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HUME'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

THESIS APPROVED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

BY

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PREFACE

EVERYONE who has studied Hume's philosophy, and especially those who have written books about it, will agree that in spite of everything that has already been written on the interpretation and significance of his doctrines there still remains much to be investigated

This book is concerned only with Hume's views about those problems which are epistemological in the sense in which I have described that word in Chapter I Its object is to help the student who finds himself, after reading the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, still not at all clear what it is all about, to correlate Hume's different remarks about these problems It is not intended to be in any sense a substitute for reading Hume himself, in fact I doubt if it will be even intelligible to anyone who has not already read Hume's own works

I believe that the study of philosophy should be regarded as the study of certain problems and not as the study of particular philosophers or of particular philosophical works Accordingly I have tried to discuss Hume's views in such a way that anyone who is familiar with the work of those who preceded him and who follow him will be able to judge how they are related to the process of development of the problems they concern In so doing some personal interpretation is inevitable, and I must confess that in attempting to understand Hume I have come to disagree strongly with the view of his early critics, which is still widely current, that Hume has nothing of importance to contribute to philosophy and that his own claim to fame as a philosopher lies in the fact that he developed the

false premisses of his predecessors to their logical conclusions It seems to me that on the contrary Hume was the first to raise some of the problems about which philosophers are still puzzling to-day

This indication of my interpretation of Hume's epistemology will show more clearly than any acknowledgement could how much I have learnt from those philosophers who have taken up Hume's problems and have facilitated the interpretation of his theories by their own developments of them I am grateful to these philosophers and to those whom I have mentioned by name and from whom I have quoted, for teaching me everything that has made the writing of this book possible I can never adequately thank Professor Stebbing, who has read the whole work in manuscript, has discussed each section with me in detail and has saved me from making many blunders even worse than those that still remain

A paper dealing with the problems discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 was read to the Aristotelian Society in May 1935 I wish to thank the committee of the society for permission to reprint the sections which reappear verbatim and the members of the society who took part in the discussion following the paper for the criticisms which led me to substitute what I hope are less inaccurate treatments of the same subjects for the remainder C M

LONDON,
February 1937

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II *Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison on Epistemology* — Dawes Hicks holds that epistemology is concerned with the process of knowing in relation to what is known and especially with the validity of our knowledge of an external world Pringle-Pattison thinks that "epistemology" has sometimes been used for the enquiry into what can be known to be certainly true and sometimes for an investigation of all forms of cognition Both these enquiries might be called a theory of knowledge, but it is important to recognise that "knowledge" may be used in a strict and narrow sense for that form of cognition which yields certainty, and it may be used in a wide sense for all forms of cognition Philosophers in the past have been inclined to assume that only knowledge in the strict sense is worthy of investigation, but since, from the time of Hume onwards, problems about other forms of cognition have been recognized to be important, Dawes Hicks' and Pringle-Pattison's definition of epistemology seems to be more satisfactory than a definition which confines it to a study of knowledge in the strict sense

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iii *The Epistemological Interest shown in the* Treatise — Since Hume gives no account of epistemology we can only

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judge whether he was concerned with that subject by trying to discover whether his attitude to the problems he raised should be called epistemological in the sense considered The discussion of impressions and ideas is often thought to be a psychological theory Although Hume confused psychological, metaphysical and epistemological statements, the use he makes of this theory, and the revised discussion of it in the *Enquiry*, suggest that it should be treated as a contribution to epistemology Hume also explicitly maintains that his principles will produce a total revolution in philosophy, so that we shall probably misrepresent him if we take his views to be concerned with metaphysics or psychology in the accepted senses

iv *The Epistemological Interest shown in the* Enquiry — In the *Enquiry* Hume clearly distinguishes certain fundamentally different kinds of objects of mind This is an epistemological procedure Moreover, Hume explicitly says that his intention is to investigate the differences between these objects, and that the sole purpose of his investigation is to produce an account of the nature and relations of such objects

v *Conclusion* —Hume is open to criticism in that he suggests that some of his terms are ultimate and indefinable, and then uses them to refer to things which are clearly analysable, he says that the only objects of mind are perceptions and then proceeds to discuss others, he says that he is concerned with the activities of the mind and proceeds to discuss the mind in relation to its objects, and he uses "object" to refer both to something independent of and external to mind and to something which is certainly not independent of mind and is not known to be external to mind In examining Hume's account of the different activities of mind in relation to their objects, I shall substitute the word "accusative" for the word "object" when it is used in the second sense

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ii *Sensations of the First Kind* —Sensations are said to be mental, compleat in themselves, and unanalysable Sensations having the last two characteristics are only apprehended indirectly by means of a concept Thus the account of the characteristics of sensations of the first kind cannot be accepted as an account of what we perceive, and must be regarded as useful for epistemology in that it enables us to give a clear account of sensations of the second kind

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ii *Simple Impressions of Sensation* —Hume admits three different kinds of simple impressions, but as he concentrates on sensations it seems unnecessary to discuss the others in detail He fails to distinguish simple impressions from pure sensations, and so his account of the former is inadequate From his use of the impressions it is clear that we must be aware of them, whereas we are not aware of sensations as such A simple impression is a complex having a sensation as one element The complexity seems somehow due to past experience and involves either a modification of the sensation, or, if there are new distinct elements, then they are different in kind from sensations It is important to recognize that these impressions differ in degree of complexity and of intensity and determinacy "Sensation" is sometimes used for a physiological occurrence It is not possible to distinguish in experience where such sensation ends and perception begins This should not disturb the scientist who is concerned to give an account of the differences

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iii *The Nature of the Simplicity of Perceptions* —A strict definition of simplicity yields no information, and to get knowledge it is necessary to try to give an account of an element which will fulfil the strict definition for the purposes of a certain particular enquiry The description of the particular simple element will always be partly empirical in character and therefore liable to error Had Hume realized that the 'simplicity' of any element is always relative to a particular enquiry, he would probably have been able to avoid many of his confusions

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difference can be expressed by saying that we believe that impressions are external and that ideas are not Other characteristics, often cited as the differentiating characteristics of impressions, are not in themselves sufficient to justify the distinction, though they may influence our belief, either rightly or wrongly This interpretation of Hume's distinction enables us to see what Hume means by saying that impressions are compleat in themselves, and ideas represent impressions It also enables us to see that the important differences between impressions and ideas can only be expressed in terms of our apprehension, and therefore that there is no important difference between perceptions which are not apprehended as external or as of something external

Criticisms of these views appear to be based on a failure to understand Hume's confusion between the three senses of "perception", and on the assumption that to say that an idea represents an impression necessarily implies that if the idea is apprehended it is apprehended as representative of the impression it represents The view that this theory is incompatible with his scepticism seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the scepticism

ii *The One Exception* — The so called exception does not seem to be an exception at all Hume supposed it was because he argued that we could perceive the missing colour and assumed that "perception" in this usage was equivalent to "imagination" In fact "perception" here names a very complex non-perceptual accusative and so is not an exception to the perception rule If in fact the missing colour were imaged Hume ought to alter the general rule

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perceptions consist of two or more simple perceptions united by a real connection, that apprehension of a complex perception necessarily involves apprehension of the relating element and that apprehension of that element must be through perception There seems no good reason for accepting these assumptions, and so no reason for rejecting the principles

It seems probable that the abstraction of simple perceptions from complex perceptions, of sensations from simple perceptions, and of characteristics of sensations involve processes which differ from each other in important respects, but Hume writes as though there is only one problem

II *Complex Perceptions* —As an epistemologist Hume is concerned with the problem of the analysis of complexes which are indisputably given, not with the problem of the construction of complexes out of simples He believes that what is taken to be an object is a complex impression What is taken to be an object appears, however, to be a complex both of simple impressions and of ideas All Hume should mean by "a complex impression" is a collection of simple impressions apprehended as a unity, and by "a complex idea" a collection of simple ideas apprehended as a unity If or when we are aware of these complexes it is at a later stage of psychological development than awareness of objects The fact that collections of simple perceptions are apprehended as complex perceptions can only be explained, in Hume's philosophy, in terms of apprehension of objects The fact that two or more simples are apprehended as a unity is due to an ultimate character of the way in which we apprehend, and anything so apprehended is called by Hume an individual Hume sometimes uses "particular" for "individual" and sometimes in opposition to "general" As a result he assumes that what is individual cannot be general This does not follow from his argument

III *The Relation of Objects to Complex Perceptions* —Hume believed that perceptions and objects are not distinguished by the vulgar He does not make clear what the common-sense object is In order to understand his arguments it seems desirable to distinguish between objects of the first kind, which, like perceptions, are perishing, and objects of the second kind, which, unlike perceptions, are persistent

IV *Impression-Objects of the First Kind* —Although Hume says we take our perceptions to be our objects, his treatment of objects and our own experience suggest that the fact that an object is external and a perception is not, is not the only differentiating characteristic The fact that the complex perceptions he names are complexes of both impressions and ideas suggests that there are further problems An object of the first kind seems to include a complex of impressions and ideas

apprehended as 'out there' It does not seem to involve apprehension of persistence although it may involve some kind of reference to the future Examination also suggests that some ideas which are constituents of objects are not perception ideas but general ideas or concepts, and that the whole problem of the analysis of objects is very much more complex than Hume admits The apprehension of one particular collection of perceptions as a unity rather than another is due to a characteristic of the way we apprehend which we cannot explain, the nature of the complex is, however, modified by experience Hume assumes that the vulgar in apprehending objects apprehend non-spatial qualities as having place I suggest that this view implies that the plain man's objects have as constituents concepts which are only revealed by philosophical analysis

v *Impression-Objects of the Second Kind* —If a common-sense thing is regarded as persistent it will require a different analysis from the analysis appropriate to objects of the first kind The impressions which are elements in objects of the first and of the second kind seem to stand in different relations to the two complexes This is partly explicable in terms of the fact that in one case some reference to time is required and in the other case it is not The problem, 'What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?' is, for Hume, an epistemological problem He maintains that perceptions are apprehended as a persistent unity when they have a quality of coherence This view seems to be inconsistent with the view that the apprehension of a collection of perceptions as a unity is due to a fundamental character of our way of apprehending If we accept the latter view the former is not necessary to explain the independence of objects It might be argued that coherence is supposed to explain objects as the false philosophy sees them, on the other hand, since Hume repudiates this philosophy, it is improbable that he meant to discuss such objects Nevertheless, his argument seems to involve a definite inconsistency owing to his failure to distinguish objects of the first kind and objects of the second kind Objects of the second kind cannot be merely perceptions apprehended as distinct, and I suggest that although Hume is probably right in thinking the analysis of the accusative does not involve reference to anything like his philosopher's object, he has not shown how it should be analysed

vi *Idea-Objects* —Hume leaves the relationship of impression-objects to idea-objects to be deduced from the relationship of impressions to ideas This distinction is most easily understood by considering the relationship of ideas of memory to ideas of imagination Since Hume argues that there is no simple idea not preceded by a corresponding simple impression, there must be a difference even between a simple idea of

memory and a simple idea of imagination The difficulties in Hume's account of memory seem to arise from the fact that he has two incompatible views about the nature of the memory accusative, one that the differentiating characteristic is the feeling of 'force and vivacity' which we have already considered, the other, that it is a different and specific feeling He has not realized that he has two views, and his confusion is due to the fact that he believes that it is always possible to substitute "perception" for "object" The difference between ideas of memory and ideas of imagination lies in a different kind of feeling which Hume calls 'force and vivacity' This suggests that the distinction is to be drawn in terms of externality Certain passages, however, show that Hume does not always use "liveliness" in this sense, and that we must regard it as expressing the fact that some ideas are apprehended in a certain way which we may describe for short by saying that we have a 'feeling of pastness' No ontological or psychological problem as to whether the original impression can enter the present situation arises for Hume, who is concerned only with what is now present to me Liveliness, in this sense, is a sufficient differentiating characteristic of a memory perception There are, however, other observable differences between memory and imagination ideas Firstly, complex memory images all represent complex impressions and complex imagination images do not Secondly, there is usually a difference of force and vivacity in the literal sense

Hume seems to have recognized that we can distinguish idea-perceptions from idea-objects, but he has not himself sufficiently distinguished them to give a clear account of either The difference between ideas of memory and of imagination is in a certain feeling of vivacity which may mean a feeling of externality or a feeling of pastness The latter seems the more satisfactory interpretation Complex imagination ideas are not merely not apprehended as past, but are probably not even copies of another complex, their complexity is due to the faculty of imagination

Hume only considers the fundamental impression and idea element in impression-objects and idea-objects respectively, and does not throw any further light on the nature of the whole complex, idea-object It is clear, however, that there are important problems which he does not raise concerning the other elements in the complex We agree to accept an object of the first kind with an idea element, which resembles even though it does not exactly represent the impression element in an object of the first kind we have experienced in the past, as a memory because we believe there is an object of the second kind to which many different objects of the first kind stand in the same kind of relation Which particular elements of the

original are represented in the copy depends upon the context of the two experiences

Hume has very little to say about imagination-objects There seems no reason to suppose that the analysis of this accusative differs from the analysis of the memory-object except in the one fundamental respect, namely that it is not apprehended as external nor with a feeling of pastness

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1 *Hume's Confusion of Concepts with Perceptions* —Hume is not concerned to deny that there are abstract ideas but to show what kind of ideas they are The *Treatise* suggests at first that all ideas are images There are no abstract or general images Nevertheless, Hume does admit abstract ideas and non-image ideas As a result of his beliefs that there is no abstract image and that all ideas are images Hume fails to give an analysis of the concept-accusative He maintains that some images give rise to a custom, but his use of this explanation implies a concept-accusative The assumption that there is such an accusative enables us to understand the circumstances which Hume describes as extraordinary, and to see that his account of them shows how a particular image is related to a general idea This interpretation is based on the assumption (1) that there are three different problems relating to the one topic, and that some light on the epistemological problem can be derived from statements of Hume's which seem to relate to the psychological problem, (2) that epistemology is incomplete without a concept-accusative—the defects in Hume's alternative view also show the need for a concept-accusative, (3) the image instance of a concept is in no sense part of the concept Some of Hume's inconsistencies with regard to the nature of the relation of the idea to the impression show that some other relation is required in the case of non-image ideas

11 *Determinateness and Distinctness and Separateness* — "Abstract", "general" and "universal" are used by Hume to describe concepts in opposition to "particular" which characterizes perceptions If we recognize that a concept is not a collection of perceptions in any sense, then we must admit that these words express the fundamental difference between the two types of accusative "Individual" in Hume's philosophy seems to be equivalent to "particular" "To have a determinate quality" seems to mean "to have a precise degree of a quality" The words "determinate" and "indeterminate" apply to perceptions, are used derivatively in connection with objects, and have no application to concepts Hume's usage is inconsistent owing to his confusion of concepts and perceptions To say

that two perceptions are distinguishable or separable is to say that we can perceive them to be different, thus only simple perceptions can have this quality The 'distinction of reason', as Hume recognizes, does not yield any accusative which is distinct in this sense What is apprehended is a concept which is typically different from a perception

III *Infinite Divisibility* —Hume points out that there is no infinitely small image, and that when we talk about the infinitely small we do experience an image having a certain magnitude He did not see, however, that what requires to be analysed is not the image but the accusative the phrase expresses He also confuses accusatives and physical things in this connection

IV *Space* —Hume is concerned with space only as an accusative, but he confuses the concept with the image instance of it and tries, without success, to show that the extended thing image can be regarded as identical with the concept *extension* He does show, however, that apprehension of the concept *extension* is usually simultaneous with apprehension of an extended thing image, and that as a matter of psychological fact the apprehension of the concept is subsequent to apprehension of image instances of it Space or extension which characterizes objects must be distinguished from the concept of a particular way of appearing to mind which Hume sometimes calls "distance" He shows first that there is no image *empty space* In accordance with his principles of philosophizing he admits nevertheless that something must be apprehended when we talk about space, and he suggests that it is a relation, distance This concept is apprehended as the result of perceptual experiences of objects having the relation to each other

V *Time* —Hume's discussion of time relates to the accusative *time* Unfortunately he is primarily concerned with the image instances of the concept and throws very little light on the concept itself He first shows that there is no image *time*, but his attempt to provide an alternative explanation is useless unless we assume a concept Just as the concept *space* is in fact preceded by perceptual apprehension so perceptual apprehension is necessary for the concept *time* *Time*, however, cannot be derived from apprehension of any particular sense impression, it is the *manner* in which impressions appear Hume did not realize that "time" is used in many different senses, and he seems sometimes to think of the concept *time* as an image of a collection of filled moments of time, and sometimes to think of the concept *time* as the *manner* of the appearance of impressions This confusion implies a distinction between two concepts The first might be called "duration", which is not, as Hume supposed, an image, but a concept

which can only be indicated as that which perceptions or events occupy The second, for which we may retain the word "time", is indicated by Hume's assertion that it is the *manner* in which perceptions appear Although it would be consistent with Hume's position to admit that there are other *time* concepts, he does not discuss them except in so far as his confusion implies a further concept which can only be accounted for in terms of what is distinct from accusatives

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1 *Perceptions and Propositions* —Although Hume gives no clear statement of his position on this point he admits, in the course of his discussion, that from the point of view of epistemology each object of the mind, *i e* each accusative, is a unity, and in that respect is similar to every other accusative Nevertheless, he seems to assume that everyone will recognize that accusatives differ from each other in important respects, and that only propositions, and not perceptions, can be considered as possible accusatives of knowing

11 *The General Nature of Hume's Scepticism* —It is of the utmost importance to distinguish two totally different theories, scepticism with regard to the senses, and scepticism with regard to reason, frequently referred to as 'Hume's scepticism' Each of these forms of scepticism is an epistemological theory giving an account of certain familiar experiences and everyday statements with a view to the analysis of the accusative involved As such they are of purely philosophical interest, and in no way either confirm or refute any of the views we may accept as plain men

111 *Scepticism with Regard to the Senses* —In Hume's philosophy the word "certain" had a wider application than the word "knowledge" His scepticism with regard to the senses consists in the assertion that apprehension of perceptions is certain and apprehension of objects is not Thus it is not a theory about knowledge at all, but a theory about the certainty and fallibility of perceptual accusatives Even this theory leads to no drastic practical consequences, since all that is necessary for everyday life is belief in the existence of objects, and not certainty of their existence

IV *Intuitive Knowledge or Knowledge of Particular Proposition Accusatives* —The important problem raised by Hume's discussion of knowledge is the possibility of knowledge of propositions which do not have objects as their constituents since, as we have already seen, those which have objects cannot be certain and therefore cannot be known Unfortunately Hume himself never succeeded in distinguishing

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perception-propositions and object-propositions, with the result that his discussion of this problem is rather confused Moreover, he also failed to distinguish particular and general propositions It is clear, nevertheless, that Hume wanted to maintain that all particular perceptual propositions, that is to say all propositions in which the relata are perceptions and in which the relations and the relata are simultaneously apprehended, are known His own doubts about some such propositions seem to be due to his failure to distinguish them from object-propositions Although such 'intuited' propositions are known, and therefore certain, we sometimes appear to be mistaken in our intuitions This is due to the fact that even if we do not make any assumptions about objects we frequently behave as if we intuited, or assume we have intuited, a proposition which is in fact only based on the intuition Assumptions of this kind, however, do not lead to any important consequences for epistemology and are chiefly of practical interest

It should also be noted that many of Hume's 'mathematical' propositions are not mathematical in the more usual sense of the word, they resemble the other intuitive propositions in all important respects

v *The Accusatives of Reasoning and Demonstration and Scepticism with Regard to Reason* —There is a further class of accusatives of knowledge which are typically different from intuitions—accusatives of reasoning or accusatives of demonstration In the *Enquiry* Hume refers to these accusatives as 'relations of ideas' These relations of ideas must, however, be clearly distinguished from the relations of ideas in the *Treatise* Although Hume himself does not state in what the difference consists, it appears from his treatment of the problem to lie in the fact that in the *Treatise* the terms of the relations of ideas are perceptions, whereas the terms related in the relations of ideas in the *Enquiry* are concepts Since the words which express concepts can be defined, propositions having concepts as constituents can be known, Hume assumes that only propositions of quantity and number belong to this class, but there seems no reason why there should not be relations of concepts other than quantity and number concepts which can also be known

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1 *Introduction The Different Kinds of Accusatives of Believing* —There are three kinds of accusatives of believing (1) All objects, *i e* all perceptions apprehended as existing externally to and independently of the observers, are beliefs (2) Proposition accusatives which are not relations of ideas are

matters of fact Matters of fact which concern present impressions or *memory* ideas are known All other matters of fact are believed (3) All propositions having objects as constituents are accusatives of believing The distinction between these different kinds of believing implies two different uses of "belief" "Belief" is used for that act of mind by which we attribute a distinct and independent existence to pure perceptions In so doing we go beyond the evidence of the senses Belief is also used for that act of mind by which we apprehend propositions *relating to the future which are not necessarily object-propositions* In so doing we go beyond the senses in another sense In answer to the question which is of most importance to him in relation to this subject, Hume maintains that no matter of fact can be known because the contrary of any matter of fact is still possible He therefore asks if there is any justification for our feeling of assurance about them Since all such inference is founded on the relation of cause and effect the answer to the question will be found in the analysis of the causal relation

II *The Psychological Problems concerning Believing* — Hume's problem of distinguishing accusatives of knowing and accusatives of believing is of importance only for epistemology and involves a highly technical use of the word "belief" "Belief" is generally used to name our attitude to those propositions within belief in Hume's wide sense with regard to which we feel some doubt Hume does not clearly distinguish these two senses of "belief" The state of mind in believing in the wide sense is to be distinguished from the state of mind in knowing, the only other state possible in relation to these ideas, by the fact that it is possible for us to think otherwise in belief whereas in knowledge we are necessarily determined to think as we do Hume's account of the difference between belief in the narrow sense, and disbelief, is less clear He seems not to have distinguished the feeling of the ideas to the mind and the feeling of the mind All that we seem able to say in the end is that there is a recognizable difference between accusatives of believing and accusatives of disbelieving, that the difference cannot be described or defined, but that it is quite definitely not a difference in idea Corresponding to this difference in accusatives there is also a difference in feeling, which we are equally unable to explain or define Admitting the difference between belief and disbelief, Hume asks why some propositions are believed and others disbelieved In the case of the first kind of accusative of belief, belief in objects, it is due to a fundamental characteristic of all human minds The apprehension of the object as the kind of thing it is, is, however, partly due to past experience Belief in an idea object or in a present object-proposition is to be explained in similar terms Beliefs about the future, that is to say beliefs of the second kind, are

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due to custom or habit, a principle of human nature which everyone knows well Belief of the third kind, in object-propositions relating to the future, is the result of a combination of these two factors

III *The Causal Relation* —Hume examines the causal relation to discover whether there is any justification for belief which goes beyond the evidence of the senses because causation alone produces such belief He professes to be concerned with the plain man's notion of cause, though he sometimes confuses this with the scientific notion This examination shows that causal predictions are based on the observation of constant conjunction No observation of what has happened in the past is evidence for any future event It follows there is no evidence which justifies any feeling of assurance or certainty about causal propositions Scientists try to get over this difficulty by maintaining that there is a necessary connection between events Hume maintains, however, that this necessary connection cannot be discovered

IV *Scepticism Again* —Scepticism with regard to reason consists in the assertion that those propositions which I have called accusatives of believing cannot be known Hume sometimes writes, however, as if the theory that I cannot be certain about beliefs is scepticism This theory may have some bearing on everyday life even though, as we see clearly, the epistemological theory will not have Hume maintains that although it shows that we cannot be sure that beliefs will turn out to be true, nevertheless it would be ridiculous not to continue to behave as though they will There is one further kind of scepticism, popular scepticism, which arises from the fact that our faculties are fallible This leads to a discussion of what we mean by saying that one event is more probable than another and of what conditions lead us to make such a judgement This discussion shows that as plain men we must admit some propositions as proofs, even though we cannot know them Other probabilities still admit of doubt The assertion that one event is more probable than another means, from the point of view of the plain man, 'I feel greater assurance about it', and from the point of view of the philosopher, 'it has been more frequently observed'

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HUME'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

THE very first steps in the study of philosophy are sufficient to show that the plain man's question "What is philosophy?" is not easily answered A wider knowledge of the subject only reveals more clearly the difficulty of giving any short account which would be adequate to describe all the very different work which has been done on the subject or which would be acceptable to more than a few philosophers Plain men who are anxious to know more about the subject are usually perplexed to find that there is no one short statement which would be universally accepted as an accurate definition of "philosophy" Most philosophers, on the other hand, are more concerned with certain problems which they regard as philosophical problems than with the nature of philosophy Although they cannot state precisely what philosophy is they feel assured that such problems are philosophical and that other men who have discussed them may be truly called philosophers It seems to follow that the history of philosophy should be the history of the development of these problems If this is so any discussion of the work of a philosopher should be concerned to show the part he played in the development of the particular problems he discussed If the philosopher in question expresses his views in highly technical language it will, of course, first be necessary to attempt to interpret them in language sufficiently simple to be understood by everyone Hume's philosophy is expounded in such simple terms that there is nothing to be gained by restating his arguments except in so far as this is necessary to remove

verbal inconsistencies or to reveal contradictions The serious difficulties, in his case, arise from the fact that he did not clearly formulate his problems It is often difficult to discover his views even on problems in which he was obviously interested, simply because they are confused with views on other problems which although related are nevertheless distinct As a result, although we may find many philosophers anxious to maintain that the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* are valuable contributions to philosophy, it is very difficult to find any stating clearly in what this greatness consists In the following chapters I shall examine the views Hume expresses on certain philosophical topics, and attempt to show to what particular problems these views relate in the hope of discovering whether any of them has been of particular significance in the development of the problems in question

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1
THE NATURE OF EPISTEMOLOGY

1 *Introduction*

THERE seems to be fairly general agreement among philosophers that Hume was an epistemologist This is evident from the fact that most discussions of epistemology or criticisms of epistemologists involve some reference to Hume, and from the fact that those who are more interested in interpreting Hume's writings than in epistemology, even though they may offer very different interpretations, are nevertheless ready to admit that he is an epistemologist The following discussion is concerned with Hume's epistemology and not with his other views which although interesting are not epistemological, except in so far as it is necessary to consider them in order to distinguish them from those which are epistemological In Part Two I hope to make clear which epistemological problems Hume raised and the nature and extent of his contribution to their solution It is first necessary, however, to examine the notion of epistemology in order to understand the precise nature of that study and then, in the light of our conclusions, to give some justification for the assertion that Hume can be said to have made a contribution to epistemology

A preliminary survey of the various studies of so-called epistemological questions and of the examinations of the nature of epistemology and the doctrines

of epistemologists shows that unfortunately criticisms of the theory are more numerous than precise statements of its nature or aims It is not surprising, therefore, that there seem to be various different conceptions of the theory current in philosophical literature The only method of determining if there is any one precise sense of the word "epistemology",[1] which is adequate for all philosophical discussion, or if we require more than one sense to allow for these different usages, is by an examination of the views expressed by some of the philosophers who have written on this subject I propose, therefore, to begin by examining two positive statements of the nature of epistemology by Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison, and in the light of these statements to proceed to the views which are in part explicitly stated and in part implied by Marvin and by Laird

II *Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison on Epistemology*

Professor Dawes Hicks defines epistemology as 'that branch of philosophy which has for its province the investigation of the nature and structure of knowledge as such, with a view to determine the condition of its possibility, and the significance, worth and validity of its contents as representing the nature and relations of the real' [2] He explains that the word epistemology was first used in Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysics*, 1854 Ferrier here makes a sharp distinction between epistemology, the doctrine or theory of knowing, and ontology, the science of that which truly is, and contends that although psychologically the latter is prior, logically the former is, since we cannot know what is until we have answered the question, 'What is the

[1] Single inverted commas are used throughout as a sign of a quotation Double inverted commas are used to indicate that the word, and not what is expressed by that word, is referred to

[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Theory of Knowledge

meaning of "to know"?' Dawes Hicks proceeds to argue that the notion of knowledge seems to imply a distinction between an inner or mental process of knowing and an outer world of fact to which the act refers, and that it is in knowing that the two distinguishable aspects are brought together in a certain unity The result of this act of knowing is the acquisition of truth These distinctions show that there are three different fields of research· investigation of the structure of the subjective process called knowing is the field of psychology, of the specific character of the objects of the external world, is the field of the natural sciences, and of the nature of truth as distinct from the mind and the facts it is "about" is the field of the theory of knowledge and logic Finally he shows how the nature of epistemology can be made clear by distinguishing it from psychology with which it is obviously liable to be confused Psychology is concerned with the act of mind as a psychical event and has no special interest in what is apprehended, whereas epistemology is primarily concerned with the problem how an act of mind can give knowledge of the external world and under what conditions such an act truly represents the world

Pringle-Pattison gives two definitions,[1] the first that epistemology is the theory of the origin, nature and limits of knowledge, the second that it is 'the systematic analysis of the conceptions employed by ordinary and scientific thought in interpreting the world and including an investigation of the act of knowledge, or the nature of knowledge as such with a view to determining its ontological significance, otherwise known as Theory of Knowledge' He too makes clear his conception of epistemology by distinguishing it from psychology

[1] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Epistemology

Psychology is concerned with the psychical event and not with its objective import, epistemology investigates the nature of the cognitive relation as such and asks whether knowledge is a true account of reality

These two accounts of epistemology have so much in common that it seems advisable to consider them together It is noteworthy that both Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison regard "epistemology" as equivalent to "theory of knowledge" So long as the two expressions are regarded as strictly synonymous there can be no objection to this usage Unfortunately, however, "theory of knowledge" is used in more than one sense, so that there is obviously some danger of confusing epistemology with some theory of knowledge which is not that theory of knowledge for which "epistemology" is an alternative name Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison both draw our attention to the importance of distinguishing psychology, which may also be said to be concerned with a theory of knowledge, in one sense of that phrase, from epistemology Nevertheless this will not prevent many people from confusing problems about the act of knowing with problems about the relation of the knower to the known Locke, for example, professes to be going to discuss problems which I should call epistemological problems, but in fact confuses them with psychological problems It follows that it is most important to determine precisely the sense of "theory of knowledge" which is equivalent to "epistemology"

The verb "to know" is commonly used in both of two quite distinct senses It is sometimes used as a name for the class of all cognitive acts which relate a mind to anything which can be an object of mind, for example, perceiving, believing, supposing, sensing, judging, etc It is convenient to call this sense of "to

know" the wide sense It is also used as a name for one member of this class of cognitive events, namely for those cognitions which give certainty In this sense of "knowledge", perception, supposition, belief, etc., are not knowledge at all I shall call this the strict sense of "to know" The strict sense will clearly also be the narrow sense It is obviously important to determine in which of the two senses Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison are using the word "knowledge" in the phrase "theory of knowledge" Ferrier's strict dichotomy of mind and matter, of epistemology and ontology, suggests that he thought that the only question worth asking is whether what I think that I know conforms to or represents reality Any cognition which is judged to be true to reality is then knowledge and any cognition which is not knowledge merits no further consideration In this case only the strict sense of knowledge is required Pringle-Pattison, on the other hand, wants to maintain that "epistemology" has been used in two distinct senses He argues that epistemology is frequently supposed to be concerned with the possibility and conditions of knowledge in the strict sense, but thinks that it is also used for 'a critical analysis of all the conceptions by which we endeavour to interpret the world', and in this usage it is concerned with the analysis of knowledge in the wide sense Accordingly we may conclude that for Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison epistemology is a certain kind of investigation of knowledge It is to be distinguished from psychology, which also investigates knowledge, in that it is concerned with the knower as related to the known and not with the knower as knowing It is to be distinguished from ontology, which investigates what is known, in that it is concerned with the known in relation to the knower or the knowing and not with the nature of

something independent of any knower For Ferrier some cognitions will give knowledge and others will not, and epistemology is only concerned with those which do not give knowledge in order to distinguish them from those which do Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison, however, think that "epistemology" may also be used for an examination of all forms of cognition It seems to me that this wider usage is the more satisfactory, since there are many problems of importance which are frequently discussed and which would be admitted to be epistemological problems which would not be covered by the narrower definition

III *The Priority of Epistemology*

Before turning to the other two conceptions of epistemology it is desirable to consider whether epistemology in this sense is prior to other investigations, and, if so, what is to be understood by the assertion that it is The originator of the idea that there is some sense in which epistemology is prior to other investigations is Locke His argument runs: 'The first step towards satisfying several enquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into was to take a survey of our understandings, examine our own powers, and see to what things they are adapted Till that was done, I suspect we began at the wrong end, and in vain sought for satisfaction in a quiet and secure possession of truths that most concerned us, while we let loose our thoughts into the vast ocean of Being, as if all that boundless extent were the natural and undoubted possession of our understandings, wherein there was nothing exempt from its decisions, or that escaped its comprehensions '[1] It should be noted first of all that if we

[1] *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, I, i, 7

accept the above account of epistemology, then it is no part of the nature of epistemology that it is prior in any sense. Consequently, any assertion of its priority will be an independent statement in that the nature of epistemology is the same whether it be judged to be logically or psychologically prior or not It is necessary to recognise this point, in view of the fact that the notion of priority seems to be contained in the New Realists' conception of epistemology We must then ask in what sense epistemology is sometimes considered to be prior and what it is that it is supposed to precede No one who adopts the kind of view of epistemology which I have been discussing thinks that it is psychologically prior Locke explicitly says 'we let loose our thoughts in the vast ocean of Being as if all that boundless extent were the natural and undoubted possession of our understandings, wherein there was nothing exempt from its decisions, or that escaped its comprehension' Hume draws our attention to the same fact, Ferrier points out that we are first interested in ontology or the nature of being, and Pringle-Pattison agrees that epistemology arises as a result of doubts about our beliefs about being or existents and is, therefore, a secondary product of thought It seems clear, then, that epistemology is not psychologically prior to other investigations Locke's positive contention is that an examination of the understanding which, disregarding his inconsistencies, is epistemology, is 'the first step towards satisfying several enquiries the mind of man was very apt to run into' In the *Essay* (I, 1, 7), however, and in all the other parts of the essay consistent with this passage, Locke is concerned to maintain that before we can say that we know anything we must decide what can be known This is equivalent to the assertion that before we can answer epistemological

questions we must study epistemology It can only be said to assert that epistemology is prior to other branches of knowledge on the assumption that they give knowledge in the quite precise sense which epistemology is to define Locke does not even attempt to establish this Nevertheless, he does appear to assume that the object of all enquiry is to give knowledge in this precise sense Even if we admit that this assumption is true, however, it is difficult to see in what sense the notion of priority is being used in this context Locke does not attempt to explain how he is using the phrase "the first step" and it probably never even occurred to him that it would give rise to difficulties I for one, however, cannot think of any way of analysing this relationship of priority of epistemology over the other sciences, especially in view of the fact that epistemology must in some sense presuppose other investigations, since we cannot ask what can be known unless there is something about which this question can be asked The assertion that it is logically prior throws no light at all on the problem without an analysis of the notion of logical priority To me it seems very doubtful whether forms of knowledge can be arranged in any of the kinds of orders with which we are familiar, and it rests with the person who maintains that they can be ordered to give a precise account of the relationship of the members of that order

We have already seen that Ferrier believed that epistemology is prior to ontology and furthermore that we cannot even begin ontology without attempting to know what is, and are not in a position to know what is until we have answered the question, 'What is the meaning of "to know"?' The first contention may be true, but it is impossible to decide whether it is or not

until it has been elaborated The second raises a number of problems which need not concern us here The attitude of most philosophers, scientists and plain men alike, however, can be illustrated by reference to Hume and Pringle-Pattison Hume points out both in the Introduction to the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry* that he does not aim to show that knowledge is possible, he assumes it In the course of his argument he accepts the fact that there are many things which we would affirm without hesitation that we know, quite independently of any epistemological investigation He would admit, I think, that epistemology enables us to see which of these affirmations are true and which are false Pringle-Pattison also maintains that the validity of knowledge is an ultimate and inevitable assumption, though we may ask whether there are any grounds for supposing that knowledge represents reality It may still be argued that even though we all do in fact assume that we know, even though we have no knowledge of epistemology, nevertheless we are wrong in this assumption I suggest, however, that it is not at all obvious that we cannot know without knowing that we know, and that the *onus probandi* lies on Ferrier or anyone else who wants to maintain this view The point which is important in this connection is that, although we may know certain ontological propositions without having any knowledge of epistemology, we are not in a position to say in what sense we know them, or whether or not we are using "knowledge" in a sense so remote from all other uses of it that there is no justification for it, until we have studied epistemology. Since, however, the problem of deciding what can be known, or in what sense what we assume that we know is known, is an epistemological problem, the fact that we cannot answer it without

studying epistemology does not seem to me to establish the priority (in any sense) of epistemology to ontology

Although the assertion that epistemology is prior to ontology requires further justification, if "epistemology" is understood in the sense I have accepted, in two of the alternative interpretations of epistemology it does seem to be prior in some sense If the purpose of epistemology is to prove that knowledge is possible, as some philosophers suppose, then it must in some sense be prior to ontology In fact, however, most epistemologists do not seem to be concerned to prove this If, moreover, epistemology is concerned with knowledge in the strict sense only, then it may be prior Probably Locke took this view of epistemology He seems to think that the only thing worthy of consideration by the human understanding is knowledge in the strict sense Accordingly, we must determine what can be known before proceeding with our enquiries Finally, when the enquiries are completed, a statement of human knowledge will begin with a statement of what can be known and proceed with an amplification of that statement Thus in the *Essay* Locke maintains that only relations of ideas can be known, and then proceeds to show what these relations of ideas are We may conclude, then, that if epistemology is concerned only to determine what can be known in the strict sense, and if the only object of investigation or enquiry is what can be known—if we are not to 'let loose our thoughts into the vast ocean of Being'—then the epistemological statement, for example, 'knowledge is of the relations between ideas', is in some sense logically prior to the metaphysical or ontological statements about those ideas If, however, epistemology is regarded as an investigation into knowledge in the

wide sense, it has yet to be proved that it is prior in any sense to other investigations

iv *The New Realist Criticism of Epistemology*

In view of the fact that the New Realists maintain that 'Perhaps the most notable feature of a realistic philosophy is the emancipation of metaphysics from epistemology',[1] it seems advisable to consider their views on the subject of epistemology As their representative it is Marvin who is especially concerned to establish this particular characteristic of their theory The point he is most anxious to emphasize is that epistemology is not fundamental to, *i e* logically prior to, any of the special sciences Although there are many statements relating to the nature of epistemology, the New Realists seem to assume that no-one is likely to have very much difficulty on this point Consequently, they do not give any detailed statement of their views about it In the Introduction[2] it is argued that "the emancipation of metaphysics from epistemology" means that the nature of things is not to be sought primarily in the nature of knowledge This suggests that epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge in some sense of that phrase Marvin's definition throws more light on the subject He believes that epistemology is 'the science which investigates the nature, the possibility, and the limits of knowledge',[3] that epistemology is concerned with 'the knowing process, the act of discovery, man's reasoning and the conditions of his reasoning',[4] and that, since these are natural events, it is concerned with the same kind of investigation as any other natural

[1] *The New Realism*, p 32
[2] This is said to express opinions common to several of the authors of the book
[3] *The New Realism*, p 45 [4] *Ibid*, p 60

science Moreover, he instances as an epistemological theory that may be of use to metaphysicians the view that knowledge grows by the trial and error method [1] If this is an instance of a fact about the nature of knowing or the knowing process, it is clear that Marvin means by an examination of the knowing process an enquiry which would be regarded as psychological both by Dawes Hicks and by Pringle-Pattison It is beyond the scope of this book to give a detailed criticism of this theory, but in view of the fact that problems of this kind are discussed by psychologists, and are seldom even referred to by those philosophers who are regarded as epistemologists, it would be as well not to use "epistemology" to refer to an investigation of the knowing process The assertion that epistemology is concerned with the possibility of knowledge is also open to question Moreover it is ambiguous Since epistemology is concerned with knowledge it must in some sense be concerned with the possibility of knowledge, since without knowledge there could be no epistemology We might say, then, that epistemology either assumes or discovers that knowledge is possible and investigates under what conditions it is possible Marvin seems to think that this procedure consists in the assumption that certain things in the world can be known and others cannot, and that this is a metaphysical statement, or at least presupposes definite metaphysical views, and in the assertion that any scientist who has maintained that he knows anything which the epistemologist does not admit as knowledge has been wrong and should alter his views This interpretation of epistemological procedure seems to be quite mistaken The assumption that some things can be known and others cannot is only *a priori* in a repre-

[1] *The New Realism*, p 94

hensible sense if it is supposed to tell us something about the world As Marvin points out, there is no justification for the view that statements about the world are valid when made by an epistemologist but not when made by a scientist. I suggest, however, that the epistemologist's assertion that something can be known is not an *a priori* metaphysical statement but a statement about how he is going to use the word "knowledge" The only metaphysical assumption required for epistemology is that, in some sense of "are", there are objects of mental processes [1] These are the subject matter of epistemology The epistemologist divides these objects into different classes which he calls by different names One of these classes will be objects of knowledge The assertion that there are typical differences between the objects is a result of an examination of the subject, and if it can be refuted the refutation must take the form of an epistemological argument and not of an *a priori* statement or of a statement from one of the special sciences The assertion that one class is to be called the knowledge class is of course arbitrary, but as it merely concerns the use of a word there is no reason to take exception to it Finally, in saying that some of the propositions which the scientist says that he knows cannot be known, the epistemologist is only saying that in these cases his use of "knowledge" does not apply Since this is an epistemological statement it does not, as Marvin assumes, contradict any scientific statement The scientist is not interested in his relation to what he investigates nor in the nature of his cognitions but in the subject he is investigating, and the epistemologist is concerned only with the former and not at all with the latter We should also notice that although Marvin defines "epistemology" in

[1] Cf below, p 100

this way he sometimes seems to write as though the doctrine that epistemology is prior to all the other sciences is an epistemological doctrine Although we must agree with him that epistemology is not prior to the sciences, it is important to remember that this is not an epistemological theory but a quite independent theory about a method of scientific procedure In conclusion, it seems to me that the New Realists have misunderstood the arguments of epistemologists on some of the most important points and that although some philosophers who profess to be considering epistemological questions may discuss psychological and metaphysical problems, for the most part they are concerned with the kind of investigation which Dawes Hicks and Pringle-Pattison describe

v *Laird's Conception of Epistemology*

In a Presidential Address to the Aristotelian Society[1] and in *Knowledge, Belief and Opinion* Laird gives a detailed discussion of epistemology with much historical information and criticism I propose to discuss only those remarks which relate to the particular aspects of the subject which I have been considering Laird takes as his starting-point the assertion that we must accept the fact that we think Consequently we cannot argue, as he maintains some philosophers wish to, that there can be no study of epistemology In fact we do ask epistemic questions He continues, that epistemology is usually supposed to be either the theory that 'Cogitation should examine its own powers and capacities *before* examining or conjecturing anything by means of cogitation', or the more moderate theory that 'the mind is a knowable thing among other knowable

[1] *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1929–30

things' [1] He himself holds, however, that epistemologists are not compelled to make either of these assumptions [2] Epistemology will be an independent study because there are epistemic questions, for example, 'How do I know that this is so?' and 'What right have I to believe that this is so?' These and other epistemological questions concern the knower and something known and not, as critics of epistemology suggest, the knowing process or act of knowing independently of anything known or acted upon The greater part of the remainder of Laird's discussion is devoted to a refutation of the view that the faculties can be studied *in vacuo* and of the view that epistemology is prior to other sciences Without raising a series of historical problems I should like to suggest that since, as Laird himself points out, Locke, Hume, Kant and Mill all studied the faculties in operation, it is at least possible that their various statements to the effect that it is important to study the faculties mean that the faculties are to be studied in operation and not *in vacuo* The fact that their aim was to establish certain conclusions about knowledge, as distinct from psychological conclusions, seems to support this suggestion The remarks which are alleged to state the priority of epistemology are also open to alternative interpretations Although we must admit that the philosophers who have discussed these problems have not clearly formulated their conceptions of epistemology or of the place of epistemology in relation to other branches of knowledge, here again it is at least possible that Hume, for example, meant not that we cannot study other sciences before epistemology, or that it is useless to do so, but that the science of man, or of the principles of human nature, alone can form

[1] *Knowledge, Belief and Opinion*, p 5 [2] *Ibid* p 6

the basis of a system of the sciences, and knowledge of these principles will enable us to determine whether scientific propositions can be known with certainty [1] Hume's procedure certainly seems to be more in conformity with this interpretation than with Laird's, and he continually emphasizes the fact that the acceptance of the philosophical principles he expounds does not involve the rejection of other beliefs He would probably have admitted, however, that the study of epistemology may help us to develop new discoveries into organized branches of knowledge or belief

VI *Conclusion*

Whatever view we take with regard to these last two points, though, it is important to remember that we are far more likely to derive a useful conception of epistemology from an examination of the procedure of philosophers who would be regarded as epistemologists than from an unquestioning acceptance of their own statements of their procedure The latter course has resulted in a great deal of devastating criticism of epistemology, even by philosophers who are anxious to maintain that they themselves are epistemologists, and also in a definition of the word "epistemology" which, in the light of these criticisms, does not apply to any of the great epistemologists of the past This seems unfortunate, and I shall try to avoid similar difficulties by taking Hume's epistemology to be not simply what he states it to be, but the theory implied by his procedure in relation to this statement Thus, despite the fact that his statement is inadequate, I hope to show that some of his arguments do provide a contribution to that distinct branch of enquiry which is concerned with the investigation of

[1] This, of course, is an epistemological problem Cf preceding section

the different mental processes in relation to their objects and with the nature, and perhaps also the validity, of these different objects I trust this statement will be recognized as referring to epistemology even though I admit that a definition cannot be abstracted from it

CHAPTER 2

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *TREATISE* AND THE *ENQUIRY*

1 *Introduction*

In spite of the facts that Hume uses very simple terms and that his arguments show at least verbal clarity, there are still considerable possibilities for differences in interpretation Some philosophers have regarded his sensory phenomenalism, or the scepticism which was a consequence of it, as his main contribution to the development of philosophy In the following chapters I want to show, by an examination of Hume's epistemological doctrines, that the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* are of particular importance in the history of philosophy, because they raise for the first time a great many of the problems which are still the subject of investigation to-day This procedure will involve the interpretation of some of Hume's arguments as epistemological statements—even though they have usually been interpreted as metaphysical statements This chapter is concerned to give some justification for the epistemological interpretation

11 *The Differences between the Philosophies of Hume and of his Predecessors*

The best way to show that it was Hume, rather than any of his predecessors, who first raised these epistemological problems, and that these problems are different problems, is by contrasting his work with theirs So far from Hume's philosophy being in the

same tradition as the work of Descartes, Spinoza and Berkeley, it seems to be quite independent of certain fundamental assumptions on which the latter writers based their arguments It never occurred to these philosophers to question these assumptions, nor even to state them They seem to have thought, for example, that philosophy is the science which tells us what is indisputably true, and that the truths philosophy states are not relative to anything else Again, they believed that the universe is an ordered system and that a complete account of the nature of the universe would be a complete statement of all there is to know They held that the plain man's everyday beliefs have no claim to be called knowledge but that as philosophers we can have intuitions of truths which may be regarded as the indubitable and necessary bases for the construction of a complete theory of the nature of the universe They even doubted the validity of scientific assertions, since these have their foundations in common-sense beliefs, and are therefore not directly related to what we know to be true about the universe Propositions asserted by a philosopher, on the other hand, are true because they follow from the fundamental intuitions The view that such truth is relative to the intuitions as propositions in a deductive system are relative to the initial assumptions, would, of course, be quite unacceptable to any philosopher trying to construct a theory of the universe in this way Both the original intuitions and everything that follows from them have absolute truth

Hume's philosophy differs from these philosophies in at least two very important respects In the first place, although both Hume and the philosophers I have mentioned could be said to have started from a proposition which cannot be doubted, and, therefore,

appear to be similar in their choice of method, the interpretation of this assertion will be quite different when it is applied to Hume from when it is applied, for example, to Descartes Descartes builds his whole metaphysic on an intuition which is said to be simple and ultimate Despite the fact that as an intuition it is supposed to be indubitably true, some philosophers would say they can doubt it, others that it is false, and still more that it is not the only ultimate principle on which metaphysics should be based In contrast to this, Hume takes as his starting-point, not an intuition such as 'I think, therefore I am', which no-one but a philosopher would have thought of, but a statement about a particular concrete situation, for example 'I am now perceiving an apple', 'I believe that it will rain to-morrow', 'I have an idea of Paris', which every plain man would admit to be true in certain circumstances Such statements are probably neither ultimate nor simple, it is chiefly because they are complex that everyone would accept them, but it is important for Hume that in taking them as a starting-point for his investigation he neither asserts nor denies their complexity They cannot, therefore, be rejected in the same way as Descartes' intuition might be It cannot be denied that in certain circumstances 'I am perceiving an apple' is true, so that to refute Hume one must refute his analysis of the statement, and whether in fact the person speaking is lying or not is quite irrelevant to the analysis If he speaks truly, then 'this is true' will be an assertion which can be made about the original statement but will not be part of the analysis of it

This difference in choice of starting-point leads to the second and more fundamental difference Descartes, Spinoza and Berkeley were undoubtedly concerned

with metaphysics They hoped to show the nature of what there is in the universe, and assume without question that it is possible to do so They are, therefore, obliged to consider mind as one phenomenon to be accounted for in their system of the universe Hume, on the other hand, seems to be concerned with totally different questions He is not trying to give a metaphysical account of the universe, but an epistemological account of the knowing process in relation to its object He asserts that his philosophy is an enquiry into the nature and extent of the human understanding, so that he too is concerned with knowledge The resemblance in this respect is, however, quite superficial. Hume's problems of knowledge form an independent study not touched on by Berkeley, Descartes or Spinoza His object in investigating the understanding is to give an account of the different forms of cognition in relation to their objects, and in the light of this account to show how the propositions of metaphysics, mathematics, the sciences and common sense are related to each other and how far each can be judged to give us certainty about an external world Such a philosophy is 'distinctive in purpose and point of view'

In maintaining that Hume was concerned with different problems from his predecessors I did not refer to Locke, because Locke is usually given the credit for having first raised the epistemological problems Although Locke's statement of his object suggests that he will discuss epistemological problems, the *Essay* is not epistemological in character, so that we must look to Hume for the first discussion of these problems These few considerations seem to show that Hume was not primarily concerned with the metaphysical problems of his predecessors, and it is now necessary to

attempt to justify the assertion that he was concerned with epistemological problems

III *The Epistemological Interest Shown in the* Treatise

The difficulty of finding any precise account of the nature of epistemology even to-day, when so many philosophers are studying epistemological problems, suggests that we are not likely to find statements which would lead to a useful and unambiguous definition of the word epistemology in Hume's writings. Although Hume does give some statement of his object and does recognize that he is embarking on a new kind of investigation, his statement is not adequate to do justice to his procedure, and he does not make clear in what respect his work differs from that of his predecessors Accordingly, as I have already suggested, we cannot justify the epistemological interpretation by reference to any of Hume's explicit statements, but must turn to his actual process of enquiry The strongest evidence in favour of this interpretation is that there is undoubtedly a development from a treatment of problems which is partially epistemological in the *Treatise* to another treatment of the same problems which is quite definitely so in the *Enquiry* In the *Treatise* Hume's avowed object is to examine the extent of the human understanding This, in one sense, undoubtedly leads to epistemological investigations, but it may, as with Locke, lead to something much more closely resembling the metaphysics of Descartes, Spinoza and Berkeley Hume, at this stage, is not really clear what the examination implies, and he is obviously influenced by the traditional method of approach to philosophy[1] He sees that the examination of the understanding leads to some kind of analysis of what is known He

[1] In Berkeley and Locke and possibly in Spinoza and Malebranche

therefore begins with the theory of impressions and ideas This procedure was unfortunate, as Hume realized later It gives rise to two different kinds of misconceptions, and although Hume does not explicitly discuss them he expresses his dissatisfaction with the scheme of the *Treatise* in the Advertisement to the *Enquiry* and in his letters [1] In the first place it would be almost impossible to determine, from the opening chapters of the *Treatise* alone, whether Hume is concerned with psychology, metaphysics or epistemology Moreover, in the second place, Hume's desire to start with the psychologically obvious and his desire to reach the logically simple have together led him to confuse the two As an instance of the view that the theory is primarily a psychological doctrine we cannot do better than take Mr Selby-Bigge's criticism 'Even in the *Treatise* we feel that the introductory psychology is rather meagre and short to serve as a foundation for so large a system, but in the *Enquiry* it is still more cut down' [2] This clearly suggests that we should regard the theory as a fundamental psychological basis for all Hume's more important doctrines Unfortunately Hume's method of expounding the theory in the *Treatise* sometimes admits of such an interpretation, and it is possible he would himself have been satisfied with it at first The use he makes of this doctrine, however, seems to justify us in regarding it as epistemological It might then be argued that Hume's contention is that impressions and ideas are the elements into which all epistemological complexes can be analysed Here again we must admit that the exposition of the theory of impressions and ideas, both in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*, does justify this assertion

[1] Cf below, p 27

[2] Introduction to Hume's Enquiries, p xii, Selby Bigge Edition

Nevertheless it is important to remember that the object which was historically first for Hume was to find for a starting-point something which would be so obvious as to be undeniable even to the plainest of plain men. Despite his inconsistencies he is genuinely anxious to make statements which are quite unambiguous in order to avoid the confusions which he says are so common in other philosophies, based, for the most part, on principles which are themselves unclear These efforts unfortunately frequently lead him to oversimplify his problems In this particular case Hume's exposition certainly suggests that the theory of ideas, 'the elements of this philosophy' (T 13),[1] is indeed an adequate foundation for all that follows Continuing historically, Hume soon could not fail to notice that there are other objects of the human mind besides perceptions, for example beliefs and judgements He proceeds, therefore, to discuss the other activities which give these objects without explicitly stating what the discussion obviously implies, that some of his earlier remarks will require revision Hume's account of knowledge, in the wide usage of the word "knowledge", to cover the whole field of our experience, is quite obviously not confined to impressions and ideas Just as the scientist may have to reject an hypothesis which is adequate to the scientific facts he knows at a certain stage of his enquiry, since newly observed facts do not conform to that hypothesis, so Hume must admit that the theory of impressions and ideas is not alone adequate for an epistemology The second confusion in the opening sections of the *Treatise*, between the psychologically and the logically simple, cannot be

[1] Quotations from Hume are throughout given with page reference to the Selby Bigge edition thus (T 13) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p 13, and (E 13) *Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding*, p 13

illustrated shortly, but should become clear in the course of the discussion of Hume's treatment of simple and complex ideas and impressions We may conclude then, from the *Treatise*, that although Hume's statement of his object is not an altogether satisfactory statement of an epistemological investigation, in the light of the course his argument takes it is difficult to interpret it as a statement of a psychological investigation. The following discussion of these arguments will, I hope, show that they can be rightly called epistemological

One further argument, if not from the *Treatise* itself, from a letter written when Hume had the *Treatise* in mind, might be adduced in favour of the epistemological interpretation At one time Hume maintains that he wants to adhere to common sense and to avoid introducing any of the mysterious unobservable entities of substance, cause, etc , and in so far as he discusses the nature of ideas he is fairly successful At another time, however, he maintains 'My principles are also so remote from all the vulgar sentiments on the subject, that were they to take place, they would produce almost a total alteration in philosophy' [1] This obviously cannot refer to the first principles, which are supposed to be indubitable There seem to be only two alternative interpretations The 'principles remote from vulgar sentiments' may be the principles of the analysis of matters of fact which lead to scepticism It seems to me more probable,[2] however, that the 'remote' principles are the principles of epistemological enquiry [3] Admittedly it is unlikely that the vulgar have any definite sentiments with regard to the respective merits of epistemological and metaphysical studies, whereas

[1] P 25 to Home Cf Green and Grose, vol I, pp 23, 27, 31 and 36

[2] See below, pp 46 and 47

[3] These principles involving views about knowledge and religion which are equally 'remote from vulgar sentiments'

they probably have very definite convictions about the reality of the external world Nevertheless on the former interpretation there would not be a total alteration in philosophy, since a metaphysical scepticism is not so very different, from the point of view of the plain man, from Berkeley's idealism On the latter interpretation, that the new principles are the principles of epistemological enquiry, there would be, and I maintain has been, a total alteration in philosophy

IV *The Epistemological Interest shown in the* Enquiry

Turning to the *Enquiry*, we find that the evidence which was vague, scattered and ambiguous has been replaced by definite and indisputable statements of epistemological principles We must agree with Grose that Professor Fowler makes a great mistake in ignoring the *Treatise*, which contains 'some of the acutest speculations of one of our acutest thinkers, and those, too, on points which are not discussed in any of his subsequent writings' [1] For our present purpose, however, the important point is that on his own showing 'the *Treatise* does not represent Hume's later sentiments', and we must therefore disagree also that the Advertisement should be regarded merely as 'the posthumous utterance of a splenetic invalid' [2] Similar views are expressed in the letters written from the time of the failure of the *Treatise* until after the *Enquiry* was published, when Hume was between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-seven and not an invalid, and we seem justified in accepting Hume's own assertion that the *Enquiry* does set forth in a simpler, shorter and more orderly form the 'revolu-

[1] Green and Grose edition of Hume's *Essays*, vol I, p 39
[2] *Ibid* footnote

tionary' principles which are scattered throughout the *Treatise*

The stimulus to the study of epistemological problems is undoubtedly the recognition that the things usually grouped together and called objects of the various mental activities comprise sets of fundamentally different kinds of objects We have already seen that in the *Treatise* Hume recognized at least three different kinds, impressions, ideas and propositions or relations of ideas Although he does not lay any particular emphasis on the difference he certainly discusses them separately, and probably thought the distinction so obvious as to require no emphasis He maintains that 'all the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call *impressions* and *ideas*' (T 1), and that it is unnecessary to enlarge on this point because everyone will readily perceive the difference 'Reasoning', as he later points out, is concerned with the comparison of, and discovering relations between, ideas We have, therefore, two kinds of objects of perception and a third kind of object which is the object of reasoning Hume, in common with his contemporaries, uses the word "understanding" to cover every mental activity, including even sensing, in contrast to modern writers who tend to confine it to the higher cognitive processes

It is interesting to compare Hume with some of his contemporaries in relation to this point Descartes' whole metaphysic follows from his conception of method, and this, in its turn, is based on his conception of simple natures The simple natures are simple and indubitable objects It is true that Descartes is confused at this point, but he certainly seems to assert that they are simple in the sense that each consists of a simple essence If this is the case it is difficult to see

how they are conjoined Descartes certainly assumes that they are, but does not explain how we can pass from the apprehension of one to the apprehension of another Thus, although he does not admit that we can intuit related simple natures, that is to say, propositions, his further arguments nevertheless assume them so that he too has at least two different kinds of objects of the understanding Locke went one step further and asserted that since our ideas are nothing but bare appearances or perceptions in our minds they cannot in themselves be true or false, truth and falsity belong to propositions [1] Thus, in spite of his assertion in the introduction that the object of the mind in thinking is always an idea, he too must admit another object, namely that to which truth and falsity apply The problem does not arise for Berkeley, of course, because the mind is not apprehending a different kind of object in the two cases to which the other writers refer, on both occasions it apprehends ideas, but whereas in one case the mind is merely apprehending, in the other it is apprehending and combining

It is clear, then, that Hume is not alone in the implicit recognition of at least two different kinds of objects of the mind He goes further than his contemporaries, however, in the *Treatise*, in emphasizing the fact that perceptions are of two different kinds In the *Enquiry* he goes still further and is equally careful to distinguish objects of reasoning into matters of fact and relations of ideas Still more important, however, is the assertion in section I 'It cannot be doubted, that the mind is endowed with several powers and faculties, that these powers are distinct from each other, that what is really distinct to the immediate perception may be distinguished by reflexion . . There are many

[1] *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II, 32, 1

obvious distinctions of this kind, such as those between the will and the understanding, the imagination and passions, which fall within the comprehension of every human creature, and the finer and more philosophical distinctions are no less real and certain, though more difficult to be comprehended' (E 13-14) Finally, of equal importance is the concluding assertion that the *Enquiry* is an attempt to throw some light on these subjects The *Enquiry* thus begins with the explicit statement that it is concerned with the different activities of the mind That this is intended to be epistemological and not psychological seems clear from the fact that Hume is throughout concerned with the mind in relation to its objects, the impressions, ideas, matters of fact, etc Moreover, it is clear that Hume is concerned with these problems entirely as epistemological problems and not simply as a means to some metaphysical view, since he hopes to complete his investigation with an arrangement of the principles of the understanding similar to the astronomer's or the scientist's arrangements of their data In addition to his statement of this object, however, the distinction between his investigation and metaphysics is brought out by his explicit rejection of the latter 'This talk of ordering and distinguishing, which has no merit, when performed with regard to external bodies, the objects of our senses, rises in its value, when directed towards the operations of the mind, in proportion to the difficulty and labour, which we meet with in performing it' (E 13) He concludes the positive statement of his epistemology with the pious hope that by means of it he can 'undermine the foundations of an abstruse philosophy, which seems to have hitherto served only as a shelter to superstition, and a cover to absurdity and error' (E 16)

It is, however, not only in the positive statement that Hume's epistemology is shown more clearly in the *Enquiry* than in the *Treatise* There is a marked improvement, from the epistemologist's point of view, in his method of approach to the problems he raises This should be quite obvious from even the most brief comparison of the exposition of the theory of ideas in the two essays Whereas in the *Treatise* the theory might be thought to be psychological, especially if considered independently of the rest of the work, in the *Enquiry* it is quite clearly epistemological It would be absurd to suggest that Hume was entirely consistent Even in this section of the *Enquiry* he is again guilty of using words which suggest that the only objects of the mind are impressions and ideas, but this in no way deters him from proceeding immediately to contrast relations of ideas with matters of fact Nevertheless, since the *Enquiry* is so very much more definitely epistemological in character than the *Treatise*, and since Hume himself urges that the purpose of the *Enquiry* is to set out more clearly the revolutionary principles put forward in a confused manner in the *Treatise*, we seem justified in concluding that, allowing for his inconsistencies, Hume is primarily concerned with epistemological problems, that even if he was wrong in thinking his principles original,[1] he was probably the first philosopher to proceed in accordance with them, and that his philosophy should therefore be examined as a contribution to epistemology and not as a contribution to metaphysics [2]

[1] Since Locke suggested them before him

[2] It is interesting to speculate whether Hume abandoned philosophy because no one took up his argument or even saw the point of the new principles I think this explanation is certainly more plausible than Grose's Cf Greene and Grose edition of Hume

v *Conclusion*

Before turning to the examination of Hume's answers to the epistemological problems which he raises, there are several points to be noticed at which his account of epistemology and his epistemological method are open to criticism We have already noticed that problems about the nature of the objects of mind and about their relation to each other are apt to be neglected It is quite usual to read, for example, that we 'sense so and so' or 'perceive so and so' as if it were quite obvious that what the "so and so" expresses must be the object of that particular kind of act It is clear, however, from the fact that it is usually not difficult to find another writer giving an example of the same act with a different kind of object that it cannot be obvious As we have already shown, Hume is so far an epistemologist that he cannot be accused of assuming that the objects of a certain act are of a certain kind without stating the assumption The opening chapters of the *Treatise* and of the *Enquiry* are devoted entirely to making clear the nature of what he there says he believes to be the only possible objects of mind His argument is, however, open to other objections In the first place these accounts of objects involve the use of terms which Hume suggests are simple, ultimate and indefinable, whereas the use he makes of them shows that they refer to things which are extremely complex It is essential to try to discover what analysis of them Hume would have given before we can accept his views about them Furthermore, as we have already seen, Hume's original statement of his views about the objects of mind gives quite a false impression of the field of epistemological investigation He suggests that the understanding is confined to

impressions and ideas, whereas he himself explicitly recognizes other objects of mental activity, for example, relations of ideas, and discusses other objects, for example, matters of fact, the objects of belief, which in the *Treatise* he does not explicitly recognize as a special type of object at all I have tried to show that epistemology involves an investigation of all objects of the understanding, and that we are not yet in a position to determine what number of kinds of objects there are Hume does recognize, however, in the *Enquiry*, that we are not yet in a position to state the different kinds of activity of the understanding This leads to a third difficulty in his philosophy The epistemologist is concerned with the mind in relation to its object Hume says that he is concerned with the activities of the mind This assertion is mitigated by the fact that he immediately proceeds to discuss the objects of the activities, but it is important to notice that his statement is open to criticism and that it leads to confusion of the kind noticed above, when he sees that there are many different kinds of activities and talks as if there are only two kinds of objects Finally, Hume's use of the word "object" must be admitted to be very unfortunate, since he also uses it in a completely different sense, namely, in the sense in which it refers to the external thing which the vulgar assume to be related to the idea or impression An object of this kind, in Hume's view, could never be an object of the understanding at all Since Hume uses the word indiscriminately for objects of both kinds, it is only possible to determine from the context in which sense he is using it Moreover, since this is not always very easy we are in great danger of misinterpreting him by thinking of the object of the understanding when he himself is referring to the external object, and *vice*

versa For example, in saying that 'the senses, in changing their objects, are necessitated to change them regularly' (T. 11), the object is probably an impression On the other hand, in the very same sentence the assertion that 'the imagination must, by long custom, acquire the same method of thinking, and run along the parts of space and time in conceiving its objects', does not nearly so obviously refer to ideas Similarly in his discussion of the ideas of space and time Hume deliberately uses the word "object" in such a way that it may apply either to an external independent thing or to an impression (T 37) We know that Hume was mainly concerned in this connection to point out the affinity between the vulgar and the true philosophic view on this subject He wanted to show that ideas and impressions, as he conceived them, fulfilled all the functions of common-sense objects It seems very plausible to suppose that to do this he would use the word "object" as often as possible as a synonym for "impression" on purpose to show that impressions can be substituted for objects in ordinary discussions His subsequent treatment of impressions and objects, however, reveals important differences for epistemology between them It therefore seems desirable to distinguish for Hume between the objects which are perceptions of mind, and the objects which are external to and independent of mind In order to avoid confusion it is necessary not to use "object" for Hume's objects of the first kind at all Instead I shall substitute "accusative" An accusative is what is expressed by the word or set of words which follow any verb expressing a cognitive act, for example, "I know", "I perceive", etc It may then be regarded as a class name for the objects of the different mental processes It is the business of the epistemologist to show

how many different kinds of accusatives there are and to tell us something about each kind Part Two is concerned with Hume's contribution to these problems

PART TWO

CHAPTER 3
SENSATION

1 *Introduction*

As plain men we would all agree that our ordinary everyday experience consists chiefly in apprehension of objects both in isolation and in relation to other objects Accordingly Hume, who is determined not to base his philosophy on any assumptions which are themselves open to suspicion, begins by asking what is the nature of the accusative which is apprehended whenever we believe in, or talk about, or behave in relation to, an object,[1] that is to say, a table, a chair, or any other common-sense thing The answer to Hume's question will be quite independent of any theory of the metaphysical nature of the object Accusatives apprehended in experience of this kind are complex perceptions Even as plain men we can see that such complexes may be split up into collections of simple elements and that these simple perceptions are either impressions or ideas Simple impressions, again, can be divided into three groups, sensations, passions and emotions Since, as a matter of fact, we usually apprehend complexes and rarely attend to the simples of which they consist, it is desirable to begin the investigation in this way with the familiar complexes and so proceed to the less familiar simples For the purposes of epistemological exposition, however, it is better to begin with the elements which are epistemologically simplest

[1] See Chapter 6, below

The evidence for an interpretation of "sensation" as Hume uses it in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* is of two kinds Firstly, there are a few clear and quite definite statements about sensations, and, secondly, there is a considerable amount of other information relevant to the problem A consideration of the views expressed in these two different ways suggests that they cannot consistently both be attributed to the same concept Rather than reject any of these views as mere inconsistencies, since all of them seem to be of some philosophical importance, it seems advisable to admit that Hume has confused two quite different concepts and to attempt to try to distinguish his views which concern the one from his views which concern the other

From the argument I have just outlined it appears that sensations are a certain kind of accusative, or, as Hume would say, object of the mind The influence of Locke's conception of an idea 'whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks' is evident It is interesting to speculate how far Hume might have avoided his confusions on this point had he realized that the phrase 'the object of the understanding when a man thinks' so far from being clear, as his contemporaries seemed to think, is extremely ambiguous It is clear, however, that whatever Hume's sensation may be, unlike Locke's, it is non-representative In non-philosophical moments sensations are usually regarded as the consequence of stimulation of the sense organs by an external object, but, in Hume's opinion, so far as the philosopher is concerned, this is totally irrelevant It is true he often speaks as though the belief is relevant, for example, 'An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other' (T 8) Nevertheless, I think we may safely

regard such inconsistencies as unimportant, since Hume's whole exposition is in sympathy with the view that an impression is something of which we are immediately aware (and thus not the kind of thing which could strike upon the senses) and whether or not it does occur in any relation to anything striking on the senses is not a question which the epistemologist as such, nor, for that matter, the sceptical philosopher as such, can answer

These simple perceptions which we can all see to be the simple elements out of which our complex perceptions are composed might be called psychologically simple if, in saying that they are psychologically simple we mean that they are the simplest element which we perceive We may in fact indirectly apprehend elements which are in some sense simpler, but we shall be aware of them by means of a construct which is the result of a thought process, so that from the psychological point of view the accusatives are less simple [1] The fact that simple perceptions are psychologically simple is sufficient justification for taking them as the simplest elements in an epistemological account of accusatives Unfortunately, it never occurred to Hume to doubt that what is psychologically simple is simple from every point of view Accordingly, in describing sensations, he attributes to them the greatest simplicity he can conceive What is simple for perception or awareness, however, seems to be very complex from other points of view Modern philosophers and psychologists are careful to draw a distinction between simple perceptions, which are epistemologically simple, and sensations, which are even simpler than simple perceptions Hume confuses a sensation, which is supposed to be unanalysable, with

[1] Cf below, Chapter 4, Section III

the simplest element in awareness Although it is unlikely that he would ever have distinguished the sensation and the simple perception, unless he had first rejected the view which he does not state, but which is implied by his whole treatment of the subject, that what is psychologically simple is also unanalysable, I think he was the first philosopher to make statements which clearly show the possibility of analysing psychological simples The distinction between the psychologically simple and what may be regarded as simpler, from another point of view, is obviously important for epistemology, even if only because it reveals the complexity, and so the nature, of the psychologically simple, and it is possible that modern philosophers who have learnt from Hume and who make distinctions of this kind have realized the necessity of doing so because they have seen Hume's confusion Hume's acceptance of the simplest element in experience as unanalysable may be due to, or perhaps resolvable into, his original atomistic assumption that impressions, and therefore sensations, are 'compleat in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions' (T 458), and the acceptance of 'the age-long ideal of explanation according to which the business of thinking was to discover what was (analytically or visibly?) simple, and thereafter to 'explain' anything, either by exhibiting its ultimate simplicity or its composition out of simple elements' [1] I think there can be no doubt that these assumptions are fundamental for Hume and that they do preclude the possibility of an acceptance of the distinction between the two uses of "sensation" and that we must accept the fact that, although Hume's discussion suggests that there is an important

[1] Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p 28 Cf below, pp 62 63, Chapter 4

problem to distinguish the two uses of sensation and to give an account of the two kinds of sensations, he is not himself aware what that problem is, nor is he aware that he has contributed to its solution Before proceeding, one further point in connection with both uses of "sensation" should perhaps be noted Hume does not explicitly raise the problem whether the sensing has as its object a sensation or whether the sensation and the act of sensing are identical It seems probable that it never even occurred to him However, he invariably uses phrases which imply a distinction between the act and the object of the act, so that it would always be true to say that we sense something and what we sense is a sensation This is in conformity with the terminology adopted throughout in connection with accusatives How far Hume would have thought it applicable to the unanalysable entities had he distinguished them from the simplest accusatives it is impossible to say

11 *Sensations of the First Kind*

Having seen that Hume does confuse two different accusatives of sensing, and the probable reasons for his confusion, we are in a better position to distinguish the elements in Hume which point to the first interpretation of "sensation", namely that a sensation is an unanalysable element The first characteristic of sensations is that they could be described as mental in some sense of that word and could not be described as physical in any sense of that word This, I think, would be applicable to both kinds of sensation It is important to recognize that though modern psychologists distinguishing between perceptions and sensations mean by a sensation something which could be described in physiological terms, the sensation of the

first kind required by Hume's explicit statement about it, and by his philosophy as a whole, is an epistemological abstraction Any physiological interpretation would be precluded by his view that we cannot know that there are external or physical things, either objects or selves Secondly, the assertion that a sensation is 'compleat in itself' certainly suggests the first interpretation There is a sense in which a sensation interpreted in the second way is 'compleat in itself' namely that it does not involve any reference to anything external or physical Nevertheless, I do not think that that is all Hume meant by the phrase Sensations, in the passages which suggest the first interpretation, of which this is one, are meant to be 'compleat' in the sense that they are unanalysable elements I shall try to show later that sensations in the second sense involve sensations in the first sense *plus* something else in addition, and that the additional element does involve reference to something other than sensation Thus it is only in a very limited sense that the second sensations are 'compleat in themselves', and I do not think that that is the sense that Hume intended us to give to the phrase We seem justified in concluding, then, that the interpretation of "sensations" which is compatible with the assertion that they are 'compleat in themselves' is the first, and that the phrase does imply such an interpretation [1]

The third important characteristic for consideration has already been mentioned Sensations are supposed to be ultimate and unanalysable elements Hume's way of making this point is to say that "sensation" is a word which everyone understands but it expresses something about which very little can be said A

[1] It is clear that sensations of the first kind, since they are not apprehended, as such, cannot be representative

sensation is not the kind of thing which could be described, since, being absolutely simple, it has no characteristics in common with anything else by which it could be described Hume therefore indicates what he means by "a sensation" by giving examples of sensations, an absolutely specific shade of blue, an absolutely specific sound or taste or feeling of pleasure This characteristic seems to me clearly to suggest the first interpretation Hume wants to assert that a sensation is quite simple and unanalysable His language is peculiarly appropriate to express this simplicity He always refers to 'a particular colour' (I take it that this is equivalent to "an absolutely specific shade" in modern terminology) and never, as many writers do, to 'a particular red patch' In view of the fact that Hume was notoriously careless about his use of language, and moreover, was very unclear on this point, it is improbable that he himself realized the significance of his own terminology Nevertheless, it is illuminating to notice that the phrase "a patch of colour" implies interpretation of the visual field whereas Hume's neutral phrase "a particular colour" is fortunate in that it expresses the abstractness he wants for sensations [1]

Such a sensation is an element in an accusative, so that by definition it could not be apprehended as such It must not be confused with the kind of sensation with which most psychologists are concerned This kind of sensation is a physiological occurrence, and so, as we have seen, not an accusative Most psychologists seem agreed that these sensations are not apprehended, but that they are not apprehended must be admitted

[1] I admit, of course, that it is singularly inappropriate from other points of view, especially in that it suggests a universal when in fact I think he wanted to refer to a specific occurrence

to be a matter of fact and not of definition Hume assumed that what appear to us to be simple is unanalysable [1] The absolutely specific sound which I hear is the simplest aural accusative It is not, however, a sensation of the first kind, and Hume seems to be wrong in supposing that the simplest accusative, or object of awareness, can be regarded as an example of a sensation in the sense defined [2]

If this first account of sensations be regarded as an account of the simplest elements we are distinctly aware of, it is quite true to say, in the light of modern developments of the problems of sensation and awareness, that it does not fit the facts Hume's own statement of his views, however, does not seem to give any conclusive reasons for thinking that it must be so regarded Moreover, since it is so confused with a view which does concern the simplest accusatives, there seems some justification for distinguishing the two views, if only to show what other philosophers who have developed the problem may have learnt from Hume The first view of sensations is of importance for epistemology because it enables us to give a clearer account of sensations of the second kind It must be remembered, however, that from the point of view of perceptual experience they are abstractions and, since Hume is concerned to give an account of accusatives he is naturally most interested in sensations in the second sense, namely that sense in which they are accusatives 'Tho' a particular colour, taste, and smell are qualities all united together in this apple,' Hume says ''tis easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from

[1] Cf Chapter 4, pp 62 66

[2] Cf Chapter 4, p 57 It should also be noted that even the aural sensation is not unanalysable in every sense, since we can distinguish separable elements, *e g* intensity, pitch, overtones

each other' (T 2) He does not say that as sensations (in the second sense) they are distinct and that the redness is just redness and not in any way related to the redness of the apple in our experience, nor, so far as I can see, does he say anything which suggests this view in any other context It does not seem incompatible with the main trend of Hume's thought, then, to say that we can apprehend the sensation of the first kind indirectly by means of a concept or as the result of a cognitive process, but there is no accusative, sensation of the first kind, which is perceptually apprehended in the way that sensations of the second kind are

So far I have confined my attention almost entirely to the first interpretation This is because I believe the two interpretations to be so totally different that it is a pity they are both called sensations Hume undoubtedly required to consider the first interpretation of sensation since it reveals the nature of the second kind of sensations Since, however, we do not directly apprehend such sensations it is very confusing to call them by the same name as an accusative, so that in the future I shall call sensations of the second kind simple perceptions, and shall consider them as such in relation to other perceptions

CHAPTER 4

ACCUSATIVES OF PERCEIVING

1 Simple Impressions

1 *Introduction*

If we are to be in a position to do justice to Hume's views on perception we must first consider the place of perceptual problems in his philosophy In the opening section of the *Treatise* Hume certainly suggests that in his opinion perception raises no serious problems at all, our perceptions are either impressions or ideas and either simple or complex Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that this statement cannot be accepted as expressing his final view, since the sections following are devoted entirely to an attempt to state some important points about perception Moreover, his treatment of the other accusatives requires a theory of the nature of perceptions as a basis We must, therefore, admit that Hume was not completely unconscious of the need to raise perceptual problems The fact remains, however, that these problems are hardly mentioned in the *Enquiry* and that even in the *Treatise*, where he does explicitly recognize them, the discussion is scanty and inadequate in many respects, and Hume himself does not seem to attach much importance to it It may help us to see that Hume's views on perception are important, both for his own philosophy and for others which have grown out of it, if we consider why these facts are so Hendel tells us [1] that Hume approached

[1] *Studies in the Philosophy of David Hume*, chap 2

philosophy through his religious studies and that the great discovery which so thrilled him was that our use of the notion of causation is highly presumptuous This discovery is expressed in Hume's epistemology in terms of his scepticism, that is to say in terms of the distinction between knowledge in the strict sense and other forms of cognition usually, and on Hume's view quite unjustifiably, called knowledge too The discovery also led him to investigate other acts and their accusatives Nevertheless, he is always most interested in his first discovery, and it is this discovery which he is so anxious to make known to the world Consequently, the discussions of causation occupy by far the greater part of the *Treatise* For the same reason, when Hume recasts his original work in a form which is designed to be popular, he omits all, or nearly all, he had to say about perception and concentrates entirely on trying to make clear the importance of his great discovery His concentration on the problem of the distinction between strict knowledge and pseudo-knowledge must, therefore, be regarded as a sign of his own particular interests and preferences, and not as showing that perceptual problems are unimportant epistemologically Very probably if Hume had succeeded in gaining recognition for his important discovery he would have turned his attention to a more detailed examination of perceptual problems The fact that the sections of the *Treatise* which have been recast are so very much clearer and more consistent in their new form in the *Enquiry* suggests that had he done so he might have left a very enlightening contribution to those epistemological problems most in need of it For this reason it seems worth while to give more attention to Hume's views on perception than a consideration of his own statements alone would warrant The explicit state-

ments relating to the nature of perceptions in the beginning of the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* do not give an adequate account of Hume's theory of perception, partly because he does not define his terms, and partly because the problems he is raising, as he himself points out, are new, and he has not succeeded in formulating them very successfully, so that it is often difficult to determine to what problem his argument relates

One further point remains to be mentioned in this connection Hume is apt to write as though he believed that every accusative of the mind is a perception, that is to say is either an impression or an idea This seems to suggest a use of "perception" which would not be useful in an attempt to interpret Hume's philosophy The problems he raises lead to a recognition of many accusatives of totally different types Some of these would not be called accusatives of perception in any ordinary use of the word "perception", and I do not think any serious misrepresentation of Hume's views is involved in distinguishing between those accusatives which would and those which would not be admitted to be accusatives of perception

Assuming that perceptions are one class of accusatives and that the two terms are not equivalent, it is important first of all to determine which accusatives belong to this class I shall begin with three negative assertions about them as they seem to be less disputable than any others Perceptions seem to be clearly distinct from sensations In Chapter 3 I suggested that Hume sometimes uses "sensation" for something which is an element in a simple perception and sometimes for a simple perception Moreover, no sensation of the first kind resembles any perception in any of the important respects in which all other perceptions resemble each other We are therefore probably justified in regarding

the use of "sensation" in the two senses as an instance of Hume's carelessness or confusion in regarding the first kind as perceptions, and we may conclude that no sensation in the first or strict sense is an accusative of perception In the second place, accusatives of perception must be distinguished from accusatives of knowledge Although there may be more than one kind of accusative of knowing, no perception can be an accusative of knowing Thirdly, the accusatives of perceiving must be distinguished from the different kinds of accusatives of believing, including objects

It is more difficult to make any positive assertions which would be useful in demarcating the field of these accusatives. The first passages in the *Treatise* suggest that perceptions differ only in their degree of vivacity and complexity, so that for epistemological purposes we should treat them all as similar in kind Nevertheless, both in the *Treatise* and in the *Enquiry*, Hume recognizes that there are differences between perceptions which lead us to group them into separate classes under a common name, for example sensations must be distinguished from emotions, and himself points out that the fact that different languages each have a word to express the same set of ideas shows that there is some connection between those ideas in virtue of which we give them a common name (T 10) This suggests that we can throw most light on the nature of perception by considering each class of accusatives of perceiving in turn, and the obvious course would be to begin from Hume's division of perceptions into four main groups, simple impressions, simple ideas, complex impressions and complex ideas There is, however, a serious objection to this procedure I have already pointed out that we need to distinguish between the accusatives of perceiving and the accusatives of

sensing, believing and knowing, but there is also a further distinction within the accusatives of perceiving, in Hume's use of "perception", which is equally important Hume, either by accident or by design, uses the word "perception" for two radically different classes of accusatives so that we find two accusatives, differing in very important respects, both called perceptions Since it is quite impossible to state Hume's position clearly without distinguishing them it will be impossible to keep as closely to his order as would otherwise be desirable The first of the two kinds of perceptions are impressions and ideas pure and simple, that is to say those elements which we have described as psychologically simple, and complexes of such elements. The second kind are those accusatives which Hume also calls impressions and ideas, which are perceptions apprehended as external objects It is unlikely that the importance of the distinction will be disputed, and it is not difficult to point to various factors which contributed to Hume's failure to draw it He was so anxious to show that perceptions in the first sense will fulfil all the functions of common-sense objects that he did not see that it was important for his argument to distinguish the two, still less did he see what disastrous confusions followed from his failure to do so Moreover, he thought that, since the vulgar regard perceptions as their only objects, it would be unnecessary to ask what these objects are Unfortunately this belief inevitably came into conflict with his epistemological investigations I shall show that he certainly refers to and discusses the first kind of perceptions, which are so important from the point of view of epistemology, but that for the reasons I have just given he fails to show that they differ from the second kind of perceptions For the purposes of

epistemology, therefore, it is more satisfactory to distinguish between the two different kinds of perception and to consider first all perceptions of the first kind, belonging to all of Hume's four classes of perceptions, than to examine all the members of the first group, whether they are perceptions of the first kind or of the second kind

Perceptions in the first usage are impressions and ideas considered as such, without reference to anything external which may cause them or be related to them in any other way Hume repeatedly emphasizes this point but as he also uses the word "perception" for objects there is some excuse for the fact that some philosophers think of perceptions as objects and consequently are led to misinterpret Hume's scepticism Moreover, as many modern philosophers and psychologists mean by an accusative of perceiving a commonsense thing or physical object, it is especially important to bear in mind Hume's emphatic assertions that this is not what he means by "a perception" 'We may observe that all sensations are felt by the mind, such as they really are, and that when we doubt, whether they present themselves as distinct objects, or as mere impressions, the difficulty is not concerning their nature, but concerning their relations and situation' (T 189) 'That our senses offer not their impressions as the images of something *distinct*, or *independent*, and *external*, is evident, because they convey to us nothing but a single perception, and never give us the least intimation of anything beyond' (T 189) 'To form the idea of an object, and to form an idea simply is the same thing, the reference of the idea to an object being an extraneous denomination, of which in itself it bears no mark or character' (T 20) Thus it seems that the only thing common to Locke and Hume is

terminology Locke's ideas are always 'ideas of' something having a different existential status from the idea itself The reference of our perceptions to something external or the acceptance of these perceptions as external is, for Hume, belief and not perception [1] He does not wish to deny that there is anything beyond our perceptions which is the cause of them or which they represent His argument runs 'As to those *impressions*, which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative powers of the mind, or are deriv'd from the author of our being Nor is such a question any way material to our present purpose' (T 84) Apart from the fact that Hume here implies that there are objects other than ideas, he intends, for the most part, that his theory should imply neither that there is, nor that there is not, an external world He is careful to explain, though, that the vulgar almost invariably do entertain this belief about their perceptions, or rather they 'suppose their perceptions to be their only objects' (T 205), and think of them as external In the case of some perceptions, of course, the problem does not arise Emotions, for example, are not likely to be referred to anything external, nor do we entertain such beliefs in connection with some ideas of imagination Hume does not, however, succeed in always writing of perceptions as independent of anything external He argues, for example, 'An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain of some kind or other Of this impression there is a copy taken by

[1] In the first sense

the mind, which remains after the impression ceases, and this we call an idea' (T 8) If the impression is in the mind it is not the kind of thing which could strike on the senses and, as I have suggested, Hume's whole exposition is in sympathy with the view that it is not the function of the sceptical philosopher to state whether or not it occurs in any relation to anything striking on the senses Moreover, the impression of which 'there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases' (T 8), is clearly the impression which may or may not be the result of the stimulation of the senses but which is definitely not that which stimulates the senses It is important, finally, to consider the relationship of judgement, as Hume conceives it, to perception Hume does not discuss the problem of judgement at all fully, in fact the word "judgement" only occurs about half a dozen times throughout the *Treatise*, but the occurrences are sufficiently significant to merit careful consideration Hume talks at different times about 'judgment or belief' (T 180), 'judgment of knowledge or belief', and says that nature 'has det'rmined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel' (T 183) and that 'judgments are sometimes true and sometimes false' The most important passage though, seems to be the footnote to section vii of Part III of the *Treatise* Hume there argues that it is a great mistake to attach any importance to the threefold division of the acts of the understanding, into conception, judgement and reasoning 'What we may in general affirm concerning these three acts of the understanding is, that taking them in a proper light, they all resolve themselves into the first, and are nothing but particular ways of conceiving our objects Whether we consider a single object, or several, whether we dwell on these objects,

or run from them to others, and in whatever form or order we survey them, the act of mind exceeds not a simple conception, and the only remarkable difference, which occurs on this occasion, is, when we join belief to the conception, and are perswaded of the truth of what we conceive' (T 97, footnote) This passage is primarily concerned with a psychological theory, but in default of any explicit epistemological statement it enables us to see how Hume would have, or in any case, could have, dealt with the epistemological statement Omitting reasoning from this discussion, we are left with the assertion that conception and judgement are 'particular ways of conceiving our objects' Precisely what Hume meant by this phrase and by the phrase 'they all resolve themselves into the first' it is impossible to say, and it seems probable that he did not mean anything precise It seems to show, however, that Hume intended to use the word "judgement" in such a way that every accusative,[1] including the accusative of perceiving, is an accusative of judging

II *Simple Impressions of Sensation*

Hume's account of simple impressions and simple ideas is so frequently dismissed by philosophers with only the briefest of comments that it would seem as if there should be no difficulty at all over these conceptions Unfortunately there seem to me to be many problems connected with them with which Hume does not deal at all clearly I shall, therefore, examine these simples in the light of Hume's arguments, since I feel sure that some people do find difficulties in these conceptions, however simple the exposition may seem to others

[1] Except accusatives of believing, some of which will be judgements and some of which will not Cf below, Chapter 9

Hume maintains that all our perceptions are either impressions or ideas Impressions are further subdivided into the simple and complex, and into impressions of sensation and of reflection The latter distinction shows that there are three fundamental kinds of simple impressions, sensations, passions and emotions The impressions of reflection arise from the ideas of previous sensations Since Hume does not give any detailed discussion of these impressions either in the part of the *Treatise* I want to discuss or in the *Enquiry* I shall confine my attention to sensations The importance of the distinction between impressions of sensation and of reflection is that it shows that it would be a mistake to think that "impression" is a simple term, as Hume sometimes suggests He may have believed that for the purposes of epistemology there is no need to distinguish the three kinds of impression, although as plain men we must admit that there are important differences between them It is more probable, however, as he proceeds to discuss the passions in the second book of the *Treatise*, that he believed that, of the three, only sensations are elements in the accusatives he is about to consider, so that the passions and emotions can be set aside for examination later

I have already tried to show that Hume failed to see that there are certain very important philosophical problems relating to the nature of simple impressions of sensation Consequently the chief difficulty in his account lies not in any disputable statements but in the fact that he has considered it unnecessary to say more than that there are simple impressions of sensation They are mentioned as one class of impressions, which everyone can distinguish from ideas, and we are given examples of them merely to show how the simple are to be distinguished from the complex 'Tho' a par-

ticular colour, taste, and smell are qualities all united together in this apple, 'tis easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other' (T 2) The only other assertion which is directly concerned with the simple impressions of sensation is in the section dealing with scepticism with regard to the senses (T 187) Hume argues here that although it is customary to divide impressions of sensation into three distinct classes, 'those of the figure, bulk, motion and solidity of bodies', 'those of colours, tastes, smells, sounds, heat and cold', and 'the pains and pleasures that arise from the application of objects to our bodies, as by the cutting of our flesh with steel, and such like' (T 192), nevertheless there is no philosophical justification for so doing Impressions of sensation are simple, ultimate and homogeneous and nothing further can be said about them Nearly everyone would agree, however, that the problem cannot be dismissed in this summary fashion, and even Hume's own subsequent discussions show that it is inadequate for all his more important doctrines These statements do say all there is to be said about the sensations of the first kind, which we have agreed not to call perceptions Since, however, there are no other relevant statements Hume must also intend them to be an account of the sensations of the second kind, which are perceptions For this they are clearly inadequate Moreover, the second kind of impressions of sensation are involved in complex impressions and in the various other accusatives, so that we cannot afford to proceed without attempting to amplify Hume's statements I shall, therefore, accept the fact that Hume failed to distinguish the two accusatives of sensing and failed to see that the second kind, as he uses it, requires further analysis, and attempt to find from his discussion of other problems,

what account he might have given had he realized one was necessary

The most suggestive approach to the problem seems to be by reference to one of the respects in which the two kinds of sensation differ This difference is very difficult to express, since as plain men and as psychologists we are always interested in sensations of the second kind and there is no familiar language which unambiguously expresses what I want to say Although the verb "to sense" is frequently used in such a way that sensation would be said to involve awareness, probably everyone would understand what is implied by a distinction between sensing and being sensibly aware of In Hume's philosophy, as we have already seen, the elements which are sensed are the sensations of the first kind It is clear that we cannot perceive these sensations, since by definition they are abstractions from or elements in the simplest kind of perceptions Nevertheless, I do apprehend some accusative which is related in some way to a sensation of the first kind, since I can talk about sensations This accusative is a concept which is a thought-construct Sensations of the second kind, however, are apprehended in perception [1] This apprehension may be called sensible awareness Although Hume does not use this phrase it is clear that it is consistent with his views, because he habitually uses phrases which imply awareness in connection with sensations He writes, for example, suppose a person 'to have become perfectly well *acquainted with* colours of all kinds, excepting one particular shade of blue, for instance, which it never has been his fortune to *meet with*' [2] (T 6) In the light of this distinction between the two kinds of sensation I think we must admit that so long as we use the word

[1] Cf above, p 44, Chapter 2 [2] My italics

"sensation" in the first sense, there are no epistemological grounds for distinguishing different classes of sensation On the second interpretation, however, the fact that people have thought they could be so divided is a sign of an epistemological problem.

The sensations of the second kind, which are perceptions, that is to say they are accusatives or are experienced, are not obviously simple and unanalysable in the same sense as the first kind of sensations are The very fact that we can express the difference between the two kinds, however inadequately, is a sign that one is complex The simplest sensation of the second kind, for example, a particular instance of a particular shade of red, will always be analysable into a sensation of the first kind, and in addition, what can only be called the awareness or apprehension of red It is important to recognize that it is not necessary either that the percipient should recognize red, since he may never have seen it before, or that he should be aware of it as red, since he may have no conception of red, or even that he should be aware of it as a colour, since he may have no concept of colour He must, however, be aware of it in the sense that, assuming that he did understand the language, if someone asked him if he was aware of red he could truly reply 'Yes'

I think there are some grounds for assuming that Hume meant by a sensation of the first kind what most modern psychologists seem to mean by a sensation, namely, something which is describable in physiological terms If "sensation" is used in this sense it would be significant to say that I was having a sensation of red a moment ago because there is a red book in my field of vision, although I had not noticed it until this moment There will be, of course, as Hume should

have recognized, an indefinite variety of simple perceptions of all degrees of complexity. Examples of the more complex forms of the sensations we are considering would be recognition of red, *i e* awareness modified by the fact that a qualitatively similar awareness has occurred before, recognition of red as a colour, when the percipient distinguishes between visual and aural sensations for example, awareness of red as red, when the percipient is aware of the sensation as similar to others which he has grouped together, dislike of red, when the awareness cannot, from the psychological point of view be separated from a certain feeling, dislike of red because of its associations when the awareness is inseparable from the circumstances which gave rise to the feeling as well as from the feeling itself It would be tedious to multiply these examples further, they should be sufficient to show that Hume is guilty of a serious omission in saying nothing about such sensations The importance of the sensations of the first kind, from the epistemological point of view, consists in the fact that they enable us to distinguish the second kind from them and to see more clearly what kind of accusatives the second kind are Having compared the two kinds there seems to be no doubt that the simple impressions of sensation, which together constitute the complexes, are of the second kind and not the simple, colourless entities which are epistemological abstractions.

I see no reason to suppose that sensations, whatever their degree of simplicity or complexity, should be equal in degree of what Hume would call vividness Although Hume has said so much on the subject of 'force and vivacity' that there should be little likelihood of his being misrepresented on this point, it is necessary to consider differences in vividness, as they have sometimes been thought to give rise to important problems.

There certainly seem to be, at any one moment, sensations of which I am quite determinately aware, others of which I am only indeterminately[1] aware and, in the modern usage of the word, others of which I am unaware That there are sensations, in some sense of the word, of which I am not aware seems to be clear from the fact that if I make an effort to do so I can at any moment be aware of the hardness of the floor and the table on which my feet and arms are respectively resting, the lighter pressure of my clothes, the coolness of the breeze through the window, the twittering of the birds or the distant roar of the traffic Despite the fact that I am aware of these sensations only at the moments when I deliberately attempt to be so, there seems no reason to suppose that what I am aware of at the moments when I desire to be so is not also occurring at the moments when I am directing my attention to something else Everyone is familiar with occasions on which he would have heard someone open the door and walk into the room had he not been so engrossed in the book he was reading that he did not notice the sound sensation, and other similar experiences I think we must admit, then, that there are occurrences which answer to the description I have tried to give These sensations are quite genuine occurrences in the sense in which any other physical occurrence is genuine Although it might be possible to give arguments to show that Hume sometimes used the word "sensation" in this sense, the simple perceptions and the epistemological abstractions seem all that is required for a discussion of his epistemological problems

[1] This use of 'indeterminate" is obviously open to criticism I can only say that it seems to describe these accusatives in my experience I am aware of something outside the focus of my attention as being impressions, but they only take on determinate characteristics when I attend to them I admit, however, that others might experience the difference simply as a difference in degree of intensity

Certain sensations, which I suggested above might be described as those of which we have only indeterminate awareness, seem to some people to be neither simple perceptions nor merely physiological occurrences The examples most often given are the visual sensations I have 'out of the corner of my eye' For Hume, these are indisputably perceptions or sensations of the second kind There seem to me two reasons why philosophers have thought these sensations constitute a special problem The first is that they have probably assumed without realizing it that sensations must be equal in intensity The slightest thought shows that this is quite obviously not so, and it will probably be argued that no-one ever supposed anything so stupid Nevertheless, if there are two sensations, *a* and *b*, in my direct line of vision and others *c*, *d*, *e*, etc , seen 'out of the corner of my eye', there is no reason to assume that *c*, *d* and *e* differ in any important respects from *a* and *b*, except on the assumption that *a* and *b* are equal to each other in intensity and must also be equal in intensity to any other sensations which may replace them The absurdity of this assumption is so obvious that everyone will agree that the only difference between the relationship of *a* to *b* and the relationship of *a* to *c* is one of intensity and not one which would justify us in treating one group as if it constituted a special problem The second reason which may have led people to think there is this problem is the difficulty of deciding where sensations in the physiological sense end and sensations of the first and second kinds begin It seems to me that from the psychological point of view it would be quite impossible to draw the distinction at all If I attempt to decide whether a certain visual sensation of a section of the wall in a remote corner

of my field of vision is a sensation or a very faint perception, the sensation immediately becomes so intense that neither description applies It is sufficient, however, to be able to say that any sensation of which there is any degree of awareness at all is a perception, and any sensation of which there is no degree of awareness is a pure sensation Whether or not we are able to determine whether there is no awareness or a very minute degree of it, in the case of any particular sensation, is utterly irrelevant

III *The Nature of the Simplicity of Perceptions*

So far I have said a great deal about the simplicity or lack of simplicity and the determinateness or lack of determinateness of the impressions without attempting to give any precise account either of how Hume uses these words or of how I am using them This seemed desirable because, as I have shown, Hume does not define the words himself, nor would his use of them be consistent with any one definition Had I attempted to supply the deficiencies before considering his view there would have been a danger of interpreting the views in the light of the definition instead of deriving the definition from the views Unfortunately it is quite impossible to proceed further without some attempt to clarify Hume's term "simple"

Laird maintains that Hume's divisions of impressions and ideas into the simple and the complex 'indicated, in fact, Hume's acceptance of the age-long ideal of explanation according to which the business of thinking was to discover what was (analytically or visibly?) simple, and thereafter to "explain" anything, either by exhibiting its ultimate simplicity, or its composition out of simple elements' [1] It is difficult to

[1] *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p 28

see how Hume could have avoided some recognition of the fact that the apple certainly appears to be a complex of simpler impressions, despite Laird's doubts as to the value of this procedure The problem I want to raise, however, is not how Hume came to draw the distinction but what is the precise nature of the distinction he drew The difficulty is that Hume did not see the importance of asking the question Laird raises, 'Is the simple analytically or visibly simple?'[1]—still less did he realize that it is important to say what he means by saying that anything is either analytically or visibly simple The simplest elements referred to in Hume's epistemological theories are the sensations of the first kind That these are not 'visibly simple' in any ordinary sense of that phrase cannot be disputed, since it follows from our account of them It also follows from this account of them that they are in some sense analytically simple So far as I can see all that can be said precisely and accurately about the nature of this simplicity is that anything which is analytically complex can be analysed into its simpler elements, and anything analytically simple is non-complex

This very unsuggestive statement can only be elaborated by reference to the particular simples under consideration The particular elements judged to be simple in the sense defined will always be simple relatively to the particular investigation being carried out Had Hume realized this very important point his exposition would undoubtedly have been very much clearer than it is In order to understand what a simple impression is, we must, therefore, consider the impressions themselves This shows that we never can give an account of a simple impression which will be both

[1] *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p 28

accurate and complete and also certain The bare statement of the nature of simplicity is certain, because it is merely a matter of definition Any attempt to give a more complete account of any particular simple cannot be certainly true since it is at least partly empirical in character, except, of course, in the case of simples assumed to be simple for certain purposes Hume's attempt to account for simple impressions seems to me to be an attempt to describe those elements which are simple in the sense defined for the enquiry he is about to carry out The important point about it is that he does not arbitrarily select an element which is assumed to answer to the definition and then describe it, but tries to find some element which does in fact answer to it In other words, he assumes that there is an element or a set of elements which are the epistemological simples and that no other elements will serve their purpose He tries to discover what is simple by a process which is partly analytical and partly empirical, consequently we cannot know that the simples Hume describes are really simple I do not want to suggest that there is any reason to doubt that they are epistemologically simple The sensations of the first kind certainly seem to answer to the definition of "simple" and to be adequate to the needs of all epistemological investigation Nevertheless, it is not impossible that future discoveries may enable us to see that these simples can be analysed and that it is necessary, for epistemological purposes, to analyse them

The assertion that further analysis may be necessary 'for epistemological purposes' needs some justification. I have argued that any given element can only be said to answer to the definition of "simple" relatively to some given enquiry Consequently, from the fact that

Hume's sensations of the first kind are (if they are) epistemologically simple, it does not follow that they are simple from all other points of view On the contrary, although a particular sound which is an element in a simple impression, for example, a sensation apprehended as a sound, is simple for the epistemologist, it may also be considered complex It is quite conceivable that someone might want to ask a question which involved distinguishing between the intensity and pitch, etc In this case the simple element would be regarded as complex It is, therefore, very important to specify in what connection any particular element is to be regarded as simple

We can now consider why it was so unfortunate that Hume did not realize the importance of this point It is clear that simple perceptions and sensations of the first kind cannot both be epistemologically simple If sensations of the first kind are epistemologically simple, sensations of the second kind are epistemologically complex Nevertheless, this does not preclude us from regarding them as simple at all They may be rightly described as simple if we qualify the description by saying that they are psychologically simple, or simple from the psychological point of view The important point about a perception, as distinct from a sensation (in Hume's sense), is that it is a complex which consists of a sensation modified and coloured in various ways by past experience and emotional reactions Were he able to give a precise account of the nature of these modifications the psychologist would probably not regard these perceptions as simple at all As it is, he cannot analyse them further and uses them in his argument as ultimately simple. Consequently, they are, for him, simple in the sense defined The importance of this point for the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* is that

had Hume realized that what is simple for the psychologist is not necessarily simple for the epistemologist, and that what is simple for the epistemologist is an abstraction to the psychologist, he might have avoided his confusion between the two kinds of sensation

CHAPTER 5

ACCUSATIVES OF PERCEIVING

2 IDEAS

1 *The Relationship of Ideas to Impressions*

HUME seems to have been very considerably hampered by lack of terminology at this stage of his investigations, so that any discussion of his argument must begin with an examination of his use of the word "idea" His first assertion is that all our perceptions are impressions or ideas, impressions are sensations, passions and emotions, and ideas are faint copies of them Although he does not explicitly say so, it is clear that Hume meant us to understand also that there is no idea which is not either a faint copy of an impression, either simple or complex, or else is a new complex of faint copies of simple impressions It is obvious, then, that he means by an idea what in modern terminology would be called an image [1] Unfortunately, though, Hume uses the same word "idea" for a number of ideas which cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be regarded as images Consequently it is often supposed, I believe falsely, that Hume thinks that every idea must be an image, and, therefore, that his whole epistemological theory is untenable I shall return to the ideas which are not images later,[2] and shall consider now ideas in the narrow sense, that is to say images

It is fairly easy to see that although we may not

[1] Since in the *Enquiry* and in Part I of the *Treatise* Hume is concerned with sensations and sensation images, I do not propose to discuss the problems relating to passion and emotion ideas [2] Chapter 7

be able to define "perception" in the narrow sense we are not likely to confuse sensations, passions and emotions with other accusatives I shall not, for example, think that I have a sensation of a proposition or an image, *triangular*, although Hume seems to think that people sometimes forget that the image which is a particular triangle is not an image, *triangular* This is not, however, a serious difficulty, since any such person would admit his mistake when his attention was drawn to it Since, then, we feel fairly confident that we can distinguish perceptions in the narrow sense from other accusatives, the main problem about ideas is to determine how they are to be distinguished from the impressions which constitute the remainder of the field of perceptions We must first consider Hume's preliminary statements on the nature of this distinction Ideas differ from impressions in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind (T 1) The ideas are the faint images of the impressions in thinking and reasoning (T 1 and 2), but they do not differ from each other in kind Moreover, 'the common degrees of these are easily distinguished, tho' it is not impossible but in particular instances they may very nearly approach to each other' (T 2) Nevertheless, the exceptions in the case of sleep, fever and madness (T 2) are not sufficiently frequent to deter us from recognizing the difference in general If we accept this distinction between impressions and ideas, an empirical survey (T 2) shows that every simple idea (at this stage without exception) is derived from a simple impression (T 3) [1] Experience also shows that im-

[1] Cf 'The one seem to be in a manner the reflexion of the other' (T 2)
'The one are the causes of the other' (T 5)
Ideas 'exactly represent' impressions (T 4)
Any idea 'arises from' a primary impression (T 75)

pressions are 'prior to' ideas We do not proceed so absurdly as to endeavour to produce the impressions by exciting the ideas, and it seems clear that anyone born blind or deaf not only is without the impressions of sight or sound but lacks also the corresponding ideas (T 4) [1]

Various different objections have been raised to these points, but critics of Hume seem to be unanimous in maintaining that, taken as a whole, the theory is inadequate to account for the facts Hume wants to explain Many of these criticisms throw light on Hume's problems, and, in so doing, merit a detailed examination We cannot, however, decide whether they are justifiable until we have determined the nature of Hume's problem very much more precisely than he does himself It is very easy to suppose that Hume is considering the relationship of impressions to ideas in whatever senses of those words most naturally occurs to us If we are to do justice to Hume's view, however, it is of the utmost importance to be quite sure that we are interpreting the words in the same way as Hume himself interpreted them It is very doubtful whether we do so Hume certainly suggests quite frequently that he would mean by "a complex impression" what anyone would mean by a name for any material thing, and by "an idea" what any plain man would mean by an idea of it Nevertheless, we have seen that certain characteristics of

'*All our ideas are deriv'd from correspondent impressions*' (T 105)
'We have no idea, that is not deriv'd from an impression' (T 155)
A simple idea must 'arise from' a simple impression (T 157)
An idea is 'deriv'd from' an impression (T 157)
'Reason alone can never give rise to any original idea' (T 157)
'Therefore that idea must be deriv'd from experience' (T 157)
'Ideas always represent their objects or impressions' (T 157)
'All ideas are deriv'd from and represent impressions' (T 161)
'All ideas are deriv'd from impressions' (T 160)

[1] Cf 'Impressions always take the precedency of ideas' (T 33)

the plain man's material thing are quite incompatible with some characteristics of impressions in Hume's account of them when he is being philosophical Our natural tendency, in attempting to test Hume's theory, is to consider something we are now perceiving, for example a brown surface of a table, in relation to an idea of another brown surface, either perceived or imagined Although these accusatives are certainly perceptions in Hume's wider use of the word, they are not perceptions in the narrow sense What is perceived by the plain man or the philosopher in an unphilosophical mood is a highly complex accusative in which an impression or an idea in the narrow sense is a constituent For example, my perception is not simply a visual sensation which could be described by a certain colour name, nor is it even merely awareness of that sensation conditioned by past experience It is awareness of certain sense-given elements *as having characters and relations* which are certainly not sense-given Precisely the same is true of the idea It is a memory of some table surface which I have perceived, in the way I have just indicated, in the past, and which I think of as part of the surface of something external to me It is obviously very important to decide whether Hume's discussion relates to perceptions in this sense, or to perceptions in the strict or narrow sense, before we attempt to criticize his view We may find that it relates not to perceptions at all but to sensations

Probably everyone will agree that Hume does not explicitly distinguish the different problems of the relationship of the three different kinds of impressions and ideas respectively Nor does he even give any clear statement which enables us to judge which of the three problems he is concerned with Moreover, his carelessness in his use of terminology makes it equally im-

possible to decide this point with any degree of assurance from his exposition It seems to me probable that Hume not only did not explicitly distinguish the problems but did not realize that there are three problems This is not surprising in view of the fact, which we can see from his terminology, that he did not distinguish sensations, the abstractions from perception, and the two kinds of perceptions, the simplest perceived accusative, and the complex, the perception apprehended in relation to certain beliefs or with certain attitudes or interpretations The failure to distinguish the two kinds of perception, as we have seen, was deliberate Hume was especially anxious to emphasize the similarity between the true philosophy and common-sense belief Nevertheless, the fact that his use of the same name to express two different accusatives was deliberate has not saved him from confusing characteristics of one of the accusatives with characteristics of the other, and I believe that his failure to distinguish sensations and simple perceptions is a result of this process of deliberately thinking of the two as one and the same Consequently, if we regard his statement about the relation of impressions to ideas as a contribution to only one of the problems, we must admit that they are inconsistent with each other If we distinguish the three problems, it becomes clear that they are not inconsistent but that they relate to different problems That it was desirable for Hume to distinguish them is clear He was led to write the *Treatise* by the discovery that some of our firmest beliefs, and especially religious beliefs, cannot be supported by any observable facts, and he was particularly interested to distinguish those beliefs which, in Hendel's terminology, are 'presumptive' from those which are not Since some ideas appear to involve

'presumptive' beliefs and others do not, and since the difference can best be discovered by comparing them with their corresponding impressions, it is obviously important for Hume not to treat the different ideas and the different impressions as one and the same Since it is also important for epistemology that the different problems should be distinguished and that we should learn what Hume contributed to each, I shall try to discover to which of the problems his remarks relate

If we agree to adopt Hume's terminology and talk about sensation-impressions and sensation-ideas, we must admit that in so doing we are using the word "idea" in a different sense from the normal one As used by the plain man, "idea" always involves reference to an external world for its interpretation Since, in the case of sensations, there can be no such reference to an external world, there seems no reason to dispute Hume's assertion that ideas are fainter copies of impressions It amounts, in fact, to the assertion that he is going to use the word "idea" in such a way that a faint copy of an impression is an idea A consideration of the relationship of the sensation element in a perception-impression complex apprehended as external and a perception-idea complex apprehended as of something external suggests that this account is quite adequate without any reference to representation or priority Whether it is also adequate to account for the relation of simple perception-impressions and simple perception-ideas is another matter Just as, in describing sensations, Hume thought that he was describing simple perceptions, so, in describing the relationship of simple sensation-impressions and simple sensation-ideas, he thought he was describing the relationship of simple perception-impressions and

simple perception-ideas Consequently, we must accept this difference of force and vivacity alone as Hume's solution to both of the first two problems, while admitting that in view of the fact that the accusatives, which the second problem is about, are more complex than Hume realized, perhaps the relationship between the impressions and ideas is also more complicated

We must agree with most of Hume's critics that if the perception-impressions apprehended as external are supposed to be related to the perception-ideas apprehended as of something external merely by a difference in force and vivacity his theory is inadequate Hume saw perfectly clearly, however, even though he did not point out its importance for this problem, that if we confine ourselves to a study of what we can be certain about we shall omit some of the most important problems of epistemology There are many passages which emphasize this opinion 'Philosophy informs us that everything, which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind' (T 193), nevertheless, ' we feign the continu'd existence of the perceptions of our senses, to remove the interruption, and run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation' (T 254),[1] and "Tis certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose, that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence It is also certain that this very perception or object is supposed to have a continued uninterrupted being, and neither to be annihilated by our absence, nor to be brought into existence by our

[1] Cf Conclusion of *Treatise*, pp 206, 207

presence' (T 206) These facts clearly indicate another very important field of investigation, and it is with this field that Hume's second argument is concerned Nevertheless, 'that our senses offer not their impressions as the images of something *distinct*, or *independent*, and *external*, is evident' (T 189) The facts cannot, therefore, be accounted for by reference to the nature of impressions and ideas alone We must examine the total state of affairs in which someone is perceiving a perception and supposing it to have a continued existence This is Hume's second problem

It seems to me that the distinction between the impressions and ideas of the third kind, which forms the topic of Hume's second problem, can only be explained in terms of our beliefs about an external world It is often supposed, though, that Hume maintains that the difference is a difference in degree of vividness in precisely the same sense as one impression of red might be more vivid than another impression of red This objection is frequently raised We may take Stout's statement of it as representative In his article, "Some Fundamental Points in the Theory of Knowledge", he writes 'There is here a gap [between the impression and the image, which is both more or less like the original impression, and derived from it] which is certainly not bridged by his insistence on the faintness or feebleness of the derivative copy as compared with its original' [1] Again, referring to Hume's view in his Gifford Lectures, he says 'An impression in order of time is an original experience, the corresponding idea is a subsequent fainter copy of it That it is a subsequent fainter copy is all that from this point of view he ought to mean when he calls it the

[1] *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p 366

idea *of* the impression '[1] It is very difficult to see why philosophers should be so ready to attribute such a very silly view to Hume Everybody admits that, although we sometimes make mistakes, we can usually distinguish impressions and images without any difficulty, and so far from denying this fact Hume is very careful to point it out Yet this criticism is directed against a view which admits no such distinction Any interpretation of "force and vivacity" which leads to such an absurdity should be suspect for that reason alone and certainly seems to demand further investigation It seems quite obvious, as Ward points out,[2] that Hume cannot mean a simple difference of intensity, and the problem is to decide what we are to understand by his somewhat figurative language Stout himself admits as much in the *Manual*,[3] where he says that Hume was right about the "force and vivacity" but that the statement is ambiguous In this context he maintains that the essential point of Hume's doctrine is in the 'striking the mind' 'Images do not strike the mind in the same way as actual sensations ' It does not seem to me that this[4] is the essential point of Hume's view, but what is important at the moment is to notice that the views expressed by Stout in *Mind and Matter* and *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology* are incompatible with the view expressed in the *Manual* The important point is, in Laird's words, 'that Hume's term 'vivacity' was intended to indicate something ultimate and indefinable, not, as would seem in the preliminary discussion, the mere intensity of our perceptions'[5] Laird also holds, however, that 'he cannot be acquitted of ambiguity in

[1] *Mind and Matter*, p 218
[2] *Psychological Principles*, p 170
[3] *Manual of Psychology*, p 136
[4] As Stout understands it
[5] *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p 33

this particular or of (consciously or unconsciously) taking advantage of the ambiguity'[1] If he means by this simply that "force and vivacity" in Hume's philosophy are likely to be given a literal interpretation we must agree with him, as we have already noticed instances of such an interpretation If he means, as I think he does, that there are no good grounds for an alternative interpretation I do not agree with him In addition to pointing out that we all do in fact distinguish impressions and ideas, Hume says 'Had I said, that two ideas of the same object can only be different by their different *feeling*, I shou'd have been nearer the truth'[2] (T 636) By this, as Laird says 'Hume did not contemplate any drastic revision of his theory, but merely wanted to say that 'feeling' expressed his meaning better than "force and vivacity", and 'The fact that the feeling in question was just Malebranche's "le je ne sais quoi qui nous agite, car la raison n'y a point de part" (V xii), and that Malebranche, as we have seen, also spoke of 'force and vivacity', tends to confirm this interpretation'[3] We should, therefore, consider the possible interpretations of "force and vivacity"

I think the stumbling-block for everyone who has given a literal interpretation to "force and vivacity" has probably been Hume's assertion that ideas and impressions do not differ in their natures It is very easy to jump from this assertion to the conclusion that there can be no method of distinguishing one from the other except by their different degrees of intensity The fact that this criterion, as Whitehead says, 'does

[1] *Op cit* p 33

[2] This passage is not concerned with the relation of impressions to ideas but with the relation of memory to imagination, but the relation in question is "force and vivacity" in each case

[3] *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p 112

not fit the facts',[1] should, as I have suggested, lead us to look for some fallacy in the argument The fallacy obviously lies in the assumption that Hume's second problem must be answered in terms of a difference in nature between ideas and impressions of the first kind Stout, as I have already indicated, thinks that the essence of the difference, in Hume's view, lies in the 'striking the mind'[2] He himself holds that the impression has a certain aggressiveness which the idea lacks, and, although normally we do not notice it, in certain cases it is unmistakable He instances the sound of a steam whistle[3] Although a candle flame is much less bright than an electric light of high candle power, the impression of the flame 'strikes the mind with some degree of force and liveliness, whereas the mental image [of the electric light] does not strike the mind in the same way' Although he admits that 'the difference between images and sensations is in the degree of vividness but for practical purposes we use other tests', he holds also 'the distinction between image and percept, as respectively faint and vivid states, is based on a difference of kind The percept has an aggressiveness which does not belong to the image It strikes the mind with varying degrees of force or liveliness according to the varying intensity of the stimulus This degree of force or liveliness is part of what we ordinarily mean by the intensity of a sensation But this constituent of sensations is absent in mental imagery' This does not seem to be a satisfactory account of the distinction as Hume drew it because, whereas Stout would explain the difference in the way perceptions 'strike the mind' in terms of the nature of the impressions and ideas, Hume would say that it

[1] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p 188
[2] *Manual of Psychology*, p 137 [3] *Ibid*

must be interpreted in terms of our beliefs about our perceptions and that there is no difference in the nature of the perceptions Nevertheless, Stout's view is very suggestive and his assertion that the difference lies in the way ideas 'strike the mind', even though he interprets this phrase differently from Hume, makes an advance on other views Ward, for example, will not accept the view that the important difference lies in the way the ideas and images respectively 'strike the mind' He maintains 'we are familiar with striking ideas as well as with striking, but not necessarily intense, sensations' [1] The importance of this contention lies in the fact that it shows that Ward thinks that although no irreducible difference can be perceived between the way the ideas strike the mind and the way the impressions strike the mind, he thinks that some other difference can be perceived in the nature of the impressions and ideas themselves

As an interpretation of Hume's view, Stout's theory has the great merit of showing one way in which Hume might have distinguished impressions and ideas sufficiently unmistakably to satisfy the plain man, yet without rejecting his own principle that they do not differ in their nature I do not think Stout's interpretation is adequate, because I think another is possible, which leaves Hume's answer a little less vague than the view that all he can say is that there is an indescribable difference in the two ways of 'striking the mind' It seems to me that a great part of Hume's discussion of belief may be considered an explanation of the vague phrase 'striking the mind' When we are not in a sceptical mood we believe some of our perceptions to be external Other perceptions are not regarded in this way The perceptions which we believe

[1] Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p 171

to be external are impressions, those about which we have no such belief are ideas I shall try to show later how Hume thought that this attitude of belief to our perceptions is quite inexplicable and quite unjustifiable philosophically [1] At the moment it is only necessary to notice that in conformity with this opinion Hume should have said that there is no important difference between one perception and another if they are not apprehended as external We must, however, take note of the fact that we have a certain belief about some perceptions and not about others This belief plays such an important part in our lives that it is desirable to have different names for the 'believed' and the 'not-believed' perceptions Since the perceptions do not differ 'in their natures', but only in respect of our attitude to them, the obvious and only satisfactory way of distinguishing them is in terms of that belief attitude Perceptions which are believed strike more forcibly on the mind than the others, consequently Hume says that the difference between impressions and ideas lies in the force and vivacity with which they strike upon the mind, and it is of the utmost importance not to forget that this phrase is to be understood in terms of the inexplicable belief about external objects [2] This account of the distinction has one great merit which most other accounts lack, in that a similar distinction cannot also be drawn between one impression and another or one idea and another Having distinguished impressions from ideas we can always say that ideas are generally fainter, more fragmentary, less forcible, less distinct, less steady, etc , but none of these characteristics alone, nor even all of them together,

[1] Chapter 9

[2] Hume admits, though, that we do not always so interpret it Cf below, p 82

is adequate to distinguish impressions from ideas This is largely due to the fact that some ideas and some impressions are fainter, more fragmentary, more unsteady, etc , than other ideas and other impressions, consequently some vivid ideas will be more vivid than some faint impressions and so on Worse still, however, they are unconvincing ways of distinguishing, since we all do distinguish ideas from impressions and feel more sure that we are distinguishing rightly than we ever should if we believed the only difference to lie in the kind of characteristics I have suggested above, which sometimes are a sign of a difference but quite often are not It is clear that ideas are usually less vivid, etc , than impressions, and this and other distinctions are useful for many purposes, especially to help us to decide whether the criterion should be applied when there is any doubt There must, however, be some other criterion by which we distinguish impressions from ideas before it is even possible for us to see that impressions have certain characteristics which ideas have not Hume himself would be the last to deny the importance of the characteristics for this purpose We do not, of course, believe any and every perception We have constructed an elaborate system out of our believed perceptions which we call the external world, and all impressions must fit into this system Sometimes the belief is incompatible with other beliefs and further perceptions will show that what appeared to be an impression was, in ordinary language, an illusion, and for Hume, a perception which would not have been believed had not belief outrun the understanding In cases such as this we may have been led to believe the perception because it had a certain characteristic which ideas usually have not, we are thus misled by the characteristic On other

occasions, it is conceivable that the superior liveliness may induce belief in someone in a state of doubt Whatever the effect of noticing these characteristics, however, it is essentially bound up with distinguishing true beliefs from beliefs which we should give up on consideration They lead to belief or disbelief, but in themselves, and without the peculiar attitude of belief, are inadequate to distinguish ideas and impressions Apart from the common-sense belief in an external world there would be no need to distinguish different kinds of perception at all

On this interpretation, there is some point in Hume's contrast between the idea as representative and the impression as 'compleat in itself' On the alternative suggestion, that ideas and impressions differ only in force and vivacity in the strict sense of those words, there seems to be no particular reason for supposing that an impression, simply because it is vivid, is complete, and an idea, simply because it is faint, is not On the interpretation I am advocating, however, the remark would be very significant, since it shows that though the impressions are independent of ideas and of anything else, unless we had perceived impressions we should not perceive ideas, since it is the nature of the idea to represent an impression It follows from this view that the impression must be psychologically prior. Unless we accept this we must say that an idea could be derived from or arise from something other than an impression, but this Hume expressly denies

This analysis of Hume's answer to the psychological problem enables us to deal more fully with the epistemological problem This is no mere accident From the nature of the case we should expect that the problem which is simplest epistemologically can only

be solved after the problem which is simplest psychologically It is only after we have considered how we do in fact distinguish impressions from ideas as they are experienced that we can decide how far our distinction is justified in terms of the nature of the elements and how far it is merely belief In answer to the problem of the relationship of the complex elements, Hume has said that impressions are to be distinguished from ideas in terms of our beliefs about an external world Ideas represent their impressions and are derived from them but are related to the external world only indirectly through impressions Since the ideas are derived from the impressions the impressions must be prior None of these characteristic differences throws any light on the problem of the relationship of the impressions and ideas as such There seem to be two answers which Hume might have given to this problem and I doubt whether either is very satisfactory One possibility is that ideas differ from their impressions in force and vivacity in the ordinary sense of those words Although Hume explains that he is using the words "force" and "vivacity" in a metaphorical sense, it is clear that he also uses them sometimes in their literal sense This is probably because he saw that as a matter of fact the relationship of impression to idea, *i e* force and liveliness in the metaphorical sense, is in a way analogous to the relationship of more to less vivid (in the literal sense) and we do tend to take vividness in the literal sense as evidence for vividness in the metaphorical sense This tendency is most important in relation to what we call mistaken judgements It explains why it is that in unreflecting moments, due to sleep, fever, madness, inattention, etc , we mistake an idea for an impression The mistake is entirely due to the fact that we assume

force and vivacity in the literal sense to be evidence for force and vivacity in the metaphorical sense, *i e* for an external object, whereas on consideration we should unhesitatingly admit that the assumption is unjustified since some ideas are more vivid than some impressions Thus Hume sometimes argues as if the impressions and ideas in the first and second senses do differ in vividness, in the literal sense, in themselves, that is to say quite apart from any attitude of the percipient to them In the case of the problem of the relationship of the third kind of impressions and ideas, the difference in vividness, in the literal sense, either leads to or is derived from, the difference in vividness in the metaphorical sense, *i e* whether the perception is or is not external The difference can have no such connection in the case of the other problem Consequently the distinction between impressions and ideas in the first two senses would be purely arbitrary, depending on which particular degree of vividness is to be on the border-line It would follow also, of course, that in terms of this problem there could be no mistakes, granting that we could provide a standard of vividness If a perception has a certain degree of vividness then it is an idea If it has not, it is not

The second possibility is that Hume meant his answer to this problem to be that ideas are copies of impressions If so, "copy" must be interpreted in such a way that the copy implies no reference to its original In this case, any particular perception, on its first occurrence, is an impression, and any subsequent perception precisely similar to that perception is an idea It would, of course, be quite legitimate to define "ideas" in such a way that an idea has this relation to impressions but we do not throw any light on any problem of importance to philosophy or epistemology

by so doing Since this is true of the distinction in terms of vividness also, and since Hume offers no further alternative, I suggest that it is not necessary to distinguish impressions from ideas in the first and second senses The view that these impressions and ideas are indistinguishable may appear startling, but the fact that it has no far-reaching effects will no doubt render it acceptable Its chief recommendation is that it conduces to clarity If we admit that there are the two different problems I have distinguished, we are able to see that the only sense in which ideas and impressions can be distinguished is in terms of our beliefs about them, and that there is no characteristic which can be named or discussed without risk of error which would justify us in asserting any kind of difference between impressions and ideas as such

We must now consider some of the objections that have been raised to this theory of the relations of impressions and ideas I shall take Professor Stout's statements as representative of these criticisms as he appears to have raised all the arguments which may seem to be important objections to Hume's view and to have offered enlightening contributions of his own to the same topics The most important of these objections we have already considered, namely, whether the force and vivacity argument adequately answers Hume's problem The second important criticism is also raised by Stout We have seen how he argues that Hume ought only to mean by an 'idea' of an impression a 'subsequent fainter copy', and how, in the Gifford Lectures, he seems to be interpreting this phrase quite literally [1] He then argues, 'But if he consistently abided by this position, he could not stir a step in working out a philosophy even of the most sceptical character', and

[1] *Mind and Matter*, p 218

concludes, 'Hence he surreptitiously takes a step of momentous importance, with no indication that he recognizes its significance He substitutes the term "thought" for "idea" as if they were synonymous' This substitution 'covertly implies that in perceiving an idea we not only perceive what is in fact a copy of an impression, but also think of it as being a copy, and therefore think not merely of the copy but of the original' Unfortunately, Stout does not give any reference which would enable us to see at what point he thinks Hume takes this momentous step, nor does he give any quotation or explanation in justification of what he takes to be the consequences of this substitution We cannot, therefore, be sure that we have understood his criticisms In default of any clear statement from Stout himself, we can only assume that he is attacking Hume for making the confusion we have already discussed Hume does not make it sufficiently clear that it is the ideas which he is concerned with in the first problem which are distinguishable in terms of their own natures and the ideas which he is concerned with in his second problem which have distinguishing characteristics other than those Stout is probably using "idea" for ideas of the first and second kinds and "thought" for ideas of the third kind Hume, however, uses "idea" in both senses, or rather he requires ideas to fulfil the two different functions throughout his philosophy, so that the use of "thought" as synonymous with "idea" does not seem to be a particularly momentous step "Thought", as Stout understands the word, is synonymous with one of Hume's uses of "idea", but he uses "idea" in this sense throughout Stout suggests that Hume starts from certain fundamental assumptions and professes to deduce certain consequences from them, but in fact is

only able to reach the consequences if he makes a new assumption (viz that an idea is representative) which is incompatible with the original assumptions (especially that an idea is nothing but a faint copy) If this is so we should have two incompatible theories neither of which would be likely to seem very satisfactory either to Hume or to anyone else If we agree to interpret Hume's argument as we have interpreted it so far it is clear that the different accusatives, whether called "thoughts" or "ideas", are not confused in the sense that Hume cannot admit both but only in the sense that he has not clearly distinguished the two kinds of entities nor the two problems relating to each of them The fact that Stout himself distinguishes the idea which might also be called a thought from the image, which is the idea in Hume's first or second sense,[1] might have enabled him to see this His statement runs 'The image is the specifying content of the thought, determining it as the *idea* of a specific impression' [2]

Even if we admit that the perception-idea must be distinguished from the idea as experienced, or thought, it does not follow that the thought is to be interpreted as Stout suggests I do not think that Hume's second use of "idea" implies either covertly or openly that in perceiving an idea we always 'not only perceive what is in fact a copy of an impression, but also think of it as being a copy, and therefore think not merely of the copy but of the original' In perceiving any perception either we perceive it as external or believe it to be external or we do not If we do not have that attitude of belief then the perception is an idea The recognition that an idea is a copy of an impression comes only

[1] It is unnecessary to distinguish the two for this argument
[2] *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p 367, cf 366 367

after we have considered their relationship It does not seem to be implied by Hume's use of the words since we can perfectly well draw the distinction without reference to copying at all It is true, of course, that some ideas represent their impressions, and quite probably Stout is using "copy" for "represent" Nevertheless, not all ideas refer to the impressions which they copy One difference between ideas of memory and imagination is that in the former case the idea is thought of as being a copy of an impression, in the latter case, although the simple ideas are in fact *of* an impression, they are usually not thought of as such, and we certainly do not think of all the simple impressions of which the simple ideas which compose the complex are representative

The same objections seem to me to apply to Laird's criticism· 'Yet the mere fact (if fact it were) that ideas are *derived* from impressions surely does not prove, or even suggest, that every idea is so very wise as to know its own father, or even as to know that it has a pedigree of any kind, and the fact (if fact it were) that certain ideas and certain impressions do actually resemble one another is no more proof of an idea *knowing* this resemblance than the similarity between one penny stamp and another one is a proof that penny stamps possess knowledge at all "Copies" in other words need not *mean* or *refer,* and if impressions do not mean and do not refer why should their effigies do so?'[1] All this seems to be quite indisputable but irrelevant The fact that an idea is "of" an impression does not imply any of the things that Laird denies that it implies, but, so far as I can see, Hume did not think that it does

The final points raised by Stout's criticism are that

[1] *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature,* p 32

Hume could not stir a step in his philosophy without substituting "thought" for "idea" and that 'the whole foundation of Hume's scepticism is destroyed if it is once admitted that the fainter copy of an impression may be so connected with its original that in perceiving the copy we *eo ipso* know immediately not only this, but the previous existence of the impression as the original of the copy' [1] In the first place, since, as I hope I have succeeded in showing, Hume's remarks about ideas in relation to his two different problems must be distinguished, and since he did not assume that his philosophy could be based on ideas of the first kind only, there is nothing to be gained by trying to see whether Hume could have stirred a step in philosophy on that assumption, if he had made it In the second place, Hume does not seem to say that in knowing an idea we *eo ipso* know immediately the previous existence of the impression as its original, and Stout does not attempt to substantiate the view that Hume does Nevertheless, even if Hume did admit this, it is not so obviously disastrous to his scepticism as Stout seems to think The particular sceptical theory of Hume's which is relevant to this point seems to consist in the assertion that we can have belief only, and not certainty, about an external world [2] Had Hume thought, as most people seem to suppose he thought, that we can have doubts, or cannot have certainty, of our perceptions, his philosophy would be reduced to absurdity The point of the sceptical theory of the relation of minds to the external world is to distinguish that relation from the relation which gives certainty It is difficult to believe that Hume would have spent so much time and trouble on making the distinction if he thought we had to be as sceptical

[1] *Mind and Matter*, p 218 219 [2] Cf Chapter 8

with regard to perceptions as we should be (as philosophers) with regard to beliefs—in fact there would be no distinction

Stout's mistake, in the passage I have quoted, lies in the fact that he says that Hume would admit that we 'knew' the impressions Supposing Hume does make the admission Stout accuses him of (which I deny), he is unlikely, even in his most careless moments, to say that we know an impression in the sense in which the impression is believed to be external Hume was quite firm in maintaining that we can have only belief, and not certainty or knowledge, about what is external This is the very essence of one form of his sceptical theories, and the contradiction which would destroy the whole foundation of the scepticism would not be admitted by Hume although he cannot admit memory knowledge he can consistently allow memory belief, which is all he requires This mistake seems to me to be natural enough on Stout's part, since he himself holds, I think, quite rightly, that our perceptions always involve belief in something external, and has apparently not realized that Hume is concerned not only with perceptions as they are usually apprehended but with the perceptions as such, which enable him to deal with philosophical problems, and that it is only of perceptions in the latter sense that we can ever be said to have certainty or knowledge in Stout's usage If the perception be so analysable that it is not apprehended as external or as of something external, this argument has nothing to do with his scepticism In this sense, an impression merely is a 'fainter copy' quite literally, and the assertion that it is will be entirely in terms of perception and so not a matter of fact at all

The source of all this trouble seems to be, according

to Laird,[1] Hume's unfortunate remark that 'ideas always represent their objects or impressions' Laird assumes that representation involves reference to what is represented, and presumably Stout also bases his arguments on this assumption, although he does not make it explicit It does not seem to me, however, that Hume does use the word in this sense It is equally possible to interpret the passage in question in such a way that "represents" is synonymous with "copies", and I imagine that this is what Hume meant Stout and Laird both give the alternative interpretation, presumably because they think Hume cannot stir a step in his philosophy without it I hope I have succeeded in showing that the assumption is not at all necessary for Hume's philosophy If so, it will be agreed that there is no particular reason for accepting this interpretation, which is incompatible with Hume's other assertions, rather than the one which is compatible with them That there are difficulties in Hume's exposition of his theory is indisputable, but this does not seem to me to be one of them I think both Laird and Stout probably are thinking of impressions in the *first sense and ideas in the second sense* and arguing, *quite rightly, that Hume cannot derive* one from the *other without introducing* something more than the *literally* interpreted force and vivacity argument Also that he cannot stir a step in his philosophy without the simple ideas in the second sense, which is equally true I think they are wrong, though, in the conception of simple ideas of the second kind as *known* to be representative, and wrong in thinking that there is no way of accounting for simple ideas of the second kind open to Hume other than by the assumptions they accuse him of Hume's mistake seems to me to lie in failing

[1] *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p 32

to distinguish clearly between impressions of the first and second kinds and ideas of the first and second kinds, and in failing to give an adequate account of the importance of belief in this connection The views implied by everything he says seem to be admirably clear and self-consistent, even though he did not himself succeed in expressing them at all clearly

11 *The One Exception*

We have so far considered Hume's theory of the nature of ideas in the light of his view that every simple idea has a certain relationship to some simple impression There remains, however, Hume's famous 'exception' to this rule If, indeed, it be an exception, then there still remains one class of simple ideas of which we have as yet given no account Hume says that if we suppose a person to have been acquainted with every shade of blue except one, and that all the shades of blue except this one are placed before him in order, he will perceive the blank and will, 'from his own imagination, supply this deficiency, and raise up to himself the idea of that particular shade, though it had never been conveyed to him by his senses' (E 21) 'This may serve as a proof that the simple ideas are not always, in every instance, derived from the correspondent impressions ' Nevertheless, Hume concludes, 'the instance is so particular and singular, that 'tis scarce worth our observing, and does not merit that for it alone we should alter our general maxim' (T 6, cf E 21) We must first consider the exception itself and then ask whether it requires us to 'alter our general maxim'

Just as in many other cases, Hume's own statement here is so brief that the correct interpretation of it is to a great extent left to the reader's imagination If we

take his argument just as it stands, a great many people, including myself, would reply that we could not raise up the idea of the shade which had never before been experienced Since the matter is insusceptible of proof the discussion would then have reached its conclusion This procedure, however, throws no light on Hume's problem, and as it seems to me that an examination of 'the one exception' and the confusions it involves brings out some of the fundamental characteristics of Hume's enquiries, I propose to adopt a more lax procedure, and instead of keeping to the letter of Hume's argument to ask how he came to introduce it and how it might be interpreted in the light of his other arguments I think it is clear that the 'one exception' either just happened to occur to Hume, as it might occur to anyone, or else it was suggested to him by someone else Being fundamentally honest in these matters, he therefore draws our attention to it, but from the fact that the argument in the *Enquiry* follows the same lines as the argument in the *Treatise*, instead of being redrafted from the beginning in the light of the exception, Hume obviously does not think it very important Most critics of Hume do not ask why he regards it as unimportant, a question which surely must be asked in the light not only of Hume's explicit statement but also of the form of his argument in the *Enquiry* They content themselves with the assertion that the statement of the exception involves the collapse of Hume's fundamental theory about impressions and ideas For this reason I propose to begin by examining the exception, even though, from the point of view of Hume's argument, it would be better to begin with the reasons for its relative unimportance

Despite the fact that Hume himself regards the particular instance he cites as an exception to his rule,

and that everyone else accepts his view without question, it is quite possible that it is not an exception at all The singular instance which Hume noticed was not in itself an exception to his rule but simply a fact of our experience There are various different ways of stating and interpreting this fact, and it is only on one particular interpretation, namely the one Hume accepts, that it is an exception to his rule The fact that Hume uses words to express this problem which have misled him at other times suggests that he may here too have been confused owing to his failure to define his terms clearly Hume is probably right in saying that if we had been acquainted with every shade of a certain colour except one, and if every shade except that one were placed before us, descending gradually from the deepest to the lightest, we should 'perceive' the blank Everyone will admit, however, that this is a very loose expression The fact that there is a shade missing is not perceived in any ordinary use of the word "perceive", or in any of Hume's uses Awareness of the fact that 'there is a greater distance in that place betwixt the contiguous colours' (T 6) is some form of judgement resulting from a series of very complicated mental processes and concepts As a general rule, if we raised this problem at all, it would only be to point out the fact that given a series of elements each of which is related to the next element in the series in a certain way, we become aware of the relation and so of the fact that there is a gap in the series In this case, to say that we 'perceive' a gap sufficiently expresses our observation If, however, we are concerned with a perceptual problem, it is obviously undesirable to use this expression unless we do actually 'perceive' the gap in the sense in which we have defined "perception" for the purposes of this discussion In this case, it would

be better to say that we judge that there is a gap "Judgement", of course, is as vague as "perception" until it is defined, but the use of this word at least shows that we do not perceive the gap Hume then argues that we can raise up the 'idea' which would fill the gap The use of "idea" here makes his assertion appear more plausible than it really is [1] The fact which few will deny is that we are aware that there is a gap, and that a particular shade of blue intermediate between those on either side of the gap would fill it From this point of view we do not perceive the idea, but we are aware, or judge, that a certain particular having certain relations to other particulars would fill the gap I think that this is the fact which Hume first noticed, but owing to his use of "perception" in this context and to his interpretation of "idea" as "image" at this stage of his enquiry, he assumed that few will deny that we can raise up an image This is clearly a disputable point I suggest, then, that the instance Hume cites shows clearly that we do have an idea in some sense of the word, but it does not necessarily show that we can have an image of the missing shade [2]

We must now ask, why Hume thought the exception unimportant It seems to me that, as Hume himself states it, it is important He says that he believes that nearly everyone will admit that we can perceive the missing shade If this is so there is precisely the same evidence for the exception as there is for the rule, namely that everyone, or nearly everyone, would agree that each is observable in experience Consequently Hume should have altered the rule to allow for the exception If, as I have suggested, although everyone

[1] I suggest that 'the inferences Hume did not explore' (Laird, *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature*, p. 37) are implied by his confused use of "idea" throughout and not merely by this one exception

[2] Cf Stout, *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*, p 377

will admit that we can have an idea of the missing shade in some sense of that word, not everyone will admit that we can have an image of it, there is not the same evidence for the exception as for the rule This seems to be in fact the case Although everyone will agree that most images are derived from preceding impressions, and the majority will agree that there is no image not derived from a preceding impression, very few will admit that we can raise up a new image independently of any previous impression, Consequently, whereas there is a very high degree of probability that the rule applies universally, and it certainly applies in some cases, the assertion that there is an exception has only a very low degree of probability, as judged from Hume's empirical standpoint We have already seen that Hume is not concerned to assert or to deny that we have or do not have any particular experience, but to examine what everyone would admit is experienced The terms "impression" and "idea" are introduced primarily to enable us to talk about these experiences, but the attempt to define these terms and to determine those elements in experience to which they can best be applied throws light on the nature of the elements to which they refer Hume's examination of the elements in experience which everyone would admit to be impressions and ideas respectively, in some sense of these terms, determines the definitions he gives, and so the means of deciding in cases where we are doubtful For Hume, whether the drunkard's pink rats are complexes having sensations as elements or not is not a metaphysical but an epistemological problem He is not asking whether something which appears to be an element in someone's experience is or is not 'really there', but how the experience is to be expressed in terms of his epistemo-

logical theory In the same way, the discovery that an individual may experience an idea which does not copy any previously experienced impression should also, to a certain extent, determine his definition Had Hume felt fairly sure that we can raise up a new image, and that everyone would agree that we can, as he suggests they do, he should have adapted his definition of "image" accordingly Since, however, the definition is largely a matter of convenience, although to a certain extent determined for us, the fact that there can be no evidence for the 'exception' and that most people doubt its occurrence, justifies Hume in refusing to change his definition Even if there either is or will be such an exception, we can never know that there is,[1] so it is unnecessary to adapt our theory to cover this possibility We may conclude, then, that Hume was wrong in supposing that there is strong empirical evidence for the fact that we can 'raise up' a new image, but right in so far as he enables us to see that it may be possible He is also wrong in supposing that even if there is strong empirical evidence for it, nevertheless it does not merit that we should change our rule, since it is this form of empirical evidence which determines us to select one rule or definition rather than another If, however, we accept the fact that the evidence only justifies us in asserting that we can make certain judgements about the series with the missing member, and not in asserting that we can raise up a new image (although we admit this may be possible), then the exception does not merit that 'for it alone we should alter our general maxim' [2]

[1] I do not agree with Spearman, *The Nature of Intelligence and Principles of Cognition*, p 94, that he has 'verified' Hume's 'conjecture' He does not give any evidence to show that he has not perceived that particular shade before, nor do I see how he could

[2] For an interesting discussion of the psychological problem which Hume's discussion raises, but with which he himself is not concerned, see Stout, *Analytic*

III *Conclusion*

So far we have confined our attention to simple ideas, and we should therefore turn now to an account of the complex ideas If, however, this interpretation of Hume's theories is correct, it is only desirable to distinguish impressions from ideas when these words are used with reference to objects Consequently, in so far as it might be necessary to refer to a complex idea in the strict sense of "idea" (*i e* the sense in which it is a perception and nothing more), it could be described precisely as a complex impression would be described, with the additional assertion that it is fainter. All the important problems about the complexes relate to the perceptions which are to be regarded as objects and not as perceptions in the strict sense of that term, and therefore belong to the next chapter

Psychology, vol II, p 54 For an alternative interpretation see Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p 234

CHAPTER 6

ACCUSATIVES OF PERCEIVING

3. Complexes and Objects

1 *The Relation of Complexes to Simples*

According to Hume there are two fundamental premisses which he feels must be accepted, even though he also believes them to be inconsistent with each other, namely '*that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*, and *that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*' (T 636) Since the two principles certainly appear to be independent and not incompatible, Hume means, presumably, that, taken together, they are incompatible with the fact that we do apprehend complexes Many of Hume's critics accept his view on this point and believe that he cannot advance beyond the discrete perceptions and cannot, therefore, account for complexes They conclude that his position is untenable, but that his argument is nevertheless valuable in that it shows that any philosophy which attempts to give an account of experience in terms of ultimate principles is doomed to failure[1] Although there may be a fundamental incompatibility between Hume's principles and the existence of complexes in any sense, the incompatibility is not obvious, so that we should at least attempt some further investigation of the problem before rejecting his fundamental principles This is especially important in view of the significant fact that despite the quandary

[1] *E g* Reid, *Essay on the Powers we have by means of our External Senses* Hamilton's Edition, vol 1, p 293

he is faced with Hume insists on holding his ground 'I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflexions, may discover some hypothesis that will reconcile those contradictions' (T 636) Very probably the difficulty may be overcome by means of a new interpretation of the principles without any need for a new hypothesis We must, accordingly, ask on what interpretation of Hume's position difficulties arise, and if there is any alternative interpretation which does not give rise to difficulties.

If we begin our enquiry into the nature of the accusatives of the human understanding by asking what everybody would admit that they apprehend, we discover a number of complexes, a desk, a chair, a pen, etc We are, therefore, bound to acknowledge that these complexes exist in some sense, Hume says, and there must be something wrong with any epistemological theory in terms of which there can be no complexes Nevertheless, a further examination of the accusatives of the understanding yields the two principles which must be accepted and which Hume believes to be irreconcilable with the complexes The fact that there are complexes and the facts expressed by the two principles are, however, only irreconcilable on the assumptions that the complexes we apprehend are apprehended as complexes of which the elements are distinct perceptions, and that distinct perceptions can only constitute a complex when united by real connections, and that a real connection can only be apprehended in perception It is open to question whether any one of these assumptions is necessary for Hume, and I think it is possible to show that so far from being necessary they are incompatible with many of his more important doctrines

The first question to ask is whether there is anything referred to in Hume's philosophy which can be described as distinct, and, if so, what is meant by saying that it is distinct It seems clear that if anything is to be described as distinct it must be the simple perception According to Hume, simple perceptions are what really exist They are the elements which alone can take the place of the substance of previous philosophies If anything answers to the account of substance, then impressions and ideas do, but, whether they are substances or not, there can be no doubt that there really are simple impressions and simple ideas, or that simple ideas and simple impressions exist, or are in the world or in nature We may be sceptical about external objects, selves or complexes, we may argue whether perceptions are appearances or representations of something beyond themselves, but it is not within the power of any human being seriously to question the existence of simple perceptions This seems to me to be Hume's sole strictly metaphysical statement, all his other problems are problems of analysis, and so far as I can see it asserts a thoroughgoing realism which is absolutely undeniable The problem is, which of Hume's different varieties of simple perceptions are the real distinct existents Hume would probably have replied, the simple perceptions which are not apprehended as external and which I have indicated in the only way possible As we have seen, however, the characteristics Hume attributes to simple perceptions do not characterize the simple impressions and simple ideas he indicates The ultimately simple and unanalysable entity is not identical with that entity which we perceive to be a simple element in our complex perception Although the notion of distinctness requires analysis, the assertion that sensations, Hume's un-

analysable entities, are distinct existences is at least intelligible The fact that they cannot be defined, but can only be indicated by references to the properties or relations they do not have, implies some sense in which they are distinct It is clear that if sensations are distinct in this sense, then simple perceptions and simple ideas are not distinct in the same sense, since sensations are constituents of simple perceptions and since the latter can be analysed into sensations apprehended in certain ways or having certain characters As Hume does not distinguish the simple perception from the sensation he assumes that perception alone will reveal the ultimate simple elements of experience He cannot, however, deny that we do mistake the complex for the simple The only defect of our senses is, that they suggest that what is complex is simple (T 28) It is quite legitimate to argue that we do not perceive real connections between the distinct existents, but that, owing to the activity of mind, we nevertheless perceive complexes, but it is not legitimate to assert that these distinct existents are perceived and that perception suggests that complexes are simple The assertion could only be accepted if Hume could supply some criterion by means of which we could distinguish the 'apparently' simple from the 'really' simple He does not attempt to supply such a criterion and probably could not do so If, however, he had distinguished the sensation from the simple perception there would have been no difficulty The sensations which are simple and are distinct existents can only be apprehended directly as inseparable elements in simple perception or indirectly by means of a concept which is reached by analysis As experienced they are not distinct at all, but are elements associated with other elements in complexes Even though we perceive a perception as

simple now, we may in the future perceive it to be complex Moreover, even if we could be certain that what we now perceive as simple is really simple (which in this context can only mean will never in fact be perceived to be complex) we could not be certain that it is distinct Sensations can be described as distinct because the concept sensation is reached by analysis and anything which has not the character referred to as distinctness is not a sensation "Simple perception" on the other hand, is a name for something which is in fact apprehended in perception, and we can only discover whether it is or is not characterized by distinctness by empirical investigation Hume does not give any justification for calling such perceptions distinct, and I think it is very doubtful whether any useful purpose is served either in philosophy or epistemology, by calling them distinct in any sense On the contrary, since the simple perceptions, although accepted as simples for certain purposes, are themselves complex and presumably involve principles of association within themselves, an investigation of their complexity is likely to be very much more illuminating than an attempt to determine some sense in which they are distinct We may conclude, then, that although in some sense a sensation is an existent, the fundamental existent for Hume is the simple perception The existent which is distinct is the sensation, and since it cannot be directly apprehended as such it cannot be apprehended as distinct There seems no reason to dispute Hume's assertion that those sensations which 'exist separately' cannot alone yield a complex which exists in the same sense as they exist Hume's confusion of sensation and simple perception, however, must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that he has not given any reason for supposing that simple perceptions

are distinct and isolated, and, therefore, has not shown that it is impossible that there should be complexes

Even if we allow that it is not impossible for simple perceptions to be connected with other perceptions, or with anything else, in a complex we have still to explain how they can be connected One of Hume's views on this point, and I believe the view which is partly responsible for his belief that the principles are incompatible with the existence of complexes, is that since all our perceptions are impressions or ideas, that is to say, since we do not perceive relations, for instance, we cannot account for complexes This argument seems only to be valid on the assumption that a complex perception consists of two or more simple perceptions connected by a real connection, that the apprehension of a complex perception necessarily involves apprehension of the relating element and that apprehension of that element can only be through perception Hume does not explicitly maintain any of these assumptions In so far as he believes that there are no connections which are real in the same sense as the simple perceptions which are connected are real he is probably right This does not prove, however, that there are no connections in any sense nor that the existence of a complex implies the existence of something which can be referred to as a connection [1] Moreover, not only does he not prove that apprehension of a complex perception necessarily involves apprehension of real connections relating the simpler constituents of the complex, but his own treatment of one type of complex perceptions is inconsistent with the assertion that it does Finally, his own subsequent arguments show that he did not believe that all appre-

[1] The complex may, for example, be the result of a particular way of apprehending simples

hension is perceptual apprehension We may conclude, then, that the two principles are only obviously incompatible with the existence of complexes if we assume that the simple perception has the characteristics which should only be attributed to sensations, and that Hume's belief that nevertheless the complexes and the principles are incompatible seems to be based on assumptions which there is no particular reason to accept Accordingly we need not reject the principles, but we must reject Hume's identification of simple perceptions and sensations and also his implicit assumptions

Before considering the complexes it is important to recognize that Hume has not distinguished this problem of complexity from a quite different problem of complexity We cannot dispute the awareness of the complexes with which our investigation begins Within complex perceptions we can perceive simple perceptions These simple perceptions, however, are too complex for the expression of certain epistemological doctrines Accordingly, the epistemologist abstracts the sensation, which is an element in the simple perception, and by this means is able to tell us something about simple perceptions For other purposes, however, it is necessary to proceed to a still greater degree of abstraction From one point of view sensations are simple, but as Hume says, 'Even in this simplicity there might be contain'd many different resemblances and relations' (T 25) Thus, just as simple perceptions are insufficiently simple for some epistemological purposes, so pure sensations prove insufficiently simple for other epistemological purposes To give an account of abstract ideas and mathematics, for example, we must be able to refer to the different respects in which a sensation, which is supposedly simple, both differs from

and resembles other simple sensations As Stout points out, 'Any homogeneous sensation will manifest by analysis a variety of characteristics', and he gives as an example that toothache has quality, intensity, extensity, protensity and local sign [1] Any representative collection of Hume's remarks on the subject of the separability of perceptions certainly suggests that the distinction of simple perceptions within complexes, of sensations within simple perceptions and of characteristics within sensations can all be treated as one problem. It seems very probable, however, that the processes of abstraction differ in important respects in each case

11 *Complex Perceptions*

We have already noticed that it is not easy to discover the precise character of Hume's problems from his own statements about them This difficulty arises in connection with his arguments about complexes Hume has sometimes been criticized for inconsistency in admitting that there are complexes at all It is held that if indeed everything in nature is 'distinct' then there can be no complexes This form of criticism suggests that Hume's treatment of complex impressions is intended to show the way in which complexes can be made up of simples Although it must be admitted that many of Hume's own arguments lend colour to this view it does not seem to be a correct interpretation of his problem The passages which suggest that Hume's object was to account for the genesis of complex ideas from simple ideas are very unfortunate He does not begin his enquiry with simples as the data out of which complexes must somehow be constructed, any

[1] *Manual of Psychology* p 125, though it should be noted that Stout is here using sensation for what I have called a simple perception

more than any plain man first experiences simples and then constructs complexes out of them On the contrary, he first takes for granted the fact that the apple is indisputably given as one thing and then asks the epistemological question, 'How is this complex to be analysed?'—not the psychological question, 'How do we come to perceive this complex as one thing?' In the first place it is, of course, perfectly true that with only simples given Hume can never account for complexes It is equally true, however, that he is not faced with this impossible task He is just as willing to admit that there are complexes as that there are simples What he denies, though he does not succeed in making this very clear, is that there are complexes in the *same sense* in which there are simples Moreover, that there are simples[1] is not a datum of his philosophy, it is only discovered by analysis In the second place, although from the psychological point of view objects are prior to complex perceptions, for his purposes Hume can analyse complex perceptions without reference to external objects

The nature of complex perceptions is not so obvious as Hume seems to think, and his statement of his own view about them is, to say the least, a little ambiguous He affirms simply that complex impressions are those perceptions which are separable into simple perceptions I have purposely used the word "separable" in this connection because it seems to me that Hume does intend us to understand by "a complex impression", an impression which is perceived as complex and not merely a complex which can only be analysed by abstraction It follows that he is not here concerned with the connection of sensations, but with the connection of simple perceptions in a complex Or, more

[1] In the sense indicated

strictly, he will be satisfied if he can analyse the complex in terms of perceptions so that his discussion of complexes throws no light on the relationship of simple perceptions to sensations

The only clue to the nature of the complex impression is Hume's example, the apple Even this is likely to be very misleading 'Tho' a particular colour, taste, and smell, are all qualities united together in this apple, it is easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other' (T 2) That there is a complex impression constituted by the different simple impressions of taste, colour and smell would be true under certain conditions, namely, when one person is actually smelling, tasting and looking simultaneously [1] Hume did not think it necessary to supply these conditions and his failure to do so seems due not merely to carelessness in stating his view but to a more fundamental difficulty If a complex impression can be accurately described as an impression at all, then the constituents of the complex must all be simple impressions This is in conformity with Hume's own definition of complexes There must, then, be no elements in the complex impression which are not being experienced (as impressions and not as ideas) by the percipient It is arguable, of course, that this is precisely what Hume meant and said I think it is clear, though, that Hume has a strong tendency to conceive complex perceptions as being far more closely analogous to objects than his theories about perceptions justify [2] In answer to this objection he would probably have argued that the vulgar take their perceptions to be their only objects, so that there is no problem of distinguish-

[1] I am inclined to think that taste and colour, for example, never could be combined in a complex impression, since what is tasted must be in the mouth and therefore not visible

[2] I mean by objects the external things which all plain men regard as objects

ing the two, at any rate for the true philosophy From the point of view of epistemology, however, it is highly desirable that the two should be distinguished clearly It is most improbable that a complex impression ever is taken to be an object, even by the most unphilosophical What is 'taken to be an object' is, at the very least, a complex of impressions and ideas, and this complex probably usually contains also other ideas of different kinds Hume could reply, quite legitimately, that he has not asserted that the apple is a complex impression but only that it is a complex perception He certainly does not distinguish complex impressions and complex ideas in this discussion, and it might quite well be the case that he considered that the apple is not a complex impression but a complex perception in which colour and smell are impressions and taste is idea, nevertheless he nowhere asserts such a view, and I do not think he had realized that it was necessary

By "a complex impression" then, we seem justified in understanding a collection of simple impressions apprehended as a unity, and by a "complex idea" a collection of simple ideas apprehended as a unity Whether anyone in fact ever apprehends a complex impression or a complex idea as such, or whether they are only apprehended as elements in other complexes, is irrelevant to the epistemological problem of their analysis It is important to recognize, however, that most common-sense objects cannot be regarded as examples of complex impressions or of complex ideas, even if we believe a common-sense object to be nothing but a perception They may, however, on this assumption, be examples of a complex perception consisting of simple impressions and simple ideas The fact that Hume does not raise this problem at all seems to corroborate the assumption that he really was not clear

about the distinction between perceptions and objects We seem invariably to experience objects—even our ideas are conceived as ideas of possible objects—but it is not inconceivable that we are sometimes aware of complex perceptions If we are, then this awareness is at a later stage of psychological development than awareness of objects In any case it is sufficient for the epistemologist if he can see clearly how perceptions and objects are to be distinguished when he analyses them It is necessary to consider, though, why one particular group of impressions is regarded as a complex rather than another Why, for example, do I take the blue impression (from a book) to be part of a different complex from the brown impression (the surface of the table)? We have already seen that objects are psychologically prior to perceptions Hume believes that the fact that we are aware of objects at all, or of the particular objects of awareness as they are, cannot be explained It may be due to the fact that there are external objects, or to the will of God, or to some peculiar characteristic of the human mind In any case we cannot know what it is It seems clear, however, that if we are aware of complex perceptions, either complex impressions or complex ideas, the awareness must be due to the fact that we have been aware of objects, and, if the complex perception is merely an epistemological abstraction, it is only significant in an epistemology which also admits objects In other words, the complexity found in complex perceptions, that is to say in complex impressions and complex ideas, is derivative from the nature of the complexity which is somehow given in awareness of objects Hume does not sufficiently emphasize this point Consequently, he sometimes seems to write as if simple perceptions and relations are sufficient to give a complete account of

complexes Quite clearly this is not so Any complex can be analysed into relations and simples, but given the relations and simples we should not necessarily experience the particular complexes and simples we are in fact aware of The relations hold equally between any number of other simples, so that if we imagine that Hume is attempting to show how we make up complexes out of simples and relations his account is hopelessly inadequate to explain why we are aware of these particular complexes and not others If, as I have suggested, he is primarily[1] concerned with analysis, then the complex itself is given and the problem is to determine which simples and which complexes are involved in it In discussing perceptions, whether impressions or ideas, then, it does not seem necessary to ask why the complexes are such as they are but merely to show what it is they are The former problem may now be seen to belong to the discussion of objects Moreover, it is also important to bear in mind (I do not think Hume always does so) that relations are not given in perceptual awareness as such, any more than simples are Just as simples are discovered by a process of distinguishing the complex perception from the object and separating the simples within the complex, so relations are only discovered by a process of analysis, abstraction and construction

I said above that a complex impression is a set of simple impressions which we are aware of as a unity We must now examine this loose phrase Even if we admit that the recognition of a collection as a complex is not by perception, but is due to something else, we can still ask whether we can know anything further

[1] I do not want to deny that his arguments also bear on psychology, but the psychological implications are not relevant to this problem and it would have been better if Hume had distinguished them

about the fact that it is a complex Hume expresses the fact that the collection is regarded as one thing by saying that it is individual He does not define this word and his use of it does not indicate at all certainly how it is to be interpreted The most plausible interpretation seems to be that it is used to express an ultimate character of the way in which we apprehend We have seen that Hume accepts the fact that we do not apprehend simples but collections of simples The collection which is apprehended as one thing is an individual The individual may have any number of elements from one to the greatest number which it is physically possible to apprehend simultaneously It may have any degree of complexity, and we may or may not be aware of the nature of the complexity or of the nature and number of the constituent elements As a general rule we are not aware of these things in our apprehension of the individual but only when we come to analyse them An individual is not necessarily an object though there may be one kind of object which is an individual An individual does not persist and does not recur I may at this moment be experiencing a complex impression precisely similar in character to another experienced a moment ago, but it would be a mistake to regard these experiences as two experiences of the same individual, each experience is of a different individual

In support of the view that "individual" is used to express a certain character of what we apprehend we may take Hume's account of the apprehension of one thing 'Suppose an object perfectly simple and indivisible to be presented, along with another object, whose *co-existent* parts are connected together by a strong relation, 'tis evident the actions of the mind, in considering these two objects, are not very different

The imagination conceives the simple object at once, with facility, by a single effort of thought, without change or variation The connection of parts in the compound object has almost the same effect, and so unites the object within itself, that the fancy feels not the transition in passing from one part to another Hence the colour, taste, figure, solidity and other qualities, combin'd in a peach or melon, are conceiv'd to form *one thing*, and that on account of their close relation, which makes them affect the thought in the same manner, as if perfectly uncompounded' (T 221, cf T 262) Again Hume expressly repudiates the view that a complex is a unit in any other sense than that it is apprehended as such 'Twenty men may be said to exist, but 'tis only because one, two, three, four, etc , are existent, and if you deny the existence of the latter, that of the former falls of course 'Tis therefore utterly absurd to suppose any number to exist, and yet deny the existence of unites, and as extension is always a number, according to the common sentiment of metaphysicians, and never resolves itself into any unite or indivisible quantity, it follows, that extension can never at all exist 'Tis in vain to reply, that any determinate quantity of extension is an unite, but such-a-one as admits of an infinite number of fractions, and is inexhaustible in its subdivisions For by the same rule, these twenty men *may be consider'd as an unite* The whole globe of the earth, nay, the whole universe, *may be consider'd as an unite* That term of unity is merely a fictitious denomination, which the mind may apply to any quantity of objects it collects together, nor can such a unity any more exist alone than number can, as being in reality a true number But the unity, which can exist alone, and whose existence is necessary to that of all number, is of another kind, and must be

perfectly indivisible, and incapable of being resolved into any lesser unity' (*i e* sensations) (T 30)

Hume is sometimes led into confusions in connection with the characteristic of individuals we have already noticed, namely, that they occur once and once only Sometimes he uses the word "particular" to express this character He also uses "particular" in opposition to "general" or "abstract", for example, 'If ideas be particular in their nature, and at the same time finite in their number, 'tis only by custom they can become general in their representation, and contain an infinite number of other ideas under them' (T 24, cf T 34) This leads him to suggest that the individual, which is particular in the first sense, must also be particular in the second sense, for example, ''tis a principle generally receiv'd in philosophy, that everything in nature is individual, and that 'tis utterly absurd to suppose a triangle really existent, which has no precise proportion of sides and angles' (T 19) It certainly does not follow from Hume's account of the individual that a general idea cannot be individual, but a discussion of whether this is so or not must be postponed until we have considered the nature of general ideas The last point to notice about the individual which is a complex impression is that it is absolutely determinate, or as Hume sometimes puts it, is 'clear and precise' (T 72)

III *The Relation of Objects to Complex Perceptions*

Although Hume's style and his use of undefined expressions lead to innumerable different interpretations of his view, probably everyone would agree that he believes that the distinction between perceptions and objects is only drawn at the philosophic level He repeatedly calls our attention to the fact that the vulgar

take their perceptions to be their only objects, and his emphasis of this point is clearly due to his belief that it is very significant for all his more important views It is not very difficult to see why he did so His primary aim was to show how everyday language had led his predecessors to confused philosophies, especially in their treatment of knowledge His own 'great discovery' was that it is the greatest mistake to think of what is called religious knowledge as analogous to other forms of knowledge This showed him that 'knowledge' of objects and of selves is open to similar objections, and that we cannot hope to reach a true philosophy until we have made clear in what sense the word "knowledge" is being used on these different occasions In order to do this he tries to bring out the difference between common-sense opinion and philosophic theory, and thus shows that, whereas philosophers distinguish between perception and objects, the vulgar take their perceptions to be their only objects

Unfortunately, Hume's desire to retain everything true in the common-sense view for his philosophy and especially his use of "perception" and "object" as equivalents led him into confusions Although he saw clearly that 'true' philosophy must be based on common sense, he never fully realized that common-sense opinion, which for common-sense purposes is necessarily vague, is only useful for philosophy when it is made precise I think this is why the sections dealing with objects towards the end of the *Treatise* are often more confusing than enlightening On one point, at least, we may feel quite certain, 'as far as the senses are judges, all perceptions are the same in the manner of their existence' (T 193) Nevertheless the vulgar take their perceptions to be objects, so that we are justified

in asserting that objects are different accusatives from the perceptions which we have just considered In Part IV of the *Treatise*, where Hume has most to say about objects, his view appears to be (though his argument is not without verbal and serious inconsistencies) that objects have a distinct and continued existence and that the fundamental problem is to show why we believe they have a continued existence Everyone will admit, of course, that in everyday life we unquestioningly believe that there are things which persist through time independently of us and that it is no misuse of language to call these things objects Thus far Hume is on safe ground We must, however, also bear in mind those other statements which assert that we take our perceptions to be our only objects [1]

We may agree that a perception will fulfil all the functions of the common-sense object if the only difference between the two is supposed to lie in the fact that, whereas the former is internal and mind-dependent,

[1] ' the vulgar confound perceptions and objects, and attribute a distinct continu'd existence to the very things they feel or see' (T 193)

' however philosophers may distinguish betwixt the objects and perceptions of the senses, which they suppose co existent and resembling, yet this is a distinction, which is not comprehended by the generality of mankind, who as they perceive only one being, can never assent to the opinion of a double existence and representation' (T 202)

' all the unthinking and unphilosophical part of mankind suppose their perceptions to be their only objects, and never think of a double existence internal and external, representing and represented' (T 205)

' 'Tis certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence' (T 206)

' Our perceptions are our only objects, and continue identically and uninterruptedly the same in all their interrupted appearances' (T 216)

' as every idea is deriv'd from a preceding perception, 'tis impossible our idea of a perception, and that of an object or external existence can ever represent what are specifically different from each other Whatever difference we may suppose betwixt them, 'tis still incomprehensible to us, and we are oblig'd either to conceive an external object merely as a relation without a relative, or to make it the very same with a perception or impression' (T 241)

' they (men) always suppose the very images, presented by the senses, to be the external objects, and never entertain any suspicion that the one are nothing but representations of the other' (E 151)

the latter is external and independent In admitting this it does not follow that we should also admit that the perception, which is 'perishing', will fulfil all the functions of the object, if the object is supposed to persist through time Unfortunately, Hume does not give a very clear account of the common-sense object In the earlier part of the *Treatise*, where he is anxious to establish the fact that perceptions fulfil all the functions of common-sense objects there is no reason to suppose that an object persists Even in some passages in Part IV of the *Treatise* it is possible to interpret "object" as a name for a perishing existent although the greater part of this discussion refers to a persistent existent From the point of view of epistemology it seems desirable to avoid confusion by distinguishing between two different object accusatives Although it seems impossible to determine from Hume's discussions how he thought the common-sense object should be analysed, if indeed he had any clear ideas on the subject at all, and although I am quite unable to throw any light on this problem, I think it is desirable to distinguish the different elements in Hume's argument as far as possible I shall, therefore, begin with objects of the first kind, that is to say perceptions apprehended as external but not as persisting

IV *Objects of the First Kind*

I think it is not very difficult to see how it was, that, although some of Hume's remarks suggest that objects should be analysed in one way and others suggest a different analysis, he nevertheless writes as though there is only one kind of object In everyday life, in so far as we refer to anything clearly, we rarely want to refer to objects of the first kind and it is most improbable that anyone would ever use "object" in that

sense [1] Moreover, since it is not usually necessary to distinguish the two kinds of objects, we often talk as though what is in fact an object of the first kind is an object of the second kind This habit is quite innocuous in everyday life,[2] but in philosophy it is likely to lead to difficulties, since the analysis of the two kinds of objects shows, that not only is one kind persistent and the other perishing, but that different elements enter the two analyses, and Hume's confusion in this case seems to be due to the fact that he adheres too closely to the letter of common sense, instead of recognizing that for his purposes a greater degree of accuracy is necessary For similar reasons, his view that the vulgar take their perceptions to be their only objects led him into another confusion The point Hume wants to emphasize, that it is only philosophers and not ordinary people who want to distinguish between perceptions and objects, is very important Unfortunately, though, he did not see all the implications of this view We have already seen that in giving his examples of complex impressions he tends to confuse perceptions with objects This suggests that he interpreted the assertion we 'take our perceptions to be our only objects' quite literally, and assumed that the object of common sense is merely a perception apprehended in a certain way, namely, as external It seems very probable, though, both from introspective evidence and from some of Hume's own statements, that the object cannot be accounted for so simply, and Hume's failure to realize this resulted in confusions both in his account of objects and in his account of complex perceptions

The form of our investigation of the nature of objects

[1] Because what we refer to in everyday life is a physical thing and not an accusative

[2] Cf p 115

is determined by the character of Hume's exposition It is obviously desirable to collect together all his statements about objects This cannot be done simply by taking those assertions in which the word "object" occurs, because this word is used sometimes for objects of the first kind and sometimes for objects of the second kind Moreover, Hume also uses "perceptions", "impressions" and "ideas" sometimes for objects and sometimes for perceptions in the strict sense The only possible course, in the face of these difficulties, is to consider those assertions which can be seen to relate to objects of the first kind owing to the fact that we already have a rough idea of the kind of things those objects are Moreover, the fact that Hume uses "perceptions" (in the strict sense in which perceptions are impressions or ideas) as equivalent to "objects" suggests that we must approach this problem through his account of perceptions

A complex perception, as we have seen, is a collection of simple perceptions apprehended as a unity The reason for our apprehending any collection as a unity, or for our apprehending one collection rather than another in this way, cannot be given in terms of perception alone, and the fact that they are so apprehended must be accepted without question in any analysis of perceptions as such The important point to bear in mind is that the perception is simply the impression of the senses or the fainter copy of it in idea According to Hume's explicit statement all perceptions are either simple impressions or simple ideas or collections of impressions or collections of ideas which we call complexes His very first example, though, belies the explicit statement The complex perception of the apple is neither a complex impression nor a complex idea but a complex of impressions and ideas A little considera-

tion shows that nearly every complex impression is a constituent of, or abstraction from, a complex of this mixed kind This should have been a clue to the problem of objects, but, unfortunately, Hume does not advance beyond the examples and does not even seem to see that the mixed complex raises problems which are not answered by his discussion of impressions and ideas These problems cannot be answered, it is true, in terms of the nature of perceptions, but they are of vital importance for the analysis of objects

The first point of importance is to see how object-perceptions are to be distinguished from perceptions in the strict sense When I am perceiving (in the strict sense) those perceptions which together constitute the complex perception *apple*, what I am in fact aware of is something external to me, extended in space and having properties which are named by the names I give to the simple perceptions which are constituents of this accusative This accusative is an object of the first kind As a preliminary statement we may say that it is a complex perception apprehended in a certain way, namely, as external to the observer Hume frequently uses the word "independent" in this connection It seems to me that this word can only be employed in the analysis of this accusative if we use it to express that characteristic of the accusative in virtue of which we feel that the perception is 'out there' This is the differentiating characteristic of objects, but the question whether the object or perception is dependent or independent in the usual sense of those words is clearly not raised at all at this level Another point of importance is that this accusative, the object of the first kind, does not involve apprehension of the 'thing out there' as persisting through time in the same way as it involves apprehension of something as out there—I do not, in

the act of apprehending it, consider whether the table persists or not If it is involved in any way, it seems to be in a peculiar kind of beliefs about the future These beliefs are such that an analysis of what I am, or perhaps seem to be, aware of at this moment would reveal only an object or set of objects in the sense I have given Nevertheless, if I now look under the table and see that there are no legs and that the surface is poised in mid-air I should probably say that I had believed that the table had legs This is only one example of a vast number of such beliefs which vary very considerably in kind and which are involved in this peculiar kind of way in all perceptions Whether Hume would have included these beliefs as constituents of objects we cannot say, as he nowhere raises the problem, but I think it would not be incompatible with his other views if he did include them Whether they should in fact be included is another question

The two problems to which this account immediately gives rise are, firstly, which particular perceptions are apprehended as external when we are aware of an object and, secondly, what leads us to take these particular perceptions rather than any others The attempt to answer these problems also gives rise to a third, namely, are what we at first supposed to be perceptions all perceptions in the strict sense at all It is simplest to begin with an impression object and to derive our description of the idea object from it One element which everyone will accept as a constituent of the object is a complex impression This consists of those simple impressions which I am apprehending through the senses when I apprehend the object If I am only looking at an apple they will be visual impressions, if I am holding an apple and looking at it they will be visual and tactual impressions, if I am

looking at a bell and hearing it ring they will be visual and auditory impressions To assert that the complex impression, apprehended as external, is an object, does not seem to be adequate We seem, as I have suggested, to need other elements of a different kind Hume's examples of objects suggest that some of these other elements are simple ideas, for example, the idea of the taste of the apple or of the olive Unfortunately, his suggestion does not seem to be very satisfactory A simple idea is always a copy of a simple impression and as such particular, but the idea of the taste of the apple is probably not particular in the same sense It cannot be an idea of the taste of this apple because I have not yet tasted it, nor have I any reason to suppose that it will have a taste precisely similar to the taste of any other particular apple I have tasted What I seem to apprehend is an idea, *apple taste*, which is a general idea If, in fact, I ever had gustatory images, I might represent it by a particular taste image, but I doubt if I should regard this as a constituent of the object, since particular images which, in a sense, represent abstract or general ideas do not seem to replace them I think, then, that the ideas which are constituents of the object complex are sometimes particular simple ideas, but are also often general ideas If, for example, I eat part of the apple and then, when I am not eating it, look at it again, the gustatory image which is a constituent of the object I am apprehending will probably be a copy of the absolutely specific taste I have just tasted Similarly if I look at something with which I am familiar, although some ideas may be copies of certain particular impressions, others will represent the number of different impressions I have perceived on various different occasions of being aware of the object For example, my idea of the leg of this table is

not a copy of any particular past impression, although it is related in some way to some or all of the past impressions [1]

These considerations suggest that what is apprehended as external is a mixed complex of which some elements are simple impressions, some elements are simple ideas in the strict sense, some elements are general ideas, some elements are simple ideas (in the sense of images) representing these ideas in the way in which, when we make a remark about triangles, we may have an image of a particular triangle, and possibly some kind of beliefs or expectations should be included as elements I do not want to suggest that this is either a complete or a correct analysis of objects A great deal of research into this problem seems to be necessary before we can determine even what kind of elements go to make up the complex, and still further problems are raised by the fact that the elements are indeterminate,[2] so that there seems to be no distinct division between the different kinds of elements (especially between the general ideas and the beliefs or expectations) and no distinct limit to the complex itself We are not, however, concerned with the analysis of objects but with Hume's epistemology and the point about which I do feel convinced and which I do want to emphasize is that Hume, by example and suggestion, has indicated what may be a very important field for investigation These suggestions and examples, moreover, show clearly, without any need of criticism, that his own treatment of the subject is not satisfactory

[1] 'This multiplicity of resembling instances, therefore, constitutes the very essence of power or connexion, and is the source, from which the idea of it arises' (T 163)

[2] Throughout this discussion the elements I want to refer to are the elements as apprehended and in saying that they are indeterminate, I mean, therefore, that they are not apprehended as determinate I do not want to deny that there is any sense in which they are determinate

I suggested[1] that Hume's second problem was to ask what leads us to take these perceptions rather than any others as the perception elements in an object It now seems that the elements are not all perceptions in the sense Hume supposed and that there will be various different problems relating to the selection and conjunction of the different kinds of elements Since Hume did not see that so many different kinds of elements were involved in his complex, he did not see how many different problems of relationship there are Nevertheless he does throw light on some of them In reply to one problem, why is this particular collection of visual impressions selected out of the whole field of visual impressions as constituting the set which is a constituent of the object, Hume would reply that this is an ultimate fact about experience, so far as he is concerned It may be important for someone to ask this question, perhaps for the psychologist, it may even be possible for someone to answer it, but it is not a problem but a datum for epistemology Hume would probably admit that in many actual cases of such apprehension it is in part, at least, due to past experience, but this only moves the problem one step further back Experience only serves to modify the conception of the unity (for example, it may lead me to regard a cup on a saucer as two objects, not one), we cannot explain the original apprehension of the unity in terms of it

Hume would give a very similar answer to the problem why we conjoin visual, tactual and gustatory impressions, and call the collection one object It is due to a 'blind and powerful instinct of nature' (E 151) which, as philosophers, we must accept, though we cannot explain it It is significant that this quotation,

[1] See above, p 120

which seems to express this point most clearly, is from the *Enquiry*, since we can feel fairly sure that the *Enquiry* gives us his considered opinion The corresponding statements in the *Treatise* are not so clear For example, having pointed out that the imagination conceives a simple indivisible object with a single effort of thought, he continues 'The connexion of parts in the compound object has almost the same effect, and so unites the object within itself, that the fancy feels not the transition in passing from one part to another Hence the colour, taste, figure, solidity, and other qualities, combin'd in a peach or melon, are conceiv'd to form *one thing, and that on account of their close relation, which makes them affect the thought in the same manner, as if perfectly uncompounded*'[1] (T 221) The first part of this passage clearly rests the responsibility for the connection on the imagination The part I have italicized suggests, though, that the imagination apprehends the collection in this way *because* there is a certain relation between the elements of the collection There are two possible ways of accounting for this difficulty In the first place, it may be the case that, although Hume had seen how the problem should be approached, he was not really clear about it and, like other philosophers, had 'sufficient force of genius to free [him] from the vulgar error, that there is a natural and perceivable connexion betwixt the several sensible qualities and actions of matter, but not sufficient to keep [him] from ever seeking for this connexion in matter, or causes' (T 223) If so he is guilty of a definite inconsistency Alternatively, in view of the fact that he seems to be sufficiently aware of the dangers of the problem to see how others have succumbed to them, it may be better

[1] My italics

to take the view that the passage involves no definite inconsistency but only a very misleading expression Although the apprehension of an object as such is an ultimate fact of experience and cannot be explained, nevertheless objects, as apprehended, seem to have certain observable characteristics in common On this interpretation this argument is analogous to the argument about impressions and images The difference between impressions and images is ultimate, but there are certain describable differences which are usually observable Although I would not agree that vividness could be regarded as the distinguishing characteristic in place of the ultimate difference, nevertheless I should admit that most impressions are more vivid than most ideas and that vividness may be regarded as a practical guide if any difficulty arises, provided it is not allowed to supersede the ultimate difference In precisely the same way Hume may be arguing, although a collection of perceptions is regarded as one object simply because the mind so apprehends it, nevertheless the perceptions so apprehended do usually have some close relations If this is all he meant it is unfortunate that he did not make the point more clearly In either case, what is really important for our view is to recognize that the statement in the *Enquiry* justifies us in accepting the 'blind and powerful instinct' as his considered answer to the problem

Hume lays some stress on one further point in connection with our apprehension of an object in the sense we are considering He holds that we, that is to say the vulgar, regard the different kinds of impressions and ideas as conjoined in one place I am inclined to suspect that he is here doing less than justice to the common-sense view What we apprehend is an object, and, although we regard the taste idea as part of the

same object as the olive visual impression, it does not follow that we regard the taste idea as extended Actually, as plain men, we never ask such a question as whether it is or is not extended, but I suggest that any plain man, on reflection, would admit that the taste is not extended and that Hume's statement of the problem as the problem of 'local conjunction', a phrase no plain man would ever use, begs the question In any case Hume probably first thought of the different perceptions as 'locally conjoined', even when he approached the problem as a philosopher, or he would not have been so concerned about it The point he wants to emphasize is that an object is a complex in which some elements are spatial and others are not, so that the unity cannot be adequately described in spatial terms I do not think that the apprehension of the fig and the olive as being at different ends of the table necessarily implies that the fig taste is extended in one place and the olive taste in another Obviously an object having spatial elements involves a spatial reference, and the spatial reference will be to that place where the visual impression is situated But from the fact that we conjoin something having place with something unextended in a single complex it does not follow that we think that the taste is extended any more than we think the visual impression tastes Hume seems to be right in thinking that '*an object may exist, and yet be nowhere*' (T 235), in other words, that non-spatial perceptions are not spatial, but wrong in supposing that the problem of whether they are or are not arises at all before the philosophic level, and that the vulgar have any belief on the subject, and that any of their other beliefs necessarily imply any view on the matter

The problem of the connection of impressions and ideas and of perceptions and what I have called a

peculiar kind of belief about the future, which I think refers to what Hume means when he talks about 'secret powers' (E 37), cannot be answered in terms of the inexplicable behaviour of the imagination alone It is due to habit or custom Habit is a principle 'which determines me to expect the same for the future' 'Experience is a principle which instructs me in the several conjunctions of objects for the past' (T 265) These principles cause us to make a transition from an object to its usual attendant, although we are not aware of this fact in ordinary experience This view is also expressed in the *Enquiry* (E 37),[1] where Hume maintains that the conjunction of sensible qualities and secret powers is due to custom or habit It is unlikely that anyone will want to dispute this assertion An object is a complex in which certain elements 'carry our view beyond those few objects which are present to our senses', and I think that, in the way Hume interprets this, it can only be due to past experience

So far we have considered only impression objects It seems to me, though, that everything I have said about these objects can be applied to the idea objects The only additional problem which arises is to distinguish memory objects from imagination objects This problem must be postponed until we have considered impression objects of the second kind, since Hume has not distinguished the two kinds of objects

v *Objects of the Second Kind*

Objects of the second kind are common-sense things

[1] It is interesting to notice that Hume appears to be distinguishing objects which have a secret power of nourishing which appears not to have any connection with colour, consistence and other sensible qualities, from complex impressions which have not these powers This seems to support the above analysis of objects

perceived as persisting through time Our apprehension of them is through sense awareness, so that in one sense they can be said to be based on sense impressions The impression, though, seems to serve only, or perhaps primarily, to give rise to the apprehension of the object, so that the relation of the impression to an object of the first kind is different from its relation to the object of the second kind In other words, the same impression will occur as an element in the analyses both of an object in the first sense and of an object in the second sense, but it will occur in a different way in each This difference is very difficult to express, but as it is not difficult to see that there is a difference, a rough description should be sufficient to indicate it Although we should not experience most objects of the first kind in the way in which we do experience them if we had not in fact had past experiences, the analysis of an object of the first kind does not necessarily involve reference to what has happened at another time or to what will happen in the future This should be clear from our examination of those objects The elements which are included in the complex as a result of past experience are ideas of qualities of the object and ideas of 'secret powers' Although these ideas are included as a result of past experience, they are not apprehended as referring to the past or as having any other relation to past events Moreover, it would be possible to have an object which did not include any such elements, that is to say, a complex accusative, not involving any such elements in its analysis, could be rightly named an object provided it fulfilled the other requirements of our account of objects [1] This being so, the impression which is one element of the object has no temporal

[1] I think it is conceivable, though improbable, that there could be such an object, but this is not relevant to the discussion

relations to any other elements of the object and the sense in which it is part of the object might be defined without reference to time In the case of objects in the second sense, on the other hand, we apprehend something which persists through time as persisting through time, and from the nature of the case it could not be apprehended in any other way Thus the way in which we go beyond what is given in sense in this case is different from the way in which we go beyond the sense given in apprehending an object of the first kind In apprehending an object of the first kind we do not apprehend the impression elements as referring in any way to anything which is not contemporaneous with our apprehension, whereas in apprehension of objects of the second kind we do It follows that the sense in which the impression is part of the object of the second kind cannot be analysed without reference to time, and it seems to me that this may be an essential difference in the two relations

In discussing objects of the first kind we had to abstract from Hume's discussion since he does not distinguish the two kinds of objects It was therefore impossible to follow his form of argument very closely In the case of objects of the second kind, with which Hume is chiefly concerned, we can adopt his method of approach After pointing out that we must accept the principle of the existence of body, even though we cannot defend it by argument, Hume maintains 'We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but 'tis in vain to ask, *Whether there be body* or not? That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings' (T 187) He seems to have regarded this as a perfectly clear and unambiguous statement of his method of procedure, but, from the fact that it has misled both himself and other people,

it is clear that it cannot be so The problem as Hume states it, 'What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?' certainly appears to be psychological in character, but a more careful consideration seems to show that it is not The greater part of Hume's argument is a contribution to the analysis of this particular accusative, although we must also admit that other parts of it are concerned with purely psychological questions Since the accusative he is analysing is not a perception in the strict sense, but a complex of *these perceptions and something due to mind*, the account of what is due to mind must be in psychological terms It does not follow from this, though, that Hume is concerned with a psychological problem His problem seems to me to be the epistemological problem of showing how certain forms of mental behaviour or certain mental acts enter into or are relevant to the analysis of the different accusatives The psychologist is concerned with totally different questions, namely, how to give an account of the nature and origin of the behaviour or acts with which Hume begins his investigation That Hume himself was not clear about the distinction is obvious from the fact I have already pointed out, that some of his remarks relate to psychological problems, and also from the fact that he is involved in some inconsistencies which seem to be chiefly due to this confusion Fortunately this has not prevented him from giving a very enlightening account of the accusative

In his own words, Hume's problem is to show why it is that we take our perceptions to be our only objects We have already seen, though, that we do not always apprehend perceptions as elements in persistent objects Thus a better statement of the problem would be, why do we take our perceptions as a sign of, or element in,

objects of the second kind? Since an object[1] is a distinct continued existence there are two things to be accounted for, the belief in distinctness and the belief in continuity. 'To begin with the SENSES, 'tis evident these faculties are incapable of giving rise to the notion of the *continu'd* existence of their objects, after they no longer appear to the senses For that is a contradiction in terms, and supposes that the senses continue to operate, even after they have ceas'd all manner of operation' (T 188) We have also seen that the senses cannot give rise to the notion of a distinct existent We must, therefore, look elsewhere for an explanation As a clue to the next step in the investigation Hume asserts that this idea of a continued existence of body 'is prior to that of its *distinct* existence, and produces that latter principle' (T 199) This assertion is of importance for two different reasons In the first place, it confirms the view that Hume's problem is epistemological and not psychological It cannot be meant for a psychological statement Quite apart from the fact that it is unplausible on the face of it, there is no possibility of verifying it, and, despite his carelessness on many other points, Hume is usually most careful either to show how his assertions could be verified or to say that they do not admit of verification If the statement is taken in a psychological sense it cannot be supported by any philosophical argument, nor is there any common-sense evidence for it The statement is, however, significant, if it is understood as an assertion about the terms in the analysis of the accusative, that is to say, as asserting that our apprehension of bodies as distinct can only be explained in terms of our apprehension of them as continuous, or that, for the purposes

[1] For the rest of this chapter "object" alone is always used for "object of the second kind"

of analysing the belief factor the former idea is logically prior to the other In the second place, although the statement is significant when interpreted in some such way as this, it does not seem to me true, and I think it either leads to, or is a consequence of, a serious inconsistency in Hume's account of objects We have already seen that his considered opinion seems to be that the apprehension of perceptions as external and distinct is due to the imagination and is an ultimate fact of experience This view is supported by many passages in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry,* including those I quoted, and by Hume's insistence that the difference is due to the imagination and not to any of the reasoned arguments suggested by philosophers 'Even after we distinguish our perceptions from our objects, 'twill appear presently, that we are still incapable of reasoning from the existence of one to that of the other So that upon the whole, our reason neither does, nor is it possible it ever shou'd, upon any supposition, give us assurance of the continu'd existence of body' (T 193) Unfortunately, although Hume is quite sure the belief is due to imagination and not to reason, he does not seem to be quite sure to which of his different kinds of imagination it is due In the *Enquiry* he definitely says it is due to a 'blind and powerful instinct of nature' This is the view I feel inclined to accept, partly because it is Hume's last word on the subject, and partly because besides being in complete conformity with his other arguments it seems to be the most satisfactory view There is, however, another argument running through the *Treatise* Hume sometimes seems to want to make out that the perceptions apprehended as distinct have some quality (in the widest possible sense of that word, to cover a way of appearing to the mind as well as a quality in the more usual sense) which

perceptions not apprehended in this way do not have. This quality is not involuntariness, nor force or liveliness, but constancy and coherence [1] We need not worry about the fact that so-called internal perceptions are also coherent, because their coherence is of a 'different nature',[2] and it is only in the former case that the external body is 'required' to give the coherence. Whichever way Hume arrived at this view, whether he thought of the coherence because he had previously decided the apprehension of distinctness was dependent on the apprehension of continuity, or whether he decided on the dependence because he had already accepted the coherence view, it does not seem to be satisfactory The only sense in which we 'require'[3] the external body to give the coherence is that having already, by means of the 'blind and powerful instinct', apprehended the perception as external, the body is required to give external continuity [4] If the perceptions of sight and touch, for example, were not originally apprehended as external, a body would no more be

[1] 'After a little examination, we shall find, that all those objects, to which we attribute a continu'd existence, have a peculiar *constancy*, which distinguishes them from the impressions, whose existence depends upon our perception' (T 194)

'Bodies often change their position and qualities, and after a little absence or interruption, may become hardly knowable But here 'tis observable, that even in these changes they preserve a *coherence*, and have a regular dependence on each other, which is the foundation of a kind of reasoning from causation, and produces the opinion of their continu'd existence' (T 195)

[2] 'We may observe, that tho' those internal impressions, which we regard as fleeting and perishing, have also a certain coherence or regularity in their appearances, yet 'tis of somewhat a different nature, from that which we discover in bodies' (T 195)

[3] ' on no occasion is it necessary to suppose, that they [passions] have existed and operated, when they were not perceiv'd, in order to preserve the same dependence and connexion, of which we have had experience The case is not the same with relation to external objects Those require a continu'd existence, or otherwise lose, in a great measure, the regularity of their operation' (T 195)

[4] I think also Hume here confused the problem of coherence of elements of objects of the first kind with the problem of the coherence characteristic of an object of the second kind, which cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of the coherence of objects of the first kind alone

required to account for their coherence than it is required to account for the coherence of the internal perceptions, for example, the passions Similarly, the only 'difference in nature' between the coherence of external and internal perceptions is that the latter coherence is supposed to be dependent on us and the former independent of us This independence of the external perceptions was given by the 'blind and powerful instinct' quite independently of the apprehension of coherence, so that the difference in nature of the coherence is unnecessary as it explains nothing which has not already been explained [1] Nevertheless, Hume did not see this, and I think it must be admitted that there are these two conflicting arguments and that he was not clear about this problem, at any rate at the time at which he was writing the *Treatise* It should perhaps also be noted that the arguments apply to the notion of independence of our perceptions as well as to the notion of their externality In other words, the notion of distinctness is not to be interpreted in terms of extension It is important to notice this in view of Hume's remark, 'sounds, and tastes, and smells, tho' commonly regarded by the mind as continu'd independent qualities, appear not to have any existence in extension, and consequently cannot appear to the senses as situated externally to the body' (T 191)

There is one very serious objection to this interpretation of Hume's position which must now be considered As we have seen, his problem is to decide 'why we suppose them to have an existence DISTINCT from the mind and perception?' (T 188) Now Hume expressly says that he means by "objects", perceptions, or 'what

[1] In fact Hume seems to be arriving back at his original view when he argues that the conclusion from the coherence of our perceptions, that there is *something* external, cannot be due to custom, habit or experience, because we go beyond them, and therefore must be due to imagination (T 197)

any common man means by a hat, or shoe, or stone, or any other impression convey'd to him by his senses' (T. 202), and that he will be sure to give warning when he returns to a more philosophical way of speaking and thinking [1] It might be argued that I have been unnecessarily perverse in taking advantage of the fact that Hume has not here given due warning that he is using a philosophical expression, or, alternatively, that since the promise of warning is later in the *Treatise* I have no right to expect it Moreover, the fact that he uses the phrase "distinct from perception" shows that he is using the word "object" in the philosophical sense This being so my objection to Hume's view is invalid since the imagination only leads us to regard our perceptions as distinct, and the notion of objects, in the philosophical sense, is, as Hume says, subsequent to the notion of them as continuous One reply to this objection would be that as Hume holds that only philosophers could have evolved or accepted the notion of objects as distinct from perceptions, when he raises a problem about our beliefs in objects he must be referring to objects in the vulgar sense which are identical with perceptions It seems to me very doubtful whether it is possible to give any solution to this problem which would be consistent with all Hume's remarks The point he was most anxious to maintain is that plain men take their perceptions to be objects So long as we interpret "object" here as object of the first kind there seems to be no serious difficulty in this view We can argue that as a result of a 'blind and powerful instinct of nature' we apprehend perceptions as distinct and external In so far as Hume is concerned

[1] The fact that this remark comes later in the *Treatise* does not seem to me very important Hume's method of exposition is such that there is nothing to be gained by undue concentration on the order of his remarks

with objects of the second kind, however, his explanation seems to be not so satisfactory We may say that the plain man takes a perception to be an object of the second kind, but we must admit that since the analysis of the two kinds of accusatives, perceptions and objects of the second kind, is quite different, this assertion has very little significance for epistemology An examination of Hume's account of the apprehension of persistence does not help to overcome the difficulties The fundamental fact for Hume is that 'we have been accustom'd to observe a constancy in certain impressions, and have found, that the perception of the sun or ocean, for instance, returns upon us after an absence or annihilation with like parts and in a like order, as at its first appearance' (T 199) The fact that the observation of constancy is inadmissible on some of Hume's principles and the fact that 'memory alone acquaints us with the continuance and extent of the succession of perceptions' (T 261) are not relevant to this point We do not need to ask whether his account of this particular kind of experience is satisfactory or not, but only how he makes use of it The second point is that we apprehend these resembling perceptions as having identity This is due to a peculiar characteristic of our apprehension of successions of perceptions, namely, the smooth passage of the thought (T 206, 208, 256 and 262) Here we are faced with a 'contradiction' The smooth passage of the imagination overcomes the interruptedness of perceptions and makes us apprehend our succeeding perception as identical or continuous, yet on reflection we always admit that they are interrupted We overcome this contradiction between the interruptedness and the continuity by supposing an object which gives the continuity (T 254 and E 151)

I think we must admit a definite inconsistency here Either there is no difference between perceptions and objects or there is Hume says that there is no difference [1] If this is so, we only apprehend perceptions, and there is no need for any epistemological concept *object-accusative* Hume also says, however, that 'It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses, and that, without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated' (E 151) If this is so, then we do need an epistemological object-accusative, the analysis of which will show us what is in fact the accusative of mind when we believe ourselves to be apprehending something independent of mind The fact that on reflection we should admit the perception to be distinct is no excuse for refusing to admit objects in any sense The only way to overcome this inconsistency seems to me to be by distinguishing between objects of the first kind and objects of the second kind Owing to a blind and powerful instinct of our nature we take our perceptions to be objects of the first kind This assertion shows that for purposes of epistemology it is important to distinguish between perceptions and objects even when as plain men we do not do so Hume, however, does not distinguish between objects of the first kind and objects of the second kind, and so does not see that we do not take our perceptions to be objects of the second kind Objects of the second kind require further analysis A preliminary examination shows that one characteristic is to be derived from our belief that something persists The analysis of objects of the first kind or the assertion

[1] Sometimes

that we take our perceptions to be objects of the first kind shows that what we think persists is not, as some philosophers have supposed, something distinct from perceptions, so that the analysis of objects of the second kind does not involve any kind of reference to philosopher's objects Thus far Hume's argument, if not entirely satisfactory, seems to me to be an important step in the right direction He does not seem, however, to have advanced any further The next step should be the analysis of the objects of the second kind I suggest that Hume's persistent perceptions hardly provide an adequate solution

This treatment of Hume's argument is obviously inadequate and unsatisfactory in many respects and probably even more unsatisfactory in respects which are not so obvious Some ability to solve Hume's problems, or at least to show clearly what problems he should have raised, is essential for a useful discussion of this topic Unfortunately all that I can do is to point out that his argument is unsatisfactory and to suggest, in the first place, that this is chiefly due to his attempt to conform to common-sense language which is necessarily vague and ambiguous, and, in the second place, that despite this fact his argument is important since his confusions may enable philosophers more capable than I am to see what problems should be raised

VI *Idea-Objects*

Although it was essential for Hume to distinguish between perceptions and objects, the fact that he wants to emphasize the similarity of the two accusatives rather than their differences leads him to concentrate on the perceptual aspects of objects Consequently we are left to deduce the relationship of idea-objects to impression-objects from the relationship of ideas to

impressions for ourselves A simple idea is a copy of a simple impression, a complex idea may or may not be[1] a copy of a complex impression, but it must be composed wholly of simple ideas which are copies of simple impressions Since an object is a complex having a complex perception as one constituent, we may say, presumably, that the simple idea elements in objects must be copies of simple impressions Whether there is anything more to be said can only be discovered by a further examination of ideas Hume's treatment of the problem demands that this should take the form of a consideration of the relation of ideas of memory to ideas of imagination

Hume does not seem to think that there is much difficulty in distinguishing ideas of memory and of imagination 'We find, by experience, that when any impression has been present with the mind, it again makes its appearance as an idea, and this it may do after two different ways either when, in its new appearance, it retains a considerable degree of its first vivacity, and is somewhat intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea, or when it entirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea The faculty by which we repeat our impressions in the first manner, is called the MEMORY, and the other the IMAGINATION' (T 8) 'The ideas of memory are much more lively' (T 9), and memory 'preserves the original form in which its objects were presented' (T 9) Although Hume is probably right in thinking that it is usually easy to distinguish the two from a practical point of view, he is unduly optimistic in supposing that he has given an adequate account of the difference

The greater part of the discussion of this problem is

[1] 'If it be a compound idea, it must arise from compound impressions' (T 157) seems to me to be only a slip

concerned with complexes and objects It is clearly important also to decide how simple ideas of memory and imagination are related The assertion that all simple ideas are copies or exact representations of simple impressions suggests at first that the distinction between ideas of memory and ideas of imagination may only apply to complex ideas On the other hand, Hume has insisted that *any* idea may make its appearance in two ways and also that *neither*[1] the ideas of the memory nor imagination, neither the lively nor faint ideas, can make their appearance in the mind, unless their correspondent impressions have gone before to prepare the way for them' (T 9) Hume must mean, then, that although every idea must have an original impression, some simple ideas differ from others in that they can be said to be remembered or recognized For an account of this differentiating characteristic we must turn to complexes

Hume seems to have had two different opinions on the subject of the differentiating characteristic He clearly believed that it is not nonsense to talk about remembering a perception in the strict sense, that is to say an impression or idea not apprehended as external or as related in any way to anything external It should, therefore, be possible to express the distinction between ideas of memory and ideas of imagination without reference to anything external Moreover, since he is somewhat preoccupied with perceptions, we should expect Hume to be chiefly interested in this particular instance of his problem As a matter of fact, we do find a number of references to a certain feeling which would give the required explanation Far more frequently, however, he prefers to explain his distinction in terms of the force and vivacity which expresses the external

[1] My italics

reference of our perceptions We are, then, faced with a problem Although idea-objects, perceptions apprehended as external to us, can be distinguished in this way, we clearly cannot distinguish the 'internal perishing existences' into two classes by means of some characteristic which can only be expressed in terms of something external, or of the apprehension of something as external It follows either that the distinction between the impressions and memory images is different from the distinction between impression-objects and memory-objects or that Hume has two different views about the nature of one relation In view of the fact that he was anxious to maintain the similarity of perceptions to objects it seems best to regard the problem as a result of a confusion If he had concentrated on the perceptions he would have realized that the fundamental differentiating characteristic is the peculiar feeling which I shall call for short the feeling of pastness [1] Some of his remarks could be interpreted as referring to this feeling Usually, however, he draws the distinction between memory and imagination in terms of force and vivacity Since these characteristics cannot be used to account for any differences between perceptions as such, we must admit that Hume was confused and that his confusion was probably due to his attempt to treat perceptions and objects in the same way Although this theory is unsatisfactory as an explanation of the difference between ideas of memory and ideas of imagination, since it does not refer to what seems to be the funda-

[1] This phrase seems appropriate because as plain men we do feel that in remembering we are in fact apprehending something which is past This is because we think of an external object and not an accusative The external object clearly is not now apprehended, if it were I should be perceiving and not remembering As epistemologists we want to say that the accusative must be present and not past and would regard this phrase as an abbreviation for "the feeling that the idea accusative which I now apprehend is related to another perception accusative which it may be said to represent" This may involve memory of the context of the original impression or it may merely consist in recognition

mental differentiating characteristic, it is important as an account of other characteristics of ideas of memory and ideas of imagination

Although Hume's force and vivacity argument must be interpreted as relating to perceptions apprehended as external, it obviously does not provide a complete account of the relationship of memory-objects,[1] either to impression-objects or to imagination-objects, so that we must take it as an account of the relation of the memory-image element in a memory-object to the imagination-image in other idea-objects The distinction between the two kinds of images is drawn in terms of vivacity and faintness just as is the distinction between the impressions and ideas There seems to be no more reason to interpret these words literally in this case than in the other On the contrary, there seems very good reason to suppose that Hume intended them to be interpreted in the same way We distinguish impressions from ideas by the fact that we have a different feeling towards them, in other words, we have a belief about an external world in the case of impressions which is absent in the case of ideas Similarly we can distinguish ideas of memory from ideas of the imagination by the fact that we have different feelings towards them, again we have a belief about the former which is absent in the case of the latter In this case though, the belief is different clearly we do not believe that the idea of memory is something external or that it stands in the same kind of relation to something external as the impression If either of these alternatives were fulfilled, it would be an impression and not an idea at all As plain men we either regard apprehension of a memory-idea as apprehension of something which

[1] "Memory objects" is merely a convenient abbreviation for "memory idea objects"

existed in the past or[1] we believe that the idea of memory is related to some past impression (or external object) and we do not have this belief about the idea of imagination This interpretation seems to be supported by the view that ideas of memory are, as it were, intermediate between impressions and 'perfect ideas' To say that they have 'a certain vivacity' is simply to say that we do believe something about the idea which is not directly given as the idea is Since we have this feeling or belief it is not a perfect idea (A 'perfect idea' is presumably an idea of the imagination or an idea not standing in any relation to anything apprehended as external) Since we do not believe the idea to be external or of something external, but only a copy of some impression which is apprehended as external, it is not itself an impression Hence it is intermediate between the two This interpretation of Hume's argument is supported by the view that the enlivening of ideas gives belief (T 110) We may enable someone else to imagine some occurrence which we have both experienced in the past but which he has forgotten and we remember, but when something 'touches the memory'[2] (T 15) the ideas of imagination become ideas of memory This is due to the fact that there is no alteration 'beside that of the feeling' In the case of perceptions the feeling of pastness would be sufficient, but in the case of objects we require also the feeling that what is past has force and vivacity, *i e* was apprehended as external, otherwise what is remembered is the idea and not the object

We have already seen that this theory is not, in itself, sufficient to explain the difference between memory-idea-objects and imagination-idea-objects, and that it

[1] If, as we sometimes do, in memory, we distinguish the idea from the external existent which was apprehended by means of an object-accusative in the past

[2] The explanation of what happens when something 'touches the memory' is a psychological problem and is not relevant to the analysis of the accusative

has no application to memory of impressions or ideas in the strict sense That Hume did not intentionally ignore the fundamental problem is clear from the fact that he recognizes that we can distinguish memory and imagination ideas even when they are not apprehended as external This recognition is, therefore, very important ''Tis evident, that whatever is present to the memory, striking upon the mind with a vivacity, which resembles an immediate impression, must become of considerable moment in all the operations of the mind, and must easily distinguish itself above the mere fictions of the imagination. Of these impressions or ideas of the memory we form a kind of system, comprehending whatever we remember to have been present, either to our internal perception or senses, and every particular of that system join'd, to the present impressions, we are pleas'd to call a *reality* But the mind stops not here For finding, that with this system of perceptions, there is another connected by custom, or if you will, by the relation of cause or effect, it proceeds to the consideration of their ideas, and as it feels that 'tis in a manner necessarily determin'd to view these particular ideas, and that the custom or relation, by which it is determin'd, admits not of the least change, it forms them into a new system, which it likewise dignifies with the title of *realities* The first of these systems is the object of the memory and senses, the second of the judgment' (T 107) [1] It is not here necessary to consider the theory of '*reality*' which this passage expresses so long as we recognize that the apprehension of something as external is independent of the remembering When we try to find out what Hume takes to be the distinguishing

[1] Cf 'All our arguments concerning causes and effects consist both of an impression of the memory or senses, and of the idea of that existence, which produces the object of the impression, or is produc'd by it' (T 84)

characteristic of the remembering we are faced with a series of assertions about the liveliness of the idea Thus he seems to have been aware of the problem, and either to have failed to answer it altogether, or else to have attempted to answer it in terms which, on his own statement of the problem, do not apply I think a possible solution of this quandary is that Hume saw that the difference between an idea of memory (without external reference) and an idea of imagination is in our feeling towards it, but that, when he came to describe this feeling, he had in mind ideas with an external reference and in the case of these ideas what we primarily notice is that the memory idea is of something which was apprehended as external and the imagination idea is not By confusing the two uses of "idea" he fails to answer his original problem satisfactorily We might, alternatively, take the view that the term "lively" is meant to express this difference between strict ideas of memory and imagination Hume was so confused on this point that it is impossible to determine which alternative is the more correct interpretation of his position The second interpretation certainly seems to be more suggestive In the first place, however, it must be admitted that it is most unfortunate that he here uses words similar to those used for the apprehension of something as external to express quite a different kind of feeling In doing so, he seems to have confused himself just as much as his readers, and the confusion is increased when he talks of the *belief* or *assent*, which always attends the memory and senses (T 86), which we have already learnt to regard as an expression of the apprehension of an object We cannot, therefore, expect much enlightenment from his explicit statements Fortunately his general remarks about memory and imagination enable us to see that the concept would

have to be analysed differently from the concept of externality if it is to fulfil the functions revealed by the use he makes of it In this case, as in others, Hume is anxious to start from what is given in everyday experience Everyone admits that we do in fact experience ideas in two different ways The only problem is to explain what constitutes the difference which is universally recognized It may have been the fact that what we may, for the sake of argument, call the specific memory quality of the idea is so obvious, and the fact that it is referred to in calling the idea an idea of memory, which led Hume to ignore it—except for the brief reference to the special feeling if it is that feeling—and to concentrate on the distinguishing characteristics connected with the externality In this case, however, what is most obvious, and apparently liable to be overlooked, is most important A simple memory-idea is a complex accusative consisting of a simple idea (in the strict sense) apprehended as the copy of some previous impression or idea by a plain man in a philosophical frame of mind Usually, however, in this kind of apprehension the plain man believes himself to be apprehending something in the past A simple imagination-idea is a non-complex accusative, since it is not apprehended as a copy of an impression or idea Hume is careful to insist that there is no difference in the ideas themselves, only in the way we apprehend them The accusative of memory which he is discussing is something present to me now, and it follows from his statement of his problems that the accusative of which I am now aware cannot be identical with any accusative which I have been aware of in the past nor can a past accusative be repeated in any way which would enable us to compare the two If there is any *other* kind of element which is common to the two situations it does not concern Hume

as an epistemologist Since, then, the idea is not in itself any different from the idea of imagination, and since there is no other element apprehended in relation to it, it is clear that the characteristic we have already noted is fundamental and sufficient The memory-idea is an idea apprehended as representative of some particular past idea, or is that accusative which is apprehended when the plain man thinks he is apprehending something which existed in the past This form of apprehension is ultimate and it is through it that we remember the past, or feel an idea to be representative, even though we are not apprehending what is past or that which the idea represents The peculiar kind of feeling which we experience when we say that we remember may be analysable, but the analysis is a task for the psychologist Some psychological analysis of the feeling might enable us to see how to analyse the accusative further but it seems unlikely that any advance can be made simply by further epistemological argument The only defect in Hume's view is his extremely unfortunate name for the feeling, and it is most important to recognize that it is unfortunate in order not to be misled by it

Just as there is one fundamental differentiating characteristic between ideas and impressions but also many other usually observable differences, so too, in addition to the one fundamental difference there are other peculiarities of ideas of memory and imagination respectively These differences all seem to be between the complexes of each kind There is one important difference between complex ideas of imagination and complex ideas of memory which does not apply to the simples A simple memory-idea is apprehended in the specific way characterized by a feeling of pastness The complex memory idea is apprehended in the same way

The simple imagination idea represents some past impression or idea, but is not apprehended as past The complex imagination idea, however, not only is not apprehended as a past complex but probably does not in fact represent any previously experienced complex It is possible that an idea of imagination which appears to be a product of the imagination (the faculty) may be a copy of a past impression or idea It is improbable, however, that all imagination ideas are of this nature, some in fact cannot be, so that we must accept this as an important difference between complex ideas of memory and complex ideas of imagination 'the imagination is not restrain'd to the same order and form with the original impressions, while the memory is in a manner ty'd down in that respect, without any power of variation' (T 9), and the imagination has liberty to transpose and change its ideas while 'the chief exercise of the memory is not to preserve the simple ideas, but their order and position' (T 9) A point Hume does not consider, although it is very important in this connection, is whether there is any justification for calling an idea which resembles and is apprehended as resembling some previous impression or idea in many important respects, though not in all respects, an idea of memory We do in fact do this, and I suggest that the reason Hume does not raise the problem is that he has not distinguished memory which is a form of strict perception having as its accusative an idea not apprehended as external from memory which is a form of the perception which he sometimes refers to as judgement having objects as its accusatives[1] This point will be clearer when we have considered memory-objects

[1] Cf 'The first of these systems is the object of the memory and senses, the second of the judgement' (T 108) Cf pp 152 157 below

A further comparison of this discussion with Hume's view of the relation of impressions to ideas reveals another of these subsidiary differences We have already seen that Hume notices a difference of force and vivacity in the literal sense between impressions and ideas I think he is here too using "liveliness" and similar words in two senses, a literal and a metaphorical The metaphorical sense expresses the fundamental differentiating characteristic When used literally it is intended to draw our attention to the fact that memory ideas are usually fainter than imagination ideas, though not, of course, without exceptions 'in the imagination, the perception is faint and languid' (T 9)

The problem of the distinction between memory and imagination objects is very much more complicated than that of the distinction between memory and imagination images It is both easiest and simplest to begin with objects of the first kind, that is to say to consider memory of some absolutely specific past awareness and not memory of some persisting object without reference to any particular occasion of awareness of it The impression object is a complex consisting of a complex perception and a number of other elements, probably ideas and beliefs, and it is very difficult to give a complete and accurate statement of them The perception seems to be fundamental in some way Without the perception there would be no complex, though other elements might be omitted and we should still be apprehending some complex not precisely similar to the original Moreover, it is primarily the perception which gives us the feeling of externality although actually the whole complex is apprehended as external Similarly, when we come to consider the idea-object, it will be the perception element in the object which determines whether we regard it as an

idea or as an impression, although the perception is only an element in the object and it is the object as a whole which is apprehended as external A more philosophical way of putting this would be to say that it is only sensible to say that certain impressions or certain images[1] are apprehended as having place, but that other elements are connected in one complex with what has place Hume's discussion of the local conjunction of sense qualities shows that he is aware of the importance of this point That he does not emphasize it again in this connection is probably due to the fact that he thought it quite obvious Unfortunately it has not been obvious to his critics who seem to think that what Hume says about the relation of impressions and images is supposed to explain the relation of impression-objects to idea-objects for which it is obviously inadequate[2] Hume was, of course, confused himself by his failure to distinguish objects of the first and second kinds and his failure to see the place of perceptions both in objects and in general or abstract ideas Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see that the impression-object, for example Hume's *apple*, is a complex consisting of an impression element, a roundish red and green visual impression which I believe to be external to me, of certain idea elements, for example of tactual and gustatory impressions of that apple, certain beliefs, for example that that impression is the surface of a solid object having back and sides which I am not now seeing All these elements though not themselves external are apprehended as essentially related to something 'out there' The idea-object consists of an image and elements similar to those in the im-

[1] *I e* visual and tactual perceptions and perhaps kinaesthetic as 'in space'

[2] Hume's argument also shows that we could not distinguish auditory and tactual impressions and ideas apart from what we learn from sight and movement

pression-object apprehended in a different way Just as the impression is apprehended as something 'in the world' of objects, and images are not so apprehended, so, in the first case the other elements, beliefs, ideas, etc , are apprehended as related in a complex to something which is in the world and is not present to me, but, in the second case, the elements are not related to such an impression In the first case, the perceiver would be in a position to say 'I could now be experiencing such and such gustatory and tactual impressions if I were behaving in a certain way' In the second case, he could only say truly either 'I have been in a position such that I could have experienced such and such impressions if I had behaved in a certain way' (memory), or 'If such and such conditions were to be fulfilled, I should be able to experience such and such impressions if I behaved in a certain way' This is obviously not a satisfactory analysis, but it enables us to see how impression-objects and idea-objects can be distinguished, and also to see roughly how the problem of the relationship of memory-objects and imagination-objects differs from the problem of the relationship of memory-images and imagination-images It also shows that Hume's concentration on the perception element in the object, and the fact that in attempting to distinguish impression-objects and idea-objects we have to be content with his theory of impressions and ideas, is, in part at least, due to the fact that it is the perception element which determines whether we apprehend the object as an impression-object or as an idea-object and the externality of the complex is in some way derived from it Hume's method of approach, in terms of how we do in fact apprehend objects, is satisfactory from the epistemological point of view His mistake lies in not carrying the investigation far enough The distinction

between impressions and ideas, and between ideas of memory and of imagination respectively, does not solve the important problems about objects

Having seen how the impression-objects and idea-objects can be distinguished by reference to our peculiar feeling about some perceptions, we must consider in what other respects, if any, the impression-object differs from the memory-idea-object There certainly seem to be idea-objects which, though they have one constituent which is a memory-image of a perception constituent in an impression-object, nevertheless do not have all their other elements in common with the original impression-object Moreover, a further problem arises in the case of objects which did not trouble us in the case of perceptions A memory-image exactly represents its original impression An image element in a memory-object, however, is not always exactly representative of the impression element in the original object This does not necessarily involve a denial of Hume's principle that complex images of memory are exact copies of complex impressions It shows, however, that the perception element of a memory-object is not necessarily a memory-image If not even the perception element remains the same in the memory-object as in the original we may well ask why the memory-object is regarded as a memory of the original at all It seems to me that this fact can only be explained in terms of yet another characteristic of our experience which Hume himself does not appeal to in this connection although he has noticed it In the first place, apprehension of objects occurs always in some context in the life history of the experiencing individual It is clear that the context determines the nature of the apprehension to a very considerable extent In the second place, as Hume himself observes,

our apprehension of objects is essentially an apprehension of one thing In attempting to analyse the object into its constituent elements, for philosophical purposes, it is very easy to lose sight of this important fact If we do, however, we shall be quite unable to solve some of the important problems for the sake of which we carried out the analysis

When I perceive an apple I apprehend some object in the external world We have already seen roughly what elements enter into the complex accusative of which I am aware The analysis of the accusative, shows, moreover, that a great many different sets of elements, provided they were sufficiently similar in certain respects, would serve to give awareness of the same object My successive perceptions of the apple probably differ considerably from each other, but since I do not normally consider the elements of the accusative, I am unaware that they differ and am quite content to say that I am perceiving the same apple This suggests that, although my apprehension of the apple as an object of the first kind is independent of my apprehension of the apple as an object of the second kind, nevertheless it is only by reference to the second kind that I can give an adequate account of the first kind By saying that the two perceptions are of the same apple I should mean that the two different accusatives, both of which are objects of the first kind, each stand in a certain relation to some object of the second kind To what extent the object of the first kind may differ and still stand in this relationship does not concern us now, it is only necessary for this discussion to recognize that some difference in the accusatives is not incompatible with their standing in the same relation to one object of the second kind

This throws some light on the memory problem A memory-idea of an impression-object of the first kind, if we interpret it strictly, must be an exact copy of the impression-object The perception element, the idea elements, etc , must all be precisely similar or it cannot truly be called a memory-object As I have already pointed out, however, memory-objects do not in fact bear this exact relationship to their original impression-objects, or at least they very often do not do so These considerations only appear contradictory if we attempt to account for experience, which seems to be infinitely complex, in terms of the strict dichotomy, which is the very widest interpretation we can give of Hume's remarks When I apprehend a memory-object which is a memory of the apple I perceived this morning the accusative is obviously not a memory-object of the second kind because I am not thinking of a persisting object but of one absolutely specific awareness On the other hand, it is not, strictly speaking, a memory-object of the first kind either, since I am quite convinced that neither the perception memory elements nor the other memory elements exactly represent the impression elements of this morning's object The fact that I regard this particular set of elements as a memory-object of this morning's impression-object is due to the fact that I also believe that the impression-object of the first kind and the memory-object of the first kind both stand in a certain relation to some object of the second kind and that this object of the second kind is the same in each case It seems to me that the great majority of our rememberings of objects of the first kind are of this nature What I represent in memory, either voluntarily or involuntarily, is a certain accusative previously apprehended which was an object of the first kind I accept the memory accusative as a memory of the

impression-object, even when the two do not exactly resemble each other, because of my belief about the object of the second kind

It is important to remember, though, that the belief and the apprehension are quite distinct, from an epistemological point of view This is clear from a consideration of how the belief in fact affects the apprehension I obviously do not compare the memory and the impression and, by referring the two to one object, decide that they are sufficiently similar for the one to be regarded as the memory of the other The accusatives, impression-objects and imagination-objects, are always complexes, but we attend to one thing, we do not apprehend the elements as elements Moreover, our awareness of the elements is of varying degrees of determinacy and their places in the complex are of varying degree of importance Thus it is almost impossible to say precisely what it is that we apprehend as the one thing Most of the difficulties this might lead us into are overcome by the use of language When I apprehend the particular object accusative of the first kind which we have been considering, I recognize it as *an apple* I only notice certain elements of the complex, and which particular elements are noticed depends on how the whole complex is related to what I am thinking or doing Similarly, when I remember the apple, what I attend to or notice is not all the elements of the complex but *an apple* and those of the elements which give *the apple* which are important in relation to the rest of my experiences at that time Since I do not apprehend the accusative distinctly, nor even those elements in it which I particularly notice, it is not surprising that I am willing to accept another accusative, and another set of elements within that accusative as a memory of it, even if it is only substantially similar and not pre-

cisely representative [1] Although the accusatives are in fact different I do not normally even notice the differences, but even when I do I am still quite ready to accept the idea-object as a memory-idea of the apple I think the fact that we do accept idea-objects as memory-objects of certain impression-objects, even though they do not precisely represent them, and the fact that we cannot be content to say that we are aware of the accusative, but must take into consideration the fact that some elements of the accusative are noticed or attended to more than others, can only be explained in terms of objects of the second kind There seems to me no doubt that these two points at least are important and there may be many other considerations of equal importance which I have not noticed

The chief defect of most discussions of memory problems and the chief danger for anyone attempting to solve or discuss them is over-simplification of a series of problems all of which are complex The acceptance of the idea-object as a memory-object, even though it does not precisely resemble the original impression-object, would probably ordinarily be said to be due to habit Even though we are not usually aware of any reason for habit behaviour, it is clear that it is always based on some kind of belief, since, in cases of doubt, criticism or unexpected effects, we are quite prepared to give some reason for it In this particular case I suggest that though we do in fact apprehend objects of the first kind, which as such cannot be persistent, the

[1] For example The memory object, *apple*, which I now apprehend as related to an impression object, *apple*, which I perceived this morning, may have as a constituent an idea element exactly resembling the original impression element or it may not The idea element may be fragmentary or have indeterminate outlines where the original was definite and complete This is clear from the fact that if I try to remember the apple my first memory object will be replaced by another which more nearly represents the original The same is true of the other elements Some of them may not occur at all in the new complex, others may occur in a different way, *i e* they may be more or less attended to than before

idea-objects of the first kind which would be regarded as memory-objects are only so regarded because we do in fact also perceive objects of the second kind Experience shows us that the characteristics of objects of the first kind vary very considerably so that two different sets of elements, *i e* two different object accusatives of the first kind may be related in the same way to one object of the second kind Thus we are liable to regard slight differences between the different objects of the first kind, by means of which we apprehend objects of the second kind, as unimportant That is, when we observe the differences, very often we do not even notice them From the point of view of apprehension of objects of the second kind this habit is not only convenient but essential It is evident, though, that we retain this habit in the case of ideas of the first kind, and regard a slight difference in nature between the idea-object and its original as insufficiently important to deter us from calling it a memory-idea-object Apart from the fact that both perceptions are related to the same object of the first kind, however, there is, as we have already seen, no justification for regarding the idea-object as a memory-object unless it is *exactly* similar to its original Thus, although when I remember the apple, I say that my present idea-object is a memory-object of the particular object of the first kind which I apprehended this morning, in other words it is a representation of a certain specific accusative, nevertheless I should not so regard it, in view of the fact that it does not exactly represent its original, unless I had already acquired the habit of disregarding small differences in my perceptions of objects of the second kind

These considerations are also important in relation to the fact that certain elements in the object of the first

kind are attended to more than others It seems to be an original characteristic of apprehension of objects of the first kind, that some elements stand out, or are attended to or are noticed more than others Nevertheless, which particular elements are especially noticed is largely determined by past experience of objects of the first kind related to this and other objects of the second kind Thus, which particular elements stand out, and so the character of any given object of the first kind, is in some sense dependent on apprehension of objects of the second kind Though I may not now be apprehending an object of the second kind, the objects of the first kind which I am now apprehending would be other than they in fact are if I had not in the past apprehended objects of the second kind This peculiar form of apprehension must also be connected in another way with apprehension of objects of the second kind Objects of the first kind become more and more complex, presumably from the very first, as we become more familiar with the objects of the second kind to which they are related and as we see analogies between different objects Familiarity also brings wider awareness of elements and it would be natural to suppose that the number of elements in any given complex which are attended to would increase This happens only to a limited extent, and the fact that we do persist in attending only to a few elements, it might almost be said the fact that we reject elements with which we are so familiar that we should expect to notice them, is also due to the fact that our habit of disregarding differences in the different objects of the first kind by means of which we apprehend one object of the second kind, operates here in leading us to attend only to those elements which are relevant in the context in which the accusative occurs

I have several times referred to the 'context' of the object-accusatives as relevant, and this expression obviously needs some explanation No-one is likely to deny that my object of the first kind will be different if it is a chair which I am interested in solely because I am going to sit on it from the object of which I ask 'Is it a genuine antique or a very clever imitation?' Although there may be a non-accusative external thing which is the same in each case, some of the differences between the objects of the first kind are due to differences in the train of thought in which they occur The problem of giving a precise account of how these facts should be interpreted and of how far the accusatives are dependent on the context is a problem for psychology The epistemologist is concerned with what we do in fact experience and not with how we come to have such experiences It is not, therefore, necessary for him to explain how "the context of an accusative" can be defined nor even precisely how far the nature of the accusative is determined by its context It is important, however, that he should recognize that it is in some sense dependent on the context Although it is essential that epistemology should abstract it is very important that abstraction should not be carried too far I think, in this case, if we consider any particular accusative in complete isolation from all the other accusatives which are contemporaneous with it, or which closely precede or follow it, we should find ourselves unable to give a satisfactory account of those accusatives If, on the other hand, we relate it to experience, even if the relating takes the form of saying only that the accusative is such as it is partly because it occurs in a certain context, it will be possible to give a much more satisfactory account of the experience

It may be argued that the whole of the foregoing

discussion is also psychological and as such has no more place in this chapter than a discussion of the nature and importance of context I have not, however, been concerned solely with the epistemological problem of the nature of the memory accusatives but with an attempt to show precisely how Hume's view is inadequate and unsatisfactory The only way to show how, despite these deficiencies, we must accept Hume's argument as an important contribution to the problem is by pointing out what peculiar characte. istics of our experience he has failed to take notice of and how, if he had noticed them, some of his inconsistencies could have been removed and many incomplete analyses completed

There is one further point of importance which I have already indicated that Hume did not notice, presumably because he made the confusions I have already referred to between images in the strict sense and image-objects, namely, that only the image element in the memory complex has the relation to its original impression which the image has to the idea This may seem an absurdly unnecessary statement, as the perception element is an impression in the first object and an image in the second and therefore must have this relation, and the other elements, being different, presumably would not have a precisely similar relation Nevertheless, it seems to me that it would be quite easy, when we think in terms of Hume's argument, to suppose that the elements of the memory-object are all 'fainter copies' of the elements of the impression-object On consideration, however, we must admit that there is no justification for the supposition It is quite possible that the idea elements in the impression-object should not differ in any respect from the idea elements in the idea-object, although we might think that they do

because one is an element in a complex in which the fundamental element has force and vivacity and the other an element in a complex in which the fundamental element has not force and vivacity Similarly, the feeling element may be precisely the same in each case

The most important point to note with regard to Hume's treatment of memory in relation to the criticisms of it is that he does not assert that memory always consists in awareness of an image Nor does he ask whether it does or not His argument is, in fact, concerned with the memory-image which undoubtedly occurs, and to assert that he therefore denies all other forms of memory is either illogical or is due to a very superficial knowledge of the relevant arguments It would be perfectly consistent for Hume to hold that there could be memory without an image, or at least a memory-accusative in which the image was only one element among others Moreover, it seems to me, at any rate, that the confusions in his theory are due to a recognition of some of the other problems and would never have arisen if he had throughout accepted the views so often imputed to him Another important point which is frequently overlooked is that the distinguishing characteristic of the memory idea lies in our peculiar feeling towards it It might be argued that my interpretation of Hume's account of memory allows that he is open to the objections brought against him by Laird and Stout, which I have already denied As I have previously suggested, though, to say that 'ideas represent their objects or impressions' is not necessarily to say that 'every idea is so wise as to know its own father' We can now see that the reference to what is represented by an idea, if in fact it can be called reference at all, is a peculiar feeling Although the idea

represents the impression, it does not, in itself, contain a reference to the impression This being so, it is not true to say that Hume's account of the relationship of impressions to ideas is inadequate *because* he secretly has to make the assumption that ideas refer to their impressions Nor is it true to say that he cannot get on without this assumption, since he gets on perfectly well with his own far more satisfactory view that the reference to the past and to objects is to be accounted for in terms of certain feelings

Other memory problems, memory of events, memory of general ideas, recognition, etc , must obviously be sharply distinguished from the problem of the analysis of memory-objects, and any criticism which relates to these other forms of memory does not concern us here

The problems we have so far considered do not arise in the case of imagination-idea-objects The imagination-object is not a copy of any impression-object The image elements must, of course, be copies of the original impression elements, but they are not apprehended as related to impressions, or recognized, as the memory images are Hume is so concerned to make clear his views on the psychological problems that we are left to deduce the nature of imagination-objects from what we know of memory-objects and of the relationship of memory to imagination I think we should distinguish imagination-ideas from imagination-objects, just as we distinguished memory-ideas from memory-objects It is quite conceivable that we sometimes do apprehend an image as such, *i e* without regarding it as external and without apprehending it in relation to non-image elements which would be related to it if an object were being apprehended Even if this be denied, however, we must admit that some elements in imagination-

objects are images and some are not, so that the two accusatives can be distinguished This is important, because it shows that the imagination-object is very similar to the memory-object and the impression-object The peculiar characteristic of the imagination-object is that, although I am not now apprehending the complex as external, nor have I apprehended any similar complex as external in the past, nevertheless it is apprehended in a way which I can only describe very inadequately by saying that we apprehend the complex as something which might be or could be external The object has all the qualities necessary for an external object, except that in fact it is not regarded as something which is in the world but only as something which I have thought of which might be in the world Hume does not tell us how he can explain this peculiar characteristic, and probably the only analysis of the object which is possible at this stage of epistemological theory would be in terms of another specific 'feeling'

One further problem arises in this connection The elements of an impression-object are regarded as forming one complex because of the unity given both in visual perception and through past experience, and the memory-object derives its unity from the impression-object The imagination obviously does not derive its unity in the same sense of "derive", since it has not been 'given' on any past occasion Hume's answer to this problem is that the imagination is an active faculty with an unlimited power of compounding and contrasting We must add to this, I think, that the fact that it 'compounds' in the way it does is, partly at least, due to past experience In any case, it is not the business of the epistemologist to ask how or why any faculty works as it does It is only necessary to accept the

complex and to admit that it resembles a memory complex in all important respects except the one we have considered The fact that the two accusatives are apprehended as units for different reasons raises a problem for psychologists only.

CHAPTER 7
CONCEPTS

1 *Hume's Confusion of Concepts with Perceptions*

It is obvious that any epistemology, if it is to be complete, must give some account of all the accusatives, which are commonly called ideas, but which seem to be very differently related to impressions from the other ideas we have considered Hume was well aware of the importance of problems relating to this particular class of ideas, and although his investigations in this direction did not carry him very far, he is most emphatic about the points he does raise Despite this fact, and despite the fact that he illustrates his points at some length by reference to particular concepts, there seems to be a certain amount of misunderstanding of his position It is often supposed that he denied that there are concepts, and that his sole contribution to the problem is an expression of approbation of Berkeley's assertion that there are no such things as what are commonly called abstract ideas However we decide to interpret Berkeley's views on the matter, it would be the greatest mistake to suppose that Hume wanted to deny the existence of any accusative which either philosophers or plain men suppose themselves to experience In Hume's investigation there is no place for any question as to whether there is or is not a certain accusative If there is anything about which any question can be asked, then *ipso facto* there is that accusative Hume's problems are all problems of the analysis of these accusatives His arguments about abstract and general

ideas are designed to show what kind of accusatives these are Since the argument takes the form of an emphatic denial that they are at all the kind of accusative which ordinary language suggests and philosophers assert, it is sometimes supposed to assert that there are no such accusatives Such an assertion would, of course, be nonsense, or rather there could be no such assertion We must, therefore, try to extract the positive contribution implied by these denials

We have already had occasion to notice the significance of the position of some of Hume's views in his exposition I think our interpretation cannot do full justice to these arguments about abstract ideas unless we also consider the context very carefully The *Treatise* begins with the statement of the doctrine of impressions and ideas, of the relationship of impressions to ideas, and of the different kinds of impressions and ideas In his first statements Hume seems to assume that perceptions are the only accusatives, and he is obviously using the word "idea" as synonymous with "image" Even so, the doctrine will be incomplete without some reference to abstract ideas, which had seemed so important to his contemporaries We may assume, then, that the first discussion of abstract ideas (Part I, section 7) was written at the stage when he was so absorbed with the importance of emphasizing the relationship of impressions and ideas that he had not seriously considered the view his statements imply, that the only accusatives are perceptions[1] in the narrow sense (*i e* impressions and images) In terms of this standpoint, the only problem that arises is whether there are abstract images The first point to be learnt from Hume on this topic is, then, that there are no

[1] The fact that the rest of his philosophy contradicts this view seems to me sufficient evidence for this assertion about Hume's thoughts

abstract images He would probably agree that this could be better expressed by saying that abstract or general ideas or concepts are not images and can only be called ideas if we agree that in so calling them we are introducing a new use of that word He then proceeds to show, as Berkeley did, that the suggestion that there could be a general image is so fantastic that it could only have been made by philosophers who were not thinking about what they were saying, or by plain men who had simply adopted the word "idea" without asking whether it was appropriate or not His argument runs as follows The abstract idea of a man has been supposed to represent men of all sizes and qualities This, it is thought, is only possible if the idea either represents all possible qualities, etc , or else no particular one at all The former is thought absurd and the latter accepted The latter is not, however, satisfactory, since we cannot conceive (T 18) any quantity or quality without forming a precise notion of its degree Hume 'proves' this assertion by means of three different arguments (T 18) I shall return to the proofs later At the moment it is only necessary to see that by telling us to introspect and consider the nature of our images Hume has shown conclusively that there cannot be general or abstract images

Although this is the point Hume makes most clearly and is most anxious to emphasize, it would be a great mistake to regard it as the only point of importance he raises in relation to this problem The other points which emerge, though not clearly expressed or thought out, are equally important, and are even more interesting, since they relate to matters on which there is less general agreement We shall understand his argument best if we pursue our original method of approach It soon becomes clear that despite Hume's original asser-

tions he does accept accusatives other than perceptions At first one might regard the remarks which suggest this simply as careless inconsistencies, but, as the argument proceeds, the impressions and ideas, which were said to be all-important for any and every epistemological problem, are again and again left to play a very subsidiary part, or even no part at all, in problems which Hume obviously considers significant for epistemology Amongst other points we find that not all ideas are images and that we must accept, and give some account of, those that are not Accordingly, having agreed that abstract ideas are not image-ideas, we may still ask what kind of ideas they are Hume's answer to this question is part of his reply to those who assert that an abstract idea is an image of no particular quality It might be objected that, this being so, the development of Hume's views has no significance for this problem This would be a mistake I do not want to maintain that Hume started from a clearly defined position which he afterwards rejected What is important is that the early part of the *Treatise* implies that all accusatives are perceptions, although Hume probably had not considered the problem and would not have accepted the implication if he had, and the latter part asserts that there are accusatives which are not perceptions The view that the implication is due to Hume's preoccupation with impressions and ideas, and his desire to establish his starting-point, and that he had not considered it sufficiently either to accept or reject it, is borne out by the fact that even when he appears to be asserting that all accusatives are impressions or images he is also discussing relations and abstract ideas Thus, the two elements are present side by side from the very beginning, but the dominating one gives place to the other as the argument proceeds In the

Enquiry, when the argument is recast, the claims for impressions and ideas are very much modified Hume certainly begins with them again, but his discussion of them is brief, and he asserts only that 'all the materials of thinking are *derived either from*[1] our outward or inward sentiment' (E 19), and quickly passes to the other accusatives which he then regards as more important The account of abstract ideas, then, is one of the first indications that Hume did recognize accusatives other than impressions and images,[2] and must not be ignored simply because he has suggested that all our accusatives are impressions or images and denied that there are general images

Unfortunately, despite the fact that Hume saw clearly that whatever an abstract idea is, it cannot be an abstract image, he was still confused himself by his failure to distinguish ideas, in the widest sense of that word, and images As a result, his argument is much less clear that it might have been It leads him to conclude that 'Abstract ideas are, therefore, in themselves individual, however they may become general in their representation' (T 20)[3] This statement is obviously due to Hume's failure to distinguish ideas and images The only reason for insisting that the ideas must be individual, in the sense in which Hume is here using the word, is that they are supposed to be images and all images are individual If we accept the fact that not all ideas are images, there is no need to say that abstract ideas *must* be individual Very much more serious,

[1] My italics

[2] Despite the fact that they are introduced solely to support the impression image theory and are not considered sufficiently important to be introduced in the *Enquiry*

[3] 'All abstract ideas are really nothing but particular ones, consider'd in a certain light, but being annexed to general terms, they are able to represent a vast variety, and to comprehend objects, which, as they are alike in some particulars, are in others vastly wide of each other' (T 34)

however, is the fact that his confusion distorts the problem for Hume so that he never clearly formulates or answers the question which is really important for epistemology He recognized, quite rightly, that as a matter of psychological fact awareness of an abstract idea is often, or perhaps usually, accompanied by an image of a particular instance of the idea Because he has not distinguished images and ideas he takes the apprehension of the image to be fundamental in the situation, and the problem he raises is the problem of the relation of the particular image to the abstract idea This is a very interesting and important problem, but it is a problem for the psychologist, and it is unfortunate that Hume just missed the important epistemological problem, namely, how is the abstract idea itself to be analysed This does not mean, of course, that we can learn nothing of importance for epistemology from Hume's discussion on this point On the contrary, much of what he says in answer to the psychological problem directly concerns the epistemological problem and still more could be adapted to do so Nevertheless, one cannot help feeling that had he asked precisely the right question he would have given a more satisfactory argument and would have advanced further than he in fact did

Hume's answer to the question, 'why do we apply the particular image as if it were universal?' is that it 'becomes general by being annex'd to a general term, that is, to a term, which from a customary conjunction has a relation to many other particular ideas, and readily recalls them in the imagination' (T 22) The 'custom' in virtue of which we do recall in this way is, as Hume sees, fundamental He holds, however, that this custom is an ultimate characteristic of the human mind and as such cannot be explained, though he is able to illustrate

it by analogy If all we could say about so-called abstract and general ideas was that certain images stimulate the mind to behave in a certain way, namely, to apply judgements about some particular images to other particular images, it would be clear that there is no accusative abstract-idea or general-idea, since all that is ever present to the mind is the particular image Everyone would admit, though, that we can observe more in the matter than this, and Hume's own discussion shows far more clearly than any criticism that his own answer to the psychological problem is based on the assumption that there are abstract ideas in some sense, or that some non-image accusative is required to give plausibility to that answer Hume does not seriously think, any more than anyone else does, that the mind will treat *any* particular idea as a universal, without any suspicion that the idea is to be so treated until custom has in fact operated It is clear that the custom of applying judgements about one particular image to other particular images cannot even be indicated without reference to the fact that what is apprehended is not merely a particular image, but some other accusative which invariably gives rise to the habit or custom [1] There is ample evidence that Hume's argument requires this accusative In the first place, Hume says that though the image is particular 'the application of it in our reasoning (is) the same as if it were universal' (T 20) Since an image must be particular and so can never give any notion of universality, the phrase "as if it were universal" is only significant if we agree that there is some other accusative which can be called uni-

[1] Cf E 158 footnote ' all general ideas are, in reality, particular ones, attached to a general term, which recalls, upon occasion, other particular ones, that resemble, in certain circumstances, the idea, present to the mind' I do not see how Hume could analyse "in certain circumstances" without reference to the concept

versal and can show what is meant by this assertion 'Custom' cannot fulfil this function, since it is itself the custom of treating particulars as universals In the second place, Hume proceeds to explain that 'When we have found a resemblance among several objects, that often occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them, whatever differences we may observe in the degree of their quantity and quality, and whatever other differences may appear among them' (T 20) It is an observable resemblance, then, which gives rise to the custom and we may safely assume that there would be no custom without the resemblance As this resemblance is of fundamental importance both for our analysis of the abstract-idea accusative, and for the psychological account of how we come to be aware of it, it appears that the accusative is more fundamental than the custom In the third place, Hume admits that 'the word raises up an individual idea, along with a certain custom' (T. 20) In other words, the apprehension of 'the word' gives rise to the custom This 'word', however, is obviously the abstract-idea accusative which we are trying to analyse Moreover, we can only explain how the custom produces any other individual image, or even what the custom is, in terms of it The custom is a custom of calling up other instances of the universal whether we call it an abstract or general idea or an abstract or general term

If we recognize that it is the accusative which is fundamental in all those situations in which it occurs, Hume's 'extraordinary circumstances' do not seem very surprising Despite the fact that when we consider any universal we often simultaneously apprehend an image instance of it, the image does not take the place of the idea in our reasoning, so that it would be more surprising if we formed conclusions which applied only to

that one instance than if we did not (T 21) Recognition of this point also enables us to see that Hume's 'analogies' are not strictly speaking 'analogies' at all, but merely instances or illustrations of the point he is trying to make Firstly, it is clear that numbers are general ideas, but if, as I strongly suspect, Hume means not that we cannot have an image of a thousand, but that we cannot have an image of a thousand things, the 'analogy' is not relevant to his argument, since this inability is due to a limitation of the mind's capacity and not to the nature of the idea The image, moreover, is inadequate because it is either very indeterminate or is accepted as having insufficient magnitude, or as being only part of the whole idea, whereas the image attached to the abstract idea is usually quite determinate and is not regarded as part of the abstract idea The 'imperfection' (T 23) seems to be of a totally different type The second instance is analogous in that both habits are revived by one word It is important to recognize, though, that, whereas the first word of a verse is part of a verse, neither the original particular image nor the new ones the custom gives rise to are part of the abstract idea. The supposition that they are is in conformity with some, but not all, of Hume's statements on the subject The third argument resembles the first if we accept the first interpretation of the latter The fact that 'we do not annex distinct and complete ideas to every term we use' (T 23)[1] is not 'analogous' to any fact about the custom, but is itself a fact of the relationship of the image to the idea As we have already observed, apprehension of an abstract idea is usually accompanied by apprehension of an image instance of that idea This is all Hume needs to say here, but his

[1] A 'complete idea' here seems to be an image which completely represents its term

statement of the point involves a very bad blunder The examples he gives are not complex ideas at all, and there are two possible ways of interpreting the passage Either Hume thinks he is stating an analogy and his mistake lies in not seeing that *government*, *church*, *negotiation* and *conquest* are names for abstract ideas and not for complex ideas apprehended in some way analogous to the apprehension of abstract ideas Or, alternatively, Hume would agree that he has instanced abstract ideas In this case, he is wrong in saying that he is offering an analogy and wrong in saying that they are complex ideas I think the former alternative is probably correct, since Hume consistently maintains that an abstract idea is to be accounted for in terms of the particular image and custom, and never suggests that the first particular image and the other particular images which custom may give rise to in any way form a complex idea The fourth argument does not seem to be meant to be an analogy Hume wants to point out that it is through the awareness of the relation between the particular images that the imagination calls up those images In other words, he admits that apprehension of the abstract idea (here disguised by the new name "relation") enables us to image instances of it This only confirms my previous suggestion that 'custom' is only explicable in terms of the abstract idea [1]

With these 'four reflections' (T 24) Hume seems to have given an interesting account of the relationship of particular images to abstract ideas of which they are instances He has not, however, as he suggests, established the view that an abstract idea consists of a particular image and a custom Nevertheless, he establishes indirectly the view which his argument requires

[1] It is interesting to notice, in view of the fact that some people think that Hume denied that there are abstract ideas, that he thinks that genius consists in marked ability to see relationships (T 24)

but which he never explicitly states There is a certain kind of accusative, which we may call a concept, an abstract idea or a general idea or anything else we please, which is not a sensation nor an image, nor is it a complex of sensations or images Nevertheless, it is related to images in a way which Hume describes by saying that it is customary to raise up certain images in connection with it and that these images would be accepted and others rejected This custom is ultimate and inexplicable Modern philosophers would say that the idea and the images are so related that the latter are instances of the former and would regard the conception of 'being an instance of' as equally ultimate, and the apprehension of images as instances of concepts as equally inexplicable, with the custom The difference in terminology is unimportant The chief defect of Hume's view is that he says that apprehension of the abstract idea is apprehension of a particular image and a custom, and does not explain, though his discussion assumes it throughout, that the custom can only be accounted for by reference to the concept Since he is discussing the psychological problem of our apprehension and not the epistemological problem of the analysis of the accusative, it is not absolutely essential for him to do so, but it would have been very much more satisfactory if he had I think his failure to make this point clear was undoubtedly due to a certain reluctance to discuss non-perceptual accusatives, or perhaps to confused or unformulated ideas as to whether he wanted to discuss all accusatives or only perceptions This being so, had he raised the problem of concepts again at some later stage, for example in the *Enquiry*, his arguments would undoubtedly have taken a very different form, since, as we follow the *Treatise*, it becomes steadily clearer, both to the reader and to Hume himself, that very few epis-

temological problems can be answered in terms of perception alone, although there are probably none which can be answered without reference to perception

There is so much difference of opinion with regard to all problems relating to universals or abstract ideas that it would be impossible to find a view even on this one problem which would be acceptable to everyone This makes it especially important for me to make my position as clear as possible The assumptions on which this discussion of Hume's views is based do not constitute a complete theory on this subject, nor do I feel at all convinced of their truth Nevertheless, since we cannot criticize Hume, or even discover his views, without taking some view as a starting-point, I have tried to choose those assumptions which seem less questionable than any others that I know of It is important to bear in mind, then, that the value of this or of any other discussion of Hume's views, especially on a problem such as abstract ideas where it is exceedingly difficult to decide what Hume intended to say, is largely dependent on the value of the assumptions on which it is based My first assumption is that it is of the utmost importance to distinguish three different classes of problems relating to what is in some sense one topic There are firstly what may be called logical, analytical or metaphysical problems, according to our particular bias For example, 'Is a universal to be analysed into a set or class or complex of particulars, or is there something which such an analysis omits?' Secondly, there are the psychological problems It is not always easy to distinguish these from the third class, but I think it is fairly clear that some of the problems Hume raises are psychological For example, the problem of discovering and describing the difference in feeling or behaviour in the situation in which I am aware of a particular image

and am using a general term in connection with it The third group are the epistemological problems These are problems about what it is that is present to mind when we are using a general term Problems belonging to this third group are the ones which are important for Hume, and I have been trying to find his answer to them As we have seen, however, his explicit statements on the subject mostly relate to the second group, whether he means to discuss that group or not

In the second place, I am assuming that there is such an accusative as a concept or that the concept is a genuine accusative It is for this reason that I reject Hume's suggestion that an abstract idea is analysable into a particular image and a custom The custom, in his explicit statements, is not, and as far as I can see, could not be present to the mind in the way which we cannot describe, but which we all experience in our apprehension of other accusatives I am most anxious not to dogmatize on this point since there seems to be no conclusive evidence in either direction It is, therefore, very important to point out that the criticism and the interpretation are based on this assumption If Hume seriously meant that an abstract idea can be analysed into a particular image and a custom, I do not think we can prove him to be wrong Moreover, if this view is to be accepted, I am wrong in suggesting that the alternative is implied and required Though I cannot refute him, I can, however, give the evidence which leads me to reject this view In the first place, there seems to be introspective evidence against it Everyone will agree that introspective evidence is not very strong evidence We are all liable to misinterpret or misrepresent our experiences, and at best we end with one introspection opposed to another with no means of judging between them Unfortunately, the

subject matter of epistemology is such that we are bound to resort to introspection It also demands that we take careful note of any evidence we have of other people's introspections It seems to me that when I talk about, think of, or refer in any way to any abstract idea, something is before my mind which is other than a particular idea Moreover, the fact that I shall behave in some customary way in the future does not in the very least explain the difference between what I am now aware of and a particular image I assume that some other people would also agree with this, because they do in fact use general terms and people do not mean the same when they use the word "red" as when they use the phrase "an instance of red" It is not an objection to say that though we do not realize it, what the general term refers to is to be analysed as Hume suggests This is to confuse the first group of problems with the third group We are not now concerned with anything which 'really is' something other than we suppose it to be, but with what we are in fact apprehending when we use a general term There seems to be a certain reluctance, which is not confined to Hume, to admit that there are any accusatives which are not perceptions I cannot see any reason to suppose that there is only one type of accusative The chief reason for *saying* that there is only one type seems to be that if anyone maintains that there is more than one he is immediately asked by his critics what 'kind of' accusative the other is When he cannot answer this ridiculous question it is assumed that his view must be wrong It would, however, be equally impossible to explain what 'kind of' accusative a perception is, to anyone who had no senses It is, in fact, as Hume points out, impossible to explain to anyone the nature of any one particular kind of sensation if he has never experienced

a sensation of that kind, even though he may know sensation from having experienced all other kinds of sensation There does not seem to me to be any problem of any philosophical importance at all arising out of these considerations Any plain man would accept without question the fact that to know (in the widest sense of that word) a sensation it must be experienced Similarly to know a concept it must be experienced It takes a philosopher to ask that one should be explained or described in terms of the other If, as I feel convinced, though I cannot prove, we are aware of concepts, then the only reason for wanting to explain away the concept and retain the perception, rather than the reverse procedure, is that perceptions seem to be psychologically prior and certainly play a greater part in our daily life These psychological and sociological considerations, however, should not be allowed to play such an important part in our philosophy as to lead us to reject one type of accusative altogether I conclude, then, that there is a type of accusative of which we do in fact apprehend an instance when we use general terms,[1] which is not analysable into perceptions as a complex perception is analysable into simple perceptions, though I feel sure that there is much to be said about the relations between perceptions and concepts, if only we had the language to do so

There is further evidence for the fact that Hume admits and requires this accusative, in the defects in his own attempts to express the alternative view I have already mentioned most of these, but the point seems to be sufficiently important to justify repetition The assertion that 'in forming most of our general ideas, if

[1] I do not, of course, want to deny that people often do use general terms without apprehending the concept accusative which the term expresses, but this is no objection to my view

not all of them, we abstract from every particular degree of quantity and quality' (T 17) implies that something is abstracted ' we can at once form a notion of all possible degrees of quantity and quality' (T 18) admits a non-perceptual accusative (Despite the fact that in the very next sentence Hume uses "notion" in a totally different sense) It would be impossible to explain how individual ideas 'may become general in their representation' (T 20) in terms of perceptions, or how 'the application of it in our reasoning be the same as if it were universal' The assertion that 'we find a resemblance' (T 20) among objects and that different simple ideas may have a point of resemblance which is not distinct or separable from them (T 637) also admits a non-perceptual accusative It would be possible to multiply these examples at some length, but these few seem quite sufficiently unambiguous to support my interpretation

My third assumption, which must have been obvious throughout, is that, although awareness of a concept is usually simultaneous with awareness of an image instance of it, that image is in no sense part of the concept It is this assumption especially which leads me to regard all Hume's discussion of the image as very confused. It is quite clear that he did not distinguish the concept and the image, and the difficulties in his arguments show that it is of the utmost importance to do so It seems to me that, although the two are simultaneous, we do not, in fact, confuse the image and the concept I think Hume's description of reasoning about concepts, that we try out, as it were, our argument on the image, and that when it would not apply to all instances of that concept, other images crowd in upon us, is a complete misrepresentation of the process It suggests that we reason primarily about

the image and then see if our arguments fit the concept, whereas in fact I should think that most people always intend their remarks to be about the concept, and that the image, if metaphorical language may be permitted, is in the background and not, as Hume suggests, the centre of attention

Nevertheless, there are several passages inconsistent with this attitude which show clearly that Hume was at least partly aware of the need for a broader outlook on the problem In contrast to the assertion that all ideas are merely copies of impressions, we learn that 'experience produces the idea' (T 91), the idea is 'produced by a general connection' (T 150), ideas 'give rise to' ideas (T 154) These inconsistencies can be seen to be apparent or verbal only, and one of the conflicting views not nearly so silly as it seems on the face of it if we restate Hume's theory It seems clear that he has confused himself as well as his readers by his carelessness about terminology He has used so many different words to express the relationship of ideas to impressions that we are led to overlook the fact that sometimes they are not merely alternatives but express totally different relationships We have already considered one of the senses in which ideas are related to impressions, namely, as copies Hume only establishes, however, that this relationship holds between impressions and images, yet, in spite of this, he proceeds to write as if it held between impressions and ideas of all kinds I think Hume was quite right to insist that there is some relationship between impressions and ideas of all kinds It is very easy to suppose that abstract ideas, for example, are either 'innate' or else are in some other way completely independent of impressions He was wrong, though, in supposing that all ideas are related to impressions in the same way as images are The

phrase "derived from" is very misleading in this connection It may be and often appears to be a synonym for "a copy of", in which case not all ideas are derived from impressions, or it may be used in a wider sense to mean "is based upon" Admittedly this term is not very useful until it has been defined, but everyone understands it sufficiently well to agree that it would be a misusage to regard it as equivalent to "is a copy of", which is the most important point It has the additional merit of being one not used by Hume I think the relation *being based upon* which Hume requires is such that to say 'A is based upon β' means 'Unless β had occurred A would not have occurred, and A is typically different from β' As a matter of fact we do not experience non-perceptual accusatives unless we have already experienced certain impressions and perhaps images too The latter experience seems to be in some way essential for the occurrence of the former This characteristic of experience seems to be due to the relationship which I cannot describe though I have tried to indicate it The only directly relevant assertion I can make is negative Though impressions and non-perceptual ideas are related, the relationship is not that of the impressions and images, nor is the idea in any sense 'made up of' or 'a complex of' impressions or images It follows that if it is true to say that the impression or image is part of the idea, then there are at least two senses of "is part of", and the sense in which the impression is part of the idea is totally different from the sense in which the simple impression or idea is part of the complex If we agree that "is derived from" and similar phrases must be regarded sometimes as expressing the relation of copying, which holds between images and impressions, and sometimes as expressing the based on relation which

holds between ideas, in the widest sense, and impressions, we shall be in a very much better position to benefit from Hume's arguments and to distinguish the important from the unimportant defects in his views The most obvious example of a non-perceptual accusative, that is to say of an accusative which, though related to impressions in some way, is more remotely related than images either simple or complex, is the abstract idea We have already noticed several times that it is quite clear that abstract ideas are not related to impressions as images are Although it is only in this particular case that it is easy to recognize the non-perceptual accusative, a careful examination of his views shows that he does in fact discuss other accusatives of this kind without showing clearly that they are of this kind We do not have to look very far for examples The very fact that it was necessary to distinguish objects from complex perceptions shows that they cannot be accounted for wholly in terms of perception In any object of the second kind we have at least one non-perceptual element, the characteristic described by saying that the complex perception is external If objects of the second kind are not wholly perceptual objects, then objects of the first kind certainly are not The nature of this object is such that it could not be an accusative of the senses The complex impression element in the object of the second kind is a sign for a complex of perceptual and other elements of which it is in some sense part The complex impression element in the object of the first kind is also a sign for a complex having different kinds of elements, but the sense in which these elements, including the complex impression, are parts of the complex accusative is clearly different from the sense in which the elements of the object of the second kind are parts of

that accusative, though it is difficult to show in what the difference consists Nevertheless, even though I cannot define these different uses of 'is part of', probably everyone would agree that we have here two different kinds of non-perceptual accusatives

Either of these accusatives might have been a clue to Hume to accept explicitly the fact that there are non-perceptual accusatives and to free himself from his obsession with the perceptual element in his account of abstract ideas It is not surprising that he missed the clue, as it only becomes obvious when the accusatives are examined more thoroughly than Hume examined them Yet it is surprising that none of his memory problems aroused any doubts in his mind Most, if not all, of the relevant points which emerge in his discussion of memory apply also to accusatives having an impression element, but the discussions on memory show them more clearly than the discussions on impressions The fact that the image element in the memory-object, either of the first or second kind, is sometimes, and perhaps usually, much more fragmentary and incomplete than the impression element in the impression-object enables us to see more easily that the perception is never more than one element in the whole complex Memory-objects, then, are accusatives having perceptual and non-perceptual elements, and will be analysable in similar terms to those used in the analysis of the corresponding perception objects

If we admit that even the objects cannot be accounted for in terms of perception but involve non-perceptual accusatives, we are less likely to want to explain away some of the accusatives which hitherto seemed utterly remote from other forms of experience Neither concepts nor objects can be analysed wholly in terms of perceptions The important difference between the two

is that whereas there is always at least one element in an object which is either an impression or an idea, even though the relationship of that element to the whole will probably be different for each accusative, there is no impression or idea which is in any sense an element in a concept This does not involve a denial of the fact that it is only through apprehension of perceptions or objects that we are able to apprehend concepts, nor of the other psychological fact that apprehension of a concept is usually simultaneous with apprehension of some perception which is accepted as an instance of the concept It does mean, however, that we must be very careful not to confuse the relationship of the impression or image to the concept with any of the relationships which may hold between an impression or image and any kind of object I think there is no doubt that Hume did make this confusion and that it accounts for his tendency to attempt to make the concept some kind of collection of its instances

11 *Determinateness and Distinctness and Separateness*

Now that we have distinguished some of the fundamentally different kinds of accusative from one another, and have seen how some of Hume's confusions and difficulties arose, we are in a better position to consider two characteristics of ideas which seemed very important to Hume The first is their determinacy, the second their distinctness and separateness Hume's argument is very often unclear chiefly because his terminology is so confused In particular he frequently uses the words "simple", "complex", "individual", "general", "particular", "universal", "determinate" and "indeterminate" without defining any of them, and uses them in such a way that sometimes two seem to be equivalent which at other times appear to have no

connection with each other, and that it is never clear which are used in opposition to others We have already considered his use of the words "simple" and "complex" so I need not refer to them again The next point about which there is least likely to be dispute is that "abstract", "general", and "universal" are used as equivalents, as names for an idea (concept) which in some way represents or stands for a number of particular images "Particular" is usually used in opposition to these, so that a particular idea is an idea which is not general or universal or abstract I think there can be very little doubt that Hume took over these terms as a legacy from his predecessors and that he never thought very carefully about what he meant by them This was unfortunate, because we cannot hope to solve the problems concerning the nature of what they express if we are uncertain or vague about how we are using them Hume tends rather to use "general", "universal" and "abstract" as terms of opprobrium, and I suspect that their significance for him was largely emotive, although he probably meant to refer to some kind of a concept of a many in one, in the very naive sense of one image which is at the same time many images It is not surprising that he regards the view that there are such ideas as absurd As we have seen, though, his recognition of the absurdity did not lead him to a satisfactory solution of the problem His answer is to make the image particular, as we have always known it to be, and to ascribe the generality to mental activity We could not refute this theory, even if we were unwilling to accept it, so long as Hume was consistent Unfortunately, however, he is obviously not satisfied himself with his explanation, since the generality reappears in the field of accusatives in a new guise whenever he wants to deny it The source of this un-

fortunate attitude to the terms we are considering is not very difficult to find I purposely used the phrase "represents or stands for a number of particulars", which is used by Hume and by many other philosophers, to show what he means by abstract or general ideas I still think this is what often is meant by these terms and it is obviously very unfortunate that it is, since it suggests the absurd 'many in one' kind of view Most people will admit that the concept *man* is neither one particular man nor a collection of men, nor even the collection of all men that are, have been, or will be, supposing it were possible to apprehend such a collection If we accept this view it is clear that the universal, general idea or abstract idea is a different type of accusative from a perception, that it is not sensibly apprehended, that it cannot therefore be envisaged as a peculiar image, and that its relationship to images which are instances of it is a different relationship from that of complex perceptions to simple perceptions It follows that to say that an accusative is general is not to say that it is many as opposed to an image which is one If this were all that were meant a concept would be just as much particular as an image is The important point about the distinction is that "particular" applies to, or perhaps names or expresses,[1] a characteristic of one type of accusative, perceptions, and "general", "universal" and "abstract" apply to, name or express a characteristic of another type of accusatives, concepts This does not, of course, define the terms, but it should enable anyone who has experienced an instance of each of the two classes to recognize what Hume and I are referring to If anyone does not see that the two are different or does not see that *being an instance of* and *being a part of*

[1] It does not matter which, for this discussion

are utterly different relations, there is nothing more to be said

Although some of Hume's arguments give rise to problems which might lead to a distinction which would require the words "individual" and "general" to express it, I do not think that he ever meant anything by "individual" which could not have been expressed by "particular" The assertion that 'everything in nature is individual' (T 19) is put forward to deny the view that there are general ideas "particular" would have done just as well Similarly, if we take together the assertions that 'Abstract ideas are, therefore, in themselves individual, however they may become general in their representation The image in the mind is only that of a particular object, though the application of it in our reasoning be the same as if it were universal' (T 20), ' the same word is supposed to have been frequently applied to other individuals' (T 20), 'the word raises up an individual idea' (T 20), 'when we reason on an individual idea the general or abstract term suggests another individual if we form a reasoning which disagrees with it' (T 21), 'a particular idea becomes general by being annex'd to a general term' (T 22), ideas which are 'particular in their nature' become 'general in their representation' (T 24)—it seems clear that one word would have expressed perfectly well what Hume meant There seem, therefore, to be no important problems connected with Hume's use of "individual"

The terms "determinate" and "indeterminate" occur very seldom in Hume's exposition, nevertheless the concept of determinacy plays an important part in his philosophy 'A strong impression must necessarily have a determinate quantity and quality' (T 19), and 'no impression can become present to the mind, without being determin'd in its degrees both of quantity and

quality' (T 19) [1] Moreover, Hume holds that what is present to the mind in apprehension of a general idea is a particular image, and the assertion that this has 'a precise degree of quantity and quality' seems to be intended to mean the same as the other assertions I have quoted Accordingly, we may assume that to have a determinate quantity and quality is to have a precise degree of quantity and quality Hume wants to maintain, then, that we cannot form an idea of an object, and, therefore, we cannot form an idea which has quantity and quality unless it has a precise degree of each (T 20) [2] On the other hand, he does admit that 'we form the loose idea' of a perfect standard of geometrical figures (T 49), that 'an exact idea can never be built on such as are loose and undeterminate' (implying that some ideas are loose and undeterminate) (T 50), and 'these ideas of self and person are never very fixed nor determinate' (T 189) These passages are the most important in connection with Hume's use of the words "determinate" and "undeterminate", and it does not seem very difficult to deal with the problems and the objections they suggest, although to do so it is necessary to make Hume's usage a little clearer than he did himself It seems evident that "determinate" and "undeterminate" are applicable primarily to impressions and images but that we do in fact apply them derivatively to objects, and that they are inapplicable to concepts The words apply to impressions and images because sense qualities can be, and usually are, arranged in series in such a way that we say that different qualities in one series differ in degree [3] Impressions and

[1] I think "being determin'd" here simply means "being determinate"

[2] Cf 'since all impressions are clear and precise, the ideas, which are copy'd from them, must be of the same nature' (T 72)

[3] I am using "degree" in the widest possible sense for all the different types of variation which have in common the fact that they are distinguishing characteristics of the elements in a series

images always have a certain determinate quality, and not, as some theories about abstract ideas suggest, all or none of the determinate qualities which constitute the series We do not, in fact, group concepts in any way which is analogous to the sensible series, consequently the notion of determinacy and undeterminacy can have no significance in this connection We may say that objects are determinate, because certain constituents of every object are impressions or ideas, *i e* the kinds of things which can correctly be described as determinate I regard this usage as derivative, because I doubt whether all the elements in the complex could be described in this way [1]

The next point of importance is to ask if Hume is right in supposing that all perceptions (in the narrow sense) are determinate and if so what leads him to say that some are undeterminate It seems to me that Hume's main contention is quite correct and that difficulties only arise because he has not sufficiently emphasized another important characteristic of our experience Hume's only direct reference to it is the assertion 'The confusion, in which impressions are sometimes involv'd, proceeds only from their faintness and unsteadiness, not from any capacity in the mind to receive any impression, which in its real existence has no particular degree nor proportion' (T 19) The problem arises simply because no epistemological analysis can be complete without reference to attention Although all the perceptions I apprehend are in fact determinate, the only perceptions about which I can make true statements are those to which I am

[1] These points should show that Hume's use of "determinate" does not relate to the relationship of one universal to another of a higher order which has often been called the relation of a determinate to a determinable Cf L S Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic*, pp 444 445 It is clear that in terms of Professor Stebbing's definitions Hume's determinate is also particular

attending If somebody asked me a question about something in a position in my field of vision remote from the centre I should be unable to answer unless I attended to it (This need not involve refocussing the object so that it is nearer the centre) I think it is to a state of affairs such as this that we refer when we speak, as we sometimes do, of an undeterminate impression Probably "undeterminate" is an unfortunate word to use in this connection since it is used to say something other than that the impression is not determinate It would probably be better to retain one of Hume's words, "faint" or "unsteady"

Hume's inconsistencies on this point seem to be due to his old confusion between the concept and the image instance of it which is so often simultaneous with it in our experience The 'perfect geometrical figure' is a concept and the 'loose ideas' are not 'undeterminate' in the sense we have just considered, but are 'undeterminate' because they are not images of something which, by its very nature, could not be imaged This seems to me a quite illegitimate and most unfortunate use of 'undeterminate' Precisely the same objection applies to the assertion that 'the ideas of self and person are never very fixed nor determinate' These ideas are concepts of a very high degree of abstraction, so that it is not to be expected that they are determinate

The use Hume makes of his view that simple perceptions are 'such as admit of no distinction or separation' (T 2) in this discussion of concepts requires some further examination His next assertion is longer 'First, We have observ'd, that whatever objects are different are distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination And we may here add, that these propositions are equally true in the *inverse*, and that what-

ever objects are separable are also distinguishable, and that whatever objects are distinguishable are also different For how is it possible we can separate what is not distinguishable, or distinguish what is not different?" (T 18) The important problem, of course, is to decide what the objects are One thing at least seems fairly clear, Hume is still concerned with epistemology I can see no reason at all to suppose that he is here making ontological statements, whereas the context in each case points to an epistemological interpretation In the first instance, he explicitly says that it is perceptions, which he has taken some care to describe epistemologically, that are 'distinct and separate' In the second instance Hume is attempting to show that 'abstract ideas' do not belong to that particular class of accusatives of which they are usually supposed to be instances, and it is again these accusatives, the impressions and ideas, which are asserted to be separate and distinct

The only way to throw any further light on the problem is to examine each statement individually In the passage we are considering (T 18) Hume maintains that he is repeating something he has already said before If we look back to what 'we have already observed', it is that simple impressions admit of no distinction or separation (T 2), that 'wher-ever the imagination perceives a difference among ideas, it can easily produce a separation' (T 10), that 'all simple ideas may be separated by the imagination' (T 10) If "whatever objects are different are distinguishable" and "whatever objects are distinguishable are separable by the thought and imagination" are equivalent to these previous assertions it is easier to see what they mean His contention is that if there is a complex perception of two or more elements (which will, of course,

be distinct and different from each other), then those two elements can be seen to be two and any perception which appears to be one simple element must, in fact, be one and not two The simple elements are simple perceptions, that is to say the simple impressions or simple ideas, which Hume is considering on page 2 which we have already decided are perceptions of the first kind and not sensations In saying that these perceptions are distinguishable or separable Hume meant that we can perceive them to be different [1] I perceive that the complex accusative *apple* consists of a visual perception, a tactual perception, etc This is important, because Hume calls it alternatively perceiving a difference, perceiving a difference by imagination, distinguishing, separating by imagination, separating and separating by thought and imagination If we take all these phrases as expressing the perception of complexes as composed of simples the second part of Hume's assertion (T 18) raises no new difficulties The passage as a whole, however, does raise difficulties which are due partly to this unfortunate conglomeration of words and partly to the fact that Hume was not really clear about what he was doing In the first place, what Hume wants to show is that there are no abstract images This he does very successfully by pointing out that the simplest images are the kind of accusatives which can be perceived to be different from the other simple images with which they are almost invariably con-

[1] I am taking this interpretation solely for the purposes of this discussion It seems to me to be what Hume had in mind when he was writing the passages we are considering Nevertheless, I do not think recognition of this fact is incompatible with what I have already said on this topic above (Chapter 3) I still think that Hume was concerned both with the psychologically and with the epistemologically simple elements although he did not see that they were different In this case the present interpretation of distinguishing is appropriate when Hume's argument requires the simples to be psychological simples and a different interpretation is required when the epistemological simples are under considera tion

joined in a complex Abstract ideas are described by those who think there are abstract ideas as elements of which simple images are complexes Experience shows that we do not perceive them as distinct, obviously then, they cannot be images So long as Hume was only concerned to show that they do not fulfil the conditions for being a simple image, namely that they are perceivably different from other simple images, it does not matter how many different words he uses to express the perception of difference Unfortunately, owing to a confusion of thought which we have already considered, Hume does not realize that there may be accusatives other than images, and his chances of recognizing this point are considerably diminished by the fact that he has already used all the available words for expressing their relation to images as equivalents for perceiving that a complex consists of simple elements "To distinguish" and "to separate by thought" would usually be understood to mean something different from the perceiving of differences Hume is referring to The important problem is to decide whether by any other process we are able to become aware of some accusative which is not an image I suggest that this particular passage does not relate to this problem at all, and that if it is interpreted in the way I have suggested it is indisputable from the point of view of Hume's philosophy It seems to me that this is equally true of the other relevant passages 'What consists of parts is distinguishable into them, and what is distinguishable is separable' (T 27) 'In order to know whether any objects, which are join'd in impression, be separable in idea, we need only consider, if they be different from each other, in which case 'tis plain they may be conceiv'd apart Every thing, that is different, is distinguishable, and every thing, that is distinguish-

able, may be separated, according to the maxims above-explain'd If on the contrary they be not different, they are not distinguishable, and if they be not distinguishable, they cannot be separated' (T 36)

The recognition that these passages, which appear to say so much and which are put forward as very important, are merely reaffirmations of the fundamental principles that only in perception are we aware of impressions and ideas, that a complex idea can be perceived to be complex and a simple idea to be simple, and that there can be no idea simpler than those perceived to be simple, must not mislead us into underestimating their importance Hume has approached all the specific problems of the analysis of the different abstract ideas from the standpoint of these statements Consequently, he is persistently attempting either to give an account of the image which is simultaneous with the concept, or to find images which will take the place of the concept, and he never clearly raises the problem of the analysis of the concept itself This seems to be at least in part due to the assumption which these passages suggest, that there are no non-perceptual accusatives and that there is no faculty of distinguishing and separating other than perception It seems clear that Hume did not seriously want to maintain these assertions, and it is, therefore, important to bear in mind, when we consider the particular questions he raises, that he was probably misled by his own language

One further point remains to be considered before we turn to these problems in relation to particular abstract ideas So far I have accepted without question Hume's assertion that simple ideas are those which can be separated from others in a complex and which cannot themselves be split up into simpler ideas This was justifiable because it is the function of the psycho-

logist to ask what the mind can and cannot do, and the epistemologist must accept his decision and regard any accusative which the psychologist tells him 'can be separated' as a separate accusative Moreover, I was only concerned to elaborate Hume's epistemological argument in order to prove that abstract ideas belong to a different class of accusatives from perceptions If, however, we make a wider survey of the argument it is clear that the assertion is ambiguous as it stands and therefore requires further analysis Even if we agree that the 'separation' is in some sense perceptual it is still not clear what Hume means by saying that the elements 'can' or 'cannot' be separated The passages we have been considering certainly suggest that he sometimes thought that every simple unanalysable idea or impression is not only capable of being isolated in thought but is in some way experienced as distinct It is obvious though, that our experience is not normally experience either of one or of a collection of separate perceptions We are nearly always aware of complexes, as he himself recognizes,[1] and a complex is apprehended as one perception and not as a collection of perceptions If the simples are not perceived as distinct, in what sense does Hume mean that we 'can' distinguish them? His theory on this point is in itself so inadequate that it is very difficult to give a satisfactory analysis If we agree, though, that we know what he refers to by "a simple perception", the vivid or faint impressions given us by our sense organs, even though we cannot describe it, then I think we may say that to say that every different idea 'can' be distinguished is to say something about the kind of thing a 'distinct idea' must be, namely that to be separable, different or distinguishable an idea must be a simple

[1] 'Ideas are not entirely loose and unconnected' (T 19), etc , etc

perception and that the words "separable", "different" and "distinguishable" are not applicable to anything not a simple perception The problem of what conditions must be fulfilled in order that any particular individual should in fact perceive a perception as simple is a psychological problem and does not really concern Hume, though his unfortunate expression suggests that it does The important point for him is that the psychologically simple elements are simple perceptions and that no element simpler in any other sense can be perceived

The first difficulty which the new theory of abstract ideas can be used to explain is 'that *distinction of reason*, which is so much talk'd of, and is so little understood, in the schools' (T 24) This 'difficulty' is the one which is really fundamental and of which all the others are instances, though Hume does not explicitly recognize that fact He shows that when we talk about the figure of a body, as distinct from the figured body, we are not aware of an image *figure* since by sight we always in fact perceive figured bodies and experiment shows that we cannot by any effort form an image *figure* The image we are in fact aware of when we talk about *figure* is always one or more coloured and figured accusatives This is indisputable The important question is, though, what are we talking about when we talk about *figure*? We make the distinction, even when we cannot 'distinguish' in the way in which we distinguish simple ideas, because 'even in this simplicity there might be contained many different resemblances and relations' If we apprehend these different resemblances and relations which are not simple perceptions, clearly we are apprehending a non-perceptual accusative What is required of us when we 'view things in different aspects', or 'consider the figure of a globe

of white marble without thinking on its colour' is not, as Hume says, that we form an image *figure*, which is impossible, but that we apprehend the concept So long as we do this, it does not matter what coloured figure images we simultaneously apprehend It is quite true, as Hume says, that we in fact come to apprehend the concept by 'practice' of apprehending particular image instances of it, but it is important to remember that this does not make the concept itself an image, and also that in 'comparing' or 'seeing resemblances' we do apprehend the concept accusative, a point which Hume seems to overlook

iii *Infinite Divisibility*

Hume does not put forward his theories of space and time as examples of the use of his account of abstract ideas but his exposition is such that they might almost be regarded as an illustration of it We therefore seem justified in considering those doctrines in this context The first paradox which Hume assures us is so attractive to philosophers is that the ideas of space and time are infinitely divisible His examination of this doctrine is carried out on lines similar to his examination of the doctrine of abstract ideas Anything which is infinitely divisible must consist of an infinite number of parts Introspection shows that if we attempt to divide any idea into parts, and its parts into smaller parts, and so on, we finally reach an idea which cannot be further subdivided This introspective evidence can be confirmed by an experiment with impressions 'Put a spot of ink upon paper, fix your eye upon that spot, and retire to such a distance, that at last you lose sight of it, 'tis plain, that the moment before it vanish'd, the image or impression, was perfectly indivisible' (T 27) These considerations show conclusively that there is

no infinitely small image It is equally easy to show by similar experiments that there is no infinitely large image Nevertheless, we do talk about the infinitely small, and the infinitely large (or so Hume says), and about infinite divisibility, so that the problem, 'what are our accusatives when we use these words?' still remains Unfortunately, Hume's remarks about this problem also are unclear, owing to his failure to distinguish ideas and images, and his failure to recognize that there are non-perceptual accusatives Consequently, although he raises many important points about the image which is apprehended simultaneously with the concept, and shows in what respects the image differs from the concept, he does not explicitly recognize that, although the image is not identical with the concept, there is in fact a concept, and that in showing that the image does not fulfil the necessary conditions we do imply that there is a criterion, the concept, from which it differs When I consider anything infinitely small, or even merely very very small, for example the ten-thousandth part of the grain of sand, the image is precisely similar to the image, *grain of sand*, and the image is a simple image, *i e* it is not further divisible Having established this, Hume is satisfied and does not conclude his explanation We can easily do this for him, however, in the light of our consideration of abstract ideas Although I am in fact aware of similar images when I speak of a grain of sand and when I speak of its ten-thousandth part I do not for a moment think that I am talking about the same thing In the first case, I am referring to a particular thing, or impression, of which I am now apprehending the image In the second case, I am referring to a concept, and the image is not identical with it, but is merely simultaneous with it, just as a particular red image is

usually simultaneous with our apprehension of the concept *red* Two things may have led to Hume's being less clear about this concept than he was even about those he refers to as 'abstract ideas' One is that his abstract idea is not the kind of thing which could under any conditions be imaged It is not inconceivable, though, that there might be a human being with sight so acute that he could distinguish ten-thousandth parts of grains of sand and have impressions and images of them The second is that the grain-of-sand image is not related to the concept as the particular patch is to the colour concept it is not an instance of it These two things rather suggest that the grain-of-sand image is inadequate only because it is not small enough Clearly though, it can only stand in this relation of not being small enough to something perceptually apprehended and the concept, as we have seen, cannot be perceptually apprehended Moreover, even though it is not inconceivable that there might be an image, *ten-thousandth part of a grain of sand*, that image would not be identical with, or even similar in kind to, the concept we now express by the phrase "ten-thousandth part of a grain of sand"

It should also be noted that Hume's elaboration of the impression example is certainly expressed in language which is very unsatisfactory from his point of view, whatever he may have meant by these words It is not sensible, in Hume's philosophy, to say that the microscope, spreads the rays of light from an impression which was formerly imperceptible and so makes it (*i e* the same impression) perceptible, or that the perception, which to the naked eye appeared simple and uncompounded, can, with the aid of the microscope, be seen to consist of parts The same impression cannot be apprehended both as uncompounded and

as divisible into parts The conditions or circumstances of the perceiving are utterly irrelevant, since every perception is just what it appears to be and nothing else This passage can only be made intelligible in terms of the 'objects' of the vulgar I obviously cannot apply a microscope or telescope to my impressions, but I can do so to some external object which the impression is supposed to represent Alternatively, if I regard my perceptions as themselves external objects, I can use the microscope and see that what I thought was simple is compounded In this case, though, the perception is not an accusative I think in this particular passage Hume had dropped below the level of common sense into the philosophical assumption of distinct perceptions and physical objects This need not, however, disturb us now, since, despite this fact, his argument establishes the point he wants to make, that our impressions cannot be infinitely divided in perception

The following paragraph on this topic is also a little strange In this case, Hume seems to have confused the epistemologically simple with the kind of thing which he might have regarded as simple for the physicist He is willing to admit that there may in some sense be an animal a thousand times less than a mite which is itself composed of parts It was a pity that he did not here employ his usual method of introspection which might have saved him from this confusion Introspection shows that I cannot perceive anything so very much smaller than a mite Hume's own example of the spot of ink illustrates the point very clearly The spot of ink, the moment before it vanishes, has a certain determinate size, and then is not perceived at all This determinate size is the smallest perception I can perceive, and it is certainly very much bigger than 'the smallest atom of the animal spirits

of an insect a thousand times less than a mite' (T 28) Therefore, Hume should have concluded, whatever the atom is, it is not a perception There may be an accusative *atom*, but this will be a concept, and there may be a non-accusative atom, something the physicist or the metaphysician is concerned with and about which we know nothing Because he fails to distinguish the different kinds of simples and wants to maintain that there are very small atoms, Hume has to say that they are ideas, a view which I think we may flatly deny on his own grounds Moreover, in order to account for the fact that what we perceive as indivisible, the spot of ink before it vanishes, is so very much larger than the minute atoms, he has to say that this perception is in fact composed of a vast number of parts, but that our senses give us a disproportioned image In Hume's philosophy,[1] the notion of the fallibility of the senses should be regarded as meaningless and in appealing to it he is committing himself to a distinction between the epistemological and other simples

Hume's conclusions with regard to infinite divisibility seem, then, to be, first and foremost, that there is no image which is infinitely small and that if we divide and subdivide any perception we shall always reach some other perception, having a determinate size, which cannot be divided into two smaller perceptions This being so there is nothing infinitely small and no infinite divisibility This he himself denies in talking about the infinitely small and the infinitely divisible, and I suggest that these are concepts He also expresses the view that there are very minute atoms He gives no evidence for this statement and it does not concern the epistemologist, so we may ignore it We must, however,

[1] That is to say, in his strict and narrow view of philosophy

deny the implication that these atoms are perceptions All Hume's most carefully considered views show that they could not possibly be perceptions and his inconsistencies on this point confirm that view

IV *Space*

Hume's theory of space has often been misunderstood, despite the fact that he is more careful to make his position clear on this point than is usual for him This is probably due to the fact that the word "space" is used loosely in several different senses in ordinary conversation, and Hume, having decided how he will use it (and believing wrongly that he is only using it in one sense), refuses to allow that any one of the other concepts usually called space is space This, however, is only to say that they cannot rightly be called space in his use of the word "space", it is not to deny that there are such concepts, as is sometimes supposed A further difficulty in his exposition, which does not affect his treatment, is that he does not first explain how he is using the word and subsequently discuss the concept it expresses He plunges straight into one particular problem of the analysis of the concept, and it only becomes clear in the course of the discussion which concept he is supposed to be analysing This being so we can only hope to understand his views by first distinguishing the different accusatives he refers to It is important to notice, in the first place, that Hume is throughout considering accusatives and that physical space or any other non-accusative space does not concern us here (T 64) As in the case of infinite divisibility, Hume does not always succeed in living up to this ideal, but I think that the remarks which do not conform to this criterion are always inconsistencies and that he never intended to depart from it The distinction Hume is

most anxious to draw is between space or extension (which he uses as equivalents) which is a characteristic of objects of which everyone is aware and which we refer to in saying that something is extended or has spatial characteristics, and space which can be empty of objects, or a vacuum, and which cannot, therefore, be described as a characteristic of objects The latter usage is regarded by Hume as illegitimate I shall return to his grounds for this view and to the relative merits of the terms "space" and "distance" in face of his objections later [1]

Immediately we begin to consider the accusative which Hume would regard as correctly and accurately called space, it becomes clear that his argument relates not to one but to two accusatives He sometimes confuses and sometimes distinguishes one accusative, which is undoubtedly a concept, with another set of accusatives which are images one or more of which is in fact apprehended simultaneously with the concept and which seem to stand in an important relation to it This confusion is simply an instance of the one we have already considered, between the abstract idea concept and the image which represents it when we talk about it Hume first points out that space has been described as infinitely divisible and has been said to be neither coloured nor tangible As we have already seen, however, there can be no image which fulfils these conditions Nevertheless, we do have some idea of space, since we talk and reason about it At this point, Hume repeats the mistake he makes so often As he has himself explained, we use a great many general terms in conversation which cannot be imaged, although they may be represented in thought by an image Despite some arguments which suggest that he recognized this

[1] See below, p 207

important fact, he here assumes that, because we talk about space, there must be an image *space* Accordingly, he asserts that we do not have a simple image *space*, so that it follows that *space* must be a complex impression or image Examination of our impressions shows that since all we perceive when we have an idea of extension is a set of coloured points, the space image is an image which is a set of coloured and tangible points

In certain respects this theory is unquestionable Hume is clearly right in his view that we become aware of extension through sight and touch sensations, so that if there is an image *space* or *extension* it must be visible and tangible, and there is no reason why he should not use the word "space" to refer to a set of coloured and tangible points if he particularly wants to Many of his other assertions, though, are certainly open to question In the first place, Hume is not merely saying how he is going to use the word "space" but is professing to account for the ordinary usage of the word I suggest that a complex of tactual or visual impressions is always an extended thing and that no extended thing or collection of extended things is identical with what most people are talking about when they use the word "extension" If we consider the impression or image *an extended thing*, it can certainly be seen to include a set of simple impressions each of which is coloured and tangible It seems to me, however, that it is misleading to call this accusative extension and that if anyone says he has an image, *extension*, we should assume that he simply means that he has some extended image, a collection of simple tangible coloured images, and not, as Hume does, that he also means that this is the only accusative which should be referred to by that word In the second place, Hume does not consistently maintain

this view himself If there is an image *space* or *extension* which is identical with an image *extended thing* or *set of coloured and tangible points*, then, from Hume's point of view, there is nothing more to be said about it Quite apart from the fact that not even Hume could seriously intend to maintain that "table" and "extension" are alternative names for the same accusative, however, he also asserts that by considering the distance between visible bodies we acquire an idea of extension (T 33), that the idea of extension is a copy of coloured points and *the manner of their extension*, and that 'we omit the peculiarities of colour, as far as possible, and found an abstract idea merely on that disposition of points, or manner of appearance, in which they agree' (T 34) Without asking whether these remarks all refer to the same concept we must obviously admit that they refer to some concept and not to an image This being so, it is only natural to ask why Hume appears to be quite unperturbed by what seems to be such an obvious inconsistency in his view I think this can only be explained by the fact that the image and the concept are intimately related in our apprehension Apprehension of the concept is in fact simultaneous with apprehension of some image which represents it in the imagination in virtue of the fact that it would be described as having spatial characteristics Hume's mistake lies in suggesting that the image is identical with the concept He is quite justified, however, in asserting that we only apprehend the concept *extension* if we have in fact apprehended extended thing images Only if we distinguish these three different assertions which Hume confuses can we hope to derive anything of value from his arguments The assertion, for example, that our idea of space is composed of indivisible parts (T 38) refers only to the image of an extended thing, or rather

he has proved only this point and has given no evidence to show that the concept consists of parts The last three paragraphs of this section (T 38-39) show a similar confusion The compound impression must be an extended object Hume's use of "represents" here only disguises his confusion, as does the phrase "manner of their appearance" above (T 34) It is only necessary for us to preserve the idea of the colour and tangibility for the extended object image The concept extension, as Hume says, 'omits the peculiarities of colour' It is, then, only the *extended object* image, and not the concept *extension*, which must be 'an object either of our sight or feeling' (T 39) and which is nothing but the '*idea of visible or tangible points distributed in a certain order*' (T 53)

This concept *space* or *extension* must be sharply distinguished, not only from the images which represent it, but also from another concept often called space too We have already noted[1] that this concept, which is not thought of as a characteristic of objects but as that which objects occupy, should not, in Hume's opinion, be called space at all He was not, however, sufficiently clear about the differences between the three uses of "space", for the accompanying image, for the concept of what is common to extended things, and for the manner of the appearance of extended things, to maintain this position consistently Consequently when he professes to be giving an account of space in the sense he admits, he frequently refers to the second concept which he has argued should not be called space When he wishes to refer to it explicitly he calls it distance (T 59) Hume is led to his analysis of this concept by a consideration of what people mean when they talk about a vacuum or empty space There are three

[1] P 204 above

distinct steps in his argument Firstly, he shows that there is certainly no image *empty space* Nevertheless, secondly, we must admit that there is something to be explained since people do talk in this way, and, thirdly, he suggests an analysis

In order to establish his first point beyond dispute Hume gives a more detailed and careful argument than he usually considers necessary to support any statement about the existence of any impression or image He maintains that, in this case, it is necessary to take the matter 'pretty deep', in order to avoid confusion In so doing, he makes certain points which are naturally not so obviously related to his main contention as others less 'deep', and unfortunately he does not explain their connection sufficiently well to render his argument clear and unambiguous This makes it necessary to restate his argument In the previous exposition of his doctrine of space, he had believed that he had shown that there could be no image *extension* but only extended thing images Nevertheless, since some people seem inclined to dispute this and to argue that they have an idea of space which is distinct from an extended object, and from the extension of objects, we must examine the possible sources of such an idea even more carefully It may be argued that we get an idea of empty space simply by removing all visible objects, for example, by shutting our eyes Hume's objection to this suggestion is badly expressed and his use of the phrase "positive idea", of which he gives no explanation either here or elsewhere, is particularly unfortunate It is, however, not difficult to see what he meant even though he has not said it very clearly If darkness alone provided us with an idea of space a blind man should have the idea just as much as a man who could see He assumes without question that no-one will support this conten-

tion Although I believe that his view is correct, I do not think he has any justification for assuming that everyone would agree Since, however, if anyone should disagree, it is useless to argue about it as the matter is unverifiable, there is no need to discuss the point The view Hume is really anxious to maintain is that this supposed idea of a vacuum is really regarded as an idea of space emptied of objects and that it is essentially similar in character to the spatialness of objects This being so, our apprehension of this accusative, however we analyse it, is essentially dependent on some prior apprehension of objects It is for this reason that the permanent darkness of the blind man must be totally different from any temporary darkness of a man who has sight Thus the blind man never apprehends an idea of space simply by being unaware of objects, since the complete absence of objects or of light prevents the darkness from becoming an idea for him at all In saying that darkness is 'no positive idea, but merely the negation of light' (T 55), Hume simply wants to point out that a man with sight apprehends darkness as an idea simply because he has in fact also apprehended light, but that apart from this he would not apprehend it as an idea From these considerations we may conclude that mere absence of objects does not give an idea of empty space I think we must also agree with Hume that motion through what would usually be called space, apart from present or past visual experiences, also cannot give an idea similar to the idea of empty space apprehended by those who can see Another argument that might be put forward is that motion and darkness 'combined with something visible and tangible' might give rise to the idea If, though, we add one or more objects to this darkness, we make no difference to the darkness surrounding them Consequently, dark-

ness with objects cannot in itself be an idea any more than it can be when it contains no objects This appears a little odd at first sight, but I think the difficulty chiefly consists in the difficulty of stating what Hume wants to say at all In Hume's examples of the luminous bodies moving in complete darkness there does at first seem to be some sense in which we have an impression of darkness or space If we examine this accusative more carefully, though, it becomes clear that, apart from apprehension of light or other objects, darkness would never have become an object of awareness This certainly suggests that the accusative is complex and that we are mistaken in supposing that there is a simple impression or image *darkness*, *space* or *vacuum*

Unlike some philosophers, Hume has no wish to say that there 'is not' anything simply because the thing in question can be shown not to be the kind of thing it is usually supposed to be Whenever we use words we refer to something and whenever we say sentences we say something, so that the very fact that a problem is raised shows that it must be a problem about something and not about nothing This method of philosophy, or attitude to philosophical problems, or whatever we like to call it, seems to me one of the most important, if not the most important, characteristics of Hume's philosophical writings Unfortunately, it has not had the influence on his successors which would have been desirable owing to the fact that Reid and his followers in the criticism of Hume have persisted in maintaining the so-called principle of the Inquisition, which was Reid's invention and has no application at all in Hume's philosophy Hume's method, moreover, is the only method for epistemology and is infinitely preferable to the popular method of ruling out as non-existent or illegitimate everything which does not fulfil certain predeter-

mined conditions of existence There is no word or sentence in the widest sense of these terms which can be dismissed as expressing nothing or saying nothing Everyone raises an important philosophical problem of the form, 'what kind of thing does this name?' or 'what kind of fact does this state?' It is quite ridiculous to say that because the word does not name what you or someone else at first supposed it to name that it does not name anything This attitude can only put an end to all advance in philosophy According to Hume, however, 'the appearances of objects to our senses are all consistent, and no difficulties can ever arise, but from the obscurity of the terms we make use of' (T 639) We must, therefore, attempt to give an account of that accusative which we refer to as empty space and which we wrongly suppose to be an image of an empty space or vacuum

'If it be ask'd, if the invisible and intangible distance, interpos'd betwixt two objects, be something or nothing 'Tis easy to answer that it is *something*, viz a property of the objects, which affect the *senses* after such a particular manner' (T 638) Although the only image of space is an image of coloured and tangible points we do use the word "space" in such a way that although it cannot, as we tend to suppose, express an image of empty space, nevertheless it does not refer to any colour or touch image It is easiest to see what we are in fact referring to when we use the word "space" in this sense if we consider how we come so to use it at all I do not think that the arguments, which we have just considered to prove that there can be no image *empty space*, also prove that this accusative is different from the concept *spatial* which Hume usually calls space and which we have already examined His positive statements about this use of "space", however,

show conclusively that it refers to a totally different accusative Whereas every impression and image is given immediately in experience and no number of repetitions of any experience can give rise to any new impression, not originally contained in it, this is not the case with other accusatives Thus, although we may conclude from the fact that a single experience either of the absence of visual and tactual impressions, or even of motion and darkness attended with visible and tangible objects, cannot give us an image or impression *empty space*, that there cannot be such an impression or image, the fact that no single experience in itself provides any space accusatives does not prove that there is no such accusative Hume does not himself bring out this point very clearly, but it is important to notice that his emphasis on the failure of the one instance in the first case is not incompatible with his argument from a number of experiences in the second case Experience of different kinds leads us to regard objects which have spatial characteristics as related to each other by the relation distance Hume points out three kinds of experiences which may be regarded as especially important in this connection Different objects 'form [an] angle by the rays which flow from them, and meet in the eye' (T 58) In other words, objects are given for us as distant or separated One single apprehension of two distant objects could not, I think Hume would have said, in itself lead to the apprehension of distance Moreover, supposing an individual to apprehend a succession of different objects, if each successive object occupied the same place in the percipient's visual field as the one immediately preceding it, he still would not apprehend distance Apprehension of objects separated by a greater or lesser degree of distance, combined with memory, might, however, lead to apprehension of the

relation between them The fact that in actual experience we do not merely apprehend two objects distant from each other, but frequently see and feel other objects between them, leads us to forget that, strictly speaking, what we apprehend is a relation, and to suppose that we can have some image of tactual and visual space unoccupied by anything tactual or visual Precisely similar considerations show how, in the second place, touch and movement sensations give rise to the same misconceptions The third argument to account for the apprehension of the relation and for its confusion with an image is also of the same form but is in terms of sensations of heat, cold, light, etc We must conclude, then, that we are perfectly justified in using the word "space" in a sense different from the sense in which we might talk about the space of objects In so doing we are talking about something and not nothing We must, however, make it clear that "space" in this sense expresses a concept, namely a certain relation between objects, and not an image Hume himself would probably prefer not to call this space at all but distance There is much to be said for this suggestion, since it will help us to avoid thinking of space as a kind of empty box That there is much in common between our apprehension of distance and our apprehension of occupied space is clear That similarity in this case, as in others, leads to a confusion of the two different things and to the application to both of statements which are only true of one is also indisputable Fortunately, however, we may accept these phenomena as real and still regard Hume's explication as chimerical (T 60)

v *Time*

It is the greatest mistake to suppose that Hume wants to offer a theory of time which will solve any of

the many different problems which are usually raised by other philosophers or scientists It is not very difficult to see what problem Hume does want to raise, and everyone will agree that it is a problem which is not very often discussed Just as we must not suppose that the accusative *space* is an image or an idea or can be explained in terms of these perceptions alone, so we must admit that *time* also cannot be included in this class of accusatives Nevertheless, as in the case of *space*, we cannot deny that there is an accusative *time*, since we talk and reason about it, and that we do sometimes suppose that we have an image *time* Hume does not give a clear account of the accusative *time*, in which philosophers are most interested He does, however, examine the images which, in the plain man's mind, are somehow intimately connected with the accusative itself Although he does not himself offer any justification for this procedure, it is not difficult to see why it was important for him and why it is of value to other philosophers It was essential for Hume to consider these images, both because he was attempting to give a complete account of perceptual experience, and because he was especially anxious to emphasize the fact that from a psychological point of view all our accusatives are based on sense experience Recognition of the fact that even after we have experienced a concept accusative, the perceptual experiences through which we acquired it still tend to be apprehended simultaneously with the concept itself, is significant for this point, which is so important in relation to his theory of knowledge His examination of the images, and of the relationship of the apprehension of the images to the apprehension of the concept, is interesting to other philosophers, even though they be occupied with different problems, because it shows clearly how easy it is to confuse the

different accusatives Moreover, the distinction between them throws light on their analysis

The arguments which showed us that there could be no infinitely divisible space image show also that there cannot be an infinitely divisible time image, whatever view we may hold about the divisibility of the concept Although Hume considers these arguments sufficient to establish his conclusion, he adduces a further argument which applies only to time He thinks that because moments of time are successive they must be indivisible Unfortunately, he does not explain why he thinks this, and it is very difficult to see any reason for supposing that if there is a moment t_1 and an event e, occupying half of t_1, then the half of t_1 occupied by e must be contemporaneous with t_2 which succeeds t_1 Fortunately, however, Hume has established his point already, so that the difficulties involved in this additional argument have no far-reaching consequences

Even if we admit that there is no image *time* which is infinitely divisible we may still ask if there is any kind of image *time* There is no original sense impression *time* It follows there can be no image *time* Nevertheless we talk about time, and this accusative is 'deriv'd from the succession of our perceptions of every kind' (T 34) This idea of time 'is represented in the fancy by some particular individual idea of a determined quantity and quality' (T 35) It is important to notice that Hume is here again using "idēa" in two different senses The idea of time which we form from the succession of ideas and impressions (T 35) cannot be an image, though I think the particular individual idea with the determined quantity and quality which represents[1] it in the imagination is

[1] I have purposely used the word "represents" here because Hume writes as though the same relationship holds between the image and the concept here as

meant to be This confusion of terms leads Hume to make contradictory remarks He asserts, for example, that time is not an impression additional to the succeeding impressions which give us the idea but only the *manner* of their appearance (T 37) He also asserts, however, that it is the 'different ideas, or impressions, or objects dispos'd in a certain manner' (T 37), and he further identifies it with duration and so concludes that it must consist of parts Now clearly a '*manner*' cannot consist of parts in the first case, and in the second case, even if we distinguish the different ideas and so get parts, we only do so by omitting the '*manner*' Hume is obviously here misled by his unwillingness to allow that there are non-perceptual accusatives It seems clear that the time he is talking about when he uses that word is a concept and that his attempts to describe it as something else are not only completely unsuccessful but are also incompatible with his own assertions that it is an idea which is 'represented' in our thinking by an image

If we allow to Hume that there is a concept *time*, just as there is a concept *space*, without asking how either of these concepts is to be analysed, and if we also allow to him that though neither is itself a perceptual accusative each is acquired through sense-experience, it is clear that there is an important difference between the kind of experiences necessary to give the idea *space* and the kind of experiences necessary to give the idea *time* In describing how we come to have an idea *space* Hume does not distinguish between the spatial characteristics of visible and tangible objects and their spatial relationships to each other He tells us that it is their dispositon which gives the idea of space, but

holds between an image instance of yellow and the concept itself Clearly this is not so cf below

it is clear that what the particular image represents, or is an instance of, is spatial characteristics of objects However, whichever view we take, the idea is derived from sense experience and any sense or touch impressions are theoretically capable of giving the idea The idea of *time*, on the other hand, is not so derived Although we never could in fact acquire an idea *time* unless we experienced sense impressions, no impression of any sense can give us the idea Nor is *time* a new impression of reflection Time is 'the *manner* in which the different sounds make their appearance' (T 37) If this is so Hume must admit that the idea of time is reached by a totally different kind of abstraction from the process which gives us the idea of space Moreover, although he does not call these ways of acquiring concepts abstraction, I think he regards them as processes which could be called by one name If this is so we must admit that the name has systematic ambiguity We can illustrate this point by this particular instance if we agree to accept for a moment, very unprecise terminology There is some sense of "direct" in which sense impressions give us the idea of *space* more directly than they give us the idea of *time* I admit this is very unclear, the only further relevant consideration which I can see is that although no sense impression is *space*, nevertheless some sense impressions have spatial characteristics and are instances of space There is, however, no impression which either has temporal characteristics[1] or which is an instance of time The unsatisfactoriness of this statement does not shake my belief that there is an important problem here which Hume overlooked

This distinction between the ways in which we

[1] *I e* the manner of the appearance of perceptions is not a character of any impressions

acquire the ideas of *space* and *time* respectively brings to light another important point Hume's statements of what the ideas of *space* and *time* are, and of how we acquire them, are in spatial and temporal terms respectively Nevertheless, although this makes his account circular, I do not think he is begging the question Experiences of spatial and temporal order certainly seem to be ultimate in the sense that they cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of, any other experiences If so, it is inevitable that any statements about such experiences should be circular, and we cannot object to Hume's arguments on these grounds

In order to clear up these two difficulties we agreed to assume that there is a concept *time*, which is required by some of Hume's arguments, without asking any further questions about the concept We must now consider whether his argument throws any light on the nature of the concept Unfortunately, in attempting to discover Hume's views on this point we are confronted with new difficulties He does not seem to have realized that despite the fact that people do talk about time, the word "time" is used in many totally different senses and the different people who use the word in conversation or in writing are not by any means all referring to precisely similar accusatives Admittedly it would be undesirable, either for philosophy, for science or for everyday life, to distinguish all the different uses of the word, but it is at least necessary to distinguish some of them, if we are to give any account of the concepts which will be of any use for any purposes Usually, when the plain man uses the word "time" he wants to refer to intervals of time, or durations, as Hume calls them, for example, 'so-and-so takes a long time to do', 'I have waited a long time' The

chief ways in which "time" as distinct from an interval or moment of time is referred to in ordinary conversation are in metaphorical expressions These expressions can usually be analysed in such a way that it can be seen that they do not involve any reference to the concept *time* "Time flies", for example, seems to mean only that the speaker has experienced the time intervals between certain definite events as short intervals Now, although an interval of time, just as a distance in space, is an important and very useful concept, especially in everyday life, it must clearly be distinguished from the concept *time* Hume sometimes assumes without question that *time* is a complex idea consisting of a set of intervals or indivisible moments of time just as space consists of a number of indivisible atoms It is important to notice, though, that he makes this assumption when he is asking if there can be an image *time* or an image *space* The discovery that the only images are filled moments of time and points of space suggests that the idea *time* and the idea *space* must be collections of the images of parts of time and of parts of space respectively Had Hume carried his introspective investigation a little further and asked whether there is an image *time* or an image *space* of this kind I think it would have been obvious to him, or to anyone who asked himself this question, that there is not Moreover, even if Hume had not asked himself this question, it is still surprising that he was not struck by the strangeness of his attempts to give an account of such images The confusion in his account both of the concept and of its accompanying image and his failure to see that the former cannot be explained in terms of the latter seem to be due to his original failure to distinguish the sensory and non-sensory accusatives The justification for regarding his argument as confused, and not merely

as an unsuccessful but deliberate attempt to confine himself wholly to sensory accusatives, lies in the fact that many of his assertions are quite inconsistent with the particular view we are considering, and are concerned to distinguish the concept from the sensory image In addition to the argument which explains the accusative *time* in terms of images of filled moments, there is the alternative argument which suggests that time is not the kind of accusative which could be imaged Five notes played on a flute may give us an idea of time though time is not a sixth impression It is 'the *manner*, in which the different sounds make their appearance' (T 37) Hume does not attempt to explain the relationship of these two incompatible doctrines so that either we must regard his view as fundamentally inconsistent or we must suppose that he was offering an account of two different accusatives which unfortunately happen to be called by the same name in everyday conversation It seems to me that both these interpretations contain an element of truth but that neither would be completely adequate Hume's theory is inconsistent in that he puts forward his two incompatible arguments as answers to the same problem and does not seem to see that the different assertions conflict and give rise to difficulties On the other hand, it seems clear that two different accusatives are involved in Hume's problem and that although Hume does not recognize that there are two he probably was in fact considering first one and then the other, when he made the conflicting assertions If so, then although Hume himself was confused in that he did not see that there were two problems, he was not so confused as to apply arguments relevant to one problem to the other Consequently, we may regard the assertions which gave rise to the difficulties as only apparently inconsistent

and the appearance of inconsistency as due to unclear exposition This means that even the apparent inconsistencies can be removed without any alteration in Hume's views, although of course elaboration will be necessary

The first argument, as we have already seen, accounts for the accusative *time* which is most often referred to in everyday life In this case we use the word "time" to refer to a duration This usage is perfectly satisfactory from the plain man's point of view, since we all understand sentences in which "time" is used in that sense even though as plain men we probably do not understand the word itself in the sense that we could explain precisely what it is being used to express *Time*, in this case, is a concept acquired through sense experiences in a way somewhat analogous to the way in which we acquire the concept *yellow* Just as there are many instances of yellow, so there are many durations, *i e* instances, of time in this first sense It is important, though, not to carry the analogy too far Although it may be useful and significant to use "sense" in such a way that we can say that we are sensible of durations, we do not seem to have a sense impression *duration* in the same sense as we have a sense impression *yellow* When we use the word "time" in this first sense, and apprehend this accusative, we can also, and frequently do, apprehend an image simultaneously with it This image will not be an image *duration* but a visual or tactual or auditory, etc , image, or set of such images, apprehended as occupying [1] the duration One further point of importance is brought out by the analogy with the concept *yellow* When I

[1] This form of apprehension is obviously very important and raises difficult problems As the word "apprehension" is used in this context to express the form of the mental process of abstraction, which is a *sine qua non* of this particular accusative, it is not necessary for my purposes to examine it

use the word yellow I do not refer to all the instances of yellow that ever have been or will be, I mean that something has or has not a certain characteristic Moreover, it would not occur to anyone but a philosopher even to suggest that if it were possible to have an image of all possible instances of yellow, then that complex image would be an adequate image *yellow* This suggestion seems to me to be completely nonsensical The idea, *all possible instances of so-and-so*, whatever name we may give it, is useful because it enables us to make the kind of statement which could not be made in terms of perceptions It is not a mere accident, due to the fact that our field of vision has only a certain magnitude, that we cannot perceive every instance of yellow It follows from our views about sense perception, and being an instance of, and accusatives in general, and time, that there could not be a set of sense perceptions perceived to be *every instance of yellow* Consequently, it is absurd of Hume to suggest that it is theoretically, though he would probably admit not practically, possible for us to have a complex image *time* consisting of a collection of filled duration images I suggest that the concept *time*, in Hume's first sense, is completely accounted for by saying that it would be more usefully called a period of time or a duration, that everyone knows what this refers to, and that apprehension of the concept is often accompanied by apprehension of a perception or set of perceptions as occupying a duration, although the concept itself cannot be imaged There does not, in fact, seem to be any concept *time* which is a complex or collection of durations, and for the reasons I have given it seems to me that not only do we not apprehend, or not find useful, a concept or perception so analysable, but that it is nonsense to assert that there could be such an accusative

The concept *time*, which might in some sense be said to include all time, seems to be a totally different concept It is to be explained not in terms of distinct durations, either singly or in collections, but in terms of Hume's second view that time is the manner in which our perceptions appear to us If I am right in thinking firstly that the first use of "time" is for a concept *duration* or *period of time* which as such is one concept, and that there cannot be a collection or set of it, secondly, that although there may be many instances of duration each of which might be said to be a concept, each instance is only apprehended as a duration because it is occupied by different perceptions and so there can be no concept of a collection of such concepts, and thirdly that there cannot, in the nature of the case, be a perception of the totality of filled durations, then it follows that the second concept *time* cannot be analysed in terms of durations, or sets of durations This being so we must regard Hume's suggestion of an accusative analysable into sets or collections of durations as useless for his purposes He does, however, offer an alternative which seems to be very satisfactory Probably the only way in which the plain man wants to use "time' to mean something other than a period of time or duration is to express his experience of events as passing, or of perceptions as succeeding each other Admittedly Hume's examination of this second usage does not tell us very much, but it at least enables us to distinguish the two different uses of "time" There is, however, one point which brings out the difference between the two uses which Hume does not mention It is clear that time in the second sense does not have instances as time in the first sense does, although, as Hume does point out (T 36-37) apprehension of time must in fact be accompanied by apprehension of some particular

perceptions as appearing in this manner, though it does not matter which perceptions are so apprehended This difference certainly suggests that a further examination of the problem might lead to further important differences between these two concepts and also throw light on the different types of concepts and of abstraction

It should be noted, finally, that there may be many more different *time* concepts Physicists certainly use at least one and probably several different concepts Hume does not deny that there are others, nor does it follow from his views that there are no others, he just does not discuss them

In addition to his discussion of the different *time* concepts, Hume gives us one paragraph (T 35) which seems to concern the apprehension of the concept This passage requires special consideration as it involves a serious confusion of the two different concepts The assertion that from the succession of ideas and impressions we form the idea of time suggests that the second concept *time* is under consideration On the other hand, I think Hume wants to say that neither concept can be apprehended apart from some perceptions, and I should add that the relationship of the perceptions to the concept is different in each case Similarly, that we are insensible of time during sleep is equally true in both cases The rest of the argument cannot be dealt with so easily, and it seems to give rise to difficulties we have not so far considered In accepting what appears to be Hume's view, that time in the first sense is a duration occupied by one or more perceptions, it was not necessary to ask what is meant by saying that one time or duration is longer or shorter than another In terms of this interpretation, and bearing in mind the fact that an unchanging object cannot give an idea of time, one would suppose that a duration is longer than another if

it contains more perceptions, and that it is nonsense to say that one perception occupies a longer duration than another In this passage, however, Hume declares that perceptions may succeed each other with greater or less rapidity (which can only mean that one is shorter than another) and that the same duration may appear longer or shorter This suggests that there is another concept *time* which is neither the manner of the appearance of perceptions nor the duration which we apprehend our perceptions as occupying, but a duration which may be apprehended as longer or shorter than it in fact is This being so it is rather misleading to say that we can have no notion of time apart from the succession of perceptions Hume seems to mean that there can be no apprehension of the first or second concepts *time* apart from apprehension of perceptions in the peculiar ways necessary for the apprehension of those concepts Apprehension of the third concept is, however, different in important respects In the first two cases the perceptions apprehended are apprehended as standing in certain relations to each other in virtue of which we apprehend time Now there can be succession which is not succession of perceptions but of physical objects Since we only apprehend accusatives the physical objects succeeding each other cannot be apprehended There is, however, a concept *time* which is the accusative *succession of these physical objects* This concept can be apprehended even when we do not apprehend a succession of perceptual representations of the succeeding physical objects, otherwise how could we say that the circle of fire is a succession of positions of a burning coal What in fact happens in this case is that we do represent to ourselves in imagination the succession of perceptions which we should perceive if the coal revolved more slowly Thus Hume is right in thinking

that we cannot apprehend the concept apart from some perception, but he should have pointed out that we do not here apprehend the succession of impressions standing in the necessary relationships but only another succession which is in some sense analogous to it The grounds for accepting this third use of "time" are, as Hume would say, that we all do distinguish the real and the apparent length of a duration and that we all admit successions of physical objects which are more rapid than successions of perceptions I do not think Hume realized, though, how very much more complicated would be the analysis of this concept, nor what a vast number of new and difficult problems it gives rise to [1] Even the explanation of the way in which we ascribe duration to unchangeable objects throws no light on the problem since the 'object' in this context (T 65) is a perception or series of perceptions

[1] I mean, of course, that in writing this passage he was not aware of its implications He is, however, well aware of the serious nature of these problems (T 638)

CHAPTER 8

THE ACCUSATIVES OF KNOWING AND HUME'S SCEPTICISM

1 *Perceptions and Propositions*

ALTHOUGH in the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* Hume is concerned with the analysis of many different kinds of knowledge in its widest sense the problem which was of fundamental interest and importance for him was to determine the sphere of knowledge in the strict and narrow sense He saw clearly that in ordinary speech we do not use the verb "to know" in any precise sense and he wanted to distinguish the accusatives of knowing from other accusatives which we frequently but illegitimately say that we know The first step in this direction should be to distinguish accusatives which are likely to be thought to be accusatives of knowing from others which would never even be considered such So far we have only considered the 'objects of perception' Now, according to Hume, we are concerned with the objects of human reason or enquiry We must therefore begin by considering the nature of the distinction between these two different kinds of accusative Hume, I think quite rightly, supposes that everyone does in fact take some such distinction for granted, so that even though we do not normally refer to it nobody will find any difficulty in understanding what is meant when it is referred to That he makes this assumption is clear from the fact that in the *Enquiry*, the revised exposition of his views, he does not even refer to the distinction as such, but simply proceeds, as though it were a

matter of course, from two chapters on perceptions to chapters on the accusatives of reasoning Since, however, in the *Enquiry*, Hume was writing with the especial object of cutting out all philosophical difficulties and appealing to the vulgar, we are more likely to find any views which will be useful for epistemology in the *Treatise* Although here too Hume turns with equal abruptness and no explanation from perceptions to propositions, there is one footnote (T 96) which does throw some light on the problem In it he maintains that conception, judgement and reasoning, the so-called different mental activities, all resolve themselves into particular ways of conceiving an object Unfortunately, it does not seem to have occurred to him that this statement would give rise to any difficulties, but I think everyone will agree that it is not at all obvious what is meant by the assertion that judgement or reasoning 'resolve themselves into' conception Moreover, it is clearly important also to find out what is meant by "conception", since we may admit that there may be 'a single object or several' and yet 'the mind exceeds not a simple conception' In view of the fact that Hume throws no further light on the problem, either in this context or elsewhere, we can never be certain what he meant, and I can only suggest an interpretation which seems satisfactory to me but for which I admit I can give no further justification should anyone reject it

I think Hume is here using "object" to refer to a perception Thus in asserting *God is*, there is no idea for *is* distinct from the perception God, and, the second time he uses the word, the different activities of the understanding can be regarded as different ways of apprehending perceptions If this is so, and Hume holds that we may apprehend several objects, *i e* perceptions,

while the mind 'exceeds not a simple conception', I think he must be using "conception" as a name for what the mind apprehends in conceiving, judging and reasoning On this interpretation, Hume's footnote expresses a psychological fact which is of the utmost importance for epistemology In all conceiving, judging and reasoning we do not in fact apprehend 'a single or several' distinct objects and consciously combine them in a complex Each mental activity is the apprehension of a single accusative even though that accusative may be analysable Hume has not expressed his point very clearly, but it seems to be an extremely difficult point to express at all There certainly seems to be some sense in which my simple perception *brown*, my complex perception *the table*, my judgement *the table is brown*, etc , is each a unity Hume has not shown how the statement that each is a unity could be analysed and he would probably have admitted that he was unable to do so I think though, and I think Hume would have agreed, that it is not necessary for him to do so All that is necessary is for him to point to the fact that we do so apprehend one thing, even though it consists of several parts He does this by the use of such words as "perception", "judgement", etc , and by this footnote I have introduced the word "accusative" as a name for everything which is a unity in this sense, since, although Hume himself has no word to cover all forms of this unity, he would probably have agreed that it is useful• Had anyone objected to Hume that he could not see that there is any sense in which what is judged is one accusative, I think he would have agreed that there is nothing more to be said Just as we cannot enable a man to perceive a complex who always perceives not this complex impression or idea but this and this and this simple impressions and ideas, so we cannot enable

anyone who asserts that he apprehends only perceptions to apprehend a judgement

Two remarks in this account of Hume's argument require some explanation The first is the assertion that we do not consciously combine the simple elements which are the constituents of the judgement I mean by this simply that what I am aware of in judging is a certain kind of accusative and not the activity of putting ideas together Nevertheless, even if we grant to Hume that 'we apprehend our ideas in certain ways' we must admit that the fact that we also apprehend them 'in that way' and so the fact that there is a judgement accusative, is in some sense dependent on the person apprehending and that the complexity of the complex perception and the complexity of the judgement stand in different relations to him The second is the remark that we cannot enable anyone who *asserts* that he apprehends only perceptions to apprehend a judgement I inserted this qualification because I feel inclined to agree with Hume that you cannot give an adequate account of a situation in which someone is judging something in terms of the separate perceptual elements which are constituents in the situation, and the activity of the mind judging Even if we were to admit that the activity of the mind in the situation consists in joining and not in apprehending I think we must still hold that the elements combined in judgement are not precisely similar (*i e* are not merely numerically distinct) from the elements taken to be combined I suggest, then, that anyone who asserts that he does not apprehend a judgement accusative is misrepresenting his experience

Hume's view seems to be, then, that all cognition consists in the apprehension of an accusative, although I think that the assertion that there are 'particular ways

of conceiving our objects' implies that there are different types of accusatives This view is important for epistemology because it shows that Hume believed that any accusative (if complex) can be analysed wholly as an ultimate type of complex accusative in which other accusatives are elements but which is ultimate in that a complete list of the accusative elements would not be a complete account of the complex He would probably admit that there could be a name which would complete the description even though we cannot describe the relationship or relationships which give us the complexity As it happens, we have advanced so little with the problem that we have not even the name His view also involves the rejection of any analysis of the same situation which involves reference to mental activity in such a way that what we before regarded as an ultimate character of the accusative either is, or is describable in terms of, a certain form of mental activity This treatment of the problem suggests that although Hume admits that there are different types of accusatives and expects his reader to admit this too, and to recognize the differences in type when they are pointed out to him, he does not profess to be able to give any account of these differences Now that we are to discuss problems of knowledge and belief, then, we are expected to recognize that all perceptual accusatives are to be distinguished from what Hume calls propositions and that nobody would ever suppose that a perception could be an accusative of knowing, believing, etc , and that we are now concerned only with proposition-accusatives

II *The General Nature of Hume's Scepticism*

Although Hume himself clearly distinguishes two quite different forms of scepticism, his critics are inclined

to discuss the two together This seems to me unfortunate Hume so rarely succeeds in differentiating between related problems, even when what he has to say about one cannot be applied to the other, that the fact that two problems are discussed in two distinct sections should surely lead us to suppose that it is extremely important for Hume to keep them distinct That the two different arguments have so frequently been referred to as 'Hume's scepticism' can only be due, I think, to a complete misunderstanding of his position in relation to this subject In any case I intend to follow Hume's procedure, except in so far as I shall discuss the two kinds of scepticism in one and the same chapter This seems to be desirable for two reasons Firstly, in view of the fact that they are sometimes treated as one problem, in the way in which I have suggested, I think the distinction can best be brought out by considering them in relation to each other Secondly, although the first form of scepticism is not itself a theory about knowledge or accusatives of knowing, it nevertheless throws light on certain problems concerning those accusatives and so enables us to reach a more satisfactory analysis of them

I think however, we cannot do justice to Hume's views on the subject without first considering what scepticism involves (Unfortunately, the word "scepticism" has such strong emotive force that its very mention will provoke some philosophers to a direct attack on the man whose name is associated with that word, regardless of the fact that they have not even considered what theory that word is used to name) This attitude is evident in Andrew Seth's[1] *Scottish Philosophy* In his discussion of Hume's scepticism he seems to hold that owing to this sceptical position

[1] *I e* Pringle Pattison

we must take the view that there is nothing constructive in Hume's philosophy and that his scepticism left him, stranded as it were, with no road open for advance in any direction He rejects Professor Huxley's interpretation of the scepticism simply on the grounds that he does not agree with him, without, so far as I can see, any arguments in favour of his position at all For the most part, however, the widespread feeling of disgust at scepticism, which, to Hume's great distress, manifested itself, in his own day, at any rate, in abusive attacks on individual sceptics, was bound up with religious conviction and prejudice Although Hume's position in relation to these views is obviously an interesting subject for investigation, it must be recognized that it is a totally different problem from the philosophical or epistemological problem we are now considering This problem is to discover what is implied by the assertion either that Hume is or is not a sceptic Hume himself regarded his scepticism as so important that he took the greatest trouble to state it as clearly as he could [It is probably the best expressed of all his views, so that were it not for the fact that it has so often been misunderstood it would be unnecessary to add to his own account] In view of the fact that his argument has been misinterpreted, however, it seems necessary to emphasize one or two of his more important contentions Unfortunately, those philosophers who refuse to accept Hume's sceptical arguments, but who do not seem to me to be interpreting them as Hume intended they should be interpreted, never tell us very clearly what this scepticism which they cannot accept is We can only guess from indirect evidence such as the fact that it is sometimes described as 'utter' scepticism, and the fact that it is regarded as a ridiculous and impossible theory, that they suppose Hume's scepticism

to consist in the assertion that I cannot know anything or that I must doubt everything I cannot find the latter assertion, or any other assertion which means the same as that assertion, anywhere in Hume's *Treatise* or *Enquiry*, and I intend to state a number of his positive statements on the subject which I hope will show that such an assertion would be incompatible with his whole position The former assertion is, in fact, not made by Hume Moreover, the modification of that assertion, namely, 'I can only know propositions of arithmetic and algebra', is not only not a statement of Hume's position, but even if it were is not ridiculous unless we use the word "know" in a sense different from the sense in which Hume used it We should also notice that Hume considered his scepticism to be one of the most important, if not the most important, of his doctrines If, however, it is to be interpreted in the kind of way I have been considering, it seems difficult to see how anyone could consider it at all important A dogmatic assertion as to what we can or cannot know (in the widest sense of the word, which, I submit, is not Hume's sense) may provide interesting matter for speculation, but since it can neither be proved nor disproved (if indeed this statement is significant) it must rank as an assumption and is unlikely to be of very great significance for philosophy I must confess I find it extremely difficult to attach any meaning to such an assertion at all, but philosophers who think that Hume accepted it seem to hold that it implies that we do not have some kind of experience which they themselves and others are firmly convinced that they do have The assertion, interpreted in this way, if or in so far as it is at all relevant to Hume's view, is inconsistent with it If Hume were asked whether he would deny that we have any experience, whether we regard this

as meaning an experience we do in fact have or an experience we think we have (for Hume there would be no point in this distinction, but I have inserted it because I feel that for some purposes there might be) I feel sure that his answer would be 'No' It is even more important to recognize that, although we can ask this question, it is not a question which would arise at all in the course of Hume's discussion [1] His answer in fact would more probably have been, 'Of course not' His task is neither to add to nor subtract from the number of kinds of experience we actually do have, but to offer an analysis of the experiences which we say that we have His problem is not 'Can I know that $2+2=4$' but 'If I know (*i e* say that I know or assert) $2+2=4$, what is meant by the assertion that I do know that proposition?' This question seems to me to be one that is of the utmost importance for the epistemologist to discuss As for the former, it seems very difficult to see why it has attracted so much attention It cannot be answered, even if it means anything, which is doubtful The question which I am assuming is Hume's question must inevitably be raised at some stage of an epistemological enquiry Having discussed the accusatives of perceiving it is quite natural that Hume should next introduce the accusatives of knowing In so doing he notices that the word "knowledge" is used very loosely in ordinary life and that if we attempt to base our epistemological theory on the everyday usage we shall undoubtedly be led astray That there is every justification for this view is evidenced by the fact that even when Hume has pointed out the confusions his views are misrepresented by philosophers who persist in interpreting them in terms

[1] T 64 and 84 affirm his intention to confine himself to accusatives which we all agree about

of the everyday uses of the word instead of in Hume's own stricter usage In everyday conversation we habitually say that we know a great many things (*i e* accusatives) to which we are related in totally different ways It is obviously desirable for the epistemologist to remove this ambiguity in language Accordingly, the first step in the examination of the accusatives of knowing will be a consideration of the different accusatives which we believe (in so far as we believe anything at all as distinct from using a certain form of words unquestioningly) to be accusatives of knowing, and then to decide which of them are best so described and which others should not be called accusatives of knowing at all If this interpretation be correct Hume's scepticism says nothing which will affect everyday arguments and behaviour, except in so far as a clearer conception of the relations of knowledge and probability will lead us to be more rational both in argument and in behaviour It does not matter very much to us as plain men whether we are sceptics or not If we understand scepticism to be a theory which asserts that certain things cannot be known, we must realize that Hume's scepticism is an epistemological theory which, beginning with an examination of the use of the word "knowledge", establishes certain points about the relationship of certain accusatives It does not profess either to affirm or to deny the existence of any experience at all which any human being likes to name Every conceivable kind of experience only provides additional data for Hume's enquiries It would be, for him, a nonsensical question to ask, 'Is there such and such experience?' Obviously there is something or it could not be referred to Hume's problem is, therefore, 'What is the nature of such and such and how is it related to other accusatives?' It seemed necessary

to emphasize this point at some length, even at the expense of tedious repetition, since, despite Hume's own emphatic and repeated assertions that his scepticism in no way affects our practical activities, in his own day it was regarded as a danger to all human learning, and especially to religion, and even to-day it is sometimes considered to be harmless only because it is so absurd If, however, the above interpretation be correct, so far from being ridiculous or dangerous Hume's scepticism is extremely significant, and of interest to all scientists as well as being of the greatest importance for philosophy

III *Scepticism with regard to the Senses and the Certainty of Perception*

In everyday life we regard everything which is known as certain Most plain men would probably regard the terms "knowledge" and "certainty" as synonymous For epistemological purposes, however, it is useful to apply the word "certain" more widely Thus philosophers would probably agree that perceptions are certain even though they are not accusatives of knowing and even though as plain men we have no occasion to notice whether they are certain or not Such problems simply do not arise at the common-sense level In so far as Hume's scepticism can be regarded as one theory, it is a theory about which accusatives have certainty and which do not Since, however, he takes the view that certainty may characterize either perception accusatives or knowledge accusatives, we may distinguish two different forms of scepticism scepticism with regard to perception or the senses, and scepticism with regard to reason or knowing

Hume maintains that perception is certain It would not, in this terminology, be sense to say of any particular perception that it is false or wrong or of any person

perceiving that he is mistaken A perception, whether impression or idea, is the accusative of perceiving, and it would be equally nonsensical or non-significant to say that I think or believe that I am perceiving something which I am not in fact perceiving I must in fact be perceiving what I think I am perceiving, otherwise I could not think or believe that I am perceiving it Nevertheless, perception is not knowledge, and this is the important point for Hume to notice, although he does not expressly mention it The accusative of knowledge is a complex consisting of at least two perception accusatives and a relating accusative The accusative of perceiving, although it may be simple or complex, is not so analysable Knowledge and perception, however, are similar in that each is certain

There is very little likelihood of disagreement about the certainty of perception The important problem is to explain the 'scepticism with regard to the senses' We have already noticed that the accusatives which are apprehended as constituents of our more complex accusatives of judging and believing, etc , are always objects, not perceptions In fact we very rarely attend to our perceptions at all Hume's position in regard to these facts is extremely difficult to express clearly and accurately, and he himself has evaded the difficulties by not expressing it precisely at all but, instead, implying it in his general argument I can only suggest as a possible statement that Hume believed that we have no justification for accepting objects as certain Although this statement is not very satisfactory, it is less inaccurate than many and I cannot think of a better We cannot strictly say that we know or do not know objects, since the accusative of knowledge is a different type of accusative from an object accusative, one important difference being that it exhibits a

different kind of complexity In one of Hume's uses of belief it would be true to say that we believe objects, but that does not help us to express the point I am raising, since Hume is anxious to protest that although there is justification for taking a belief attitude to objects, in fact we do more than this In saying that we accept the object as certain I mean, then, that we believe the object and accept that belief as a true belief in that though we do not normally question it, if anyone asked us if the object apprehended is what we take it to be we should reply that we are certain that it is Hume's scepticism with regard to the senses consists in the assertion that I cannot be certain about objects This does not in the least affect me as a plain man As a plain man I shall believe that I am holding a pen, and in so doing I accept the object as certain, whatever Hume says As a philosopher, however, I recognize that the belief in the pen—which unfortunately can only be expressed in the form of a proposition such as 'This is a pen' or 'This pen exists' although in fact my belief only involves an object accusative and not a proposition accusative—is not certain and that this may turn out not to be the kind of thing I believed it to be This particular scepticism is not, then, a theory about knowledge at all It does not assert that there are certain propositions which I cannot know, but that certain accusatives which I accept as certain are not certain I cannot be certain that there are any objects external to or independent of me It would be true to say that this cannot be known if we recognize that we are then using "knowledge" here in a wide sense which must be distinguished from Hume's precise sense which has no application in this context

In the *Treatise* Hume points out that we must all accept the existence of body even though we cannot

offer an argument in support of it Since, however, Nature has not left this to our choice and we cannot help accepting the principle that there are external bodies, even though we cannot prove that there are or that there are not, the only question which can be answered, and in fact the only intelligible question, is, '*What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?*' (T 187) He then proceeds to give an account of the different things which may have given rise to the belief This is a psychological discussion and, therefore, does not concern us here In the *Enquiry* he states his position a little more fully 'It seems evident, that men are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses, and that, without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated' (E 151) 'But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception' (E 152) He then proceeds to point out that the *onus probandi* lies on those who assert that we can know or prove that there are external persistent objects On the other hand, 'No man, who reflects, ever doubted, that the existences, which we consider, when we say, *this house* and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences, which remain uniform and independent' (E 152) It seems to me that this theory admits everything that most people want As unthinking plain men we take our perceptions themselves to be external objects Since we are not, in this case, considering whether there is any justification for this belief it makes no difference to us, as plain men,

of course, whether there is or is not As thinking plain men we recognize that the external persistent object cannot be identical with the fleeting perception and we believe that there is an external object distinct from our perception It is clear that in this capacity too, Hume's scepticism need not disturb us, since he admits that we do believe in this way and that it is both inevitable and desirable that we should do so It is only if or when, as philosophers, we want to maintain that we can prove that there are external objects that we come into conflict with Hume If, however, as Hume points out, plain men only require an object which is believed and which need not be proved, why should philosophers want to prove its existence? Moreover, since it is impossible to prove the existence of objects it is useless to want to do so Accordingly, true philosophers will be content to have explained what the object-accusative is and to have shown that we cannot know, be certain about or prove anything distinct from accusatives

Although this first form of scepticism does not itself relate to accusatives of knowing it certainly throws light on Hume's discussion of the scepticism which does concern reasoning and the accusatives of knowing In this discussion Hume frequently uses the word "object" without saying whether the object is a perception or an external object This, of course, has happened before, but in this case it is especially important to distinguish the two So long as Hume is trying to show that perceptions fulfil all the functions which the unthinking plain man requires of external objects there is some excuse for interchanging the references of the word This problem, though, is one which concerns the philosopher only and is of no importance to the plain man Hume himself is so anxious to emphasize this point that there should be no excuse for not distinguish-

ing the external objects and the perceptions with greater care In asking whether any propositions can be known to be true is Hume asking a question about perceptual propositions or about external object propositions? It seems to me that in so far as he is consistent he is always talking about perceptions This difficulty does not, of course, arise in the case of all the accusatives he discusses, but the examination of his whole treatment of knowledge shows, I think, that the distinction must be borne in mind and that Hume himself failed in this respect

IV *Intuitive Knowledge or Knowledge of Particular Perceptual Proposition Accusatives*

Admitting that we do apprehend proposition accusatives Hume's problem is to decide whether any of these propositions can be known to be true In order to do so it is obviously important to distinguish particular and general propositions Hume, however, does not always seem to realize the importance of bearing this distinction in mind, so that in the *Treatise* we find that the list of the seven possible relations of ideas groups together ideas which are different in very important respects The problem I want to discuss now is whether any particular proposition can be known to be true In the light of the last paragraph I am assuming that the constituents of any such propositions which might be known, must be perceptions and not objects Thus when I say 'The book is on the table' I am making a statement about perceptions, not about external objects, and I now want to ask if that statement can be known to be true It is important to emphasize this point because of the ambiguity of language The words "book" and "table" might refer either to the perceptions or to the objects If we assume that they refer to

perceptions, then my statement maybe true (so far it has not been proved true or false) In fact, however, what I am believing is a proposition in which the constituents are objects, *i e* independent continuous existents In view of the first form of scepticism it is quite clear that I cannot know anything about what I imagine myself to be knowing something about, because it is not the kind of thing which could be known It seems to me to be of fundamental importance to remember this On the other hand, since I take my perception to be my object and so am using a word to refer to a perception as well as to an object, it is possible that I may be able to know some of the things which I say that I know, if we take the words as expressions for the perceptions It seems clear, then, that the question Hume asks in Part III (sections i and ii) of the *Treatise* is not 'Can I know propositions in which objects are related by these relations?' since that is already seen to be impossible, but 'Can I know propositions in which perceptions are related by these relations?'[1]

The seven philosophical relations of the *Treatise* are all relations which enter into particular perceptual propositions According to Hume there is one sense of "know" in which I can know all propositions in which the relation depends on ideas (T 69 and 73), that is to say four out of the seven possible relations As Hume does not explain what he means by a relation which depends entirely on the ideas, we can only hope to find out by examining the use he makes of that concept Unfortunately, such a procedure seems only to reveal the fact that Hume was confused, not only about this

[1] Hume does not himself draw the distinction clearly, but I suggest that as we have no method of determining what he meant, this is the best interpretation Most of his remarks can be taken as applying either to objects or perceptions *E g* "independent of anything in the universe and in nature" may mean independent of objects or of perceptions (E 25)

concept, but about the whole problem of the particular perceptual relationships As an example of a relationship which depends entirely on the ideas, Hume gives equality and instances the equality of the angles of a triangle to two right-angles This example suggests that definitions would be good examples of propositions in which the relation depends entirely on ideas Nevertheless, from the fact that he continues that 'this relation is invariable, as long as our idea remains the same' (T 69) and from the whole trend of his argument in this section, it seems to me clear that the proposition he has in mind is not the proposition with which mathematicians are concerned, but the proposition 'This perception (a triangle, △) has angles which together equal the angles of this perception (two right-angles, ⌊ ⌊ or ⊥)' Should either of the perceptions change in any way, for example, if one of the arms of one of the perception right-angles moves in either direction, the relation is no longer the same This statement is clearly epistemological and is of no concern to the mathematician, to whom it does not matter in the least whether the perception is accurate so long as the concepts are used in the sense defined In addition to this relation, proportion in quantity and number, three other relations, resemblance, contrariety and degrees in quality, are alike in being dependent entirely on their ideas, and so are also objects of certainty or knowledge Hume seems to think that it is quite obvious that these relations can be known while the others cannot, but I doubt whether many people would agree with him on this point When he attempts to explain why the other three relations cannot be known he uses words which refer to prediction, for example, 'The relation of *contiguity* and *distance* betwixt two objects may be chang'd merely by an alteration of their place, without any change on the

objects themselves or on their ideas' (T 69)[1] This is very unfortunate, because in the kind of analysis which he is attempting to give the fact that we cannot foresee what changes will take place in the relations of time and place of our ideas should have no bearing at all on the theory of what we can or cannot know now I suggest, then, that Hume was confused on this point, and that his attempt to distinguish propositions in this way was due to the fact that he was assuming that there is an external existent or that perceptions exist when not perceived, even though he had himself denied it If we think of our perceptions as external to us in space independent of our perceptions, then there is every reason for saying that propositions containing spatial relations cannot be known If we are so thinking, however, either we cannot know propositions in which the relations of resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality and proportions in quantity and number occur, simply because we cannot know anything at all about anything external to us, or, alternatively, we do know such propositions, and if so the elements of the propositions are different from the elements of the propositions in which spatial relations occur It seems quite clear, however, that Hume intended to discuss two groups of propositions which are such that, although relations occurring in one group could not occur in the other, the terms of the relations are interchangeable and may occur in either group I have suggested above, that since we cannot know anything about external independent objects these terms must be perceptions If we do not make Hume's assumption that there are external independent objects but rather admit that what we are concerned with is a perception or internal perishing existent, there seems no reason to distinguish spatial relations from the other

[1] I do not think this assertion necessarily concerns physical things Cf T 94

four Although there may be no reason why we should not, if we choose, consider a proposition having as its elements two internal perishing existents related in an external independent space, I personally find it quite impossible to attach any significance at all to such a proposition Even supposing that such a proposition would be significant to some people, it is not the kind of proposition which we normally do apprehend, nor the kind of proposition which can be reached by an analysis of what we normally apprehend, so that there seems no reason to consider it I suggest that Hume should have seen that internal perishing existents exist in an internal perishing space, or that a proposition asserting a spatial relation of the kind he is considering is analysable into two perception ideas and a relation idea or concept This being so, such propositions do not give rise to any problems which differ in any important respects from problems about propositions involving resemblance relations which may also be analysed into two perception ideas and a relation-idea or concept Thus we should admit that we can know propositions involving spatial relations in precisely the same sense as we know propositions involving resemblance relations Hume says of the four relations which he thinks depend entirely on ideas that they are directly perceived, so that our cognizance of them is more intuitive than anything else If the above arguments be sound, then this statement applies equally to the spatial relations

The two other relations which do not depend on ideas and, therefore, cannot be elements in a complex accusative of knowing, are identity and causation I have discussed the relations of time and place first because it seems to be easier to see how Hume was confused in that particular place, but the same kind of confusion seems to be involved in his views about

the other two relations Since Hume has practically nothing to say about identity in this connection, I shall take the liberty of making out a case for him If I state any particular proposition having the identity-relation as a constituent, it will be similar in form to 'This table on which I am now writing is identical with the table on which I was writing yesterday' If Hume is consistent, "this table on which I am now writing" names a complex impression-perception, and "the table on which I was writing yesterday" names a complex idea-perception If these two perceptions are 'identical', then "identical" must mean similar in all respects except in degree of vivacity As Hume's subsequent arguments show, however, he knew perfectly well that nobody does use "identical" in that sense If I say either that this impression-perception is identical with the impression-perception I perceived yesterday, or that this external object is identical with the external object I apprehended yesterday, I am stating a proposition which is not intuitively apprehended, and which is different in such vitally different respects from the perceptual propositions that it is the greatest mistake not to draw a very clear distinction between them Precisely the same thing is true of causation No proposition involving that relation in any of the senses in which it is commonly used can be called a perceptual proposition even in the widest possible use of that name

In the light of the above considerations we may conclude that Hume s argument in Part III (sections i and ii) of the *Treatise* shows that there is one sense of "to know" in which knowledge consists in the apprehension of a certain accusative This accusative is a complex consisting of perceptions and a relation or concept related in a certain way I think it would also be true to say that the relationship is timeless In other

words, though it might help us to see what kind of accusative is being referred to, to say that the relation and both relata must be apprehended simultaneously, strictly speaking no temporal notions have any application I think everyone would agree that there is a sense of "could" which we understand even though we cannot define it, in which I could not be mistaken about such an accusative In the same way, as we noticed above,[1] I could not be mistaken about the more simple content of immediate awareness, the perception It is not merely false, but nonsense to say that I could be mistaken The four relations which Hume believes to be constituents of these complex accusatives are resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportion in quantity and number I have suggested that if, as he professes, he is discussing perceptions and not objects, relations of time and place should also be included Furthermore, since relations of identity and cause and effect cannot logically[2] hold between two particular perceptions simultaneously present to me, they are involved in a totally different type of accusative from the others, and it is of the greatest importance to recognize this difference Hume's failure to see how fundamental was the difference was due to the fact that he failed to free himself from the idea of the external object, and so did not clearly realize what were the elements of the complex accusatives he was discussing Perhaps, finally, it should be noted that if we consistently consider perceptions and not objects it is immaterial whether the two related perceptions are two impressions, two ideas, or one impression and one idea This kind of knowledge I shall call intuitive knowledge as Hume himself uses that word It is im-

[1] See Section III above

[2] *I e* since the words are so defined that it does not make sense to use them in this way

portant to remember, though, that it is only intuitive in Hume's use of the word "intuition", that is to say, if we mean by intuition the perceptual apprehension of a proposition, or the apprehension of two perceptions and a relation as a complex [1]

In addition to this epistemological problem of the analysis of the accusative of intuitive knowing, there is a further problem which is very interesting and, although in some sense related to it, is nevertheless quite a distinct problem We have already noticed that in everyday life we talk and think about things external to and independent of us, and that we cannot, in any of Hume's senses of "know", be said to know anything about them Even, however, if we omit this reference to external objects, we might still sometimes think that we have been mistaken about a particular perceptual proposition We must now ask what can be meant by the statement that we have been mistaken about some such accusative in Hume's view, if, as we have seen, all proposition-accusatives perceptually apprehended are known Although Hume does not state his solution of this problem clearly, I think it is not difficult to see what it would have been If we consider these accusatives in isolation from all the other accusatives, as we are obliged to do in an epistemological investigation, it seems to be quite impossible to see how there could be any kind of error If, however, we take a more practical attitude, and examine the accusatives in relation to their context, we shall find that they are always closely associated with some course of action, which may be either practical or physical, in the sense that our bodies are involved in doing or saying something, or else

[1] I am well aware that these phrases would throw no light on the problem at all for anyone who was ignorant of Hume's problem, but I hope that his whole treatment of the subject will enable anyone familiar with it to see how the word is being used

mental, when we are occupied with some train of thought or reasoning process Sometimes we express the accusative in words, at other times we accept it without expressing it, which involves behaving in a certain way because we have apprehended that accusative In neither of these two kinds of activity is it necessary, as a rule, either to express or to apprehend the accusative, with any precise degree of accuracy This could be illustrated by the fact that we have no language to express the perceptual or intuitively known accusative, but only language which has developed to express what it is useful to believe about external objects and which, when used in connection with the perceptual accusatives, only states something which roughly corresponds to what we apprehend Thus, if I look at two pairs of colour patches, each patch being a different shade of the same colour, but differing so slightly from the other three that I should not feel justified in giving them different shade names, then I might say that the left-hand patch in each pair is darker than the right-hand patch It is important, in this connection, to bear in mind the distinction between objects and perceptions If the four patches are, for example, four external red cherries each of uniform shade and existing whether I am perceiving them or not, it is clear that I cannot know anything about them I cannot even be sure that my beliefs about them will be sufficiently nearly true beliefs to be adequate for my particular purposes, whatever they may be I do not believe, with any degree of conviction, any proposition as to the precise relationship of the colours of the two sets of cherries Moreover, I accept the fact that even my belief that one is darker than the other may turn out to be false, owing to some peculiarity of my vision, of illumination, or of the nature and posi-

tion of the surrounding objects If, however, I consider the perception *red cherries*, there is a certain absolutely specific relationship between the four different shades which I know even though I cannot name it The error which arises here is, therefore, quite different from what is usually called error about external objects In the latter case, I believe something about external objects, based on the belief that there is a certain relationship between my perceptions and objects, when in fact this relation does not hold In the former case, the accusative is known, and not merely believed, but I express or accept a proposition which is not identical with, but is very similar to, the proposition which is intuitively known This is due to carelessness or inaccuracy, which results in what Hume calls failure to conceive clearly and distinctly This carelessness is habitual with most people because it is rarely necessary to be precise, so rarely, in fact, that we scarcely ever have occasion to notice this type of error when it does occur For this reason, also, I have been obliged to use the same word "error" for it, although it is so totally different from the usual types of error that a different word is really required The best example of this type of error would be one of the few occasions on which it might be noticed Most artists are concerned to represent their perceptions in some medium Let us suppose that the four cherries are part of the visual perception of an artist who is about to paint them I do not know whether all artists persistently apprehend completely and accurately the visual perception they are reproducing throughout the time that they are painting it I should imagine that it is highly improbable that they do In any case, it is at least possible that some artists do not. If so we might imagine a case in which the artist having completed, or partially com-

pleted, his representation of the cherries, reconsiders his perception more carefully and thinks that the relationship between the cherries in his picture does not exactly correspond to the relationship between the cherries in the perception (I am assuming, of course, that the lack of correspondence is not due to failure to mix the right shade of paint, but to a belief that the colour he has produced is identical with the colour in the perception) In this case, he was assuming or believing that he knew something which in fact he did not know Presumably, this particular kind of error is very frequent in all mental processes, although we rarely have occasion to take any notice of it If or when we do notice it we should probably say that we thought we knew something and we found out that we were wrong In fact, of course, we can see on reflection that we spoke or acted as though we had knowledge which we are quite aware we did not have, and the phrase 'I thought so and so' which we use as an abbreviation for 'I thought I knew so and so' is not really an accurate expression for our mental process What we mean is, 'I assumed that I knew something which, if I had not been in such a hurry, or if I had reflected, or if I had been more precise, etc , I should have realized that I did not know at all' There are some relations which are such that there is no danger of mistake even in this sense, for example, *resemblance* and *contrariety* Others require greater accuracy of perception, for example, *exact proportion*

I have dealt with this problem at some length, because only by so doing is it possible to show how Hume was confused Apart from its value in this respect, the problem does not seem to me to be very important If we confine ourselves to an analysis of accusatives, it is really unnecessary to mention it Its interest, such as

it is, is purely practical and arises from the fact that our practical activities are such that we do make this kind of use of our intuitive knowledge From the practical point of view, however, what we are primarily interested in is mistakes about objects, and plain men, as distinct from artists, rarely if ever take any notice at all of mistakes about perceptions I think it is clear, at least, that we do make two different kinds of mistakes, one about objects and one about perceptions, and the difference between the two kinds is so fundamental that if anyone happened to be sufficiently interested in the second kind to want to talk about it, he would have to coin a new word in order to avoid the misapprehensions which would undoubtedly arise In this context I only want to distinguish the two kinds in order to show that Hume is not himself clear about his own distinction between perceptions and objects This is evident from the assertion that except in cases where the particular type of error we have been considering cannot arise, we 'proceed in a more *artificial* manner' (T 70) I cannot conceive any manner of comparing perceptions which could be expressed by this "artificial" in italics I may, however, believe one external object to be larger than another, for example, two squares differing very little in size and situated with some distance between them in my field of vision, and test whether my belief is a true one by placing the two together This probably is the kind of artificial testing Hume is referring to Such a test does show the relationship of the external objects, that is to say it gives stronger grounds for the belief, but the subsequent perceptions which we apprehend when the external objects are placed together, do not prove anything at all about the original perception, or the original knowledge, but only about the original object belief Mistakes about the object are not relevant

in this context in Hume though mistakes about perceptions are, and I suggest that Hume's solution of the problem would be that only what is clearly and distinctly conceived can be known, and that our view on this subject should not be affected by our habit of assuming that we know what could not be an accusative of knowing

Although a fuller treatment of Hume's views on mathematics belongs to another section it is important to consider them in relation to other points It is clear that he means by "geometry" a certain set of statements of what is given by sense, not by definition Unfortunately, though, he is not himself clear about what is implied by this account of geometry If we intend only to consider the appearance of objects, there seems no reason why an appearance should not provide the necessary standards If we reject this kind of standard, we must be aiming at something which is precise in a different way from the way in which perceptions are precise This suggests that what Hume requires is a concept Our decision as to whether propositions of geometry can be known or not will depend upon the view of the nature of geometry we believe Hume to take If, however, as he here suggests, some propositions of geometry are perceptual, we can ask now whether they are known or not If any perceptual intuitions could be rightly called propositions of geometry, then, of course, some propositions of geometry are known The propositions Hume is considering, though, appear to be propositions which are expressed Such propositions will of course, not be precise or accurate, and therefore, as Hume himself concludes, cannot be known As his subsequent discussion shows, however, the fundamental problems about geometry belong elsewhere

A similar confusion of problems is evident in Hume's brief paragraph on arithmetic and algebra (T 71) In the first place, a theory of intuitive knowledge, such as Hume is here expounding, does not throw any light at all on problems about 'chains of reasoning' In the second place, the relations of numbers which he admits can be known in this way are not strictly speaking so known at all, they involve a totally different kind of accusative from the perceptual accusative The only kind of proportions of quantity and number which can be known in this particular sense of "know" are relations of quantity and number between particular perceptions These propositions will be just as certain as the other judgements we have considered if the ideas are clearly and distinctly conceived, and we are as little justified in this case as in the other in assuming that our statements of the intuitions are known, since we may be using words vaguely, or trying to read into our intuitions the kind of relationship which is such that it could not be given in perceptual or intuitive knowledge

Despite Hume's many inconsistencies and his confusion of problems I think we may conclude that he held we do have knowledge in one strict sense, of relations of ideas, that is to say we have certainty in this case as in the other cases of knowledge, and he should have added, it seems to me, that this knowledge is different from various other kinds of knowledge As a matter of fact, either this knowledge is useless to us or we wilfully refuse to be content with it, and so we use it as a basis for beliefs and statements which may be false or inaccurate, or may convey what we do not intend them to convey Nevertheless, the fact that these beliefs and statements may be false has no bearing on the problem of the certainty of the intuition The intuition is something to which the concept of falsity does not apply It is certain

The beliefs and statements, on the other hand, are the kind of accusatives which would not be known, because they make perceptual assertions which go beyond what is perceptually given We even go further and sometimes assume that intuitive certainty gives us knowledge of external object relations I think it was the recognition of the impossibility of successfully substituting perceptions for objects that led Hume to abandon his attempt in the *Treatise*, to refer only to perceptions and to return to the reference to objects in the *Enquiry* This may have been due to the fact that he wanted, in the *Enquiry*, to make a popular appeal, it may have been due to the fact that nobody seemed to grasp the significance of his argument about objects, or it may have been that Hume himself realized that the relationship of perceptions and objects was not so simple as he had at first supposed Whatever may have been his reason for it, the change itself explains why it is that we have to content ourselves with the remarks in the *Treatise* for his view of intuitive knowledge

v *The Accusatives of Reasoning and Demonstration*[1]

The class of intuitive propositions must be sharply distinguished from the non-intuitive propositions, which may be divided into two groups, the accusatives of reasoning and the accusatives of demonstration Hume is concerned with these two kinds of accusatives in the *Enquiry*, where he does not discuss the intuitive accusatives at all The problem for him is to decide whether I can truly be said to know any proposition which goes beyond the evidence of my senses or the records of my memory In other words, can I predict with certainty,

[1] "Reasoning" and "understanding" are used in this chapter in the sense in which they are opposed to "apprehension of matter of fact" and "belief," as *e g* E 32, and not in the sense of 'reason from experience', which is really equivalent to custom and is to be opposed to reason from understanding, *e g* E 41

or know with certainty any past event with which I was not sensibly acquainted In answer to this problem he begins by asserting that 'All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, *Relations of Ideas*, and *Matters of Fact*' (E 25) In connection with this remark we should perhaps notice that Hume uses the word "reasoning" very loosely It is clear, I think, that he here intends to refer to all the non-intuitive propositions That he should omit all reference to this important class of proposition accusatives is probably due, as I have already suggested, to the fact that he wanted to make a popular appeal, and that the intuitions are hardly likely to interest the vulgar, who rarely if ever attend to them This use of "reasoning" must be clearly distinguished from Hume's second use which he employs to distinguish reasoning from demonstration, and a third use with which he contrasts reason (*i e* demonstration in the second use) with expectation (*i e* reason in the second use) (E 36) His conclusion is that, although relations of ideas can be known, matters of fact cannot be known I shall be obliged to consider matters of fact in this chapter, since, although they are not accusatives of knowledge, we cannot clearly understand the force of Hume's distinction between an accusative of knowing and accusatives which cannot be known, unless we consider the two classes in relation to each other

It is very much easier to show that relations of ideas and matters of fact are totally different accusatives, than to give a precise definition of either class Hume succeeds very well in distinguishing the two, but his success should probably be attributed more to the fact that we all are aware of the distinction than to his skill in describing the differences between the two classes The account of relations of ideas would, in fact, be

extremely confusing to anyone who was not already fairly clear as to what Hume was driving at He asserts 'Of the first kind', *i e* relations of ideas, 'are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra and Arithmetic, and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain' (E 25) It would take too long and probably would be of little value to attempt to discuss all the criticisms which might be made of this extremely unfortunate statement, but a few are important because by considering the mistakes and deficiencies of his statement we bring to light the essential characteristics of the accusatives he is trying to describe In the first place, it is useless to tell us that relations of ideas are affirmations which are intuitively or demonstratively certain, since our object in considering relations of ideas and matters of fact respectively is to discover whether either are certain, that is to say, if either can be known In the second place, it is very misleading to talk about affirmations being 'either intuitively or demonstratively certain' If we consider only what has been said before this passage in the *Enquiry*, we are ignorant of what is meant either by "intuitive certainty" or by "demonstrative certainty", and so the statement means nothing. If we consider Hume's other relevant assertions it is clear that intuitive certainty and demonstrative certainty are quite different The relations of ideas discussed in the *Treatise* were intuitively certain, but this kind of relation of ideas is not discussed at all in the *Enquiry* That 'this pen visual impression is to the right of this book visual impression', is a proposition of which I am intuitively certain, but this certainty is totally different from my certainty that '$2 + 2 = 4$' Moreover, Hume's subsequent references to this second type of certainty, which he calls demonstrative certainty, show that it is quite different In the third place,

it is also useless to tell us that the sciences of Geometry, Algebra and Arithmetic are instances of relations of ideas without giving some account of these sciences It is of no advantage to us to take the account given in the *Treatise*, since Hume there asserts that there is an important difference between propositions of geometry and propositions of arithmetic and algebra respectively, and since it is very doubtful whether he conceives even arithmetic and algebra in such a way that its propositions could be called relations of ideas in the sense in which that phrase is used in the *Enquiry*

This attempt to interpret Hume's account of relations of ideas in the *Enquiry*, in terms of the views he expresses in the *Treatise*, seems to me to show that he could not state his position clearly without making use of terminology which he has attempted to reject It is clear that the relations of ideas in the *Treatise* are not the same as the relations of ideas in the *Enquiry* The fundamental difference between the two seems to be that the ideas related in the complexes are different The ideas of the relations of ideas in the *Treatise* are, as we have already seen, perceptions The ideas of the relations of ideas of the *Enquiry*, I suggest are concepts If we accept the view that perceptions and concepts are irreducibly different accusatives we seem justified in insisting that there is an important difference between the two classes of complex accusatives, relations of perceptions and relations of concepts At the very least we must admit that to have shown that one class can be known does not prove that the other class can be known Probably no one will deny that Hume has failed to see the importance of this distinction This failure seems to me to have two sources In the first place, as I have already shown, he would not explicitly accept the distinction between perceptions

and concepts even when the views he is expressing demand and presuppose that distinction Consequently, since the fundamental difference between the two classes is most easily seen in the recognition that the terms related are different, he does not seem to have realized that there is a fundamental difference at all In the second place, though this is more disputable, Hume's language frequently suggests that he thought of a relation of ideas, in the sense in which he uses that phrase in the *Enquiry*, as a general proposition in the same sense as one class of matter-of-fact propositions is general If, for example, I say that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right-angles, I am saying something that is general in precisely the same sense as, for example, 'All crows are black', is general The difference lies in the fact that, although it is possible that there may be a white crow, it is not possible that there ever will be a triangle of which the angles together equal either more or less than two right-angles This is obviously a very crude statement, but the view or idea in Hume's mind was itself crude, as we can see from his own statements, and cannot be expressed in precise language It may be argued that he was quite free from this assumption Unfortunately, there is no evidence either to prove or disprove such a statement I can only suggest, firstly, that the use of temporal predicates in connection with relations of ideas may be a mere accident but that if Hume had fully realized the nature of the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact he would have been anxious to point out how inappropriate they are Secondly, in the *Treatise* Hume clearly thought of a proposition of mathematics as a proposition about the mathematical relationships of certain propositions, which could be verified, in the case of arithmetic and algebra, by com-

parison with a standard, and that if he had developed a more satisfactory view at this stage he had not expounded it Furthermore, had he realized the importance of the distinction between perceptions and concepts, he would probably also have recognized that it is far more satisfactory to distinguish the two kinds of propositions in terms of this distinction than in terms of possibility or impossibility, which cannot be defined There is, then, a second class of accusatives of knowing, similar to intuitions in that such accusatives are certain, but differing in that the ideas related are concepts and not perceptions

Although it is important to take note of these confusions, it is even more important to recognize that despite his failure to formulate his view clearly or to free himself from certain mistaken assumptions of the *Treatise*, Hume has recognized a very important distinction and has suggested the lines on which we should formulate that distinction His own attempts at a precise statement are not very satisfactory, largely owing to the confusion of the presuppositions, but they do throw some light on the problem Even though we may criticize Hume because the assertion that relations of ideas are intuitively or demonstratively certain merely assumes what we are trying to find out and does not help us to understand what a relation of ideas is, we must admit that if we do recognize an example of a relation of ideas we can also see that it is certain In a sense in which no matter of fact is certain In such circumstances we shall also admit that relations of ideas are not dependent 'on what is anywhere existent in the universe' (E 25) This statement of Hume's seems to me to be equivalent to the statement that a relation of ideas concerns or involves concepts and not perceptions, and I think it shows that this kind of

distinction is necessary, although Hume himself did not realize that his statement requires it

The assertion that a proposition is demonstratively certain is equivalent to the assertion that its opposite would 'imply a contradiction' (E 26) A proposition which implies a contradiction 'could never be distinctly conceived by the mind' Thus a demonstrative proposition, that is to say one whose opposite implies a contradiction is necessary, if we mean by "a necessary proposition" a proposition of which the opposite could not be clearly conceived by the mind In this sense then, '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' (T 166) Hume has frequently been criticized for covering up his difficulties by using such words and phrases as "possible", "impossible", "necessary", "implies a contradiction", "could not be conceived", etc , without defining them It seems to me, however, that if we take these different remarks on the subject in relation to each other we must admit that he is not concealing any difficulty These words and phrases are used to express certain ultimate characteristics of our experience, so that we shall understand them if we have apprehended those characteristics and if Hume can show us that he is using the words to refer to those characteristics, but it would be ridiculous to expect any definition which would enable us to see how the words are being used Hume's mistake, then, lies not in his failure to define the words, but in his failure to state his argument sufficiently clearly to enable us to see that no definition is necessary When we do understand his argument, we are able to see that there is an important difference between propositions, which we may not have noticed

before, such that some propositions have as their elements concepts and others have perceptions This distinction we should express in ordinary life by saying that some are not about the external world and others are Any proposition about the external world may turn out to be false, and, therefore, cannot be known to be true, but propositions of which the terms are concepts are known and are necessary in virtue of a certain observable characteristic which we all recognize, but which we can only describe somewhat inadequately by saying that the proposition asserts that I am using certain words in certain ways and that it must be true since I cannot in fact both be using the words in that way and in a different way, or, in Hume's language, 'the opposite implies a contradiction' The only propositions which answer to this account, according to Hume, are propositions of quantity and number (E 163) For some reason or other Hume does not wish to include other relations of ideas as demonstrations If, however, we accept his dichotomy of propositions we clearly must admit that definitions and any example of what he calls 'a more imperfect definition' (E 163) are known in the sense in which mathematical propositions are known and it is difficult to see any very good reason for distinguishing the two

One further problem arises in this connection If we accept Hume's view, how are we to account for the fact that there are times when people certainly appear to be mistaken about a mathematical proposition? If I assert '2 + 2 = 5' is this to be regarded as an accusative of knowing, and if not how is an accusative of knowing to be distinguished from other mathematical propositions which are not known? I think the first point to notice is that no proposition can be known unless it is distinctly conceived I may quite well state any number

of mathematical propositions without clearly and distinctly conceiving the concepts involved in those propositions Any such statement does not express an accusative of knowledge but a totally different accusative of a kind Hume does not attempt to deal with The fact that I may believe myself to be clearly and distinctly conceiving a proposition when in fact I am not, if it is possible to have such a belief, is irrelevant to the epistemological analysis of the accusative I think, however, that Hume would have said that if I say that I clearly and distinctly conceive a proposition when in fact I do not, then I am merely being either careless or lazy, and that it is always practicable for me to decide truly whether a proposition is or is not clearly conceived It may still be argued that I might in fact clearly and distinctly conceive two and two to be equal to five and assert this proposition so that someone else will be in a position to judge that I am knowing something false To this I think Hume would reply that it is a contradiction to say that I am knowing something false and that if what I assert appears false to you then that is only due to the fact that the expression I use expresses one accusative for me and a different accusative for you For example, if you clearly and distinctly conceive what you would express by saying '2 + 2 = 4' and I clearly and distinctly conceive what I would express by saying '2 + 2 = 5' then we are using one or more of the words "2", " + ", " = ", "4", or "5" in different senses 'If there be any difficulty in these decisions, it proceeds entirely from the undeterminate meaning of words, which is corrected by juster definitions' (E 163)

These two kinds of accusatives, the perceptual or intuitive accusative and the relation of ideas, are the only two which can be strictly called accusatives of

knowing Other people, philosophers and plain men alike, use the word "knowledge" in different senses from the clearly and definitely restricted usage of Hume It follows that a great many accusatives which others would admit to be accusatives of knowledge Hume would regard as propositions which cannot be known We have already considered the first form of scepticism, or scepticism with regard to the senses, which is implied by Hume's treatment of perceptions and of perceptual knowledge A consideration of the second kind of scepticism, scepticism with regard to reason, which is also implied by his use of "knowledge", shows that it consists in the assertion that no propositions which do not belong to one or other of these two classes can be known This means that no general or universal matter-of-fact statement can be known unless it concerns what is now, or has in the past been, present to me We must, however, always remember that these are epistemological statements, and, as such, assert only that "knowledge" in everyday life is used to cover different forms of knowledge It does not imply that it is desirable for us to adopt a new practical attitude to matters of fact simply because they are not known in the same way as the propositions of a deductive system are known

CHAPTER 9
THE ACCUSATIVES OF BELIEVING

1 *Introduction. Three different kinds of accusatives of Believing.*

All proposition accusatives which are not relations of ideas are matters of fact (E 25) Since these two classes of propositions are irreducible types of accusative, it is not possible to define the difference between them Nevertheless, Hume is able to indicate it in such a way that we can understand the importance of the distinction by pointing out that, whereas the opposite of a relation of ideas is a contradiction and so not an accusative, 'the contrary of every matter of fact is still possible, because it can never imply a contradiction' (E 25), and is not demonstratively true or false (E 26 and 35) Hume might have drawn his distinction even more clearly if he had pointed out also that the terms related in the matter-of-fact proposition are perceptions or objects, whereas the terms related in the relation of idea propositions are concepts [1] We may understand his distinction sufficiently well to accept it and to recognize to which of the two classes the different propositions we apprehend belong, however, without necessarily also understanding what he meant by "a matter of fact" Although there seems to be no doubt that a matter of fact is not a relation of ideas, there seems to be some room for controversy as to what Hume meant by "a matter of fact" Probably most people would under-

[1] See above, Chapter 8, Section v

stand by "a matter of fact" an event occurring in the external world It would not, however, I think, be misusing common-sense language also to use the phrase as a name for a proposition expressing an event occurring in the external world It is quite possible that Hume is always using the phrase in this sense If he is, then the terms of a matter of fact are objects and his use of language is in conformity with common-sense usage On the other hand, we should also take into account the fact that Hume is primarily concerned with epistemology and that common-sense language is rarely sufficiently accurate for epistemological purposes If, instead of taking up a common-sense standpoint, we consider Hume's argument from the epistemological point of view, we find firstly, that he is concerned with accusatives, secondly, that non-perception and non-object accusatives are proposition accusatives and thirdly, that all proposition accusatives are either relations of ideas or matters of fact We also find that Hume's earlier discussion implies that it is not only significant but also important for epistemology to consider perception accusatives as distinct from object accusatives If this is so, there seems to be some justification for assuming that it is at least significant, and perhaps also important, for epistemology to discuss proposition accusatives having perceptions as constituents as distinct from proposition accusatives having objects as constituents If this assumption be correct it is obviously necessary for the epistemologist clearly to distinguish the two classes of accusatives and to have different names for each If Hume is using "matter of fact" as a name for the proposition accusatives having objects as constituents, then he has no name at all for the proposition accusatives having perceptions as constituents On the other hand, it is clear that he some-

times uses "matter of fact" as a name for the proposition accusatives having perceptions as constituents, as, for instance, when he admits, in the *Treatise*, that we have knowledge of proposition accusatives of which the constituents are simultaneously present In admitting that such propositions can be known he commits himself to the view that the propositions are perceptions, since no proposition having an object as a constituent can be known The problem of deciding what he did mean by "a matter of fact", and precisely how his different arguments concerning matters of fact are related to the two different classes of accusatives respectively, will always remain an unfathomable mystery to me Moreover, I strongly suspect that the only reason that Hume himself was not disturbed by the difficulty of expressing the relationship clearly was that he did not think about it very much

Even though it is impossible to find sufficient evidence for any definite assertion about Hume's position on this point, it is desirable to make some assumption to take the place of a statement for the purposes of discussion We have already considered Hume's position on the subject of the relation of objects to perceptions He believes that we take our very perceptions to be objects and believe them to be external to us and to continue to exist even when not perceived The essential difference between perception and apprehension of an object lies in a certain psychological factor, the belief attitude If it be true, as I suggested, that what is believed to be external and independent is something much more complex than a complex perception of the kind Hume instances, his failure to notice that fact is not important in relation to this problem This same attitude characterizes the apprehension of propositions 'The only remarkable difference, [between the different

acts of the understanding] which occurs on this occasion, is, when we join belief to the conception, and are perswaded of the truth of what we conceive' (T 97, footnote) Thus belief is more than a simple idea, it is a particular manner of conceiving an idea (T 97) In the light of these considerations I think it may be the case, though I admit that the evidence is inadequate to justify my view, that Hume meant to use "matter of fact" to refer both to proposition accusatives having perceptions as constituents and to proposition accusatives having objects as constituents, and that he would have justified this procedure on the grounds that the analysis of the two classes of accusatives is the same, or that there is in fact only one class of accusatives—the difference only lying in this particular way of thinking about them or apprehending them If in fact this was Hume's position I think he was wrong in supposing that it is unnecessary for epistemology to distinguish the two groups, and that on the contrary, some important epistemological problems can only be answered by means of a reference to the differences between them. We have already come across one example of the necessity of this distinction One class of accusatives of knowing is the class of those matters of fact in which the related terms are present impressions This contention is significant, and seems to be true if we mean by "a matter of fact" a relation of perceptions If, however, we apprehend those perceptions in a different manner, and regard them as objects, it is quite clear that the belief complex cannot be known Thus here, at least, it is necessary to distinguish between the two uses of "matter of fact", since in one usage members of this particular class are objects of knowledge and in the other they are not

Once we admit that Hume's attempt to treat the two

kinds of matters of fact as one and the same accusative is not satisfactory, we are faced with the difficulty of defining his problem in such a way that we can see how it relates to each of the two classes respectively Having admitted that some matters of fact can be known, namely those matters of fact which have present impressions as constituents, Hume would say that all other matters of fact, that is to say all other propositions except relations of ideas, cannot be known in the strict sense, and are, therefore, accusatives of believing There is very little doubt that Hume is here using "matter of fact" to apply to both the classes I have distinguished Thus all matters of fact in the sense in which that phrase refers to perception propositions, with the exception of the one group already mentioned, are accusatives of believing, and all matters of fact, in the sense in which the phrase refers to object propositions are, without exception, accusatives of believing All these propositions, of both classes, are accusatives of believing, in virtue of the fact that they go beyond the evidence of the senses and records of the memory It seems to me to follow from the fact that there is this significant class of exceptions, which is such that in the case of one group it is believed and in the other known, and in one group it goes beyond the evidence of the senses and in the other it does not, firstly, as I have already suggested, that we must, for epistemological purposes, distinguish the two groups, and, secondly, that Hume is using both "belief" and "goes beyond the evidence of the senses" in two different senses Before considering the belief problems which most concerned Hume it is important to distinguish these different uses

There is one sense of "belief" in which the word is used to name that particular attitude or manner in which all plain men do in fact apprehend most of their

perceptions, and which might be described by saying that they believe those perceptions to be external independent existences, or objects This particular kind of belief, which I shall call belief in the first sense, is associated with a certain characteristic of the perceptions themselves which Hume calls force and vivacity (T 86, cf T 119, 94-98), with the reservation that these words are used in a metaphorical sense, and that it is inevitable that this should be so, since we have no word with which to name that characteristic Whenever we believe in this first sense we go beyond the evidence of the senses in that we feel assured of the existence of something independent of our perception Similarly, whenever I apprehend any proposition in which the constituents are believed perceptions, or objects, I believe that proposition and I go beyond the evidence of the senses in this first sense It follows from this that one class of belief accusatives are objects, and that a second class of belief accusatives are object propositions, that is to say all the matters of fact of my second kind If, however, we use "belief" in this sense only, we leave out of account one important class of accusatives which are certainly not accusatives of knowing, namely those proposition accusatives of which the constituents are neither present impressions nor concepts Such propositions seem undoubtedly accusatives of believing, even though they do not involve reference to any external object It is a belief, for example, that a certain particular kinaesthetic sensation (which accompanies the movement of my arm from where it is resting on the table to another position on a book) will be followed by a change in tactual sensation, or that a certain visual impression, a lighted match in contact with my hand, will be accompanied by a certain sensation of pain Hume certainly suggests that he believed that because

we take our perceptions to be our only objects it is unnecessary to consider any beliefs which are not object beliefs He argues for example "Tis evident, that all reasonings from causes or effects terminate in conclusions, concerning matter of fact, that is, concerning the existence of objects or of their qualities' (T 94) I suggest that it is important to distinguish the two kinds of belief and to recognize that for the epistemologist there is an important difference between them for two reasons In the first place, there are propositions which are accusatives of belief, of which I have given examples, which are not accusatives of belief in objects, and in the second place, the belief problem which is of fundamental importance for Hume is to account for the belief in propositions which relate to the future Although we may in fact always have object beliefs about the future, it is not logically impossible to have beliefs about future perceptions This being so the problem would still arise even if there were no object beliefs, so that it would be conducive to greater clarity in epistemology if we recognized that this particular belief problem is quite independent of the belief in objects, and that the way in which we go beyond the evidence of the senses in this particular case is in believing something about the future, either about perceptions or objects, and is, therefore, distinct from the belief in the externality of our perceptions This second problem of belief concerns both perception propositions and object propositions, so that I can see no harm in grouping the two classes together for the purposes of this discussion, provided that it is first recognized that the essential problem is the reference to the future and not the reference to externality as such An important factor in Hume's failure to make this point clear may have been the fact that he tended to concentrate on the psycho-

logical aspect of the problem and that the *feeling* of belief in each case is similar

We may now turn to Hume's central belief problem In future I shall use "matter of fact" to refer to a perceptual proposition, but it is immaterial if object propositions be substituted provided that it is remembered that the problem we are considering is the problem of belief in propositions concerning the future and not belief in externality Having seen that some matters of fact can be known, the next thing to ask is if any of the others can also be known In the *Enquiry*, where Hume gives the fullest treatment of this subject, he does not even refer to the class of perceptual accusatives which can be known This shows, I think, that he here intended us to understand by "a matter of fact" a relation of objects In maintaining that no matter of fact can be known he can only appeal to experience to show why this is so We all know what is meant by the assertion that the contrary of every matter of fact is still possible Hume accepts the view which would most usually be expressed by this assertion, but, even if we believe that every event in nature is predetermined, we must still accept Hume's distinction, since, although I may feel sure that a certain event will happen, I can always imagine a state of affairs in which it might not happen It is just as easy to conceive the proposition 'mercury is heavier than gold' as the proposition 'gold is heavier than mercury' Thus, whether I am or am not a determinist, I must admit that, in Hume's sense of "know", I cannot know any matter of fact (with the above reservation), since I only know propositions of which the opposite implies a contradiction, and so cannot be thought by the mind, and propositions which are now present in such a way that in some different and indefinable but recognizable

sense,[1] could not be otherwise The matter-of-fact propositions which cannot be known are of two kinds The first are particular propositions about future impressions, for example, 'The sun will rise to-morrow' The second are general propositions about impressions, for example, 'All crows are black' Hume does not himself refer to this distinction in this connection, presumably because he believed that propositions of the second kind are analysable into a set of propositions of the first kind, and do not, therefore, constitute a separate problem As, however, this is a consequence of his view about matters of fact which cannot be known, it should not be assumed at the start and it is accordingly important to distinguish the two kinds In saying that these propositions cannot be known we are saying that our knowledge of them is not *a priori* (E 27), and that, therefore, they are incapable of demonstration (E 166), and that they do not consist in a relation of present impressions This follows from the fact that Hume uses "demonstration" in such a way that only a proposition of which the opposite is a contradiction can be demonstrated, together with the fact that we can all clearly conceive the opposite of any matter of fact even if we believe it to be false 'No negation of a fact can involve a contradiction' (E 164) but in the sciences strictly so-called, 'Every proposition, which is not true, is there confused and unintelligible' (E 164) Since reason gives demonstration with reason alone we can never draw any inference about matters of fact, and all such inference must arise from experience (E 27 and 32) Although reasoning invariably gives certainty, experience, as we have seen, 'can be allowed to give *direct* and *certain* information of those precise objects only, and that precise period

[1] Expressed in language by the use of the present tense

of time, which fell under its cognizance' (E 33) Matters of fact which do not belong to this class are accusatives of belief, this belief is 'a certain step taken, a process of thought, and an inference, which wants to be explained' (E 34), and this inference[1] is due to custom (E 43)

Despite the fact that we cannot know those matters of fact which I have called one class[2] of accusatives of believing, it is evident that we nevertheless feel assurance about them We must now ask whether that feeling of assurance is based on any kind of certainty or any justification for certainty, even though there is no knowledge In Hume's own words 'What is the nature of that evidence which assures us of any matter of fact and real existence beyond the present testimony of the senses and the records of the memory?' A survey of the accusatives shows that all matter-of-fact inferences are founded on the relation of cause and effect (E 26 and 32), and that it is the causal relation which gives us this assurance It follows that Hume's problem will best be solved by an examination of the causal relation. Before considering the relation, however it is advisable to attempt to get a complete understanding of Hume's conception of belief

II *The Psychological Problems concerning Believing*

In the preceding section we considered two quite distinct senses of belief and a third which seemed to be a product of the other two In so doing we recognized the important epistemological point that all proposition accusatives can be divided into two classes, accusatives

[1] It should be noted that in the course of his argument Hume uses "inference" in two senses Thus in E 34 the belief is 'an inference', *i e* any step beyond what is immediately given, but in E 37 we must admit that every attempt to show that the belief is a form of inference, *i e* reasoning process, has failed

[2] The other class is the class of objects

of knowledge and accusatives of believing It will be obvious to everyone, however, that the particular problem, the problem of distinguishing knowledge and belief, rarely, if ever, arises for anyone but the epistemologist The psychologist and the plain man are interested only in problems which arise in connection with differences in our apprehension of accusatives, all of which, from the epistemological point of view, are accusatives of believing In everyday language we adopt a different terminology from Hume's and would say of some accusatives of believing that we know them, of others that we believe them, of others that we suppose or assume them, and of others that we doubt them or disbelieve them. All these different attitudes of mind might be adopted towards accusatives which for Hume belong to one and the same class, so that we might very well ask whether he should not distinguish between different kinds of accusatives of believing In view of the fact that Hume does not explicitly draw any such distinction when he is giving an account of the different proposition accusatives, I think we may assume that he did not think it necessary to make one for epistemological purposes On the other hand, in view of the fact that he does make certain statements which show that he was fully aware of these distinctions, we may also assume that he would have agreed that it may be useful to make the distinctions for other purposes Had he taken the trouble to state his position more clearly, he would probably have argued that these accusatives may all be regarded as similar by the epistemologist, since we have no more justification for our feeling of assurance with regard to one rather than to another The fact that we have a different feeling requires to be explained, but an account of differences in feeling, as distinct from differences in

accusatives, will be psychological, not epistemological

If we admit that there is this difference in attitude to the various accusatives of believing, it is easy to see that an important problem arises, namely, how are we to account for the fact that some accusatives of believing are believed (in the plain man's sense) and others are not If it is just as easy to conceive the proposition 'gold is heavier than mercury' as the proposition 'mercury is heavier than gold', why do we believe one rather than the other For the sake of brevity I shall in future refer to belief as opposed to knowledge as "belief in the wide sense", and belief as the plain man uses it, for belief in accusatives of believing in the wide sense as distinct from disbelief in accusatives of believing in the wide sense, as "belief in the narrow sense" It seems to me that psychologists who discuss belief problems are nearly always concerned with belief in the narrow sense and not at all with belief in the wide sense Moreover, Hume, when he turns from the purely epistemological problem to account for the state or activity of mind of the person believing, is sometimes thinking of belief in the wide sense and sometimes of belief in the narrow sense, and he never clearly distinguishes the two different senses

I have already had to refer to the state of mind in believing in the wide sense, in order to distinguish this belief from knowledge Hume's treatment of this topic is short, simple and straightforward It is only necessary to expound it because he failed to distinguish his views on this subject from his views on the problems about belief in the narrow sense The assertion that 'A superior force is attached to what we believe than to what we disbelieve' is usually regarded as expressing Hume's most fundamental assumption on the problem of belief It seems clear, however, that the superior force enables

us to distinguish only beliefs within beliefs and not, in the wider sense, belief from knowledge The difference in the mental attitude which corresponds to the distinction between the accusatives of knowing and believing is independent of the force and vivacity of the ideas and is summed up in the passage (*Treatise*, Bk I, Part III, Section vii) 'I therefore ask, Wherein consists the difference betwixt believing and disbelieving any proposition? The answer is easy with regard to propositions, that are prov'd by intuition or demonstration In that case, the person, who assents, not only conceives the ideas according to the proposition, but is necessarily determin'd to conceive them in that particular manner, either immediately, or by the interposition of other ideas Whatever is absurd is unintelligible, nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive anything contrary to a demonstration' This is the only account Hume gives of the necessary determination It is unfortunate that he dismisses the whole subject in such a summary fashion, without even an example, since the reader is liable to assume that he is once more concealing a difficulty by taking refuge in phrases which he could not define In this particular case, however, his procedure seems to me to be quite legitimate Granted his assumptions, this particular phenomenon is unanalysable, so that there is no good reason why he should not use to express it a phrase which appears to be merely undefined but which for him is really indefinable As we have already seen, known propositions are those which could not be otherwise, or those of which the opposite implies a contradiction Although it is impossible to analyse these concepts further, if we do understand what Hume means we shall probably also understand what he means by saying that they are propositions which a

person 'is necessarily determined to conceive in that particular manner' The essential characteristic of the mind in belief in the wide sense is that it is not so determined, and is always able to conceive the opposite of the believed propositions even though it may not be able to believe it in the narrow sense

The greater part of Hume's discussion, however, relates to problems which arise concerning all those propositions which are accusatives of believing in the wide sense, and not of knowledge Among all the propositions which are not accusatives of knowledge, there are some to which we assent and others to which we do not Some are believed, in the narrow sense, and others are not The problem which appears to me to come first, although Hume does not give his answers to the problems any particular order, is the problem of distinguishing between belief and disbelief in the narrow sense Any accusative of belief in the wide sense may be either believed or disbelieved in this narrow sense The accusatives of believing in the wide sense are objects, propositions about future perceptions or general propositions analysable into sets of such propositions, and all object propositions The differentiating characteristic of the believed (narrow sense) accusative is the same for each group, although for other belief problems it is necessary to distinguish between them In the case of none of the accusatives is there any necessity, so that the previous differentiating characteristic is useless Moreover, the difference between a believed and a disbelieved impression cannot lie in the nature of the impression itself, since if there is any difference, then they are different impressions Hume, therefore, concludes that the difference between belief and disbelief must lie in our manner of conceiving the impressions Before examining this statement more carefully I think

it would be advisable to attempt to analyse fully what it is Hume intends to define when he defines what he somewhat elliptically refers to as 'belief' Is this belief an accusative, some mental activity or attitude, a total state of affairs or situation in which someone is conceiving an accusative in a certain way, or is none of these things the object of Hume's enquiry? Unfortunately, Hume does not offer us any clear statement on the subject We can, therefore, only hope to discover what belief and disbelief are by considering his view of the differences between them On one point, as we have seen, he is quite emphatic, the difference between believing and disbelieving does not lie in the fact that when someone puts forward a proposition to which we do not assent we conceive different ideas from his The difference, therefore, he maintains, must lie in the manner of conceiving the ideas The difference he makes use of in his discussion is, however, a difference in the idea I think the contradiction is not insurmountable, and that it would be possible, by careful revision of all the loosely worded statements on the subject, to make his account consistent Moreover, the contradiction provides a clue to this problem It probably arose because Hume did not realize that to say that we have a more lively feeling towards an idea we believe is different from saying that the idea we believe is more lively than the idea we disbelieve It seems to me that the only thing which will fulfil the functions Hume requires of belief, and answer to the description he gives of it, in so far as that description is consistent, is an accusative Hume seems to be quite right in his assertion that there is no difference between a believed impression or idea and a disbelieved impression or idea, but it does not follow from this that there is no difference between the belief accusative and the disbelief accusa-

tive He tells us to survey the difference between our own feeling of belief and disbelief and we shall find that the feeling of belief is easily recognizable He follows up this statement, however, by ascribing the superior force and vivacity to the idea instead of to the feeling This suggests that he either did not realize that the feeling of the ideas to the mind is different from the feeling of the mind, or else was dimly aware that his problem was not answered simply by reference to a mental attitude This in fact seems to be precisely what is the case Although I think I am aware of the difference in feeling between belief and disbelief, I do not normally attend to this feeling, and I find it very difficult to be sure that the difference I am aware of is a difference in feeling Moreover, my ability to recognize the difference at all, if I do recognize it, is due to the fact that in certain cases, notably in the case of propositions for which there is considerable evidence, but not conclusive evidence, and which I believe but which I know that someone else does not believe, the difference is extremely marked Were it not for these cases I doubt if I should have been able to discern any difference at all Moreover, even in these cases, I am not at all sure that the difference does not lie in the fact that, on one occasion, I have a conviction that so-and-so is the case, whereas on another I have a conviction that so-and-so is not the case I do, however, feel quite convinced that what I apprehend in believing is different from what I apprehend in disbelieving If I believe an object or a proposition, it would be significant and true for me to say of the accusative that it is real and is true, respectively In saying that I am saying something about the accusative and not about my mental activity If, however, I do not believe that object or that proposition, then it is not real or is not true for me This language, I

admit, is inadequate and unsatisfactory in many ways but it is, I hope, sufficiently comprehensible to show that for me, at any rate, there is a difference between a belief accusative and a disbelief accusative It seems to me that Hume's transference of the characteristic, force and vivacity, from the mental activity to the impression or idea shows that he too apprehended such a difference If so, we seem justified in assuming that the belief he is attempting to analyse is an accusative His reluctance to admit this, and his insistence on the mental activity element in a believing situation were probably due to his recognition that the impressions or ideas are the same in the case of believed and disbelieved accusatives This assertion, however, does not seem to me to be incompatible with the assertion that the accusatives are different A perception accusative and an object accusative may both contain the same impressions, but it does not follow that the accusatives are the same I suggest then that Hume's failure to make this point clear was due to the fact that the problem he is discussing is a problem about an accusative, a highly complex notion, and that, having no clear conception of an accusative, he tries, without success, to make out that his problem is psychological The fact that he is not concerned with a purely psychological problem about the state of the mind in believing, but with the complex situation in which some mind is apprehending and believing something, seems probable from the way in which he slips from attributing the differentiating characteristic, the force and liveliness, to the person's feeling towards the idea to saying that the force and liveliness is in the idea Moreover, the fact that he also points out that "force and ' veliness" is a kind of metaphor to express something which everyone recognizes but no-one can describe; and that the idea itself is not

really forcible and lively seems to confirm my assumption that what his argument implies and requires is a difference in the accusatives Sometimes, of course, Hume does not want to refer simply to the psychological act of believing. for example, belief is some 'peculiar manner of conception' (T 184), belief is an act of the sensitive part of our natures (T 183), belief is nothing but a '*more vivid and intense conception of any idea*' (T 119) I think it would be better always to call this believing In any case, I shall assume that Hume's term "belief" does frequently refer to an accusative and that he does discuss some important problems both about beliefs and about believings The fundamental difference between the belief and disbelief will be expressed for the epistemologist in the statement that the belief accusative is a real object (for the observer), or a true proposition (for the observer) whereas the disbelieved accusative is just an object or a proposition not apprehended as real or as true, or it may be expressed by saying that the belief accusative is more forcible and lively than the disbelief accusative In any case, it is only possible to indicate what is meant Hume does not set out to explain the difference to anyone who has not already apprehended it His argument is designed to draw our attention to the fact that there is a difference and to point out that that difference is an ultimate characteristic of our experience, which as such cannot be described but can only be named or referred to by the use of metaphorical language A corresponding difference will be expressed for the psychologist in the assertion that we have a certain feeling towards some objects and propositions and a different feeling towards other objects and propositions Moreover, the psychologist will also be obliged to admit that the difference, in his case a difference in feeling, is an

ultimate characteristic of experience and so can only be named or referred to in metaphorical language but not described

Having decided that there is an important difference between belief accusatives and disbelief accusatives, the next question to discuss is why it is that some objects and some propositions become constituents of belief accusatives, whereas other objects and other propositions become constituents of disbelief accusatives In order to answer this question it does seem to be necessary to take into account the differences between the different kinds of belief The psychological attitude of belief in objects, to take the first case, is a fundamental characteristic of apprehension of objects which we cannot explain and for which we can give no reason'[1] "Tis certain, that almost all mankind, and even philosophers themselves, for the greatest part of their lives, take their perceptions to be their only objects, and suppose that the very being, which is intimately present to the mind, is the real body or material existence' (T 206) Even the sceptic 'must assent to the principle concerning the existence of body, tho' he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteem'd it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations' (T 187) Although our nature is such that we cannot help believing our perceptions to be objects, our conceptions of the nature of those objects varies considerably I cannot even know that my perception

[1] Cf Edgell, *Theories of Memory* 'Belief is nothing which can be discovered by an analysis of the imagery which enters into memory and into imagination respectively', p 162 She also holds that at the beginning of life all cognition is believing

Cf Russell, *Analysis of Mind* 'Belief in the existence of things outside my own biography exists antecedently to evidence, and can only be destroyed, if at all, by a long course of philosophic doubt', p 133

is independent and external, still less can I know that the object has all the characteristics I ascribe to it which are not given in present impression The growing complexity of the belief object accusative is due to custom and experience Thus, this form of belief accusative is a product both of the fundamental inexplicable way of apprehending perception, and of custom and experience Disbelief in objects, or refusal to accept a perception as an object or as real, is, as a matter of psychological fact, derived from rejection of some of the characteristics which are attributed to the perception as a result of experience If, for example, someone is wearing blue spectacles and is unaware of the fact, he knows that he is apprehending certain impressions, blue carpet, blue table, blue walls of a room, etc He believes, however, that there is an external blue table, blue walls, blue carpet, etc Should he remove the spectacles, or be told that he is looking through blue glass, he will decide, not that there is no table, no carpet, no walls, but that they are not blue. 'Generally speaking, we do not suppose them [our objects] specifically different, [from our perceptions] but only attribute to them different relations, connexions and durations' (T 68) On the other hand, in cases such as I have instanced we believe an object which is specifically different from our impression This belief is due to experience and is found in many of our object beliefs· "Tis universally allow'd by the writers on optics, that the eye at all times sees an equal number of physical points, and that a man on the top of a mountain has no larger an image presented to his senses, than when he is cooped up in the narrowest court or chamber 'Tis only by experience that he infers the greatness of the object from some peculiar qualities of the image, and this inference of the judgment he confounds with sensation,

as is common on other occasions' (T 112) Disbelief in, or refusal to accept, some of the apparent (*i e* perceived) characteristics of objects paves the way for refusal to accept the perception as a whole as an object, that is to say to disbelief Disbelief occurs in the case of hallucination, dreams, etc , and is due to experience Thus, we cannot help accepting objects unquestioningly, until some kind of experience of their behaviour, or of other relevant considerations, leads to doubt or disbelief The element in the complex object which must be believed or accepted (even though we agree to reject or disbelieve some of its characteristics, for example, the blue colour in the spectacle illustration) is the present impression This enables us to show why we believe one idea and not another To believe an idea, for Hume, is to apprehend an accusative which can be roughly described as an object in which all the perception elements are ideas 'Nothing is more free than the imagination of man, and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas furnished by the internal and external senses, it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision It can feign a train of events, with all the appearance of reality, ascribe to them a particular time and place, conceive them as existent, and paint them out to itself with every circumstance, that belongs to any historical fact, which it believes with the greatest certainty' (E 47) The difference between the imagination accusative and the idea-object-belief is to be explained in precisely the same terms as we used to distinguish between the disbelieved and the believed impression-object-accusative—so also is belief in present object propositions

Beliefs about the future, however, require a different explanation In this case, there is no necessity of nature

which leaves us no alternative but to accept propositions about the future This belief, as we have seen, is due to a step taken which must be explained We have already seen, however, that reason is not concerned with matters of fact and that perception does not enable us to go beyond the evidence of the senses Nevertheless, 'If the mind be not engaged by argument to make this step, it must be induced by some other principle of equal weight and authority, and that principle will preserve its influence as long as human nature remains the same' (E 41-42) This principle, Hume maintains, 'is Custom or Habit' (E 43). I think his own account of it cannot be improved ' wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *Custom* By employing that word, we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity We only point out a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects Perhaps we can push our enquiries no farther, or pretend to give the cause of this cause, but must rest contented with it as the ultimate principle, which we can assign, of all our conclusions from experience It is sufficient satisfaction, that we can go so far, without repining at the narrowness of our faculties because they will carry us no farther' (E 43) 'Without the influence of custom, we should be entirely ignorant of every matter of fact beyond what is immediately present to the memory and senses' (E 45) [1] Thus, all

[1] This passage should of course read 'we should have no belief beyond what is immediately present to the memory and senses', since in any case we are ignorant of, *i e* do not know, matters of fact

Cf 'Experience is a principle, which instructs me in the several conjunctions of objects for the past Habit is another principle, which determines me to expect the same for the future' (T 265)

beliefs, that is to say all propositions concerning matters of fact not immediately present to senses or memory, are the effect of custom Moreover, such beliefs include all propositions of all the sciences with the exception of the deductive propositions of mathematics (including propositions of geometry in so far as they are independent of perception) (E 44, footnote) It follows from our conception of the terms of the proposition that '2 + 2=4', but there is nothing in the nature of the case to show why we should believe the proposition 'gold is heavier than mercury' and reject its opposite So far I have written as though this theory applies both to object-proposition-accusatives and to perception-proposition-accusatives Hume himself seems to take this view in the *Enquiry*, but in the *Treatise* he does distinguish between them, and points out that custom provides a sufficient justification for the purposes of everyday life, for behaving as though the future will resemble the past, so long as we confine those beliefs to perceptions, but it does not give any justification at all for beliefs about objects He instances the kind of assumption we do in fact make about the existence of external objects and argues 'tho' this conclusion from the coherence of appearances may seem to be of the same nature with our reasonings concerning cause and effects, as being deriv'd from custom, and regulated by past experience, we shall find upon examination, that they are at bottom considerably different from each other, and that this inference arises from the understanding, and from custom in an indirect and oblique manner For 'twill readily be allow'd, that since nothing is ever really present to the mind, besides its own perceptions, 'tis not only impossible, that any habit shou'd ever be acquir'd otherwise than by the regular succession of these perceptions, but also that any habit shou'd ever

exceed that degree of regularity. Any degree, therefore, of regularity in our perceptions, can never be a foundation for us to infer a greater degree of regularity in some objects, which are not perceiv'd, since this supposes a contradiction, *viz* a habit acquir'd by what was never present to the mind' (T 197)

So far I have been concerned with problems which, though partly psychological in character, are important for epistemology We have seen how beliefs, in the wide sense, are to be distinguished from knowings, that a further distinction is required between belief (in the narrow sense) accusatives, and disbelief accusatives, but that the difference between these accusatives is such that we can only indicate it and not describe it, that the fact that some objects and propositions are constituents of belief accusatives and others of disbelief accusatives is due either to a fundamental characteristic of our apprehension, or to custom, or to a combination of the two There are two further topics which, although connected with the problem I have been discussing, are of a somewhat different character The first is purely psychological A great part of Hume's discussion is devoted to giving an account of the way in which these fundamental mental characteristics operate As epistemologists we may accept them as ultimate factors in our explanation, but as psychologists we want to give a fuller account of their operation by means of a detailed examination of the particular situations in which they operate In this discussion (T. 98-123, E 50-55 and 104-108), Hume points out that the object or impression in the belief is usually related by resemblance, contiguity or causation to a present impression Moreover, it is essential that there should be a present impression, we do not believe an idea related only to a present idea He also points out that we behave as if

we believe even when we do not consciously apprehend the belief, in other words he admits the fact of recognition (T 103) He also explains how the conception of a persistent external world, which to a great extent determines our belief, is built up (T 107-108) The second topic is logical in so far as it is a problem about the validity of our beliefs, but it also involves a consideration of the relation of degrees of assurance to probability As such it seems to me to raise totally different problems from those I have considered in this section, and I propose to postpone any discussion of it until a later section

III *The Causal Relation*

We have already observed that the passage of the mind from one idea to another is due to one of the three principles of association, resemblance, contiguity and causation Of these three only causation produces belief in what is beyond the evidence of the senses and the records of the memory (T 73 and 106-109, cf E 54) Whenever I assert any matter of fact relating to the future I assert that something will be the case and I feel assured of the truth of that statement because I believe it to state the effect of some cause Although no matter of fact can be an accusative of knowledge, we may have certainty of beliefs If there are any grounds for certainty we shall discover them by an analysis of the causal relation The feeling of belief or assurance in causal propositions is based on the assumptions, firstly, that every event has a cause, and, secondly, that particular causes necessarily have particular effects (T 78) There is, however, no demonstrative argument for these beliefs (T 78-82) This should be obvious, since the assumptions are themselves matters of fact and so precisely similar to all the other

beliefs we are calling in question. This in itself seems to suggest that we have no reason to suppose that our beliefs will not turn out to be false Nevertheless, Hume refuses to reject without further investigation the possibility of finding some guarantee for our beliefs and proceeds to his second question 'Why do we believe that an effect necessarily follows from its cause?'

His answer to the question takes the form of an analysis of the causal belief situation. He asks what we are saying when we use the word "cause", or how causal propositions should be analysed A discussion of this kind may begin in either of two different ways We may assume that causation is a common-sense notion which is nevertheless used by scientists, or that it is primarily a scientific notion which is frequently used by the plain man but usually in a perverted sense It is quite clear that Hume intends to discuss the common-sense notion as used by the plain man Whether, in fact, the scientist's notion is the same as the common-sense notion is a question to be asked when we have decided what the common-sense notion is Hume begins by pointing out that, whenever we say that *a* is the cause of *b*, it is essential that *a* and *b* should be contiguous and that *a* should be prior to *b* (T 73-75) We should not, however, maintain that *a* is the cause of *b* unless we also believed that there was a necessary connection between the cause and the effect (T 77) This assertion rather suggests that even Hume was not entirely free from a tendency to confuse the problem of the analysis of the plain man's notion with the problem of the analysis of the scientist's notion When he proceeds to examine the relation, he can find only that we say '*a* will cause *b*' if we have observed that things like *a* have been followed by things like *b* in the past, and that we have never

observed anything like *a* which has not been followed by something like *b* In other words, to assert causation is to assert at least constant conjunction and regularity of sequence It seems to me, as I think Hume later wants to point out, that as plain men we do believe that *b* will follow this *a* simply because things like *b* have followed things like *a* in the past, and that when we say that *a* will cause *b* we are saying that we feel quite sure that *b* will follow *a* I do not think that the idea of necessary connection need enter into an account of the plain man's causal beliefs at all The plain man is quite content to give as a justification for his belief, that *b* will follow *a* 'because it always has done so in the past' It is only as a result of scientific doubt and enquiry that we reject this common-sense expectation and suggest that there is a necessary connection between cause and effect to justify expectation. Even if this be true, however, it does not affect Hume's final solution of the problem, it only shows that in some point of his examination of the situation he was at fault in failing to see that something more than experience as such is required to give the idea of necessary connection What in fact happens is that if two ideas have been always conjoined, then if 'the impression of one becomes present to us, we immediately form an idea of its usual attendant' (T 93) Since this is so, since no necessary connection is observed between events, and since constant conjunction alone tells us nothing about the future, we must admit that as plain men we have no evidence for the certainty of our causal beliefs Moreover, not only can we not be certain that an effect will follow what we regard as its cause, but we have no justification for asserting that the effect is more probable than any other alternative (T 127, cf T 138 and E 38, 39) If, then, I cannot know a causal proposition

to be true, and if I have no reason to believe that it is certain or even probable, why do I, nevertheless, believe the kind of causal propositions all plain men do in fact so frequently assert? This belief, Hume maintains, is simply due to a habit which we cannot account for, but which we can see is always produced by observation of constant conjunctions (T 128) He also believes that animal behaviour is precisely analogous to human behaviour in this respect and exhibits the same kind of habit (T 126-129) Thus all commonsense causal propositions are merely due to a habit, and are not based on any evidence which could give either certainty or even probability It follows from Hume's view that this applies equally to the two classes of causal propositions which I distinguished, the particular and the general General causal propositions, as distinct from relations of concepts or definitions, are analysable into a set of particular causal propositions They assert that every past instance of a certain type of event has been, and every future instance will be, followed by another specified object, and this assertion about the future is based on the experience of the past (E 36)

Even if we admit that the plain man's causal assertions are the result of a certain characteristic common to all mental life, both human and animal, and so cannot be analysed without the use of psychological terms, it is still possible that the scientist's causal generalizations may be based on something which will justify belief in them Scientists themselves certainly suggest that this is so by appealing to a necessary connection which they profess to have found between some events and to be looking for between others In saying that there is a necessary connection between certain events we admit that we have an idea of necessary

connection If we have, then, on Hume's theory, there must also be an impression from which that idea is derived It is for this reason that so much of Hume's discussion is devoted to an attempt to discover an impression of necessity Although much of the argument is confused and rather misleading, the main points which emerge are of the utmost importance His procedure appears less useful than in fact it is because his use of language is so careless Ramsey, for example, criticizes him for making use of an idea of necessity and then trying to find an impression He assumes, it must be admitted with considerable justification, that the impression must be a feeling of necessitation, and quite rightly points out that although we are necessitated, as a result of experience, to think in a certain way, and probably have a different feeling from when we freshly make up our minds, the necessity is a figure of speech which Hume uses as a metaphor I suggest that although, not surprisingly, Hume does fail to find an impression of necessity, this failure is not so disastrous to his theory as Ramsey seems to suppose This, I think, is due to the fact we have already noticed that Hume uses certain words, and among them "impression" so very loosely It is true he does begin to look for an impression in the strict sense, but the chief importance of this search lies in the fact that in it he gives an account of the situation in which someone is making a causal prediction which enables us to see clearly what is being said when such a prediction is made, rather than in the fact that he fails to find the impression Moreover, anyone who believes that this failure to find the impression is in any way unfortunate for Hume's theory has failed to see the significance of the failure Hume sometimes uses "impression" in a quite strict sense as a name for what we all understand

by an impression of the senses When it is convenient for him to maintain that all accusatives are perceptions and at the same time to make use of relations, however, he is quite ready to admit that there is a relation impression, for example, distance Since he is willing to call the apprehension of a relation the apprehension of an impression (when it is quite obviously a concept and not a sense impression), it follows that in asserting that there is no impression of necessity he is asserting not only that there is no sense impression, but also that there is no relation of necessity, similar to all the other relations we apprehend This corresponds to the assertion which is so hotly disputed that there is no necessary connection between events Hume, however, would only wish to say that we cannot know that there is any necessary connection between perceptions Since the assertion of causation is not due to any relation which can be apprehended between the related terms, Hume offers as an alternative explanation that in saying that *a* is the cause of *b* we are not asserting any more than that *b* will follow *a*, and we make this assertion, for which we have no evidence, simply because we are necessitated to think in that way The recognition that we cannot help believing causal propositions is reached, however, by examination of human and animal behaviour It is not at all necessary for Hume's argument that we should feel the necessity, and this principle of human nature is not, as Ramsey seems to suppose, an impression of necessity in the mind to substitute an impression of necessity between other impressions, but an alternative explanation

The remainder of Hume's discussion of causation is concerned with what I think may be termed psychological problems He wants to show under what conditions we do in fact have causal beliefs or make causal

generalizations The most important point in this connection is to decide what kind of accusatives can be terms in a causal proposition Hume is more careless than usual on this point He usually talks about the causal relation between objects On one occasion, however, he admits that causation 'produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object, that 'twas follow'd or preceded by any other existence or action' (T 73) It seems to me, from a consideration of the examples he gives, that Hume requires what would be called events in modern terminology as the terms of his relations, but which he refers to as the 'action of an object' He believes, for example, that it is impulse of one billiard ball which is the cause of motion in the second (E 63) There is, however, insufficient evidence for any definite conclusion on this point, and it must be admitted that Hume's treatment of it is inadequate and unsatisfactory The account of the effect of the habit which induces causal belief and of the mistakes in our causal predictions is interesting, but it is long and rambling and unfortunately does not lead, as one might hope, to a discussion of the further problem of analysing what is meant by the "same object", or "things of the same kind", when they occur in causal propositions

IV *Scepticism Again*

We are now in a better position to consider Hume's second form of scepticism We have already noted that whatever his scepticism may be it does not consist in the assertion that we cannot know anything or even that we must doubt everything, as some people tend to suppose In the *Enquiry* Hume explicitly states his opinion on this point 'It is certain, that no man ever met with any such absurd creature, or conversed with

a man, who had no opinion or principle concerning any subject, either of action or speculation' (E 149), and points out that the proper question to ask first in this connection is 'what is a sceptic?' Hume's first kind of scepticism, scepticism with regard to the senses, consisted in the assertion that no object can be known (
It is clear from the view we have just considered that the second kind of scepticism consists in the assertion that I cannot know any of the propositions which we have seen are accusatives of belief This is all there is to be said on the subject of the scepticism as such, and since it shows the scepticism to be an epistemological theory it is clear that it can be of no very great importance to the plain man Fortunately for everyone who regards the scepticism as the most exciting topic of Hume's philosophy a great part of the discussion which professes to be about scepticism is concerned with a different but closely allied topic I think Hume was not altogether clear on this point himself, and was inclined to regard the theory that not only can we not have knowledge but we cannot even have certainty of our beliefs as scepticism Although as plain men we are not seriously concerned by the genuine scepticism which is a purely epistemological affair, we may be concerned with the fact that, according to Hume, we cannot have certainty of any beliefs On this point he provides the answer to his critics in the form of a really sound statement of the relation of this philosophical theory of certainty (which I shall in future call scepticism, as Hume so calls it) to everyday life The fact that Hume's final view is that as plain men we need not be very concerned even about this form of scepticism shows how he came to write about a theory which is concerned only with accusatives of belief and not at all with knowledge, as scepticism Scepticism with regard

to reason, as an epistemological theory, cannot affect anyone's practical life in the way in which Hume seems to assume that the practical man will expect it to One thing which it does show perfectly clearly is that if I have regarded the sciences, other than mathematics, as certain and demonstrable in the sense in which mathematics are certain and demonstrable, then I should change my view and also give up all hope of turning any science which depends on experience or professes to make matter-of-fact statements into a demonstrative science The theory about beliefs, called scepticism, shows that I am wrong in supposing, if I have so supposed, that I can be certain of any belief These theories have in common one point of interest and importance to the plain man Neither of them shows, as some philosophers have supposed them to show, either that my belief in future matters of fact will not turn out to be true, nor that it is desirable for me to behave as though my belief were not true With regard to practical action, Hume adopts the view that our nature is such that we cannot help behaving as though our beliefs about future matters of fact were true Scepticism will never 'undermine the reasonings of common life, and carry its doubts so far as to destroy all action, as well as speculation Nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever' (E 41) 'My practice, you say, refutes my doubts But you mistake the purport of my question As an agent, I am quite satisfied in the point, but as a philosopher, who has some share of curiosity, I will not say scepticism, I want to learn the foundation of this inference' (E 38) The problem for the philosopher is to decide whether there is any kind of evidence which gives any justification for beliefs in future matters of fact Investigation shows

that there is not Since, however, as plain men we are not in the least interested in the kind of evidence we have for our beliefs, but only in whether they turn out to be true or not, and since Hume's argument is concerned only with the former question and not the latter, there seems no reason why any plain man should be in the least disturbed that he cannot be certain of any future matter of fact 'If the mind be not engaged by argument to make this step, it must be induced by some other principle of equal weight and authority, and that principle will preserve its influence as long as human nature remains the same' (E 41) Probably most plain men, if they were acquainted with Hume's own version of his scepticism, would agree that we are not certain about future matters of fact and would have no hesitation in accepting his theory

Probably everyone would admit that in his long discussions of scepticism Hume is not solely concerned with epistemological scepticism There is a further and totally different kind of scepticism which is of importance to us as plain men Even though we may know that demonstrative propositions are accusatives of knowing, we must admit that we cannot know when we are in fact apprehending a demonstrative proposition Although we may know, we cannot know that we know Thus there is 'a new uncertainty deriv'd from the weakness of that faculty, which judges' (T 182) This new uncertainty arises equally in the case of probability, so that we must doubt both the knowledge and the degree of probability which even epistemology allows This form of scepticism, then, does concern us as plain men and shows that we cannot be certain that we are right in our judgements either of knowledge or of probability It is forced upon us by the fact that our beliefs do frequently turn out to

be false In the more developed exposition of his views in the *Enquiry* Hume refers to it as 'popular' as distinct from 'philosophical' scepticism (E 158) The consideration of popular scepticism in the *Treatise* gives rise to a discussion of probability Hume's views on the particular problem of probability he raises may be divided into two parts One part shows what we mean when we say that one event is more probable than another, the other shows under what conditions we judge the one to be more probable than the other Although neither of the discussions is epistemological in character, it is desirable to consider them now in order to ensure that no misconceptions arise in connection with them We noticed above that the notion of cause which Hume was concerned to analyse is the plain man's notion Moreover, the analysis of the causal notion is obviously important for epistemology Hume's analysis of probability is also an analysis of a common-sense notion, but in this case the analysis is chiefly of practical value

The first point to notice is that within the sphere of probability in the philosophical sense, we may distinguish, from the plain man's point of view, three different classes of propositions There are some propositions of which we feel quite certain, and everyone would agree that there is no reason to doubt them. Although we must admit that there is no difference between these propositions and the other probable propositions which gives us any grounds for drawing a philosophical distinction between them, and although we must also admit that there are practical difficulties which make it impossible to draw any precise distinction even for common-sense purposes, everyone will admit that some propositions cannot be doubted and some can be doubted: 'One wou'd appear ridiculous,

who wou'd say, that 'tis only probable the sun will rise to-morrow, or that all men must dye' (T 124) These propositions Hume calls proofs (T 124) The important thing to remember about proofs is that, although we feel quite certain about them they are, so far as the epistemologist is concerned, nevertheless similar in kind to other probabilities and are quite different from knowledge, because they are produced in precisely the same way as other beliefs (T 130) [1] The epistemologist's accusative of believing must also include probabilities and improbabilities Hume is not interested in the improbabilities Probabilities may vary in degree of probability or assurance In attempting to explain what is meant by the assertion that one event is more probable than another, Hume fails to distinguish two different problems Persisting with his intention of defining cause in terms of expectation, he wants to say that one event is more probable than another if we feel a greater degree of belief or assurance about it On the other hand, he also wants to distinguish philosophical and unphilosophical probabilities If, however, there is any other difference between probabilities besides the degree of assurance there must be some other criterion of probability Thus, Hume's argument seems to require a distinction between degree of assurance and probability in some other sense I suggest that this other notion of probability, if it is a common-sense notion, is derived from a scientific notion that there is a sense in which one event is more probable than another quite independently of my degree of belief Hume's discussion provides an answer to both

[1] I think the propositions which Moore, in *A Defence of Common Sense*, instances as objects of knowledge, for example, 'The earth has existed for many years past', would be proofs for Hume He would argue that the evidence for them gives us complete assurance but not knowledge in his sense, because the evidence for knowledge is of a different kind

problems When I say that one event is more probable than another, I do so because I feel greater assurance or belief about the one than the other. I feel greater assurance about that sequence of events, which I have most frequently observed in the past, of which I have observed fewest contrary instances, which most closely resembles the other events I have observed, which is based on the most vivid perception, which is most recent in my memory, which involves fewest steps from premiss to conclusion, or which is an instance of some general rule (T 135-147) Though in fact I say one event is more probable than another because I feel more assured, I do not intend merely to say something about my degree of assurance, but to assert what everyone understands by the statement that one thing is more likely to happen than another To account for what is meant by this statement Hume points out that "probability" only has sense if we interpret it in terms of the analysis of cause Chance is merely the absence of cause (T. 125). In terms of Hume's analysis of cause, then, to say that one event is more probable than another is to say that it has more frequently been observed to follow the present impression in the past, that there have been no contrary instances or fewest contrary instances, and that it most closely resembles the past observed events The fact that Hume admits the desirability of distinguishing philosophical and unphilosophical probabilities implies a very much more detailed account of causal propositions than he explicitly states The important point of his argument, however, is that he indicates that, although we must all give intellectual assent to the popular scepticism with regard to reason, this does not justify us in rejecting reason, because we cannot get on without it (E 158) Anyone who is unwilling to act in accordance

with any belief which does not amount to a proof is an excessive sceptic (E 159) We cannot allow popular scepticism, any more than philosophical scepticism, to deter us from action, although popular scepticism may lead to caution, whereas philosophical scepticism has no bearing on practical action at all.

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