probability* "that evidence which is still attended with uncertainty."[97] Hume's primary concern in reconstructing the mode of intelligence that operates in common active life, is with the last classification; and so, "'[t]is this last species of reasoning, I proceed to examine."[98]

Beneath the heading of *probability* Hume finds a further distinction that has to be made between different approaches to knowledge. Probability "or reasoning from conjecture" is either founded on *chance* or else "arises from *causes*".[99] The two types of foundation for probable knowledge are treated one by one, and by examining "chance" it is discovered that it is merely a misunderstanding of the probability of causes. *Chance*, Hume writes, is "nothing real in itself, and, properly speaking, is merely the negation of the cause." Whereas the probability of causes convinces the mind that a possible outcome is to be expected, the probability of chances has an "influence on the mind" that produces the opposite effect. The essential thing about the probability of chances is that they "leave the imagination perfectly indifferent, either to consider the existence or non-existence of that object, which is regarded as contingent."[100] Nothing further can be built on this indifference while the focus is on the probability of chances alone, since "one total

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[94] Ibid., p.124.
[95] Ibid., p.124.
[96] Ibid., p.125.
[97] Ibid., p.125.
[98] Ibid., p.124.
[99] Ibid., p.125.
[100] Ibid., p.125.

indifference can never in itself be either superior or inferior to another."[101] However, it is also necessary to observe that were there no admixture of causes in the perception of a situation, then "nothing limits the chances, every notion, that the most extravagant fancy can form, is upon a footing of equality; nor can there be any one circumstance to give on the advantage above another."[102] Therefore, in order to conceive one hazard being superior to another, one has to suppose "a mixture of causes among the chances, and a conjunction of necessity in some particulars, with a total indifference in others."[103]

Hume explains the manner in which this operates by using the example of throwing dice. In keeping with his general theory of human belief Hume therefore asks how it is that the "superior combination of chances" can have a superior influence on "judgement and opinion". The answer, according to Hume, is that,

> tho' in an opposition of chances 'tis impossible to determine with *certainty*, on which side the event will fall, yet we can pronounce with certainty, that 'tis more likely and probable, 'twill be on that side where there is a superior number of chances, than where there is an inferior.[104]

However, Hume remains dissatisfied with this answer and implies that there is a tautology at its root. If one were to say that "[t]he likelihood and probability of chances is a superior number of equal chances," then it would be the same as to say that "where there is a superior number of chances there is actually a superior, and where there is an inferior there is an inferior; which are identical propositions and of no consequence."[105]

The interrogation of this mode of thought therefore brings Hume back to the "neighbouring fields" in which the extra principle that distinguishes belief from the mere accumulation of separate ideas was sought. The question he asks is, *by what means does a superior number of equal chances operate upon the mind producing belief or assent since it appears, that 'tis neither by arguments deriv'd from demonstration, nor from probability*? The answer is provided by a close analysis of a dice roll. In the case of a single dye, Hume states that there are three pertinent circumstances. The first consists of *certain causes*, "such as gravity, solidity, a cubical figure, &c. which determine it to fall, to preserve its form in its fall, and to turn up one of its sides."[106] The second consists of the number of sides which "are suppos'd indifferent", and the third consists of the figures which are inscribed on each side. Due to the habit of inferring a customary effect from its usual cause, the participant in this game understands the manner in which the first aspect of

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[101] Ibid., p.125.
[102] Ibid., p.125.
[103] Ibid., p.125-126.
[104] Ibid., p.127.
[105] Ibid., p.127.
[106] Ibid., p.128.

the dye, its causes, are likely to effect themselves. In the case of the second aspect of the dye, its indifferent sides, the mutual incompatibility of outcomes forces him to subdivide the force of his imagination equally among the various indifferent outcomes. The manner in which a superior probability is attributed to a given outcome involves adding together the force of all the similar possibilities and subtracting the smaller number from the larger. So, for instance, in Hume's example there are four sides with one particular emblem, and two with another. In this case, the force attached in the imagination to the six particular possible outcomes forms combinations of four, for the first inscription, and two for the second. The strength of the latter contradicts that of the former and therefore cancels it out, leaving the combination of the remaining two. "The vivacity of the idea," Hume concludes, "is always proportionable to the degrees of the impulse or tendency to the transition; and belief is the same with the vivacity of the idea, according to the precedent doctrine."[107]

h) The Probability of Causes

Hume gives more attention to the *probability of causes*. This species of probability is "what we must chiefly examine" because, he writes, "'tis commonly allowed by philosophers, that what the vulgar call chance is nothing but a secret and conceal'd cause."[108] He states that there are several kinds of "probabilities of causes", all of which however, are "deriv'd from the same origin, *viz. the association of ideas to a present impression.*" These occur as the subject habitually associates like instances which have been experienced. Through the frequent conjunction of objects, the habitual association "must arrive at its perfection by degrees, and must acquire new force from each instance, that falls under our observation." The strength of belief indicates the accumulation of instances collected in the memory: "The first instance has little or no force: The second makes some addition to it: The third becomes still more sensible; and 'tis by these slow steps, that our judgement arrives at a full assurance."[109] The importance of quantity in determining the strength of any particular belief is stressed. Before a belief achieves a "pitch of perfection, it passes thro' several inferior degrees, and in all of them is only to be esteem'd a presumption or probability."[110] To distinguish between differing degrees of belief is difficult except where the distance between them is considerable.

There is another process through which particular beliefs may be generated, as the strength of conviction invested in one kind of conjunction is transferable to other

[107] Ibid., p.130.
[108] Ibid., p.130.
[109] Ibid., p.130.

conjunctions. The argument which was presented concerning the formation of belief in relations of causality concerned, first of all, the formation of a general belief, and only secondarily, the particular beliefs concerning particular instances of causation. The distinction between the two aspects of belief permits Hume to explain how a particular mind, "having form'd another observation concerning the connexion of causes and effects, gives new force to its reasoning from that observation; and by means of it can build an argument on one single experiment, when duly prepar'd and examin'd."[111] This argument is developed during the course of Hume's examination of the probability of causes. He distinguishes between two things which have to be taken into consideration, "*viz.* the *reasons* which determine us to make the past a standard for the future, and the *manner* in which we extract a single judgement from a contrariety of past events."[112]

Hume goes on to investigate, "the second species of probability, where there is a *contrariety* in our experience and observation."[113] He introduces this subject with an interesting passage which evokes the everyday meaning of this concern: "'Twou'd be very happy," he remarks,

> for men in the conduct of their lives and actions, were the same objects always conjoin'd together, and we had nothing to fear but the mistakes of our own judgement, without having any reason to apprehend the uncertainty of nature. But as 'tis frequently found, that one observation is contrary to another, and that causes and effects follow not in the same order, of which we have had experience, we are oblig'd to vary our reasoning on account of this uncertainty, and take into consideration the contrariety of events.[114]

In Hume's treatment of the question "concerning the nature and causes of the contrariety" he marks a strong discrepancy between the perception of the *vulgar* and that of *philosophers*. "The vulgar," he observes, "who take things according to their first appearance, attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes, as makes them often fail of their usual influence, tho' they meet with no obstacle nor impediment in their operation."[115] On the other hand, "philosophers observing, that almost in every part of nature there is contain'd a vast variety of springs and principles, which are hid, by reason of their minuteness or remoteness, find that 'tis at least possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes."[116] What appears to be a mere possibility to the

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[110] Ibid., p.131.
[111] Ibid., p.131.
[112] Ibid., pp.133-134.
[113] Ibid., p.131.
[114] Ibid., p.131.
[115] Ibid., p.132.
[116] Ibid., p.132.

philosopher, shows itself upon closer examination to be true so that, "a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes, and proceeds from their mutual hindrance and opposition." Hume's example of the difference in perspective between the two classes of people is interesting for his choice of a person with a "philosophical" perception. He writes that,

> [a] peasant can give no better reason for the stopping of any clock or watch than to say, that commonly it does not go right: But an artizan easily perceives, that the same force in the spring or pendulum has always the same influence on the wheels; but fails of its usual effect, perhaps by reason of a grain of dust, which puts a stop to the whole movement.[117]

For Hume, the land of the philosophically minded is evidently quite democratic. The application of sound reasoning in a practical manner is sufficient to bring a person out of the class of the vulgar.

Throughout the section in which Hume deals with this matter an important question hangs over the use of the terms "nature" and "natural". On the face of it, one might suppose Hume to be referring to a non-human nature over which control is to be established. However, the analysis of II.3, has shown that Hume's concern with the means by which it would be possible to ascertain causes was focused on the causes which motivate human actions. The emphatic dichotomy between vulgar and philosophically informed perspectives on this is important in light of chapter 3. It is this gulf of ignorance which must be overcome according to the essays analysed there. However, in situations where experience has presented contrary instances of causal relations which have a bearing on a present impression, "their inferences from it are always of the same kind, and founded on the same principles." This occurs despite their differing "explication" of the "contrariety of events." For both kinds of person, "[a] contrariety of events in the past may give us a kind of hesitating belief for the future after two several ways."[118]

First of all, it does so "[b]y producing an imperfect habit and transition from the present impression to the related idea." Because the frequency with which the conjunction of the two events has occurred is not constant, neither is the habit which it provokes in the observer. The mind of the individual "is determin'd to pass from one object to the other; but not with so entire a habit, as when the union is uninterrupted, and all the instances we have ever met with are uniform and of a piece." Hume refers to "common experience, in our actions as well as reasonings," to draw evidence for this habit forming tendency in the individual. He finds that "a constant perseverance in any course of life produces a strong

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[117] Ibid., p.132.
[118] Ibid., p.132.

inclination and tendency to continue for the future; tho' there are habits of inferior degrees of force, proportion'd to the inferior degrees of steadiness and uniformity in our conduct."[119]

However, while the habitual movement of the mind from cause to effect or vice versa may explain *the grounds* upon which particular inferences are made, it does not necessarily describe *the manner* in which each such inference is achieved. Hume writes that he is "perswaded, that upon examination we shall not find it to be the principle, that most commonly influences the mind in this species of reasoning." Hume's argument is that when it comes to our "probable reasoning", it is not often the case that we rely on the kind of instantaneous and unreflective custom or habit which was discussed before. The sphere of life and activity with which he associates this kind of thought is one in which such easy mental transitions do not often occur, while "contrariety" is common. He explains that in this form of reasoning,

> we commonly take knowingly into consideration the contrariety of past events; we compare the different sides of the contrariety, and carefully weigh the experiments, which we have on each side: Whence we may conclude, that our reasonings of this kind arise not *directly* from the habit, but in an *oblique* manner; which we must now endeavour to explain.[120]

Thus, it seems to be the case, that whereas when it came to deriving a general notion of cause and effect, the process of induction was basically an habitual association which gave rise to a *feeling* of certainty; in the case of particular instances of such cause and effect, and especially where there is this *contrariety* to contend with, the process of induction has to be a conscious one.

Hume states that there are two things which must be considered; first, "the *reasons* which determine us to make the past a standard for the future,"[121] and second, "the *manner* how we extract a single judgement from a contrariety of past events."[122] In order to achieve the latter and to master the situation, a deliberate calculation must be made. First of all, the individual must recall all the possible outcomes which have arisen from such a situation before. Hume observes with reference to this that, "we judge of them only by our past experience, and always consider those as possible, which we have observ'd to follow from it." The second part of the calculation involves adding up the number of times each respective possibility has occurred. Finally, the weaker possibility (i.e. the one which has occurred least) is subtracted from the larger in order to establish the difference in their

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[119] Ibid., p.133.
[120] Ibid., p.133.
[121] Ibid., p.133.
[122] Ibid., p.134.

respective probabilities.[123] Therefore, Hume states, "as past experience regulates our judgement concerning the possibility of these effects, so it does that concerning their probability; and that effect, which has been the most common, we always esteem the most likely."[124] The nature of the mental calculation concerning the probability that a given cause will be effective in a given manner, or that a given effect has resulted from a given cause, is the same whether applied to the probability of chances or to causes. The contrary potentialities are totted up separately and then compared by means of a subtraction. This operation of the mind may be achieved implicitly through a habit which has become rooted in the passions through constant repetition. However, in those life activities where such repetitions are rare or non-existent, the calculation must be achieved explicitly through ideas.[125]

In another place (II.3.iii) Hume suggests the kind of activities with which this would be associated by presenting the merchant who calculates his accounts as an example of how this kind of reasoning operates in active life. He describes "[a] merchant" who is "desirous of knowing the sum total of his accounts with any person: Why? but that he may learn what sum will have the same *effects* in paying his debt, and going to market, as all the particular articles taken together."[126] In the context of the links which were discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, where possessions, and especially money, were placed in the centre of human motivation and closely associated with the notion of *causal power*, this example seems particularly pertinent. The calculation which the merchant carries out is similar in form to that carried out by the individual faced with irregular or contrary causes in the background to a given situation. Like the subject described in I.3, the merchant adds up the causal power represented by monetary figures under the heading of monetary assets and

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[123] The manner in which the belief is formed and given a specific quantity of strength, is presented as a subtraction of the lesser possibility from the higher probability: "As to the manner of their *opposition*, 'tis evident, that as the contrary views are incompatible with each other, and 'tis impossible the object can at once exist conformable to both of them, their influence becomes mutually destructive, and the mind is determin'd to the superior only with that force, which remains after substracting [sic] the inferior." Ibid., p.138.

[124] Ibid., p.133.

[125] On the manner in which we extract the single judgement from the multiple elements Hume also gives the following: "Many of these images are suppos'd to concur, and a superior number to concur on one side. These agreeing images unite together, and render the idea more strong and lively, not only than a mere fiction of the imagination but also than any idea, which is supported by a lesser number of experiments. Each new experiment is as a new stroke of the pencil, which bestows an additional vivacity to the colours, without either multiplying or enlarging the figure. This operation of the mind has been so fully explain'd in treating of the probability of chance, that I need not here endeavour to render it more intelligible. Every past experiment may be consider'd as a kind of chance; it being uncertain to us, whether the object will exist conformable to one experiment or another: And for this reason every thing that has been said on the one subject is applicable to both." Ibid., p.135.

[126] Ibid., p.414.

money owed. The latter is subtracted from the former in order to assess his likely causal effectiveness at the market.

3.) Conclusion: Purposes of the Theory of Knowledge and Understanding

In I.3 of the *Treatise*, both critical and constructive efforts are directed at those occasions in human life and history where people have proven to be overly credulous. Superstition is mentioned a number of times in the course of this part of the *Treatise*, and Hume's explanation of the process of belief formation gives an account of how it may be perverted into false religious or super-natural beliefs as well as the more rational beliefs of everyday life.[127] Hume warns that "[n]o weakness of human nature is more universal and conspicuous than what we commonly call CREDULITY, or a too easy faith in the testimony of others..."[128] The epistemological weakness of the grounds for belief require a subtlety in that "taste" which can discern a good argument from bad. For many, this has proven too difficult and has led to gullibility in the face of "quacks and projectors"[129] and an excessive reluctance to believe when confronted with new, but probable, theories like those of Hume. He complains that while philosophy rejects "as a fallacious ground of assent to any opinion" the reception of ready made ideas through education, it "prevails nevertheless in the world, and is the cause why all systems are apt to be rejected at first as new and unusual."[130]

The ill-effects of this credulity which Hume finds in human nature and in common life, form a significant target for the critical powers of his theory. He states his conviction that,

> upon examination we shall find more than one half of those opinions, that prevail among mankind, to be owing to education, and that the principles, which are thus implicitly embrac'd, over-ballance those, which are owing either to abstract reasoning or experience.[131]

The manner in which education operates on belief is through customisation, and when an idea has been present for a long time, it is difficult to subvert it through reason. As examples, Hume cites the phenomena of an amputee who continues to feel the itch of a missing limb, and of the bereaved who continue to expect the presence of the deceased.

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[127] Hume's concern with this theme was developed later in the essay *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm* in *EMPL*, and first published in 1741, and later in *The Natural History of Religion* as the first of *Four Dissertations*. The *Four Dissertations* are reproduced in facsimile by Thoemmes Press and introduced by John Immerwahr. See also *Principle Writings on Religion Including Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and the Natural History of Religion*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford, 1993). For a comprehensive study of Hume's ideas on religion see J. C. A. Gaskin, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion* (2nd ed., London, 1988).
[128] *Treatise*, p.112.
[129] Ibid., p.120.
[130] Ibid., p.118.

The susceptibility of people to false opinions is all the greater when the passions are aroused by "admiration and surprize". Hume observes that,

> among the vulgar, quacks and projectors meet with a more easy faith upon account of their magnificent pretensions, than if they kept themselves within the bounds of moderation. The first astonishment, which naturally attends their miraculous relations, spreads itself over the whole soul, and so vivifies and enlivens the idea, that it resembles the inferences we draw from experience.[132]

There are grounds to suspect that the treatment of miracles which Hume removed in order to avoid offending Joseph Butler may have been intended for this part of the *Treatise.*[133] A number of passages make reference to the subject of religious belief, which may or may not be sincerely intended. With reference to belief in the immortality of the soul, Hume remarks (perhaps with some hint of feigned surprise) that some people fail to believe in an afterlife. "There is not," he writes, "indeed a more ample matter of wonder to the studious, and of regret to the pious man, than to observe the negligence of the bulk of mankind concerning their approaching condition..."[134] He explains the susceptibility of some towards this disbelief in the following passage:

> A future state is so far remov'd from our comprehension, and we have so obscure an idea of the manner, in which we shall exist after the dissolution of the body, that all the reasons we can invent, however strong in themselves, and however much assisted by education, are never able with slow imaginations to surmount this difficulty, or bestow a sufficient authority and force on the idea.[135]

It is difficult to tell whether Hume's concern with this was sincere or not, since either interpretation could be made consistent with the treatment of belief and credulity in which it is placed. The letter to Henry Home in which Hume refers to the castration of his work by the removal of those parts likely to offend Bishop Butler, and the reference to a letter of introduction - in the following letter to Home[136] - which the latter had sent Hume in order to establish an acquaintance with Butler while Hume was in London, would

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[131] Ibid., p.117.
[132] Ibid., p.120.
[133] E.C. Mossner writes in *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason* (Bristol, 1990) that, "David Hume recognized a congenial mind in the author or the *Analogy of Religion*, a work he is reported to have found 'the best defence of Christianity he had ever known.'" Mossner also suggests that if Butler did read the *Treatise*, then, "[t]o the last sentiment he would have given hearty approval"(156). However, given the manner in which Hume was adapting the publication of his philosophical views in order to anticipate the likely hostility which some parts would provoke, it is probably unwise to paint too rosy a picture of the prospects for an alliance between the two philosophers. In a letter to Henry Home sent from London and dated December 2, 1737, Hume enclosed a version of his treatment of miracles (later published in his *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* of 1748). He remarked that he was "afraid [that it] will give too much offence, even as the world is disposed at present," p.24, and continues saying, "I am at present castrating my work, that is, cutting off its nobler parts; that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible, before which, I could not pretend to put it into the Doctor's [Bishop Butler's] hands [...] I was resolved not to be an enthusiast in philosophy, while I was blaming other enthusiasms." p. 25. From *LDH*, vol.1, pp.24-25.
[134] *Treatise*, p.113.
[135] Ibid., p.114.

suggest that Hume may have tempered such passages for the benefit of Butler and his likes. Significantly, the 6th letter in Greig's edition suggests that Hume and Henry Home had recently discussed Butler as a new prospect with whom Hume could discuss his ideas and Butler had published his *Analogy of Religion* during the previous year (1736). This latter work had opened with an argument drawing on probabilistic thought in common active life in order to prove that life after death was no more improbable than most common beliefs.

The only effective method of discernment which, according to Hume, can allow men to avoid the errors of false opinion is to study and learn the principles of human nature. This study occurs through the experience of other men, presumably requiring the kind of assessment of individual character, inclination and motive which was described as being the original function of the understanding in Hume's treatment of the will in II.3. In I.3, Hume says that there is nothing "but our *experience* of the governing principles of human nature, which can give us an assurance of the veracity of men."[137] It is through knowledge of the manner in which the opinions and actions of others are themselves caused by the operations of individual passions, desires and aversions, that the individual learns the principles of human nature, and thus learns the criteria of philosophical discernment which are afforded by Hume's *Treatise*.

However, the treatment of the abstract principles of belief already contains some suggestions of the manner in which Hume envisaged its constructive engagement in the activities, the "affairs and the duties", of common life. In Hume's argument on the probability of causes, he showed belief to be a specific quantitative unit calculated by subtraction of contrary possibilities from the strongest probability. He also argued that the fancy allows this belief to fix itself into a single unit which incorporates the quantity of evidence lying behind it.[138] In the course of his reflections on the theory, Hume uses examples which seem to bear out the argument that this form of reasoning is closely related to, and best exemplified by the use of money. Hume argues that the formation of belief requires the use of *general rules* in order to be effective and accurate, and provides an example of how this operates with quantities of money. He discusses the need to assess the comparative strength of passional preferences as a function which runs parallel to the

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[136] *LDH*, vol.1, letter 7 to Henry Home, London, March 4, 1737/8. P.25.

[137] *Treatise*. p.113.

[138] Hume writes that, "[w]hen we transfer contrary experiments to the future, we can only repeat these contrary experiements with their particular proportions; which cou'd not produce assurance in any single event, upon which we reason, unless the fancy melted together all those images that concurm and extracted from them one single idea or image, which is intense and lively in proportion to the number of experiments from which it is deriv'd, and their superiority above their antagonists." Ibid., p.140.

calculation of belief. Both are facilitated by the use of figures. "My *second* reflection,"[139] he writes, "is founded on those large probabilities, which the mind can judge of, and the minute differences it can observe betwixt them." He considers a case where the judgement inclines towards a probability which has only a very slight advantage over its contrary, e.g. where the odds in its favour are 1001 to 1000. In such a case, where the mind would not normally be able to run through all the components of the respective possibilities in order to discern the difference, Hume says it will operate by means of *general rules.*[140]

The passions operate in a similar manner, and it is in illustrating their response to such variations in probability that Hume establishes the connection between this kind of thought, and the use of money. He explains the operations of belief on the passions by observing that "when an object produces any passion in us, which varies according to the different quantity of the object; I say, 'tis evident, that the passion, properly speaking, is not a simple emotion, but a compound one, of a great number of weaker passions, deriv'd from a view of each part of the object." It is for this reason that the passion will "encrease by the encrease of these parts." He illustrates this using the example of a man, "who desires a thousand pound." This man, he continues, "has in reality a thousand or more desires, which uniting together, seem to make only one passion; tho' the composition evidently betrays itself upon every alteration of the object, by the preference he gives to the larger number, if superior only by an unite." However, the difference in desirability between £1000 and £1001 would not be sufficient to make a noticeable difference in the passions. Therefore, Hume asserts, "[t]he difference [...] of our conduct in preferring the greater number depends not upon our passions, but upon custom, and *general rules*." On the other hand, he writes that, "augmenting the numbers of any sum augments the passion, where the numbers are precise and the difference sensible." This is illustrated by the fact that,

> [t]he mind can perceive from its immediate feeling, that three guineas produce a greater passion than two; and *this* it transfers to larger numbers, because of the resemblance; and by a general rule assigns

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[139] In the course of another self-conscious reference to the apparently "abstruse" nature of his arguments, Hume names the two basic principles which Hume regarded as basic for the reception and understanding of his epistemological theory, saying that once accepted, they would convince even the vulgar that the prevailing systems of calculating such things are wrong: "Let men be once fully perswaded of these two principles," he says, "*That there is nothing in any object, consider'd in itself, which can afford us a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it;* and , *That even after the observation of the frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reason to draw any inference concerning any object beyond those of which we have had experience* I say, let men be once fully convinc'd of these two principles, and this will throw them so loose from all common systems, that they will make no difficulty of receiving any, which appear the most extraordinary." *Treatise*, p.139. The reflections to which he refers concern these two principles.

[140] See especially *Treatise* p.147 for a clear explanation of Hume's idea of how general rules operate.

to a thousand guineas, a stronger passion than to nine hundred and ninety nine. These general rules we shall explain presently.[141]

In the investigation of ideas and the manner through which these are arranged by the understanding, illustrations showing how this operates in the use of money, appear simply to provide examples of how this might work. However, analysis of Hume's treatment of the passions - both the direct passions in relation to the will, and the indirect passions in relation to pride - presents aspects of his theory of human nature which constitute the outer dimensions of the understanding. In the course of I.3, it proved impossible for Hume to present the way of human ideas without reference to the operations of the passions - both the way in which they operate in parallel and in an analogous manner, and in the way that they assist in the organisation of the ideas derived from experience. This is indicative of the central importance of Hume's theory of the passions in understanding the broader historical and practical context of the theory of knowledge and understanding. As chapter 3 shows, this theory is inseparable from Hume's observation of contemporary human practice, and as chapter 5 shows, the kind of practice which he observed and around which he constructed elements of his theory of human nature, were related to the acquisition of commodities and pursuit of pleasure, the aspiration of the individual to social esteem, and the use of money in these two pursuits. The capacities analysed and described by Hume, and presented in this chapter, constitute the intellectual dimension of the human individual which is itself one of the two aspects of the individual the other being the passional.

[141] Ibid., p.142.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to reinterpret Hume's theory of the individual by showing that specific lines of historical meaning can be drawn between the theory presented in his first philosophical work, and the practices of his contemporaries in their historical-social and economic contexts. These lines or connections allow the historian to regain access to meanings and intentions associated with the philosophical ideas as they were conceived by Hume, and thus to make what at first appears as an abstract theory into an historically intelligible one.

The part of Hume's philosophy on which focus was brought to bear is his construction of a theoretical image of the individual which he presents in the first two books of his *Treatise*. The theory of the individual comprehends all of the more 'constructive' parts of Hume's philosophical theory in these parts of the work (as opposed to the critical or 'therapeutic' sections). His theory presents two fundamental layers found in the individual: the intellectual layer, called the *understanding* and dealing with ideas, and the emotional layer which is the locus of desire and motivation, and is referred to by Hume as consisting of the *passions*.

The manner in which this thesis achieves such an historical interpretation of Hume's ideas involves three stages or layers, recounted here in reverse order. The first involves examination of the philosophical theory itself and a reconstruction of the type of individual described by Hume in the *Treatise*. This was presented in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Analysis of the text reveals the basic features of a mentality with its own peculiar predilections and habits, and with a rationality designed purposely to pursue and continue these. The specific characteristics of this mentality provide crucial clues indicating the relevant contextual background within which the ideas were conceived, and through which their original meanings may be accessed.

The first, and fundamental, characteristic of Hume's individual was identified by many interpreters in his famous statements that, "[r]eason is and ought only to be a slave of the passions."[1] In chapter 4 of the present thesis the meaning of this is unearthed through an interpretative reconstruction of Hume's theory of the will, and of the relationship that this established between the passions, particularly the *direct* passions, and the activities of

[1] *Treatise*, p. 415.

the understanding. What this established is that the thought processes described by Hume, involving ideas, are understood to be governed primarily by *desires* and *aversions*, *hopes* and *fears*. The primary passions drive the understanding to work out the causal relationships between the objects that it finds surrounding it (both persons and things) and to calculate the prospects for intervention amongst these objects in such a way as to procure the objects or objectives desired by the passions.

Thus, by examining Hume's theory of the passions, in particular that part which deals with the will (II.3), a basis is established for interpreting the theory of the understanding and in particular the theory of causal inference and probability. As the primary constructive activity of the understanding, presented in I.3, probabilistic reasoning concerning causal relationships is shown to be concerned with values and goals established, not by reason, but by the passions. It may therefore be said that in Hume's construction of the individual the activities of the understanding are *designed* for the purposes dictated by the passions. The passional aspect of the individual directs him towards objectives in a practical manner designed to procure or otherwise intervene amongst external objects. Therefore, since the understanding as a positive activity is designed to aid the passions in achieving their objectives, it may be said to be governed by an *instrumental rationality* whose primary concern is with *effectiveness* rather than *truth*. It is therefore appropriate to interpret Hume's theory of understanding as being essentially pragmatic.

A question arose, therefore, concerning the nature of the practical ends towards which the individual's understanding, as described by Hume, is meant to be driven. This question is both historical and theoretical. Since the passions govern the understanding by providing practical ends, its immediate theoretical answer is to be found by examining the other parts of Hume's treatment of the passions. The historical answer is provided once the description of the passions is shown to be linked to the actual historical context encountered by Hume, and once it is shown that Hume was bound to incorporate elements of this context due to the 'experimental' methodology that he appropriated for moral philosophy.

Hume's analysis of pride stands at the centre of his theory of human motivation. The first part of Book II, entitled *Of Pride and Humility*, analyses not only the abstract principles through which pride operates but also presents the types of object which are associated with the passional drives of individuals. Therefore, the text of Book II presents a great deal of insight into the kinds of concrete practical orientation around which Hume

modelled his theory of motivation, thought and action. At the centre of Hume's theory of pride stands his analysis of property, acquisition and commercial desire. This is structured around a notion of power which is the same as that constructed in the epistemological study of I.3 and identified with the term 'cause', and the psychological study of the will in II.3. The particular modes of practice around which this notion of power – and the notion of probable causes – is constructed in the treatment of pride are those associated with the *power to cause pleasure*; and the application of this notion is found in the treatment of money and riches as the social representation of the *power to acquire things which cause pleasure*. As these *things* can themselves cause pride by virtue of their power to produce pleasure, so *money* causes pride by virtue of its power to procure the things which produce pleasure. The relationship between property, pride and power is crucial for interpreting Hume's theory of understanding and the will in their relationship with practice since it indicates a context of concrete historical meaning.

If the perception of causal relationships was important for Hume's interpretation of the social evaluation of property, it is even more important for his analysis of the epistemological and motivational grounds for esteeming monetary riches. Hume moves his analysis onto the capacity to obtain property, i.e. monetary power. The way in which the theory of causal beliefs from I.3 presents the crucial underpinning for his explanation of the effectiveness of money, and its esteem value, is through the assimilation of the belief in the probable effectiveness of a cause under the term *power*. He explains that, "riches are to be consider'd as the power of acquiring the property of what pleases; and 'tis only in this view they have any influence on the passions."[2] Hume's appropriation of a non-bullionist conception of money is consistent with the idea that the meaningfulness of the monetary medium lies in its capacity to represent a belief. For Hume money is the specific form which power takes in relation to "the pleasures and conveniences of life"[3] which are essential to the self-regard signified by pride, and the motivational force signified by desire. From Hume's study of the will it is clear that in his observation of the world surrounding him, the individual was concerned with estimating the capacity of other individuals to cause things. It was to this activity that Hume attributed the origin of the habit of inferring causal relationships; and in the section on money, we are provided with an explanation of how this causal power is attributed to individuals in the social context. The identification of money with power establishes a close relationship between money and the theory of causation: property has power and is a species of cause by virtue

[2] *Treatise*, p.311.

of its capacity to produce pleasure; and money has power and is a species of cause which is all the more potent for being able to obtain any other cause of pleasure. Furthermore, money is a cause of pride in itself based on the power which it measures. From the point of view of the observer, or the social rival, it epitomises the manner in which the notion of causation is built on the social practice of measuring one another's powers.

Chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis establish grounds for a theoretical interpretation of Hume's theory of understanding in which thought processes are orientated towards goals set by the passions, and in which the goals thus established are involved in the acquisition and enjoyment of goods. Thus, by reading Book II of the *Treatise,* a context is provided within which the theory of probabilistic reasoning concerning causation obtains a specific and concrete meaning. Its operations may be understood within this context to be intended for forms of human interaction and practical activity, particularly those involving the use of money and other forms of power in order to acquire enhanced social status through the procurement of objects. Thus, while the internal logic of Hume's arguments in I.3 is not understood any differently from its construal in previous interpretations, its relationship with the logic of things that are external to it nonetheless allows it to be interpreted in a different light. Locating Hume's construction of the passions that motivate the understanding in a social context of eighteenth-century consumerism makes it possible to interpret Hume's theory of the individual as constituting part of an attempt to make sense of changing patterns of behaviour in an increasingly commercialised society.

In order to justify the claim that Hume's theory of the individual bears a strong relationship with the actual behaviour of individuals acting in the contemporary social context, it was necessary to examine Hume's remarks concerning the role of philosophy in relation to common life, and on methodology, as the second layer of interpretation. Chapter 3 of the thesis showed that Hume sought a closer and more constructive relationship between the philosopher and the participants in common active life than had been seen in the past. His appropriation of an 'experimental' methodology helped to structure this relationship, and furthermore, it demanded that he place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of observing the activities surrounding him in common life in order to ground his reasonings. It is clear from the introduction to the *Treatise* that Hume had deliberately and self-consciously set out to observe, record and render intelligible what he found manifest in the typical activities of people in contemporary society. His emphasis on this justifies the argument in this thesis that his theory of the individual was structured around

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[3] Ibid., p. 311.

actual historical practices. The reconstruction of the theory of the individual in chapters 4, 5 and 6 indicates that the specific activities with which Hume's observations and reflections were concerned were those involved in the acquisition, possession and consumption of goods by individuals concerned with competition over social status.

As the third layer of interpretation, the social contexts within which Hume encountered the phenomena anatomised in the *Treatise* were analysed in chapter 2 of the thesis. Examination of Hume's early life and circumstances revealed that he was personally concerned with issues related to those that appear in the *Treatise*, particularly the manner in which social status and independence are related to financial power and profession. By mapping his geographical and social movements during the period in which he conceived the arguments of the *Treatise*, the nature of the social and economic environments inhabited and observed by Hume for his philosophical researches was sketched, as well as the perspective from which he sketched them.

The relevant contexts for understanding the basis of Hume's social observations are the landed and professional society of the Scottish lowlands and of Edinburgh, and the English society of middle-class merchants and professionals found in London and Bristol, and encountered by Hume during 1734. By the 1730s, England had experienced significant development at various levels of society in terms of the emergence of consumerist behaviour. The first half of the eighteenth century saw considerable changes in English society as the consumption of commercial luxury increased from the end of the 17th century onwards for both the landed and commercial-professional middle classes. In Scotland, the speed of commercial growth during the three decades after the Act of Union was disappointing, but the impact of 'English' consumer habits was nonetheless visible among the professional and lowland landed classes from at least the 1720s onwards. Hume was living in Scotland, and worrying about his own financial and professional future, at a time when English consumer mores were increasingly becoming the model for Scottish emulation. Thus, Hume was able to experience the impact of growing consumerism in a derivative, and imitative form before he travelled to England in 1734. His own need to find a basis for adequate social status and for independence drove him to Bristol where he saw the original of Scottish imitative efforts at first hand. The early part of the eighteenth century saw a great deal of innovation in the urban landscape of the provincial towns throughout England, much of which was directed towards the provision of locations for public displays of wealth and taste. Bristol, described by Defoe in the 1720s as the second trading city of England, was no exception to this.

The key feature of rising consumerism in England, and to a lesser extent in Scotland, was the intensification of individualist competition over social status. This was played out using the symbolic power of ostentatious and fashionable goods, epitomised but by no means exhausted by clothes, that could be consumed in a public way. The theory that the eighteenth century was marked by an increasing tendency among the middling orders as a whole to emulate the elite tastes of the aristocracy has been disputed, but the significance of individualist emulation both within social strata and between them is widely recognised. It is primarily this kind of competitive-emulative motivation that can be seen characterised in Hume's construction of a theory of the individual bent on increasing his social profile (his *pride* and *esteem*) through the conspicuous use of power, represented by monetary riches, in the acquisition and consumption of goods designed to yield pleasure.

Taken together, the three layers of investigation justify the claim that Hume's theory of the individual was conceived in a manner that was strongly influenced by the practices found in the Scottish and English social contexts of the late 1720s and early 1730s. Hume's personal predicament forced him to try to adapt himself to the demands of a professional career and of life in different parts of British society. It therefore made its changing practices and mores, in particular the modes through which it managed social status and power, the cause of personal concern. His desire to imitate the achievements of the scientific revolution in moral philosophy led him to develop an 'experimental' methodology. And for Hume, this required that he take his observations from the common life of men as it surrounded him, thus giving him an important methodological rationale for comprehending the practices that he found in contemporary society. Hume therefore had both the motive and the occasion to come to terms with the way in which individuals typically acted and interacted through his philosophical investigation of human nature. That he did so is manifested by the appearance of a highly structured and detailed account of the psychological, intellectual, and practical habits associated with life in a monetarised, commercial society in which individuals place a high value on the conspicuous ownership of wealth and consumption of goods in the management of social-status relations.

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