Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*

10/10/2002

We discussed 
The Introduction and from Book I Of the Understanding, Part 1: Of Ideas, their Origin, Composition, Connexion, Abstraction, Etc. (We did not address sections on Memory and Abstract Ideas.)

*Introduction.*

The first two volumes of the *Treatise* were published in 1738, preceded by this Introduction. Note that Hume writes in the Advertisement (p. 2) that ‘all the subjects I have there [that is: in the introduction] plann’d out to myself, are not treated of in these two volumes. … If I have the good fortune to meet with success, I shall proceed to the examination of *Morals, Politics,* and *Criticism;* which will compleat this *Treatise of Human Nature.*’

The Introduction is to the whole *Treatise*. It gives a trajectory, and the overall method. The point of the whole Treatise is that one is not supposed to despair at the end of Book 1. (The science of man is successful in the moral sphere.) As for the overall method, it is said to be experimental (based on ‘experience and observation’). But as we will see below, Hume has a complex attitude to his own methodology (and how we should be philosophising).

*Book 1. Of the UNDERSTANDING*  
*Part 1: of ideas, their origin, composition, connexion, abstraction, etc.*

Sect. 1. Or the origin of our ideas  
This section raises three interpretative problems, two of which are commonly discussed, and a third was raised in the seminar.

1. The question of force and vivacity.
   ¶1 ‘All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness.’
   Connected with this is the proposal that ideas depend on impressions.
   The full examination of the question of ‘how they stand with regard to their existence, and which of the impressions and ideas are causes, and which effects’ is, says Hume ‘the subject of the present treatise’, but the general proposition is that
   ¶7 ‘all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent’.
   Does the appeal to force and vivacity give us a difference in kind? Doesn’t it merely give a difference in degree?

2. The missing shade of blue.
   A general principle is given according to which (¶8) ‘our impressions are the causes of our ideas’. This general principle is later used in the *Treatise* as a methodological guide. Yet Hume gives us immediately a counter example, or ‘contradictory phænomenon’ which ‘may serve as a proof, that the simple ideas are not always deriv’d from the correspondent impressions’ (¶10).
   What sense are we to make of the general principle?
3. ¶8 lists various evidence we have that one of the types of perceptions is the cause of the other.

Do impressions always have corresponding ideas?

Common discussions of Hume address 1. and 2. above essentially in two (unsatisfactory) ways:
a. Hume’s distinction is incoherent (the problems highlighted are problems with Hume’s view of the mind);
b. once we pay attention to the fact that Hume uses an empiricist method, the difficulty goes away.

*Sketch of an alternative strategy for dealing with three problems above.*

Hypothesis. There is an intelligible distinction which Hume is tracking and using, but it may be incompatible with some of his *methodological presumptions.*

Hume tacitly relies on an intelligible distinction in setting up section 1. This distinction faces no difficulty with regard to the three questions raised above. BUT Hume substitutes for this distinction the problematic account, because the problematic account is of the form which seemingly could be established by the experimental method.

What is the original distinction, and what form does the substitution take?

Remember that ideas are copies of impressions. As Hume uses this and as is common in interpretation ‘copy’ looks like a mechanical process of making something similar (e.g. through photocopy). If that is the right way to understand Hume’s relation between impressions and ideas, there is no intrinsic link between ideas and impressions they are an idea of – both can be fully understood in isolation and their relation is then a further matter established through experiment.

But there is an alternative way of thinking of copying. A portrait or a landscape may be a copy of what it depicts; a photograph may be a good copy of the event recorded. Here copying does not mean merely some that mechanical process has been effective, but rather that the depiction or representation is accurate to the thing depicted.

To say that an idea is a copy of an impression could be to say that the idea is of, or about, or represents its corresponding impression. It is *intrinsic* to our understanding of an idea that it is an idea of a given impression.

This is to sort Hume’s perceptions into two kinds.

1. There are those which are presentations of aspects of reality. Sensory impressions present instances of colour or taste. Passions present a feeling. In both cases there is the presentation of what is actually there.
2. But one can think about what one has sensed in its absence or recall a past scene. And in that case one has the other kind of perception. The copy of representation of such presentation.

We have here a distinction which is one of *kind* and not of degree.

The dependency of ideas on impressions is in our understanding of them – so the idea of the missing shade of blue does not require the existence of some impression corresponding to it. The distinction is given in our recognition of whether a given perception is an impression or idea; so it does not require experimental confirmation, and hence supposed evidence for the correspondence of impressions and ideas; and the priority of the former to the latter.

Hume’s substitution is of an external relation between particular impressions and particular ideas, evidence by repeated experience of the causation of ideas by impressions for the intentional relation between a particular idea and the impression it is an idea of.

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Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature* – 17/10/2002

We discussed Book 1, Part 1, Sect. 7: Of abstract ideas; and Part 2: Of the ideas of space and time. (We only covered the beginning of section 4, followed by sections 1 & 2.)

**Book 1, Part 1, Sect. 7: Of abstract ideas**

*Why is this section here?*

(Language does not seem to be central to Hume’s concerns earlier in Part 1; elsewhere in the *Treatise* perhaps the discussion of promises at 3.2.5 ¶10.)

One may answer in terms of structure: extension and duration discussed in Part 2 are abstract ideas. But note that this is also one of the large controversies in Hume’s time.

Hume openly adheres to Berkeley’s views, but he is largely irenic between philosophical perspectives.

**Imagistic nature of impressions and ideas?**

Hume asks (¶1) whether abstract or general ideas ‘be general or particular in the mind’s conception of them’.

The suggestion is that although ideas are themselves particular, generality comes not from what they are of, but rather from the alleged fact that this particular idea is intersubstitutable with other particular ideas in reasoning, each of which correspond to a given general term (such as ‘triangle’).

**Book 1, Part 2: Of the ideas of space and time**

*Question of the importance and place of this part in Book 1*

Two interesting facts:

1. Part 2 is missing entirely from the first *Enquiry*, and
2. In the Abstract the part devoted to this is very short, and does not come until ¶29, almost as a footnote just before introducing the second volume, and after a much more detailed exploration of Part 3 (knowledge and probability).

One might hypothesize that this is indicative of dissatisfaction on Hume’s part of what he achieves in this section. However there is no direct evidence that Hume is indeed dissatisfied with this part. Moreover Hume’s claims about necessary connection and probability are novel and provocative, are so independently of the specifics of Hume’s system. This is not so for space and time and this might be why commentators have followed Hume in neglecting this part.

We might see this part as a *test* of Hume’s method to ‘anatomize human nature in a regular manner’ and ‘to draw no conclusions but where authorized by experience’ – *Abstract, ¶2*. We then might get a better sense of how Hume’s system is intended to work.

**Intellectual context**

The nature of space and time are much discussed at the time among philosophers and natural philosophers. On one hand these questions give rise to scepticism (cf. Pierre Bayle) concerning our understanding of infinity and space, and on the other hand the association between space and infinite extension invokes God in many discussions, as does the question whether there could be a vacuum in nature.

We can see two key novelties to Hume’s discussion: i.) His discussion proceeds in the absence of God; and ii.) he seeks to settle or avoid endless disputes by focussing discussion on our *ideas* of space and time rather than on the *nature* of space and time themselves.

**Structure of Part 2.**

Part 2 falls into 2 main subsections and a codicil.

- Sections 1 to 3 outline the *positive theory* of space and time, with 1 and 2 establishing the existence of indivisible minima, and 3 then deriving accounts of extension and duration consistent with this.
- Sections 4 and 5 deal with objections the theory. Part 4 concerns geometry and objections from the mathematicians. Section 5 concerns the intelligibility of a vacuum and objections from the metaphysicians.
- Section 6 (the codicil) stresses the lesson of part 2 that we make progress by attending to ideas and limiting ourselves to this. (Note: part 4, section 2 returns to this theme.)

**Positive view in Part 2**

The summary of the positive view is to be found in the first two paragraphs of section 4.

Two components of the positive view:

1. There are indivisible minima (visible and tangible points).
§1 ‘The capacity of the mind is not infinite; consequently no idea of extension or duration consists of an infinite number of parts or inferior ideas, but of a finite number, and these simple and indivisible.’

(Note that Norton and Norton identify these –annotations, p. 438—as mathematical points; but Frasca-Spada says that Hume denies they are mathematical points.)

2. Therefore extension is just a matter of our impressions or ideas of minima together with the manner of their appearance – there can be no idea of extension independent of perceptions of visibilia or tangibilia.

§2 ‘[T]hese indivisible parts, being nothing in themselves, are inconceivable when not fill’d with something real and existent. The ideas of space and time are therefore not separate or distinct ideas, but merely those of the manner or order, in which objects exist: Or, in other words, ’tis impossible to conceive either a vacuum and extension without matter, or a time, when there was no succession or change in any real existence.’ (Emphasis added.)

Part 2, section 1: Of the infinite divisibility of our ideas of space and time

Note from the outset that Hume embraces a representative theory of ideas. (Cf. discussion of distance in section 5 and 6 §7.)

Hume relies on the distinction between impressions and objects represented. The same impression or idea can represent distinct parts of the same object.

(Note that Part 1 does not express the representative view, and it is not expressly present in the same way in the First Enquiry. This is reflected in a different presentation of scepticism with regard to the senses in the two.)

The section introduces by the experimental method the minimum visibile and the minimum tangibile.

Two points to note:
1. Although Hume endorses a representative theory of impressions in what he says, and hence is not strictly phenomenalist, nonetheless aspects of that are reminiscent of Berkeley.
2. Therefore he allows for indefinite descent of observing smaller and smaller parts of objects.

Part 2, section 2: Of the infinite divisibility of space and time

Note that section 1 was called ‘Of the infinite divisibility of our ideas of space and time’, section 2, is called ‘Of the infinite divisibility of space and time’ and moves from a claim about our ideas to how space and time must be.

We started with the idea in the first paragraph of adequacy of ideas to the objects they represent and we can compare that with the claim at the end of the section that space and time must contain indivisible points. The key thing is an idea of adequacy.

Two bridge principles doing the work.
1. If something is imaginable, it is possible.
2. If something is unimaginable, it is impossible

The second of these principles Hume seems to treat as equivalent to the first, though clearly they are not. Hume first argues that an infinite number of parts requires an infinite extension, and hence is not graspable by our minds. A parallel concern with time. Then, the adequacy of our ideas is then used to explain that there must be a finite number of indivisible points in reality.

Although we can use our ideas to represent smaller and smaller parts, and hence seemingly go on for ever, at each stage our finite mind contains but a finite number of impressions or ideas. So we can never imagine an actual infinity of points. Hence the world being so is impossible. Moreover the way in which we do represent, namely via an array of indivisible minima is adequate to how the world is.

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We discussed Book 1, Part 2, Sect. 3, 4 and 5, thus concluding Part 2.
(Section 6 was briefly mentioned last time as a codicil devoted to stressing the lesson of part 2.)

Sections 3, 4 and 5 were addressed simultaneously. We focussed on questions regarding i- the copy principle and its consistency with what is said in these sections, ii- the indivisibility of visible and tangible points, iii- how to think of manner of appearance, order or disposition in this context, and iv- the fact that Hume denies that there is any idea of a vacuum.

As per last time some of what we discussed is inspired by Marina Frasca-Spada’s book: Space and the Self in Hume’s Treatise, Cambridge, CUP, 1998.

Book 1, Part 2,
Sect. 3: Of the other qualities of our ideas of space and time
Sect. 4: Objections answer’d
Sect. 5: The same subject continu’d

Two problems raised at the outset:

1. There are obvious reasons for thinking that ideas of extension and duration are problematic in light of the copy principle. This flows from the thought that when you see a square consisting of four pinpointss of light, for example, Hume will count each point as an impression, but he will deny that there is a fifth impression of their spatial arrangement. (Cf. the five notes on the flute.)
   Note that though the idea of extension is an abstract one still there is no particular impression of extension for a particular idea to exist which could then occupy the role of an abstract idea. Still, Hume actually starts sect. 3 ¶1 with the copy principle.

2. In section 2 Hume launches the attack on the infinite divisibility of physical things arguing that that requires a mind capable of containing an infinity of ideas. Now, following Zenonian discussion of infinity presents an antinomy, with indivisibility being equally problematic as infinitely divisible points. Hume rejects the antinomy first at the end of section 2, where he insists that the mind’s conceiving of finite numbers of ideas is adequate to represent physical space, and consequently that space being that way must be must be possible. But the coherence of the position is made clear at the beginning of section 4 when Hume contrasts his coloured and solid points with physical points.

   cf. sect. 4, ¶3 ‘[T]here is evidently a medium, viz. the bestowing of colour or solidity on these points … The system of physical points, which is another medium, is too absurd to need a refutation. A real extension, such as a physical point is suppos’d to be, can never exist without parts, different from each other; and wherever objects are different, they are distinguishable and separable by the imagination.’
   Nothing rules out considering the left half separate from the right half of physical points. And whatever can be conceived as distinct can exist independently according to Hume. Hence the physical point is divisible; therefore the absurdity.
Why is this not the case with visible and tangible points? There are minimum elements of conception by means of which we conceive any other object.

There can be nothing smaller than the coloured points as elements of conception. They are so to speak pixels on the screen with which we depict any state of affairs. (This means that Hume assumes that we do not ever depict the pixels themselves with pixels.)

So the positive theory in section 3 is this:

Cf. sect 4, ¶2 (‘The ideas of space and time are therefore not separate or distinct ideas, but merely those of the manner or order, in which objects exist…’), and sect. 3, ¶4 ‘[M]y senses convey to me only the impressions of colour’d points, dispos’d in a certain manner.
If the eye is sensible of any thing farther, I desire it may be pointed out to me. But if it be impossible to show any thing farther, we may conclude with certainty, that the idea of extension is nothing by a copy of these colour’d points, and of the manner of their appearance.’ (Emphasis added.)

The non-impression added is ‘the manner of appearance’ of the impressions, their order or disposition.

Following Frasca-Spada (p. 76ff of her book: ‘Manners of appearance and manners of conception’), we might juxtapose this with the treatment in the Treatise i- of belief, characterised as a manner of conception, and ii- of the self as a ‘connected heap of perceptions’.

Two questions:
1. Why is this not an embarrassment for the copy principle?
2. What does manner of appearance, disposition or order amount to?

1. Hypothesis regarding the copy principle and the manner of appearance
We should take very seriously Hume’s conception of perceptions as imagistic, so that the experimental task is to consider the way in which things can be presented imagistically when one looks for the origin of an idea. But when we consider the images by which we can conceive aspects of the world, these are spatially ordered. Spatial order is a precondition of our normal images and such spatial ordering is a precondition of the presentation of anything by such imagery. So there is no pressure to find an image of extension in order to prove its existence.
This highlights an interesting contrast for us with the idea of ‘necessary connections’ in part 3 of Book 1. For that is not treated as a mode of ordering our images, which is a precondition of entertaining images at all.

2. Manner of appearance, disposition or order
This we addressed partly by considering concerns of section 5:

a. Why should Hume have to deny that there is any idea of a vacuum?
Hume denies that there is any impression of extension over and above the impression of coloured points and the manner of their disposition. To have an idea of vacuum would seem to require, according to Hume, such an impression.

b. Why shouldn’t the manner of appearance suffice if that can ground the idea of extension?
Possible answer: the ordering of impressions or ideas is something within the mind whereas the idea of the vacuum would have to correspond to something outside of the mind in addition to any ordering of ideas. For one’s ideas could be so ordered without any vacuum being present to the mind.

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We returned to Book 1, Part 2, to par. 27 of section 5.

Book 1, Part 2,
Sect. 5: The same subject continu’d

¶ 27: I shall conclude this subject of extension with a paradox, which will easily be explain’d from the foregoing reasoning. This paradox is, that if you are pleas’d to give to the invisible and intangible distance, or in other words, to the capacity of becoming a visible and tangible distance, the name of a vacuum, extension and matter are the same, and yet there is a vacuum. If you will not give it that name, motion is possible in a plenum, without any impulse in infinitum, without returning in a circle, and without penetration. But however we may express ourselves, we must always confess, that we have no idea of any real extension without filling it with sensible objects, and conceiving its parts as visible or tangible.

Problems of interpretation.

The paradox Hume refers to seems to be of the form of an antinomy. Three questions arise
1. With respect to the first half of the antinomy, the thesis:
   Why should Hume say that extension and matter are ‘the same’?
2. With respect to the antithesis:
   Why should Hume add the problematic restriction ‘without any impulse in infinitum, without returning in a circle, and without penetration’?
3. Why should the ‘foregoing reasoning’ explain the paradox?

1.
Thesis
‘extension and matter are the same’

This conclusion is drawn already from Hume’s observation that there can be no positive idea of a vacuum. Distance is given to us by points disposed in some vacuum, and the same perception can stand for points separated by insensible matter or points separated by a vacuum. There is nothing in the idea, nothing in the image, which can distinguish between these. Extension and matter are the same because they are annexed to the same abstract idea.

2.
Antithesis
‘without any impulse in infinitum, without returning in a circle, and without penetration’

a. ‘without any impulse in infinitum’

We can certainly conceive of motion in a straight line in a vacuum, but we have finite minds. If we can conceive motion in a vacuum, then we can form an idea of such. The idea itself will be an idea composed of a finite number of points and so the idea is an adequate representation and the motion conceived will be across a finite region.
That explains the first restriction.
b. ‘without returning in a circle’, and
c. ‘without penetration’
The motion we can conceive need only be in a straight line, and there need be no evident penetration from one body by another. So for this representation to be adequate, neither penetration nor movement in a circle is required. Hence the second two restrictions.

3.

The ‘foregoing reasoning’ and the explanation of the paradox.

It looks as if in Humean terms adopting either side of the metaphysical controversy concerning space leads to contradiction. How then does the ‘foregoing reasoning’ resolve the paradox?

In §25 and 26, Hume confesses that he has concerned himself solely with the ideas of space and time, and not the nature of bodies or their secret causes. (¶25 Hume raises a new objection after answering the three he’d already mentioned (and answered): “Twill probably be said, that my reasoning makes nothing to the matter in hand, and that I explain only the manner in which objects affect the senses without endeavouring to account for their real nature and operations.” He then comments §26 ‘I answer this objection, by pleading guilty, and by confessing that my intention never was to penetrate into the nature of bodies, or explain the secret causes of their operations. For besides that this belongs not to my present purpose, I am afraid, that such an enterprize is beyond the reach of human understanding, and that we can never pretend to know body otherwise than by those external properties, which discover themselves to the senses. […] [A]t present I content my self with knowing perfectly the manner in which objects affect my senses, and their connexions with each other, as far as experience informs me of them. This […] suffices for my philosophy, which pretends only to explain the nature and causes of our perceptions, or impressions and ideas.”

Because Hume is restricting himself to the idea (of motion in a straight line in a vacuum), he does not have to suppose that there is anything in reality that corresponds to it. It is merely ordering in our mind. The paradox results when we project beyond this.

So in §27 Hume appears to be something of a ‘pop Kantian’. We are to conceive of space and time as the ordering principles of our ideas, and to avoid attributing them to things in themselves for fear of paradox.

However note the passage appended to the end of §26 (12App, p. 46-47). There are two paragraphs. The first says that there are different ways in which we can use our terms in relation to the course of experience. So there isn’t one thing you might mean by two bodies touching. (“[T]his depends upon the definition of the word, touch. If objects be said to touch, when there is nothing sensible interpos’d betwixt them, these objects touch: If objects be said to touch, when their images strike contiguous parts of the eye, and when the hand feels both objects successively, without any interpos’d motion, these object do not touch.”)

The second paragraph strives however to accommodate the ‘Newtonian philosophy’. (“[I]f it be ask’d, whether or not the invisible and intangible distance be always full of body, or of something that by an improvement of our organs might become visible or tangible: I must acknowledge, that I find no very decisive arguments on either side; tho’ I am inclin’d to the contrary opinion, as being more suitable to vulgar and popular notions. If the Newtonian philosophy be rightly understood, it will be found to mean no more. A vacuum is asserted: That is, bodies are said to be plac’d after such a manner, as to receive bodies betwixt them, without impulsion or penetration. The real nature of this position of bodies is unknown.”)

So despite the ‘pop Kantian’ direction of §27, Hume in §2 of footnote 12 in the appendix seeks to make sense of the Newtonian philosophy, and hence strives to make sense of going beyond the appearances. Even in this case, where he seems to say paradox results from doing so, he does not rule that one cannot do so if the mind is so inclined, and manages to rescue Newton by finding his conception of space more in accord with vulgar thought.
21/11/2002

We discussed Book 1, Part 3, Sect. 1 to 4.

*Book 1, Part 3, Of knowledge and probability*

We first compared the structure of part 3 with the Abstract and the *Enquiry*. Part 3 dominates both the Abstract and the *Enquiry*. As for differences in structure between the Abstract and Part 3, it is not to be attributed to Hume changing his mind. (After all, the *Enquiry* returns to the structure of part 3.) Rather, Hume decides in the Abstract to address questions which were most discussed by his readers, for advertising purposes.

*Section 1, Of knowledge*

One noticeable difference between Part 3 and the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* is the use of the term *knowledge*:

In the first section of part 3, *knowledge* is restricted strictly to mathematics and analytic truths. (Note the title of Part 3: *Of knowledge and probability*.)

¶5: There remain, therefore, algebra and arithmetic as the only sciences, in which we can carry on a chain of reasoning to any degree of intricacy, and yet preserve a perfect exactness and certainty.

(Contrast ¶6: ‘The reason why I impute any defect to geometry, is, because of its original and fundamental principles are deriv’d merely from appearances[.]’)

By contrast, the term *knowledge* has its ordinary sense in the *Enquiry*.

Cf. e.g. section 5, part 2, ¶21: ‘Had not the presence of an object instantly exited the idea of those objects, commonly conjoined with it, all our knowledge must have been limited to the narrow sphere of our memory and senses; and we should never have been able to adjust means to ends, or employ our natural powers, either to the producing of good, or avoiding of evil.’

(And cf. *Treatise* Bk.1 Part 3, section 11¶2:

’tis however certain, that in common discourse, we readily affirm, that many arguments from causation exceed probability, and may be receiv’d as a superior kind of evidence. One wou’d appear ridiculous, who wou’d say, that ’tis only probable the sun will rise tomorrow, or that all men must dye; tho’ ’tis plain we have no farther assurance of these facts, than what experience affords us.)

So the focus of the structure of the first half is building towards and account of *belief*. Belief itself is discussed very late on (sections 5 onwards).

*Sect 2 Of probability; and the idea of cause and effect*

In this section, Hume introduces the idea of necessary connexion:

¶11: ‘An object may be continuous and prior to another, without being consider’d as its cause. There is a necessary connexion to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mention’d.’ (contiguity and succession)
This question is however set aside until section 14. (‘Tis 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.’)

Instead Hume asks two questions (¶14 and 15).

First, For what reason we pronounce it necessary, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, shou’d also have a cause?  
Secondly, Why 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?

The first question concerns necessity between particular causes, and the second concerns inference from one cause to another. The first question is addressed in section 3 (Why a cause is always necessary?), and the second question consists of two non-equivalent questions which Hume nevertheless treats as equivalent and to which he returns in section 3. (Note also ¶8, concerning the need for a cause to be prior to its effect: ‘If this argument appear satisfactory, ’tis well. If not, I beg the reader to allow me the same liberty, which I have us’d in the preceding case, of supposing it such. For he shall find, that the affair is of no great importance.’ What explains this ironical attitude?)

Section 3 Why a cause is always necessary

This section consists in a negative attack on the necessity of causes, discussing various inadequate arguments from philosophers. (¶4 ‘[W]e shall find upon examination, that every demonstration, which has been produce’d for the necessity of a cause, is fallacious and sophistical.’) Hume concludes on the priority of causes,

¶9: The next question, then, shou’d naturally be, How experience gives rise to such a principle? But as I find it will be more convenient to sink this question in the following, Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?

Section 4 Of the components parts of our reasonings concerning cause and effect

In this section Hume raises the question of what can terminate inference. He claims that sense is in immediate judgements of impressions:  
¶1 ‘Tis impossible for us to carry on our inferences in infinitum; and the only thing, that can stop them, is an impression of the memory or senses, beyond which there is no room for doubt or enquiry.’  
(Notice that in this paragraph he calls ideas of memory impressions.)

The hypothesis formulated:

Impressions offer Hume the ‘touchstone of reality’; ideas will partake of reality to the extent that they involve or resemble impressions. Less metaphorically impressions are necessary components of serious enquiry. So even if inference takes us from current impressions, for it to be a genuine enquiry and not mere fancy the reasoning must also end in an impression.

This connexion with impressions is an important component of the discussion of belief to come and of the ambiguities of the discussion.

vmd, 28/11/02
Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature* –6

28/11/02

We discussed:
Sections 5 ‘Of the impressions of the senses and memory’, section 6 ‘Of the inference from the impression to the idea’ & beginning of section 7 ‘Of the nature of the idea of belief’ from Book 1, part 3 (‘Of knowledge and probability’)

*Sect. 5 Of the impressions of the senses and memory*

1.
The first problem raised was regarding the title:
Does the title mean: i- impressions of the senses, and memory, or ii- impressions of the senses and impressions of memory?
¶1, the order is inversed: ‘impression of the memory or senses’
Cf. 1.1.3. ¶1 where Hume talks of ‘ideas of memory’, not impressions and says memory is somewhat betwixt an impression and an idea’: so he has shifted the terminology he uses.
¶3, goes back to ideas of memory: ‘… since both these faculties borrow their simple ideas from the impressions’.
Although impressions and ideas are introduced as exclusive in their extension, Hume oscillates between the two when talking of memory.

2.
The focus of the section is on ‘the characteristic’ which distinguishes memory and imagination.
This needs to be a metaphysical distinction but Hume assumes that it is given to us (thereby ruling out correspondence with an original complex impression as the basis of the distinction). Here Hume appeals again to force and vivacity which distinguish impressions from ideas.

These seem intended to reflect both the psychological consequences of these states – that sense impression and memory can control our thoughts in ways that mere imagination and speculation cannot – but also some phenomenological given in virtue of which this is so.

¶4 (introduced in the appendix) gives us the example of the hunters with a contrast between ‘fictions of the imagination’ and the ‘different feeling’ attending known memory. Compare this wit sec.7¶3 with its contrast between conceiving the idea that Caesar died in his bed with the belief that this is so. So a series of parallels seem to be set up between impressions of sense, memory and belief.

Hypothesis: Hume’s substitute for what links sense perception with episodic memory in contrast to mere imagination is applied to belief as well in order to explain their common roles as contact with reality. Perception and memory in contrast to imagination are intrinsically tied to actual particular events. But Hume can make nothing of this, and so his talk of force, vivacity and liveliness are a substitute for it.

But these substitutions are (somewhat) intelligible as applied to belief to explain what it has in common with impressions of sense and memory. It would not be plausible to suggest that assenting to the thought that Caesar was assassinated is just like seeing or remembering the event in question.

3.
In ¶7 the occurrence of impressions of memory and sense are not to be distinguished from ‘the belief or assent’ in them – ‘[t]o believe is in this case to feel an immediate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in memory’. That is, there is no distinct act of assent to one’s perceptions in this case. Note already the rejection of any voluntarism in the account of judgement.
Section 6 Of the inference from the impression to the idea

1. We noted that this section introduces the notion of CONSTANT CONJUNCTION as the distinctive relation involved in judging of causes and effects, and stresses the role of experience and not reason in discerning constant conjunctions in nature and nature’s uniformity.

2. ¶3 prefigures the replacement of necessary connexion with the nature of inference we make in an account of causal reasoning: ‘Perhaps ’twill appear in the end, that the necessary connexion depends on the inference, instead of the inference depending on the necessary connexion’.

3. The section presents Hume’s alleged and notorious scepticism with regard to induction. Parallel to sec. 3’s rejection of our knowledge of the necessity of causes, Hume claims that experience alone can afford us knowledge of constant conjunctions.

4. We noted in ¶13 that Hume qualifies his appeal to his three principles of association (resemblance, contiguity and causation) as not being invariable or sole causes of association.

5. The section ends prefiguring (one part of) the definition to come of belief: ‘that ’tis an idea related to or associated with a present impression’. What is left out here, significantly, is ‘lively’.

Section 7 Of the nature of the idea or belief

We started to look at Hume’s account of belief and to ask with what it contrasts (cf. important footnote 20).

A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION (67, ¶5)
’tis only a strong and steady conception of any idea, and such as approaches in some measure to an immediate impression (67, ¶5, footnote 20)
’tis a particular manner of forming an idea (67, ¶6)
an opinion or belief is nothing but an idea, that is different from a fiction, not in the nature, or order of its parts, but in the manner of its being conceiv’d (67, ¶7 – added by appendix)
an idea assented to feels different from a fictitious idea (67, ¶7 – added by appendix)
belief consists not in the nature or order of our ideas, but in the manner of conception (67, ¶7 – added by appendix)
the very essence of belief consists in the force and vivacity of the conception (1.4.2 ¶24, 133)
belief is nothing but a peculiar feeling, different from the simple conception (appendix 396, ¶3)
the belief, which attends experience, is explained to be nothing but a peculiar sentiment, or lively conception produced by habit (Abstract, 414, ¶27)
We discussed book 1, part 3, sections 7-10 (Of the nature of the idea or belief, Of the causes of belief, Of the effects of other relations and other habits, & Of the influence of belief); and sections 11-13 (Of the probability of chances, Of the probability of causes, Of unphilosophical probability)

Is knowledge a form of belief?
The distance between knowledge and belief is important for Hume even if he wishes to go with the vulgar in talking of knowledge (involving belief) concerning the empirical world. In the Enquiry he talks of knowing things in the world around us (cf. part already quoted: section 5, part 2, ¶21: ‘Had not the presence of an object instantly exited the idea of those objects, commonly conjoined with it, all our knowledge must have been limited to the narrow sphere of our memory and senses; and we should never have been able to adjust means to ends, or employ our natural powers, either to the producing of good, or avoiding of evil.’ Knowledge here would involve belief.)

Section 7 Of the nature of the idea or belief
This is the section in which we find the discussion of the nature of belief, but the discussion carries on over the next few sections.

1.3.7:
¶5 ‘An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defn’d, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION.’
¶6 ‘But belief is somewhat more than a simple idea. ’Tis a particular manner of forming an idea: And as the same idea can only be vary’d by a variation of its degrees of force and vivacity; it follows upon the whole, that belief is a lively idea produc’d by a relation to a present impression, according to the forgoing definition.’
Plus footnote 20, 1.3.7.

Knowledge is described as assent in section 7 where the problem is first raised. But that should not lead us to think that knowledge is a form of belief, for in comparing ideas there need be no liveliness associated with a present impression, which are required after all for the presence of belief. We envisaged assent as explained partly by an act of will, and partly by understanding.

Can one withhold assent? In contrast with Descartes, for Hume there is no withholding assent, for assent is not different from having the impression.

A related discussion concerns the fact that Hume wants to allow for the idea that there can be wrong belief. But the account of what a belief is does not obviously leave room for this. A few questions were raised:

– When does something count or not as belief?
– How can we account for forming beliefs in the wrong way, and for Hume’s discussion of credulity?
– Can Hume really explain the difference between forming beliefs as we should and as we shouldn’t? (Cf. discussion of the madman: what deficit does he suffer from?)

The minimum Hume says is that the madman cannot distinguish reality from fancy and has a deficit. (Hume discusses it as if his fancies were belief.)

From this question of the contrast between belief proper and assent Hume then focuses on how the mind operates over probability rather than knowledge. (Sections 11 onwards)
Bk 1, Part 3, Section 11: Of the probability of chances

- The title may sound odd to our ears since we equate probability and chance. A question arises of how chance and cause fit together. In current discussion we allow for the possibility of indeterministic causation, where cause raises the chance of its effect, possibly to less than one. For Hume chance is contrasted with cause so there can be no chancy causation.

- The way these ideas fit together is through Hume’s account of causal reasoning (rather than focussing on the nature of cause per se). Causal reasoning is such that one’s belief in the occurrence of the effect is determined while chance leaves one indifferent among possible outcomes.

The problematic of section 11 is: if chance equals the indifference of the mind between different outcomes, how is it possible to have beliefs concerning the superior chance? That is: we are indifferent which face of a fair die will be uppermost when it is cast, but judge it more probable that an even number will be cast than an odd number less than five.

Hume’s answer involves the fancy combining ideas of similar outcomes to make them more lively, so that the ratios of similar possibilities lead to corresponding degrees of vivacity. However, although one might think of degrees of liveliness and vivacity as a phenomenological correlate of degrees of belief, there is no echo of such an idea in Hume.

So how should we partition the possibilities? As the human mind does.

Bk 1, part 3, section 12: Of the probability of causes

1.
Hume makes explicit that for the philosopher chance is but ignorance of cause.
Cf ¶1 ‘What I have said concerning the probability of chances can serve to no other purpose, than to assist us in explaining the probability of causes; since ‘tis commonly allow’d by philosophers, that what the vulgar call chance is nothing but a secret and conceal’d cause. That species of probability, therefore, is what we must chiefly examine.’

¶¶2-3: Hume gives an account of the genesis of causal reasoning in the subject. Note that this is both speculative and seemingly falsified by recent developmental psychology.

2.
Hume’s picture requires that initially we encounter seemingly perfect regularities so that habits of causal reasoning can be set up. Then, when we attend to the variability of these patterns we then make the assumption that there is a hidden pattern of causes and effects underlying the merely imperfect regularity observed.

3.
¶24 large numbers. Hume needs any difference in number to be significant, even though the ratio of liveliness of fusing ten thousand ideas to fusing ten thousand and one ideas cannot be great. He solves it by appealing to general rules. And here we have something which prefigures the appeal to universal rules in the account of the artificial virtue of justice in book 3.

Bk1, part3, section 13: Of unphilosophical probability

Discussion of good and bad ways of causal reasoning. The question is: how can Hume help himself to this distinction?

Vmd 23/1/2003
We discussed Bk 1, part 3, section 14 ‘Of the idea of necessary connexion’

Three broad moves were identified in this section:

i- the negative discussion of others’ views of power
ii- the positive account of the idea of necessary connexion (and the conclusion drawn out regarding what else Hume had said about causal reasoning)
iii- the two definitions of cause

Broadly three questions were asked:

a. How do we set Hume the context of theories of cause and power in the 17th and 18th century?
b. How does this compare with what he says about ideas of space and time?
c. What is Hume’s concluding attitude towards the existence of causal power or necessary connexions in the world?

1. The negative discussion of other’s views

The form of Hume’s discussion here starts with a couple of points on Locke followed by a fairly formulaic attack on scholastic philosophy, closely modelled on Malebranche. Hume’s discussion focuses on Cartesian arguments. (¶¶8 & 9 ‘For … the Cartesians in particular, having establish’d it as a principle, that we are perfectly acquainted with the essence of matter, have very naturally inferr’d, that it is endow’d with no efficacy, and that ‘tis impossible for it of itself to communicate motion, or produce any of those effects, which we ascribe to it. As the essence of matter consists in extension, and as extension implies no actual motion, but only mobility; they conclude, that the energy, which produces the motion, cannot lie in the extension. This conclusion leads them into another, … Matter, say they, is in itself entirely inactive, and depriv’d of any power, by which it may produce, or continue, or communicate motion: But since these effects are evident to our senses, and since the power, that produces them, must be plac’d somewhere, it must lie in the DEITY…’)

Hume’s discussion suggests that the consequences of the shift to the mechanical philosophy is that one wants to look for a general form of explanation under which to subsume all causes (under general and uniform principles). Indeed in Cartesian philosophy itself the modes of all physical phenomena are restricted just to modifications of extension, so seemingly excluding any role for force to operate within nature itself. Instead we look at the primary cause of nature, God, to explain how the parts of the watch all work together.

One key element here is the thought that, given the unifying aims of mechanical philosophy, force should be constant across the universe so that variation in the minute parts of objects should be sufficient explanation of the diverse phenomena encountered. Now that is consistent with force being treated as a secondary cause within nature in contrast with the ‘Cartesian’ story. The lack of variability of the presence of force poses a problem: on what occasion could one acquire the idea of necessary connexion?

After that, added in appendix, is the discussion of whether the idea of force can arise within the mind; and this is denied.

2. The positive account

Hume seems to say a number of things which are somewhat in tension with each other, for at times he seems to say that in causal reasoning there is nothing but the habit of the mind; at other times he seems to talk in terms of felt compulsion of the mind to move from cause to effect; and finally he talks of an impression of reflection as if after all there is something in addition.

Hume needs to make the account of causal reasoning central to the account of the idea of necessary connexion, but he still needs the idea of necessary connexion to have more to it than just the occasion the habit of the mind (which is causal reasoning). i.e.: He needs our idea of cause to be more than or other than mere constant conjunction.
**Suggestion:** The felt determination of the mind need to be none other than the liveliness attending the idea of the effect on the occasion of an impression of the cause, i.e. it need be nothing other than the belief in the existence of the effect.

**Codicil:** On this hypothesis, the idea of necessary connexion is bound to be tight to the transition of the mind, just as Hume wants.

**Objection:** In general the liveliness of the idea of Hume is not itself another idea. When then the impression of reflection?

**Comment:** Note that Hume calls the ideas of memory impressions to emphasize their status as belief. But though in causal reasoning one can believe the onset of the effect just as forcefully as one believes the past occurrence of an even in memory, these ideas are never called impressions; so one might hazard the thought that the impression of reflection here is just the echo of the presence of liveliness which otherwise would lead Hume to slip into talk of impressions.

**Note** that in taking his proposal to be a radical affront, Hume repeats the key claim twice, framing a thought about the subjectivity of the mental basis of the necessity of ideas:

"22-23 'Either we have no idea of necessity, or necessity is nothing but that determination of the thought to pass from causes to effects and from effects to causes, according to their experienc’d union. Thus as the necessity, which makes two times two equal to four, or three angles of a triangle equal to two right ones, lies only in the act of the understanding, by which we consider and compare these ideas, in like manner the necessity or power, which unites causes and effects, lies in the determination of the mind to pass from the one to the other.'"

3. **Two definitions of cause**

  cf. ¶ 31:

  i- We may define a **CAUSE** to be “An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac’d in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter” If this definition be esteem’d defective … we may substitute this other definition in its place, viz.

  ii- “A **CAUSE** is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other.”

  Note the contrast between philosophical and natural definitions. The philosophical definition is when we consider what it is for two things to be related as cause and effect, whether or not they are presented to us as such, whereas the natural definition gives you cause as you encounter it between a given cause and a given effect.

**Comparison with space and time**

1. We can now return to the hypothesis formulated in discussion of book 1, part 2. The ideas of space and time are inextricable from imagery per se and so there can be no question but that we have an idea of space, even though there can be no impression of it. This is not so for necessary connexion. A corollary of this for Hume would seem to be that we do not have to imagine things as dynamically related – the role of causation is always in belief and causal reasoning.

2. On the one hand, Hume seems explicitly to treat space and time solely in terms of the ideas of them in the mind (with the manners, disposition, and so forth) and threatening paradox if we move beyond these ideas to consider space and time in themselves. On the other hand, he does allow that we talk and investigate space and time in themselves so though paradox threatens, this doesn’t lead to the avowal of subjectivism about space and time.

  With necessary connexion, matters are different: Hume finds no paradox in going beyond the idea of cause to something in nature itself; but on the other hand he doesn’t invite us to do so, nor does he interpret us as doing so. Indeed one strand of Hume’s thought seems to be that the idea of necessary connexion is nothing in itself (so contrasting with space and time). On the other hand, despite some over-enthusiastic interpretations, Hume doesn’t seem to see any positive use for talking of necessary connexion in itself in the world.

vmd, 30/01/2003
Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* –10

30/01/2003
We discussed Bk 1, part 3, section 15 ‘Rules by which to judge of causes and effects’, section 16, *Of the reason of animals*, and part 4, section 1, ‘Of scepticism with regard to reason’

**Bk1, part 3, section 15 Rules by which to judge of causes and effects**

We noted the eight rules by which ‘we may know when [objects] really are [causes and effects to each other], namely (¶¶3-10: contiguity in space and time; cause prior to effect,…)

**Bk1, part 3, section 16 Of the reason of animals**

1. We noted the joke in ¶1. Hume says: [No] truth appears to me more evident, than that beasts are endow’d with thought and reason as well as men. The arguments are in this case so obvious, that they never escape the most stupid and ignorant.

(Our take was this: the irony seems to be that the most stupid and ignorant would lack the special power of reason which Hume’s opponents suppose animals to lack, and hence could only possess whatever reason animals do.)

2. Reason belongs to the sensitive nature of man, according to Hume, which according to Cartesians men share with beasts.

3. ¶8 sums up part 3. Hume says of his own system that it is ‘the only one’ which can ‘explain that act of the mind, which we call belief, and give an account of the principles, from which it is deriv’d, independent of the influence of custom on the imagination’. His opponents hypothesis applied equally to beasts and the human species would not hold. By contrast

that my system be the only one … is evident almost without reasoning. Beasts certainly never perceive any real connexion among objects. Tis therefore by means of custom alone, that experience operates upon them.

And Hume concludes:

All this was sufficiently evident with respect to man. But with respect to beasts there cannot be the least suspicion of mistake; which must be own’d to be a strong confirmation, or rather an invincible proof of my system.

... Nature may certainly produce whatever can arise from habit: Nay, habit is nothing but one of the principles of nature, and derives all its force from that origin.

**Bk1, Part 4, Of the sceptical and other system of philosophy**

1. The general title:
Why in a treatise on human nature is there a section concerned with philosophical systems, and why is scepticism central here (in contrast with previous sections)?

− Parts one through three seem to concern issues which one could anticipate a treatise of the mind addressing.

− There are some themes common between part 4 and other aspects of the book. For example part 2 of bk 1 seems a positive counterpart to the sceptical discussion of body in section 2. And one can contrast the discussion of personal identity in section 6, with the role of self in the account of pride and humility in bk 2.
Section 1 Of scepticism with regard to reason

1. This section launches a fallacious argument. Even with demonstrative reasoning there is a question of whether you have carried out reasoning correctly. The argument works from the uncertainty of having carried out a correct procedure to the conclusion that all of our opinions are a matter of probability and not knowledge.

§1 All knowledge degenerates into probability. The sceptical argument was then the claim that you then iterate the worry that you have reasoned correctly, and, on each iteration, the probability declines.

§6 Having thus found in every probability, beside the original uncertainty inherent in the subject, a new uncertainty deriv’d from the weakness of that faculty, which judges, and having adjusted these two together, we are oblig’d by our reason to add a new doubt deriv’d from the possibility of error in the estimation we make of the truth and fidelity of our faculties. This is a doubt, which immediately occurs to us, and of which, if we wou’d closely pursue our reason, we cannot avoid giving a decision. But this decision, tho’ it shou’d be favourable to our preceding judgment, being founded only on probability, must weaken still farther our first evidence, and must itself be weaken’d by a fourth doubt of the same kind, and so on in infinitum; till at last there remain nothing of the original probability, however great we may suppose it to have been, and however small the diminution by every new uncertainty.

This argument seems unconvincing in a number of ways. To mention just two: i- concern with the errors we introduce into reasoning do not normally compound in the way the argument assumes; ii- the argument assumes that we go through a series of acts of reasoning each of which introduces further infirmity. But the argument does not demonstrate that we in fact go through such a sequence. At best it would show that we ought to, but the decline in probability would occur only if in fact we do.

2. The question then arises what Hume’s own attitude is, and how he responds to scepticism.

§8 My intention then in displaying so carefully the arguments of that fantastic sect [absolute sceptics], is only to make the reader sensible of the truth of my hypothesis, that all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv’d from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures.

The final paragraph sees the force of sceptical challenges as residing in reason itself, where reason is a particular reflective and inquiring faculty of the mind, so that escape from scepticism resides in our independence of reason, and the mind’s propensity to work along its natural and habitual patterns.

§12 Reason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority. Her enemy, therefore, is oblig’d to take shelter under her protection, and by making use of rational argument to prove the fallaciousness and imbecility of reason, produces, in a manner, a patent under her hand and seal. This patent has at first and authority, proportion’d to the present and immediate authority of reason, from which it is deriv’d. But as it is suppos’d to be contradictory to reason, it gradually diminishes the force of that governing power, and its own at the same time; till at last they both vanish away into nothing, by a regular and just diminution.

...’Tis happy, therefore, that nature breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time, and keeps them from having any considerable influence on the understanding. Were we to trust entirely to their self-destruction, that can never take place, till they have first subverted all conviction, and have totally destroy’d human reason.

Note that Hume does not have the attitude that the sceptic cannot live his scepticism; rather total scepticism is a misconception of the status of reason.
13/02/2003 & 27/02/2003
We discussed bk 1, part 4 (Of the sceptical and other forms of philosophy), section 2.

Section 2 Of scepticism with regard to the senses

Puzzle:
Hume begins this section with a question and a reference to the sceptic, but does not return to it until the last three paragraphs. By contrast in the *Enquiry* scepticism is the central topic. Why then is this chapter labelled 'scepticism with regard to the senses'?

1. Structure

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Breaks down as follows:
- After a couple of introductory passages PP18-20 explain the importance of coherence and constancy.
- PP21 contrasts it with causal reasoning.

Problem from then on is to explain the origin of this form of movement of thought. That's done from 22 through until 42.

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<td>51-55</td>
<td>Compares the attractions of the vulgar and the philosophical opinions, and 56 and 57 express the sceptical consequences of this reflection, and the appropriate remedy</td>
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2. ¶3: Why is it that it is a contradiction in terms that the senses should give rise to the notion of continued existence?

Hypothesis
Given Hume's view of thought, if the idea was to be founded in the senses there would have to be an impression of the object together with the absence of such an impression.

3. ¶14 introduces the claim that the vulgar confound perceptions and objects.

4. Coherence and constancy

There is a slippage which Hume exploits: whether the coherence talked of concerns the pattern of experiences conceived just as a flow of subjective qualitative occurrences, or is rather the coherence of a world distinct from our perception of it.

5. There is much to be said about the account of the fiction of identity over time, but we did not really focus on that.
6.
We focussed on
i- the fact that Hume uses the term ‘perception’ now as if he is talking about the object of awareness, now as if he is talking of the active awareness. That is because Hume tacitly seems to accept that you cannot have an object of awareness without an act of awareness corresponding to it. Hence one could not form just through reflection the idea of the object of an act of perceiving in contrast to the act of perceiving it. This is highlighted in the discussion of ¶39 where Hume wishes to convince us that the view attributed to the vulgar is not paradoxical by showing that perceptions can exist independently of the mind. But the appeal he makes here to a ‘bundle theory of self’ could not show that an object of awareness can exist independently of the awareness of it, which is what is really required.

ii- In ¶45 Hume introduces some ‘experiments’ to convince us that perceptions are not possessed of independent existence. Some commentators take Hume at his word here, and suppose he thinks it a matter of the experimental method to determine the status of perceptions even if his approach would not be coherent if that was so. But one might more naturally suppose that Hume here just takes it to be obvious that our impressions and ideas are in us, and that only the most cursory experiment is needed to demonstrate this. So the interpretative puzzle is to work out why Hume should think so.

Several things were said in response:

i- The first is to note that Hume, like many early modern philosophers and natural philosophers assumed that an explanation needed to be given of depth perception in vision, and hence would draw a contrast between the immediate objects of vision as not outer and the outer objects about which we make judgements.

ii- One might see here an important influence of Berkeley (contrast this reading with the suggestion of commentators such as Wright of the primary importance of Malebranche here) that the demonstration of the qualities we sense must be mind-dependent and not inherent in any substance (cf. Principles 7 –and compare Malebranche in the Dialogues). In the context of Berkeley’s philosophy, it is taken as evident that all that can be present in the mind in sensing must be awareness-dependent, since such awareness can occur independent of any other substance.

iii- However Hume insists that the vulgar take their impressions to be the objects independent of the mind. Why should he say that, rather than identifying the objects with congeries of ideas? (Cf. ¶ 14 and 31.) Without this identification there is no clear conflict between Berkeley’s system and the view of the vulgar.

iv- Hence we can see Hume’s account of the genesis of the philosophical view and the resulting scepticism with regard to the senses as his both acknowledging the force of Berkeley’s system and its unbelievability.

Conclusion
As a consequence we can see that the section is appropriately titled within the Treatise, and there is a deliberate irony in the confidence of the first paragraph displacing a concern with scepticism which then returns with a vengeance in the final two.

5/3/2003
5/3/2003
We discussed Bk 1, part 4, sections 3 and 4 (‘Of the antient philosophy’ and ‘Of the modern philosophy’).

We noted that the titles of these two sections match the allusion in the title of part four to ‘other systems of philosophy’, and so contrast with the titles of all other sections of this part which indicate specific subject matters.

Section 3 Of the antient philosophy
This section discusses idea of substance, substantial form, accidents and occult qualities. The various philosophical views are not discussed in detail, nor really are the origin of the ideas – rather this is all presented pretty much as a philosophical pathology, as if this is a prelude to the work of the following section.

¶1… the fictions of the antient philosophy… have a very intimate connexion with the principles of human nature.

¶2 The description of our ideas of body in this paragraph fits both Locke and Berkeley, but in ways that obscure the radical differences between them. Contrast this with the account of our idea of body in sect. 2.

¶6-8 ascribe ideas to the Peripatetics – i.e. the school of Aristotle – which are really the Modern caricature of scholastic thought.

Section 4 Of the modern philosophy
Whereas the Ancient philosophy can be presented as just false, and hence of anthropological interest (how can men come by these ideas), the Modern philosophy needs to be argued against, and its pretensions exposed. In this way section 4 is a continuation of some of the themes of section 2 (and in the Enquiry some of this material is preserved in section 12).

¶3-5 give Hume’s reconstruction of the arguments for distinguishing primary and secondary qualities (cf section 2, ¶13), beginning with the ancient concern with conflicting appearances in ¶3.

¶6ff presents his one key objection to this: the primary qualities are not conceivable independent of secondary qualities and seem to lie merely in the mind (cf. Berkeley in the Dialogues). And the focus of this is the attack on the idea of solidity in ¶9-14.

Question: why focus on the idea of solidity?
This makes the object of criticism most obviously Locke. (Recall that within a Cartesian system we do not need an idea of solidity for matter is nothing but extended substance.)
The context of the discussion of solidity recalls the problematic of Part 2.
There are two further lines of attack which belong here:

- ¶13 distinguishes the sensations felt and the cause of them in the object, and this is illustrated by someone who lacks sensations of touch in one way (suffering from palsy) but not the other, and comprehends the solidity of the table.

- ¶14 raises the worry of whether there is an idea of solidity independent of the sensations one feels when impressed by an object, and also argues that there could be no simple impression of solidity.

¶15 is the conclusion to part 4, though if we think of the Modern philosophy as naturally arising out of the failures of the Ancient philosophy, we can see the conclusion of section 4 as the moral to both sections 3 and 4. ¶15 echoes again the kind of sceptical conflicts which draw sections 1 and 2 to a close. Here the opposition is between causal reasoning and the habit of mind which commits us to the existence of body, causal reasoning leads us to exclude sensible ideas from the external world, but, as argued at the end of section 2, our beliefs in an external world depend on ideas of sensible qualities: ‘When we exclude these sensible qualities there remains nothing in the universe, which has such an existence.’

20/03/2003
Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* –14, 16 & 17

20/3, 27/3 & 7/5/2003
We discussed Bk 1, part 4, sections 5, 6 & 7 & Bk 2, part 1, title page and sections 1 & 2

*Book 1, Part 4, Sections 5, 6 & 7*

1:4:5 Of the immateriality of the soul
Notable of this, and 6 which follows, the lack of a negative conclusion, emphasised in §1 of 5.

Compare §3 with the discussion of 6 and §5 with both 2 and 6.

From §7 on we have a discussion of the familiar question of extension of ideas. Hume affirms immaterialism with respect to some perceptions – they are nowhere and clearly so. There is a general problem about how these come to be associated with physical things, §11. But we should think of the ideas of sight and feeling as extended (as per part 2) but there is no inconsistency here as long as they do not inhere in any substance.

From §17 on we have the discussion of Spinoza and parallel drawn with those who suppose mental items must be mere modes.

§§31-32 reintroduction of mind-body causation and Humean attitude used to resolve any difficulties.

1:4:6 Of personal identity

Why should this be separated from 5? Why should the question of SELF be different from that of mental substance? Clearly the context here is Locke and those with which he engaged in debate. There are some parallels here at the start of discussion and some contrasts with the issues of 5. The question of personal identity (the Lockean concern) is eventually turned to only at §15 - §5 -§14 concern the account of persistence which echoes the account of §2, albeit without the inconsistency in the fiction that accompanies the idea of body. The general account of ideas of persistence are used to explain why there is a role for memory in the idea of self but not quite what Locke thought, rather have the question of how to ground the causal interconnectedness of ideas.

Note the connection and contrast between discussion of self here in Book 1 and again in Book 2: this is already flagged at §5.

The question remains of what Locke thinks is inconsistent in his account of personal identity in the appendix §§20-21. The standard accounts are not convincing on this matter. Certainly, Hume doesn’t seem to give up this view of self, so it would be hasty to think that the view itself is held to be inconsistent by him. One might rather hypothesise that the worry is how one should explain one can end up with this conception of self given the account of how causal relations come to be observed – witness, ‘… did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there wou’d be no difficulty in the case’.

1:4:7 Conclusion of this book

We have the dramatic conclusion of Book 1. The whole is written in stirring form and we have a voyage of discovery and transformation. First, the sceptical challenges of secs. 1-4 are revisited and we have the image of isolation of the enquirer. By §8 the solitary figure is completely isolated and powerless subject to ‘philosophical melancholy and delirium’. Nature rescues him from this,
returning him to common social life – viz. ‘I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends...’ in §9.

§§13-14 lead us to the positive results of this reflective enquiry – one needs a properly mitigated scepticism which allows common life its proper due. Indeed the success in this reflection is such that there is then an ironic self-criticism with which to end in §15.

One might reflect that the colourful language and drama of this conclusion, reflects the drama of part IV itself, in contrast with the first three parts of the Book. From secs 1-4 we had the disturbing sceptical conclusions, only laid to rest by proper reflection on human nature alone in secs. 5-6. The dramatic mode of the conclusion sets us up for the more positive conclusions of Book 2 and later Book 3 where sentiment and passion are engaged.
BOOK 2 OF THE PASSIONS
What is the context of Hume’s discussion?
  a.) 16th century discussions of the passions – on the one hand Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*; Spinoza’s *Ethics* and most closely Malebranche’s *Search after Truth*, Book Five;
  b.) the sentimentalist tradition, both in philosophy (notably Hutcheson, but who else?) and also more generally in the world of letters;
  c.) ancient philosophy, particularly certain Roman authors echoing Stoic predecessors.

*Title page*
Note that the epigram is repeated from Book 1. The use of Tacitus emphasises a focus on sentiment.

*Structure*
There are three parts which in some way seem to invert the structure of Book one. Parts one and two deal with the seemingly more complex, indirect, passions, while part three deals with direct passions and the will.
In book 1 we start with simple ideas, and then move through various operations of the mind which put ideas together. In contrast in Book 2 the key function of sympathy, for example, is only properly discussed in part 2, although it already plays a crucial role in the passions surveyed in part 1.

*Part 1, Of pride and humility*  
Why should one start a discussion of the passions with pride and humility? In treating indirect before direct passions we are inverting the structure of book 1 (book 1 starts out with simple ideas and then deals with ways in which they are combined, whereas book 2 starts out with seemingly complex structures, the indirect passions and only later moves to the direct passions).

*Section 1 Division of the subject*  
This sets up a series of divisions through which the passions will be classified – in this we may compare it with the beginning of Descartes’s *Passions of the Soul*. However, there is a significant difference between Hume’s approach and that of Descartes or Malebranche, for the account of the passions for Hume will reside entirely within the mind and not exploit the particular structures of animal spirits etc that rest in the body and affect the mind.

Hume reminds us of the familiar contrast between *impressions* and *ideas*, and of that between impressions of *sensation* and those of *reflection*. Bodily feelings of pain and pleasure are sensations and hence not passions; though the passions also divide into pleasures and pains.

Hume also offers two further important distinctions. The first is between *calm* and *violent* passions. There is some question how this distinction is to be employed, but its main purpose arises in part 3. More central to the whole discussion is that between *direct* and *indirect* passions.

2 Of pride and humility; their objects and causes  
Pride and humility are introduced as *simple* (and uniform). What is the importance of treating them as simple impressions? Most notably that were they complex then their component impressions could at least experimentally be isolated. But this would require that one should be able to separate out the pleasure of pride or the pain of humility from the other elements.
Digression on complexity of pain and pleasure
Par. 4 of section 1. Good or evil, and pain or pleasure are treated as correlative. This echoes 1.3.10 par. 2: ‘nature has implanted in the human mind a perception of good or evil, or in other words, of pain and pleasure, as the chief springs and moving principles of all its actions.’

Hume seems to think of bodily pain and pleasure as being sensations; he thinks of the passions as divided among the pains and pleasures (cf. current theories of emotions which talk in terms of positive and negative hedonic tone). But Hume does not seem to want to explain the division of passions into pleasures and pains through the presence of a discrete feeling of pleasure or pain.

Hume introduces the distinction between the object of the passion and its cause (par. 2 and 3). In the case of pride and humility the object is the self, and the cause is something further to be explored. (It is not going to be the cause as such which is going to offer an explanation for the passions; cf. ¶ 5 ‘vast variety’ of causes.)

The importance of the object of this distinction is further elaborated on in section 5.

At this point it is important to note that pride and humility are treated as opposite: these passions are ‘directly contrary’, and a cause which increases the one diminishes the other. This seems a contrary conception to the Christian conception of pride and humility, as Hume himself notes (sec. 7, ¶8).

Sect. 3 Whence the Objects and causes are deriv’d
Hume observes that the object of pride and humility (viz. the self) is constant in all mankind and hence is natural. In contrast the causes of these passions have a great variety, and in ¶5 illustrates with the invention of the scritoire that the passions exhibit ‘productivity’.

Sects. 4 & 5
Here Hume develops the outline of the theory of pride and humility. The first section stresses the general role of association within the mind – note that contrary to the case of the understanding, Hume’s conception of association for the passions still finds a place (if unmarked as such) in accounts of emotional processes.

The particular character of passions are explained by Hume through appeal to ideas distinct from the passions, but naturally and universally associated with them (Hume never seems to consider the thought experiment of the passions occurring without the idea of the objects and the cause.

This bogus complexity seems to solve a problem for Hume rather than posing a problem as some have thought who despair his insensitivity to intentionality. If we think of perceptions as presentations of their objects to the mind, it would be problematic for passions to have a sole object when the pleasure distinctive of pride is shared between both object and cause. So Hume’s account in terms of idea of object, simple passion, idea of cause is an elegant way of finessing this difficulty.

9/06/2003
We discussed Hume’s conception of the relation between impressions, ideas and the passions.

In discussion the question was raised of the connection between Hume’s distinction between violent and calm passions, and Malebranche’s classification of sensations.

A question was asked why Hume should speak of double relations of impressions and ideas, and the following diagrams were offered in diagnosis.

The question was raised how the above model relates to ideas of beauty and virtue. It was proposed that, in keeping with Hume’s sentimentalism, joy or pride arising from beauty would be grounded not in a bodily sensation of pleasure, but still in a sensation of pleasure proper to physical or moral beauty. In such cases the passion would be modified by rules attending the attribution of beauty and the joy in question would be *approbation*, and hence open to assessment and criticism in a way that simple joy need not be.
2/10/03

We briefly recapped the first five sections of Book II. We focused on the intellectual context, and on the account given in terms of a double relation of impressions and ideas – we returned to the diagrams reproduced in the last handout. Questions were raised about the role of the idea of self in the account – that this was treated as separate from the relation that an object bore to the self such that pride could occur. Questions were also raised about how how pride interacts with sympathy (but for this we also need to look at sec 11 today) and whether Hume could deal with familiar examples such as pride in those one loves, and it was suggested that for this Hume’s account is necessarily revisionary. For it seems that on his account, one can feel pride in someone else only through viewing them as an object proper to oneself which pleases rather than vicariously through the possibility of pleasure in what warrants pride in them themselves.
We discussed Bk 2, part 1, sections 6 to 10

**Book 2, Part 1, Sections 6 Limitations of this system**

We discussed what Hume calls the ‘limitations of the system’ in section 6 which elaborate the working of the mechanism of pride and humility. A question was asked about what Hume meant by relative closeness in relation to self. It was asked whether mere spatial proximity would be sufficient. After discussion, it was decided that relation to self did not mean some relation or other (e.g. spatial or temporal), but rather a distinctive relation of belonging or being proper to self.

We discussed the interaction of the first and the second limitation and the importance of something being peculiar to self as being an occasion of pride. (This led us to consider the discussion of health in section 8.)

A question was raised about the range of relations that Hume is prepared to discuss relative to the restrictions introduced in the discussion of relations in Book 1, part 1, section 5. We noted that the taxonomy offered there was of philosophical rather than natural relation, and so no restriction could immediately be inferred.

The importance of the final paragraph was highlighted in which contrary to possible expectations Hume does not equate the proudest with the happiest, or the most humble with the most distraught. This indicates how the various limitations must be employed in order to explain the vagaries of fortune and anticipation.

**Section 7 Of Vice and Virtue**

We stressed that, as in cases of pride caused through other goods, pride in relation to virtue must be grounded in an original impression of pleasure, even if not a bodily sensation, and that this is the first introduction of elements of sentimentalism in the *Treatise*, although it is not labelled as such, or defended at this point.

We discussed the final paragraph of this section with its irony directed at Christian conceptions of the vice of pride and the virtue of humility. This connects with the discussion from last time of the ways in which Hume’s theory of these passions is revisionary and avowedly so.

**Section 8 Of Beauty and Deformity**

The one focus we had in this discussion is paragraph 8, where Hume takes it as a problem for his account that we are not proud of health or humble at illness. He seeks to explain this by a combination of the second limitation and the fourth limitation, namely that one’s state of health is not peculiar to one, and that the risk of ill health is constant for all. Scepticism was voiced as to whether Hume really faces the problem that he solves.

**Section 9 Of External Advantages and Disadvantages**

Our only focus of discussion here was of its relation to section 10. External advantages and disadvantages include property and riches, the topic of section 10. So the real purpose of this section is just to raise the more general issue of the contrast between self proper (which is taken to include the body, even if one doesn’t reject Cartesianism), and that which is merely associated with self. Here the laws of association and the imagination are put to work.
Section 10 Of Property and Riches
The main problem that this section deals with is how to explain the pride of the miser, and our mitigated esteem of him. Hume distinguishes between objects which are the cause of pleasure and those things which have the power to produce objects of pleasure, such as money or, distinguished from money, paper (i.e. IOUs and bonds).

The matter of general interest here is the way Hume distinguishes between power and exercise in paragraphs 4-7. The problem of the miser is that, on Hume’s conception of power, he does not properly have the power to acquire pleasures, because, although he has the means with his monies to purchase things, he has the disposition to hoard these pieces of metal (without even the joy of the numismatist), and not exchange them for goods.

In paragraph 5 Hume introduces a distinction between power and exercise which he claims makes sense independent of scholastic doctrines concerning the will. A man may lack the power to subjugate me with his sword if he is suitably bound by the external constraint of law. But in paragraph 6, this is explained in terms of a connection at least to probable if not actual exercise. Hence a problem with the miser.

Hume solves this in paragraphs 8-10. First Hume notes that the imagination allows pleasure to transfer from the possible objects of the exercise of power to the power itself. Second, Hume suggests that the miser is still moved by the pleasure of probable exercise, because they are not aware of any impediment of its exercise, even though in fact no exercise will occur. And hence the riches themselves are treated as if endowed with the power of obtaining goods, and thereby a pleasure themselves, and hence a fit object of pride.

In §11 and 12 Hume turns to the comparative elements in pride and humility, and the role of seeing oneself related on a scale to others, thereby increasing or decreasing one’s pride or humility. Note that this discussion echoes one in Malebranche A la recherche de la vérité, book 5.
16/10/03

We discussed Bk 2, part 1, sections 11 & 12; and part 2, secs. 1-3

*Book 2, Part 1,*

*Section 11 Of the Love of Fame*

This section introduces for the first time the mechanism of sympathy which features so largely in his account of morals. We noted that it is much more prominent as a mechanism in the *Treatise* than in the *Second Enquiry* – though sympathy is mentioned in the latter, often it is alluded to as a form of benevolence or pity rather than the mechanism by which passions are communicated from one to another.

We noted that Hume does not, in the *Treatise,* treat sympathy as itself a passion, but rather a mechanism for inducing passions. Many commentators, following a famous passage from Hume in Book 3, 3.1 (p.368) take Hume to be operating with a model of ‘emotional contagion’: where one individual has an emotion, those around him or her are liable to ‘catch’ the same feeling.

However, this cannot be Hume’s official doctrine of the operation of sympathy. For sympathy commonly gives rise to complementary and not identical passions: grief in one individual may give rise to pity in another; and in the case in hand, love of one will give rise to pride in the other. So, though Hume directs us that sympathy converts an idea into an impression, this leaves open whether the impression that is created which is the same as that of which one has an idea is an original impression – i.e. a pleasure or pain – or a secondary impression, the passion which arises consequent on the pleasure or pain. Cf. the discussion of pity, malice and love in part 2, sec. 9.

A question was raised whether the workings of sympathy were itself explained, or whether they were taken to be original and beyond the terms of the *Treatise* to explain. In ¶8, Hume indicates that sympathy works principally by resemblance and contiguity. A parallel is drawn with causal reasoning, but the working of sympathy is more remarkable.

The account of sympathy is applied to the particular case of fame from ¶9 on. Two accounts are seemingly consistent with the story offered about sympathy in the preceding paragraphs and with the experiments to show the role of sympathy in ¶¶11-14, and the principles by which they are explained in ¶¶15-18.

On the first account, the praise of another gives rise to an idea of their love and this is converted through sympathy into the passion of pride. Sympathy would thereby work through inducing complementary passions – love in one, pride in the other. The love of fame itself, the praise of others, would derive through association with the pride induced in one’s own qualities through the praise of others.

On the second account, the praise of another gives rise to an idea of their love (or delight) in one’s qualities and this is converted through sympathy into an impression of pleasure. This pleasure at praise is thereby converted into pride since the cause of pleasure is closely related to self. Pride at praise can thereby transfer to and increase pride in one’s own qualities through association of ideas and association of impressions, since the pleasure at praise is associated with the idea of the quality praised. On this account, the pleasure associated with praise is directly explained, and the influence on pride in one’s own qualities is explained only indirectly.

The second account fits the strategy of section 10, where the problem is to explain why pleasure should be associated with mere money rather than only with the goods it has the power to obtain.
But it does not fit the surrounding text well in section 11 itself, where the emphasis, as in passages which suggest the contagion model, emphasise the coincidence of sentiment across subjects. The tenor of the discussion is that the pleasant passions in others give rise to or reinforce the pleasant passions in us.

However, Hume needs to appeal to the second account because the first is inadequate at explaining how pride could be occasioned. For pride requires the associated ideas of cause and object. While there need be no problem with sympathy guaranteeing that the appropriate object be selected when the passion arises, no account is given of how the idea of cause can be associated with the passion in the right way. The other’s pleasure is focused on a quality closely associated with one through which they approve of and love one. In their praise, the quality which they approve of will be mentioned and so the idea of it will be ready to mind. But the mere fact that the idea of their pleasure gives rise to a pleasant impression does not guarantee that that pleasure takes one’s own quality as a cause.

By contrast, taking the immediate effect of sympathy to be a pleasant original impression allows that its cause should be taken to be the praise of the other (modified in its effects, as it is, by sympathy). Since the praise is directed at one, the praise will be closely enough associated with one for pride to issue from it. So the second story indicates a way in which the passions can remain associated with the ideas they require as a matter of human nature that the first story fails to.

Note that Hume’s story of the role of sympathy has no place for the normative aspects one might think central to this case. One might think that praise leads to pride where one judges the praise merited. But Hume’s explanation makes no appeal to notions such as merit, nor requires judgement to have a role. (In §9 judgement has the role of others’ opinions confirming one’s own about one’s greatness, but no more than that; and in this it is superseded by the operation of the passions and sympathy.) Rather, the operation of sympathy through resemblance and contiguity is used to explain why those most similar to us (and hence liable to be pleased at the same things) are a more likely influence on our feelings.

*Book 2, Part 1,*  
Section 12 Of the pride and humility of animals

The end of part one leads to a comparison with other animals and Hume can see no reason why pride and humility cannot arise in them. This indicates that there is nothing from Hume’s point of view special about the idea of self in relation to the passions which belongs solely with reason.

The part seems to end with a certain irony. Having indicated it holds of all animals, Hume suggests that this confirms the theory; perhaps Hume means that finding ourselves no better than other animals in this regard we will be humbled as the theory itself would predict.

*Book 2, Part 2*

We briefly discussed aspects of the first four sections of this part: the parallels between love and hate with pride and humility and the confirmation of the system of indirect passions as a whole. We also noted that in sec. 4 an attempt is made to explain why one loves one’s relatives.

23/10/03
We discussed Bk 2, part 2, secs. 1-10

**Book 1, Part 2,**
**Section 1, Of The Objects and Causes of Love and Hate**
Hume introduces the idea that love and hate are the parallel pleasures and pains to pride and humility which take others as their objects.

**Book 2, Part 2,**
**Section 2 Experiments to Confirm this System**
We noted that the experiments of sec. 2 indicate a complex attitude towards our passionate appreciation of self. In the fifth experiment ¶¶12-13, Hume indicates how pride in the qualities of a relation can lead to pride. As we noted before, Hume does not seem able to allow properly for vicarious pride. This discussion confirms it. For the mind is led by the association of the loved one with one oneself to treat them as proper to one. This is not the kind of self-less pride that we suppose is possible in respect of those we love.

In the sixth experiment, Hume raises the question why the reverse transition does not occur – that is to say, why pride in oneself does not lead to love of relatives through their close association with the self. Having raised the issue and observed that it obtains, Hume first solves it in ¶¶15-16 by indicating that the imagination moves from obscure to lively ideas, that the association of passions relies on the transition of the imagination but that the imagination cannot easily move to others from consideration of oneself.

The key paragraph here though is ¶17 which introduces a puzzling discussion of sympathy. Hume expresses the worry that the restriction introduced conflicts with the function of sympathy to move from 'the idea of ourselves to that of any other object related to us'. This is a slightly odd statement for him at first: the mechanism of sympathy is to move us from the idea of another’s passion to an impression oneself. So there is no immediate tension with the operation of sympathy. It was hypothesised that the problem here is that if one could form an idea of one’s own passions as associated with oneself, then such an idea of a passion could, through sympathy, be converted into an impression which led to love of another. Hence the operation of sympathy would seem to conflict with the asymmetry Hume has insisted on in the preceding two paragraphs.

Hume’s answer is that an idea of self (and hence the idea of any passion whose object is the self) is never the input to sympathy. The explanation of this is twofold. Where one’s concerns are out at the rest of the world, the idea of self is not among the ideas available, just the bundle of perceptions which together make up the self. On the other hand, the idea of self is engaged in self-directed passion such as pride and humility, but when these passions are felt one’s attention cannot be directed on anything which contrasts with self.

This difficult discussion does seem to indicate that Hume recognises that there is something distinctive about the role of self in his account of the passions. While a subject is not entirely selfish in their passions, still there is an element of solipsism. For my passions directed towards others never have to take into account their self-directed passions as such, and thereby appreciate them as distinct subjects who have a sentimental perspective on the world. It is therefore no surprise that Hume’s conceptions of pride and humility can be extended to the rest of the animal world.

**Sect. 5 Of Our Esteem for the Rich and Powerful**
¶21 which closes this section, echoes again Hume’s account of sympathy as involving the mirroring of passions across different individuals, which we have already discussed as problematic.
**Sect. 6 Of Benevolence and Anger**

Hume introduces two general desires – that directed towards the good of others; that towards their ill. These two desires are distinct from love and anger but conjoined with them – and pride and humility are contrasted through their lack of any such association with desire. This raises two sets of question: why the contrast with pride and humility; and why should the desires be distinct from love and hate.

As to the first, one might speculate the shadow of the earlier concerns with self. The idea of self is not something on which we can focus attention distinct from our ideas of everything else in the world. So desires which benefit the self in general need simply be directed on an end. Further consideration of one’s own greatness or lack of it need not generate any specific impulse.

As to the second, it is easiest to see why Hume needs to make the distinctions he does. Given the account of the pleasures and pains, there will be corresponding pleasures and pains to pride and humility. Since pleasure and pain are not in themselves desires, these passions will not be identical with benevolence and anger. Why he should use the terms ‘love’ and ‘hate’ in this way, rather than to pick out the desires associated, is less clear. On the other hand, the argument actually offered in ¶5 is entirely obscure.

**Sects. 7-10 Of Compassion, Of Malice and Envy, Of the Mixture of Benevolence & Anger, Of Respect & Contempt**

A complex argument now develops over a number of sections sketching a set of passions which arise through the slightly complex interaction of desires and attitudes towards status of self and others. The problem at the heart of this discussion is introduced in ¶1 of Sec. 9. If sympathy simply worked as Hume often advertises, then sentiments of others should always produce a corresponding sentiment in the heart of a spectator. But as Hume notes here, sympathy can actually produce an opposite sentiment. The discussion of sec. 9 is then intended to avoid the charge of inconsistency. The key claim is offered in ¶11:

> That ‘tis not the present sensation or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the general bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end.

The discussion here presents the hypothesis offered last time. Sympathy particularly operates on ideas of the sentiments of others to produce an original impression, i.e. a pain or pleasure. This is then conjoined with the pleasure or pain of the desires of benevolence or anger to produce the corresponding passions of pity or contempt, ¶15.

The combination of pleasure and pain with benevolence and anger gives the following combinations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
<th>(Self Desire)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>(Love Benevolence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misery</td>
<td>(Hate Anger)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can represent the resulting passions so:

- Pity: M+B
- Malice: M+A
- Envy: H+A

Hume has no distinct word for the circumstance of H+B – it will occasion love, of course, for in happiness there will be an admirable quality in the other as the basis of such happiness.

Another important element of the story is comparison – which we have already encountered in love of money. Hume indicates that this interacts with love, so that respect is love towards one greater than one; and with hate, so that contempt is hate towards one inferior to one. Envy can arise through one doing better than oneself, and so being superior; or through them gaining some good to be closer to one when initially much more inferior (¶¶12-13 in sect 8). 30/10/2003
30/10/03 & 20/1103
We discussed Bk 2, part 2, secs. 11-12, and part 3, secs. 1-5

We discussed paragraph 6. Noted that although the distinction between object and cause of a passion is introduced primarily through indirect passions, this paragraph suggests that the double relation of impressions and ideas is in play with direct passions, such as the ‘appetite of generation’.

Part 3
Structure
The discussion of the direct passions proper is rather delayed within this part, just as the direct passions have been delayed for discussion till the end of book 2, rather than being its starting point. The first two sections discuss liberty, necessity and the will. Section 3 apparently changes tack to discuss what can move the will (passion alone or reason also). 4 through 8 discuss the various causes of motivations, and discusses the contrast between calm and violent passions. Only in section 9, the penultimate section of the part do we have an enumerated taxonomy of the direct passions. Section 10 does not parallel the closing sections of parts 1 and 2 by turning to the passions of animals, but rather focuses on a passion peculiar to man: the love of truth. (One might note that this is a passion of particular interest to the philosopher, and hence that its proper complement is 1.4.7.)

Comparison of the discussions of liberty and necessity here in the Treatise with the first Enquiry. This discussion.

2.3.1
1. Emphasis on the action of the will is subject to the principles of human nature, and not to a liberty which would make the actions of man inexplicable.
2. Remarkable definition of the will. Two features of this. First that the will is identified as an impression, and hence within Hume’s terms as something passive, and secondarily, and complementarily, that it is contrasted with our 'knowingly giving rise' to a new motion in the perception of our mind which seems to describe intentional agency. Hence the will seems to be distinct from agency on this account, rather than more obviously 'being a term for it'.

Par. 10: Hume here draws a comparison between our general knowledge of the operation of the seasons and the character of men. Just as we would not believe in contrary seasons, so we are not to believe in incredible modes of social life. Note that the highlighted examples of incredible living are Plato’s Republic and Hobbes’s Leviathan. Hume is suggesting that in both authors the supposed actions of men are against what we know of character. Perhaps this connects with the most striking feature of this part 3, the absence of the account of practical reason. Hume seems to supplant an agent’s decision making simply with the operations of principles of human nature which do not give an agent’s own perspective on the decisions made.

2.3.2.
par 1. contrast between liberty as spontaneity and liberty of indifference. It was asked why shouldn’t spontaneity indicate the agent as an originating cause of an action. Hume clearly intends it just to mean that the cause proceeds through the agent’s passions in an appropriate manner.
We discussed Bk 3, part 1, Sect. 1 and 2

Book 3 Of Morals, Advertisement
We noted that Book 3 was published in 1740, nearly two years after the first two books (which were published together). Note that Hume highlights only the contrast between impressions and ideas as the key thought to be carried over to book 3.

We also discussed the epigram (Durae semper virtutis amator, Quaere quid est virtus, et posce exemplar honesti.) This is from book 9 of Lucan’s Civil Wars, and is a question addressed to Cato who declines the invitation to consult the oracle about the future course of the Republic. In context, it is clear that Cato himself is the embodiment of virtue. This might suggest that Hume thinks we should investigate the nature of morals with an eye on concrete examples of virtue and vice.

We also discussed briefly the general structure of book 3, and the contrast between it and the first two books. It is divided into three parts. The first very brief part raises general questions about moral distinctions. Part 2 focuses on the so called artificial virtues. And part 3 on the natural virtues.

Part 1 Of virtue and vice in general
Sect. 1 Moral distinctions not deri’d from reason
We noted the unusual structure of section 1. The conclusion of the section already noted in its title seems to have been already reached by ¶7. But a more elaborated discussion of accounts which ground the distinction in reason continues all the way to ¶25.

¶ 1 Hume’s general discussion here is principally concerned with the ways in which arguments can carry conviction, with the suggestion that the problem is less acute in relation to matters practical. One might compare this discussion with the very end of book 1, that’s to say part 4 sect. 7, and with the conclusion of book 3 and the Treatise as a whole. Where the discussion of theoretical and metaphysical matters leave one in a sceptical despair, the study of morals (in the sentimental mode) leads to a perspective from which one’s account of morals is self-vindicated – one feels approval of the oneself as conceived as a result of the system sketched as a whole.

We also compared this first paragraph with the first section of the second Enquiry, which runs differently.

¶2 and ¶3 connect back to books 1 and 2 (impressions and ideas). The question of the association of moral distinctions with impressions or ideas is (curiously) treated as equivalent to whether we distinguish between vice and virtue by reason alone or by sentiment.

¶22 A worry was raised whether the par. was consistent with internalism of Hume. Following Norton we considered the proposal that Hume is really concerned with the extent of our knowledge of moral psychology on his opponent’s view. More specifically that 1. we should have to know that recognizing some distinctions in the world between good and evil would have an equal effect on a divine mind as on the human mind, and 2. that one would have to know a priori the existence of a causal relation between distinctions in the world and the will of some agent.

¶24 and ¶25 invite us to consider certain moral distinctions: that we find some seeming examples of parricide entirely neutral, while are inclined to react to human agents so acting; that we are abhorrent of incest among people, but are indifferent to such behaviour among the beasts. One may suggest that Hume is not only reinforcing the point that distinctions are not drawn by relations among things in the world, but also inducing in us appropriate moral reactions to some of his cases to illustrate for us presence of sentiments in the breast.
\textit{Sect. 2 Moral distinctions deriv'd}

First we noticed that virtue and vice are associated with particular feelings of pleasure and pain. Discussion here drew us back to 2.1.7 and 2.1.8. Given the taxonomy of book 2, the distinction between moral beauty and deformity arises from initial impressions of pleasure and uneasiness which give rise to secondary impressions, i.e. the passions of pride and humility.

In \textit{\textsection\textsection 4-5}, Hume sketches the peculiar advantages of a sentimentalist account – to label a perception a pleasure or pain is not to say something specific about it. There are many different varieties of such pleasure and pain, and so allow that there can be a peculiar pleasure which is moral approbation and uneasiness which is moral disapprobation. But an account of the distinctive pleasures and pains will place it in connexion with the earlier discussion of the passions.

In the context of this in \textit{\textsection 6}, the question (initially flagged in 2.1.7) of whence these sentiments are derived. The argument here that these are not a matter solely of original quality or primary constitution echoes, in part, the discussion of pride in 2.1.3. The remainder of the discussion then introduces the question of the contrast between artificial and natural.
Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* – 28 & 29

14/10/04 & 21/10/04
We discussed Bk 3, part 1, Sect. 1 and 2

*Book 3 Of Morals, Advertisement*
We noted that Book 3 was published in 1740, nearly two years after the first two books (which were published together). Note that Hume highlights only the contrast between impressions and ideas as the key thought to be carried over to book 3. We also discussed the epigram (*Duræ semper virtutis amator, Quaere quid est virtus, et poss exemplar honesti.*) This is from book 9 of Lucan’s *Civil Wars*, and is a question addressed to Cato who declines the invitation to consult Jupiter about the future course of the Republic. In context, it is clear that Cato himself is the embodiment of virtue. This might suggest that Hume thinks we should investigate the nature of morals with an eye on concrete examples of virtue and vice. We also discussed briefly the general structure of book 3, and the contrast between it and the first two books. It is divided into three parts. The first very brief part raises general questions about moral distinctions. Part 2 focuses on the so called artificial virtues. And part 3 on the natural virtues.

*Part 1 Of virtue and vice in general*

*Sect. 1 Moral distinctions not deriv’d from reason*
We noted the unusual structure of section 1. The conclusion of the section already noted in its title seems to have been already reached by ¶7. But a more elaborated discussion of accounts which ground the distinction in reason continues all the way to ¶25.

¶1 Hume’s general discussion here is principally concerned with the ways in which arguments can carry conviction, with the suggestion that the problem is less acute in relation to matters practical. One might compare this discussion with the very end of book 1, that’s to say part 4 sect. 7, and with the conclusion of book 3 and the *Treatise* as a whole. Where the discussion of theoretical and metaphysical matters leave one in a sceptical despair, the study of morals (in the sentimental mode) leads to a perspective from which one’s account of morals is self-vindicated – one feels approval of the oneself as conceived as a result of the system sketched as a whole. We also compared this first paragraph with the first section of the second Enquiry, which runs differently.

¶2 and ¶3 connect back to books 1 and 2 (impressions and ideas). The question of the association of moral distinctions with impressions or ideas is (curiously) treated as equivalent to whether we distinguish between vice and virtue by reason alone or by sentiment.

¶22 A worry was raised whether the par. was consistent with internalism of Hume. Following Norton we considered the proposal that Hume is really concerned with the extent of our knowledge of moral psychology on his opponent’s view. More specifically that:1.) we should have to know that recognizing some distinctions in the world between good and evil would have an equal effect on a divine mind as on the human mind, and 2.) one would have to know a priori the existence of a causal relation between distinctions in the world and the will of some agent.

¶24 and ¶25 invite us to consider certain moral distinctions: that we find some seeming examples of parricide entirely neutral, while are inclined to react to human agents so acting; that we are abhorrent of incest among people, but are indifferent to such behaviour among the beasts. One may suggest that Hume is not only reinforcing the point that distinctions are not drawn by relations among things in the world, but also inducing in us appropriate moral reactions to some of his cases to illustrate for us presence of sentiments in the breast.
\[26\] Up to then we have been notionally considering whether it is reason alone which draws our distinction between good and evil. But now very quickly at beginning of \[26\] we do not discover this distinction through any matter of fact. The first thing is to connect this back to the puzzle in \[3\]: namely why the only relevant impressions to distinguishing virtue and vice would be sentiments. We paused to discuss the sentence:

Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar’d to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind.

There is a question what comparison is being made. Is this in some way a statement of projectivism (that moral distinctions are not in the world, only in our mind, and are projected out into the world)? Against that interpretation we may note two things. First, in relation to colours and taste, for example, Hume does have a discussion of our propensity to associate these with bodies, and the puzzles which consequently arise (viz relish of the fig in 1.4.5 \[13\]), but there is no parallel of this in the discussion of moral distinctions. Secondly book 1 concludes with a sceptical attitude towards advancing specific metaphysical claims about the nature of the world, and seems to suggest that philosophy would be a successful science were it to devote itself to investigating the principles by which the mind operates. So we might instead read these passages as comparing the discoveries rather than underlining the analogy. (So we should not treat the claim that the vice in wilful murder is to be discovered in your own breast; this sentence should not be taken as an expression of moral nihilism or emotivism, rather than emphasizing in what manner the mind considers moral distinctions.)

\[27\] contains the famous observation about is and ought, but there is a question of what connection this has with what has gone on before. Hume doesn’t explicitly say that we can never derive an ought from an is; but only that vulgar theories are appealing to matters from which one cannot deduce an ought. Hence this ‘small attention … subvert all the vulgar systems of morality’ – this takes us back to \[5\]: that moral belongs to the practical, and not the speculative realm of philosophy.

Sect, 2 Moral distinctions deriv’d
First we noticed that virtue and vice are associated with particular feelings of pleasure and pain. Discussion here drew us back to 2.1.7 and 2.1.8. Given the taxonomy of book 2, the distinction between moral beauty and deformity arises from initial impressions of pleasure and uneasiness which give rise to secondary impressions, i.e. the passions of pride and humility.

In \[4-5\], Hume sketches the peculiar advantages of a sentimentalist account – to label a perception a pleasure or pain is not to say something specific about it. There are many different varieties of such pleasure and pain, and so allow that there can be a peculiar pleasure which is moral approbation and uneasiness which is moral disapprobation. But an account of the distinctive pleasures and pains will place it in connexion with the earlier discussion of the passions.

In the context of this in \[6\], the question is posed (initially flagged in 2.1.7) whence these sentiments are derived. The argument here that these are not a matter solely of original quality or primary constitution echoes, in part, the discussion of pride in 2.1.3. The remainder of the discussion then introduces the question of the contrast between artificial and natural.
We discussed Bk 3, part 2, Sect 1 & 2

3.2. Of Justice and Injustice
3.2.1. Justice, Whether a Natural or Artificial Virtue?

General structure of the section. First 10 paragraphs set-up the problem why one should look for a natural motive for justice, given the axiom stated in §7: ‘no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality’. In 10 itself we have private interest, which is found wanting. §§11-12 discuss public interest; §§13-16 the inadequacy of private benevolence to be the answer to the axiom that’s put forward in §7. §17 states that the sense of justice doesn’t arise from nature, but arises artificially. §§18-19 then offer commentary and qualify this claim. So that motives associated with justice must be in accord in general with the natural usual force of the passions. (‘Our sense of duty always follows the common and natural course of our passions.’)

We focused in particular on the question of the circle, that is to say the concern first introduced in §4 and the relation with ‘reasoning in a circle’ in §17

In particular we were concerned with the questions:

1. What is the form of the vicious circle that Hume is concerned with in §4? (or: Is there more than one?)
2. Does Hume resolve the puzzle in relation to justice in 17 by appealing to some distinctive feature of artificial virtues while leaving intact all the principles he has affirmed heretofore in the section? (Or does he tacitly forsake one of the commitments?)

In §4 there seems to be one concern with the circle which derives from the principle expressed in the paragraph’s first sentence, ‘It appears, therefore, that all virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives, and are consider’d merely as signs of those motives.’ We can see this concern as a metaphysical one, focused on the question what the value of an action depends on, requiring an asymmetry between the merit of the motive and the merit of the action inconsistent with a circle. To see this, consider the following reasoning not to be found in Hume. Suppose the agent forms the intention to act in certain manner, F-ly, in order thereby to act justly. We may suppose that in this case, the action has merit only if it is done out of the appropriate motive (namely so to act in order to act justly). But it seems we cannot suppose that the merit of the action rests solely on the motive. Why? There are some ways, F of acting such that to act in that way will never incur merit: if one intends to kill the five thousand and thereby to act justly, one cannot succeed in this intention – the act of the killing the five thousand is not just. So, for the account to be plausible, there would have to be some suitable restriction on the specification of the way of acting so as thereby to act justly. If we simply substitute ‘act justly’ for F then we have not specified an intention on which the agent can act – for there is no particular way of acting which will count as acting justly as such. But if we allow some substitutions for F and not others, then it looks like the merit inherited from the motivation for the particular action will turn on the kind of act it is that the agent intends to do, contrary to the assumption of the first sentence.

But this is not the only concern with circles in §4 or in §17. In §4, Hume talks of ‘the first motive’ and of seemingly a temporal order: ‘Before we can have such a regard, the action must be really virtuous; and this virtue must be deriv’d from some virtuous motive’. There must be something about so acting which attracts an agent to act, but in turn the merit of the action would have derived from the subject’s so being attracted, hence we need a way of specifying what is attractive for an agent in first so acting. Seeing this as a problem of genealogy (how does just activity get started) dovetails nicely with the discussion in §17 and the way in which the account of artificial virtues might provide a way out: Hume talks of otherwise a need for nature to have
‘establish’d a sophistry’, that is, we might suppose, to have reasoned men speciously into pursuing forms of action for which they have no proper motive. The answer, in turn, to this which would be provided by artificial virtues is that men can be led to act in certain ways ‘from education, and human conventions’: the account of justice will in part be an account of how the practices of acting justly can get off the ground (see sec. 2).

This leaves our second question. The requirement that merit derive from motive (i.e. the metaphysical concern) does not appear to have been waived in discussion. ¶ 17 starts with the affirmation that no appropriate motive is to be found: ‘we have naturally no real or universal motive for observing the laws of equity, but the very equity and merit of that observation…’ So, one might surmise that Hume affirms the relevant principles only in a restricted form, as applying only to natural virtues. In support of this, one might press (as MEK did) that ¶ 4 starts with the qualification, ‘It appears, therefore…’ Against this solution, though, we noted i.) the following sentence does not treat the claim of the preceding sentence as merely that already in ¶ 2 it is claimed, ‘the external performance has no merit… these actions are still consider’d as signs; and the ultimate object of our praise and approbation is the motive, that produc’d them.’; in addition in ¶ 7, the relevant principle seems to be affirmed and without any qualification: ‘no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality’.

So it is not clear how the claims about artificial virtues can be reconciled with the official statements of principle earlier in the chapter. One additional element is to consider a contrast between the kinds of acts which are naturally virtuous and those which are artificially so. What makes an action a benevolent one is none other than the kind of motive from which it is done – namely that the agent has acted out of kindness. But there is no naturally given of actions into those which are just and those which are not (or so Hume will have us suppose) – an action will count as just simply in accordance with the human conventions which govern the agent’s actions. In this case, then, if the distinction between ways of acting F-ly such that one can succeed in so intending to be just and ways in which one can’t, the further distinction does not flow either from something proper to the actions themselves (mere external signs) nor from any further motive with which one could act in that way, but rather that the conventions determine that this is the way of being just. Hence a circle here would not be vicious as in the above discussion.

(Structure of section 2 will be given with summary of that section.)

25/11/04
Seminar on David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* – 33, 34 & 35

25/11/04, 2/12/04 & 16/12/04
We discussed Bk 3, part 2, Sect 2

3.2.2. Of the origin of justice and property

Structure of Section 2
As Hume advertises, the section divides into two parts: 1. the manner in which rules of justice arise in society, and 2. the motives we have for being just, and why we treat justice as a virtue.

− ¶¶2 - 7 give a fairly conventional description of the inconveniences of human life which require there to be social institutions. (Note the three inconveniences of ¶3.)
− ¶¶8 - 11 frame Hume’s distinctive problem about the difficulty of instituting justice, and the role of convention in solving this.
− ¶¶12 - 17 discuss how, under these circumstances justice is possible, given the motivations of men, and contrast the motivations of justice with both the state of nature and the Golden Age.
− ¶18 sums it up
  ‘tis only from the selfishness and conf’d generosity of man, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin.
− ¶¶19 - 22 underline the claim made in ¶18
− ¶¶ 22 – 27 are devoted to the second question. ¶23 reminds us of the initial problem from 3.2.1.; ¶24 introduces sympathy with public interest as playing a role in moral approbation of justice; ¶25 criticizes the cynical position (possibly that of Mandeville) that moral terms of approbation are attached to institution as an artifice of politicians, relating the criticism to the problem originally introduced in ¶8; ¶26 emphasizes the role of private upbringing in reinforcing public morals; ¶27 the role of our concern with reputation or esteem.
− ¶28 concludes the section, and restricts the consequence of the explanation.

¶7 We noted a parallel with Rousseau in the suggestion that the development of society exacerbates the problems which justice must solve.

¶8 introduces Hume’s distinctive problem. The fundamental question of how men can be just is not a motivational problem, but rather one familiar from Book 1 of the *Treatise*: how can men even have the idea of justice. We are told that the natural virtues involve a partiality and unequal affection which does not match what is required in the idea of justice.

¶9 tells us immediately that the solution for this problem is artifice and convention, and in this paragraph convention is contrasted with passion in that convention can restrain the partial and contradictory motions of the natural passions.

¶10 seemingly presents a problem for us. Given the first sentence of ¶11, the manner in which conventions provide for the idea of justice must be settled between ¶¶ 9 and 10, but at first sight ¶10 does not seem to provide for this. Rather, it explains how men can enter into conventions. But to discern what is going on here we need to proceed slowly.

In the first two sentences Hume denies that convention is in the form of a promise, because promises themselves derive from convention. More specifically, we might suggest that the idea of a promise already possesses the features which Hume suggests in ¶8 we need to have an explanation of to account for justice. In the following sentences Hume sketches how the convention of property and justice might come about. He talks first of a ‘general sense of common interest’, and then a ‘common sense of interest’. Each person seems to have a conditional interest to leave property to others, as long as they do likewise for them. Now we have a key sentence:
When this common sense of interest is mutually express’d, and is known to both, it produces a suitable resolution and behaviour.

The first question about this sentence is: what’s meant by ‘suitable resolution’. It could just mean a solution to the coordination problem, thereby presupposing no particular psychological state; or it could mean a state of mind of resolving or intending, or committing to behaviour in a certain way. Read the later way, it seems to prefigure ¶22, when Hume writes:

Every member of society is sensible of this interest: Every one expresses this sense to his fellows, along with the resolution he has taken of squaring his actions by it, on condition that others will do the same.

Even if the sentence does not force the second reading, there is a further consideration in its favour: the problem posed in ¶8 is to find the materials for the idea of justice, which idea must have impartiality and equal affection across all it covers. Assuming that ideas still need corresponding impressions, there must be a suitable impression which can be the source of this idea. Moreover, because we are here in the practical sphere, the relevant impression must be a motivation. Now the resolution or the commitment to behave in a certain way conditional on others so behaving has the requisite form. The point of emphasizing here that each man acts out of interest (rather than confined generosity, which otherwise gets highlighted) is that this makes clear that the commitment each enters into in relation to others is entirely consequent on the conditional commitment, and hence can be entirely uniform and universal. So stated, Hume’s position seems to require that for a convention to be present there must be a suitable impression in each man’s mind, but in fact Hume as much wants to give a genealogy of how one can come so to be in a convention where the availability of such an impression need not be presupposed at the outset. So immediately after this passage Hume gives the example of the oarsmen, and stresses beyond it that the rules of property arise gradually and only acquire force by slow progression and repeated experience of their benefit. Moreover, the same gradual development is responsible for shared language and for the development of coinage. So Hume seems to suggest a story on which, through the possibility of coordinated behaviour in mutual interest and a gradual sensitivity to these facts, men can come to have the commitment so to act, which commitment now has the content required of an impression of justice, and hence, as the first sentence of ¶11 claims, ‘the ideas of justice and injustice; as also those of property, rights and obligation’ immediately arise.

On this reading the purpose of ¶10 and the discussion of the oarsmen is focussed on the genesis of an appropriate impression and idea of justice. It is not focussed on the question of how men can be motivated to be just. If one reads the discussion in the second of these two ways (as, for example, Gauthier may be minded) one faces an acute problem of interpretation. Throughout Book 3, Hume emphasizes that men are not, as Hobbists take men to be, and purely selfish in their actions. Even in this very section, he suggests that their motives are not only selfish, but include concerns for those close to one (‘confined generosity’). An account of justice must not look for fundamental motivations for justice which are incompatible with these other motivations. This leads to two consequences. First, Hume can be much closer to the appearances when he describes the motivations men have: the need to claim that either all men are really selfish, or that there is a selfish motive in all other-directed action, is unnecessary on Hume’s reading. Second, it is not only the case that we have an alternative account of what the story of convention is doing in Hume’s story, but also that we could not read this as solving the motivational problem through providing a sufficient context for action in, say, an iterated prisoner’s dilemma. For on that reading an agent’s reasons to be just would not consort with the other motivations they have, which arise from the natural virtues that Hume hypothesizes, and whose role Hume does not explain through the appeal to convention.