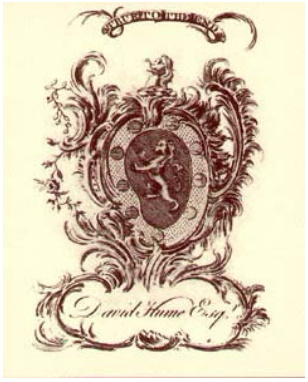

The Careless Skeptic - The 'Pamphilian' Ironies in Hume's Dialogues

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THE CARELESS SKEPTIC
THE 'PAMPHILIAN' IRONIES IN HUME'S DIALOGUES

I

In "Hume and the Legacy of the Dialogues"[1] E.C. Mossner sets out a widely accepted interpretation of one of Hume's major intentions in that great work. He argues that Hume's main use of irony therein is to dissimulate with respect to his true religious convictions. The purpose is to provide Hume with a defense against the expected negative reaction to the powerful attack on religion mounted in the Dialogues.[2] The attack, as is well known, is set out in the arguments of Philo against natural and revealed religion as espoused by Cleanthes and Demea, and Philo's views are taken to be those of Hume. It is argued or assumed that since such attacks were in Hume's day imprudent, they must be made by indirection, that is, by a device such as irony. Thus the Dialogues have surface meanings in which the religious views under attack are said (by Pamphilus) to win out; they also have other meanings, underlying or implicit, in which the religious views are conclusively refuted. That they are refuted is a conclusion drawn by the interpreters, in the present case Mossner and those who share his views. These destructive refutations are derived from explication and assessment of the ongoing argument as embodied in the explicit statements of the contestants, and are thus not explicitly linked to Hume. In consequence, quite often from one standpoint (a trivial one of external comment by an immature and prejudiced onlooker) the design argument wins; and from another, more sophisticated one, it loses. The upshot is that "Philo, who as Hume's spokesman for mitigated

skepticism will perforce be the victor in the philosophic debate, will nevertheless be 'artfully' depicted as being vanquished by the antagonist."[3] The strategy Mossner finds in the Dialogues thus has the youthful Pamphilus, a ward of Cleanthes, and one who takes no actual part in the adversarial discussions, interposing (in brief asides) comments that superficially but subtly belittle Philo's philosophical position. Philo is characterized, for instance, as having a "careless scepticism," in contrast with Cleanthes, who has an "accurate philosophical turn [of mind]" (D 128). Similarly, at the end of the Dialogues, Pamphilus awards the victory to Cleanthes.

In support of his thesis that Philo is a devious Hume's mouthpiece, Mossner brings forth two kinds of evidence, roughly characterizable as external and internal. One kind of external evidence is exemplified in Hume's correspondence with Gilbert Elliot of Minto,[4] and Adam Smith;[5] the letters involved are interpreted as showing that Philo represents Hume. Another kind involves comparing the amount of space devoted to the arguments of the three adversaries. The internal evidence is derived from the explication and appraisal of the explicit statements of the contestants; and it is essentially identified with the arguments and conclusions of Philo, except where Cleanthes can be said to make claims which square with those made by Hume in other works such as the Treatise.[6] Thus Hume's views and the related arguments are interpreted as those of Philo, in part because they are considered to be more valid and sound than those of Cleanthes, and in part because they are held to square with the views and arguments affirmed in Hume's other writings. Hume's views, as indicated above, are taken to be those of

Philo except where Philo appears to agree with Cleanthes and to accept a form of the design argument. Hume is Cleanthes when Cleanthes sets forth doctrines of the Treatise and the Enquiry[7] that are in accordance with the received (more or less) positivistic interpretation of Hume's skepticism. It is this view that requires that in those places in Parts III, X, and XII, where Philo appears to avow a form of the design argument or to let it stand unrefuted, he be (ironically) dissimulating. Thus the surface victories of Cleanthes and natural religion, which the adversarial flow of the statements of Philo and Cleanthes exhibits, are refuted by the propositions derived from the assessed form and content of the philosophical debate. The basic irony, therefore, lies in aspects of the literary form of the work -- and it includes comments by Pamphilus, as well as an appraisal of the wins, losses, and draws which make explicit the adversarial structure. Others lie in the actual force and validity of the arguments as interpreted by Mossner and the commentators who share his views.

I cannot here deal with all the problems attendant on Mossner's theory. I shall deal in detail only with the ironies which he relates to the comments made by Pamphilus.[8] He considers them to be the main strategic resource in Hume's ironic dissimulations. It is quite a task, for as is well known, Philo at important places appears to concur with Cleanthes and to endorse one form of the design argument. For example, he does not seek to refute the formulation introduced in Part III; and in Parts X and XII he avows it. Thus Mossner must argue both that Hume does not mean what he says (X, III), and does not say what he means (III). My thesis is double: First, Mossner's analysis of irony in the

Dialogues is mistaken; and, second, the mistakes of the analysis cause him to overlook deeper and more important ironies which constitute Hume's main philosophical thrust. More specifically, my contention is that when the relevant passages of the Dialogues, and their relations with their twins in the Treatise and the Enquiry, are properly understood, they are shown not to exemplify the required contradictory propositional content.

It is important that attention be called to the fact that the remarks of Pamphilus are not intrinsic to the content of the arguments of the adversaries. They are external in that they are about but not within the reasonings; they are comments about the claims, in the form of brief unsubstantiated appraisals. I believe that a much more important set of issues is involved. I think that the deeper ironies of the Dialogues are internal to the concepts being explored therein. Specifically, insofar as it can be determined by analysis of the explicit and implicit meanings of the content of the Dialogues, the propositional content of the argument does, contrary to Mossner's claims, show Philo to be a 'careless skeptic,' and this careless skepticism is generally characteristic of Hume's conclusions across the board in his earlier works.

As set out by Mossner, the ironies are as follows. (I shall in the following call them the 'Pamphilian' ironies). In five asides, he says, Pamphilus "subtly belittles" Philo's position.[9] The first comes in Pamphilus' initial characterizations of the adversaries in the Prologue. Cleanthes is there praised as a person of an "accurate philosophical turn" and Demea is condemned to "rigid inflexible orthodoxy" (D 128). Other such asides are

as follows: Philo is viewed as a caviler, railer, as a bit malicious. His manner is seen as between jest and earnest. He is described in Part III as embarrassed. Finally, there is at the end the award of victory to Cleanthes, whose principles are said to approach nearer to the truth than do those of the others.

The key ironies thus begin early, according to Mossner. In fact at the very beginning, even before the characterizations just cited, Pamphilus remarks that the discussion will concern the attributes, but not the existence, of God. It is soon obvious to any reader, of course, that a considerable part of the argument violates this proviso. Thus externally the propositional content of the Dialogues will inquire into the attributes but not the existence of God. It is said (by participants) that the argument in the Dialogues will not do A, but it does A. The contradictory relation between the propositions asserted in the comment about the Dialogues, and the explicit and implicit statements affirmed by the contestants therein, constitutes the formal structure of the irony. I agree that there is irony here, and that although Mossner does not provide any detailed analysis of the related implications, he does understand that literary irony involves inconsistency of some kind. He states that the "real meaning is contradicted or concealed by the words used."[10] Ironies can, of course, be assertive or expressive or formal. They can relate to propositional content, to shifts in emotional ties and allegiances, to ambivalent attitudes, to artistic structure, often in related combinations.[11] The more sophisticated forms of irony are not treated by Mossner, in the main, I think, because of his preoccupation with surface

matters. In my view the basic ironies of the Dialogues involve inconsistency between propositions relating to surface or explicit meanings, and those relating to underlying or implicit meanings. In Mossner's view of the Pamphilian ironies, two more are very important, and constitute a contrast. The first is the designation of Philo as careless (as a skeptic), and Cleanthes as accurate (as a philosopher). Demea is characterized as rigid and inflexible. I have space for detailed analysis of any length for only the first. The others will receive cursory attention, and less than they deserve.

It is true that there is ironic paradox between the statements made by Philo and the others with respect to the proviso that the discussions will relate to the attributes of God, but not his existence. Certainly the first three dialogues are devoted in the main to arguments concerning God's existence. But in my view Mossner's preoccupation with the role of Pamphilus, and his service to the interpretation that identifies Hume with a selected portion of the views expressed by Philo, leads him here as elsewhere to miss a main or deeper irony, one that relates to problems inherent in the concepts underlying the arguments of the contestants. The design argument, as mounted by Cleanthes in Parts II and III, involves deducing the existence of God from premises which set out features of the world that are analogous to the productions of intelligent human contrivance. This is to attempt to establish the existence of God's attributes by means of the design argument, and thereby to infer that since the world and human contrivances share similar features, their causes must be similar. The existence of a bearer of the attributes is presupposed by the existence of the

attributes. Thus in the design argument the being of God cannot, by virtue of the nature of the concepts involved, be separated from the attributes of God. The relation is non-contingent. It is, in effect, a set of related attributes that is inferred, and such a set of linked properties constitutes an individual. The irony, therefore, is implicit within the conceptual structure of the design argument; no design properties without a designer; no smile without some sort of a creature, perhaps a cat. The irony is Hegelian or Kantian; it lies in the nature of the concepts constituent to the argument, and not in external relations between the arguments and comments about them on the part of an observer. Notice also that it is not only Pamphilus who agrees to limit the argument to the attributes -- all confirm the proviso; and then each (at some place) proceeds to violate it -- even Demea. And so, Mossner appears to be wrong: the important point of the irony is not to dissimulate, to hide or obscure Hume's unpopular religious views. Pamphilus' statement is not only external to the concepts involved, but it could (and in fact should, with respect to the irony) be excised with no damage to the deeper irony, the one that is, I believe, the main philosophical point. The attempt to separate the existence of the attributes of God in this manner from the existence of God is conceptual nonsense.

I turn now to the more important subject: Pamphilus' characterization of the adversaries. First, Philo as a 'careless skeptic.' Along with the designation of Cleanthes as accurate, and as the victor in the debate, it serves in Mossner's interpretation to impugn the views of Philo and to endorse those of Cleanthes. The paradox supposed to underlie the comment is as follows: Philo is

careless (according to Pamphilus); but, according to Mossner's appraisal of the give and take of the argument which ensues, Philo is not careless -- indeed, of the three, he is the most careful in his argumentation, etc. (This important claim is not supported by argument.) Thus the message: on the surface a courtesy is granted to religion -- the skeptic about religion is characterized by a term of derogation. On the other hand, Cleanthes is praised as philosophically accurate. But again, a proposition that results from interpretive analysis of the argument is taken to show that Cleanthes is not accurate. And so another instance of an underlying, inferred, implicit proposition, 'Cleanthes is not accurate' (or is less accurate), based on interpretations and appraisals of the text of the Dialogues, is held to show the design argument (since it is set out by Cleanthes) to be flawed, inaccurate, and therefore to contradict the surface or explicit proposition. Similarly, Pamphilus characterizes Demea as rigid, inflexible, orthodox; and this also is held to be untrue.[12] In all of the characterizations A is said to be the case, and nevertheless, by implication, to not be the case. On the surface, in talk about the argument, the rational character of religion is supported, but analysis of the arguments shows by implication its condemnation.

To me the most interesting of the Pamphilian ironies is the one that characterizes Philo as a careless skeptic. According to Mossner, Philo is not careless; indeed, his skepticism is 'disciplined.' Mossner takes the adjective 'careless' in a standard sense as meaning undisciplined, uncareful, without indicating what special meanings may be attached to it by virtue of the special meanings of the noun it modifies. This is to claim that Philo is a skeptic,

and that he is careless in some general sense independent of the modes of skepticism in operation, i.e., is indolent, inattentive, and so forth. This approach neglects important features of Hume's theory. It is as if one can uncritically break the proposition 'Philo is a careless skeptic' into a conjunction of two true propositions 'Philo is careless' and 'Philo is a skeptic.' Then, of course, having claimed (unsupported in the article) that Philo's arguments are (more) valid and sound (than those of the others), and hence more careful, the paradox is generated, and with it the irony, because in this light the first conjunct is false.

I do not see this meaning of 'careless' to be the important one. To be a careless skeptic is to be careless in very special ways, and the understanding of these special ways depends upon features specific to Hume's concept of mitigated skepticism. This special sense of 'skeptic' gives 'careless' its special meaning. Once this is understood, it can be seen that both Philo and Hume are careless skeptics. Hume is a careless skeptic not only in the Dialogues, but also in the Treatise and the Enquiry. And if this is true, then Mossner loses the contradiction which is the basis of his irony, and loses thereby the irony. The difficulty with Mossner's view, thus, is that the descriptive phrase 'careless skeptic' has in Hume's work a special meaning such that Philo (and Hume) are careless skeptics; and this meaning is, further, consistent across Hume's other works.

With a sense of impending absurdity we become aware in the analysis of Hume's work on this topic that the cognitive practices and related motives that characterize 'careless (indolent, inattentive) skepticism' may well be practices that are careful, industrious, attentive, sensitive, in other contexts;

contexts in which Hume endorses the practices. Indeed, in order to be a careful (industrious, attentive, sensitive) experimental scientist, or practical agent, one must be 'careless' of certain of the demands of (absolute) skepticism. How is this so? Because a careless skeptic in Hume's view is careless in the special sense which relates to the kinds of reasons that ground his skeptical conclusions. He is a skeptic who for certain kinds of reasons cannot (as a good skeptic should) withhold belief in certain kinds of objects and processes. Roughly, a careless skeptic is a mitigated skeptic. And a mitigated skeptic is one who cannot withhold belief in the general efficacy of reason, the existence of external objects, their uniform causal relations, the repetition of their past uniformities in the same conditions in the future, belief in a persistent self. Such beliefs are natural, irresistible, vivid, forceful, necessary. And yet all involve inference to the existence of objects or processes for which the requisite impressions do not exist. Since a mitigated skeptic is a careless skeptic, both Philo and Hume are careless skeptics; and so is Cleanthes, in the end. So is Demea, in a peculiar way, although the mysticism concerning God's features to which he returns is closer to absolute skepticism in such matters. Here we have, of course, some significant, as distinct from surface, ironies.[13] It can be made clear, I think, that in the Treatise and the Enquiry Hume is a mitigated skeptic. And it can also be made clear that Philo in the Dialogues is driven to the position of mitigated skepticism in regard to the design argument. (It is interesting that in this process Cleanthes corrects Philo; in other words, makes him more accurate

philosophically.) I shall now attempt a more detailed substantiation of these claims.

II

In Part IV of the Treatise, and in Sections V and XII of the Enquiry, Hume sums up and reflects over the skeptical conclusions he has reached concerning confidence in reason and the senses. Given the damage inflicted on such common sense beliefs by the application of the principles of demonstrative reasoning, together with his doctrine concerning the origin of ideas in impressions, he faces the question "how it happens ... that these arguments above-explain'd produce not a total suspense of judgment...?" (T 184).

In the Treatise, he states that reason, as inference, is a combination of elements, including a natural instinct (T 22-23, 179, 183-187, 214), a propensity or disposition accompanied by the vivid and forceful sentiments which characterize belief (T 102-103, 193). "...reason is nothing but a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls, which carries us along a certain train of ideas..." (T 179). The tendency is irresistible. "Nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as breathe and feel..." (T 183). The belief is irresistible (T 204-209). At the basis of these 'natural' processes are custom and habit (T 102-103, 183-187), and, of course, the categories of association. The essential feature of beliefs of all kinds is forceful and vivid sensation, and is shared by the sciences and poetry and the arts (T 86, 96, 103; E 48-50). Conviction flows from an idea "which strikes more strongly upon me" (T 103).[14] The

connecting faculty is not reason, but imagination (T 193, 220, 225).

The elements of the Treatise echoed in the Enquiry are not developed in the same detail. Noting the paradox involved in the skeptical attempt "to destroy reason by argument and ratiocination" (E 155), Hume proceeds to state that inference is an instinct of our nature, rooted in custom (E 159). A considerable portion of his discussion of the limitations of reason is in relation to mathematics, and space and time (T, Part I, Sections I-V; E, Section VII, Part II). It is of interest that in his criticism of the powers of abstract reasoning, he does not subject the key maxim of reason -- the principle of consistency -- to skeptical criticism; and yet it is this principle that is his major criterion in the criticism of both demonstrative reason and the sense as the sources of demonstrative knowledge. His technique is uniformly that of reductio ad absurdum; he assumes an idea, and deduces inconsistencies from it.

Reason, for instance, finds that a judgment, though infallible by the rules (T 180-182, 184), degenerates regressively, under critical analysis, into probability, since each judgment demands a further judgment reflecting the awareness of frequencies of past mistakes and the complexities of the subject (T 180-185). And again, a similar position is reached in the Enquiry, where he notes that even in skepticism regarding the senses, reason is also under attack (E 155-157). She (reason) is so "dazzled and confounded, that she scarcely can pronounce with certainty and assurance concerning any one object" (E 157).

Why, then, do we retain faith in our inferences? In response the Treatise and the Enquiry

agree -- nature is simply too strong for principle. Attempts to suspend all belief in the felicity of all inference, comes down to the attempt to reject habit and custom with their 'easy' (vivid and forceful) transitions of the mind from one idea to another. In consequence, in addition to the paradox noted above, such attempts produce a combination of positive and negative mental states that support reason. First, the effort produces uneasiness, the product of the attempt to thwart the pull of the vivid and forceful 'easy' transitions from an idea to others with which it has been customarily and habitually associated. Such feelings of uneasiness, sometimes productive also of melancholy, are unpleasant, and elicit countering dispositions (T 22-23, 102-103, 183-187, 205-206, 215; E 36-40, 41, 106, 157-161, 186). Thus, in the critical skeptical assessment of the steps in a process of reasoning, according to Hume, after the second (regressive) step, the skeptical ideas become progressively faint and obscure (T 185, 220-225). The attention is 'stretched,' and "The posture of the mind is uneasy" (T 185; E 40-41).[15] Inattention and indifference follow; (T 203, 218, 223, 224; E 40) and, of course, natural indolence comes into play (T 223, 224, 269-270, 273). As the repeated checks theoretically demanded by skepticism are made on the inferences, the relation between the increasingly faint and obscure negative skeptical ideas, and the vivid and forceful features of the ideas, customarily and habitually related in the inferences, becomes inversely proportional. The belief in reason becomes irresistible. This appeal to irresistibility ranges over all belief, whether it relates to demonstrative reasoning or to probability. And even mathematical thinking admits finally only of probability (T 86, 103, 153-154, 183-184; E 49-50). All reasoning

involves this species of sensation. Force and vivacity, as we have seen, are the keys (T 96).

Hume's term for a person operating under this cluster of inattention, indifference, indolence, is 'careless' (T 218, 223; E 156, 160). A skeptic about rational inference, one who retains belief in checked inferences, is a 'careless skeptic' in relation to the felicity of reason.

But this carelessness has another, equally important, ground. Reason is a necessary ingredient in responding to the practical demands of life. Hume is explicit on the role played by rational inference in relation to the selection of means to desired ends (T 172, 225; E 45, 55, 76, 158-159). Hume realizes, of course, that matter of fact practical and experimental thinking requires inference, reasoning. The rejection of reasoning, thus, would have fatal consequences (T 182, 267). Skepticism concerning reason, therefore, is legitimate only in relation to abstruse reasonings (T 138, 156, 159, 185-189, 268; E 7-12, 55, 150). The mitigated skeptic concerning reason, thus, is for Hume, and Hume is in this respect, a careless skeptic.

This conclusion is even more obvious in connection with skepticism concerning belief in external bodies and their relations as derived from the senses. Generally, the basic 'irresistible' principles with which Hume is here concerned include the following: that there is a world of persisting objects (including the self); that they are uniformly related in causal laws; that future relations will repeat those of the past; that these objects and the interrelationships exist, and continue to exist, independent of their perception by humans (T 188). Claims that such beliefs rest on reason or sensation lead to contradiction (T 188, et. seq.; E 37-39). As

is the case with reason, however, these beliefs are nevertheless maintained; and, also as in the case of reason, the question Hume puts to himself is why? And the answer is similar. First, the constancy of regularities associated with perceptions which resemble each other, and are contiguous, moves the imagination to suppose independent and continued existence (T 195-196, 208-209; E 30, 35, 39, 151). The door must exist unperceived in order for us to hear the squeak; the stairs, for a letter to be delivered, etc. And, again, the beliefs rest on a collection of elements related to nature and action. These beliefs, presupposed by causal reasoning, rest on natural instinct, habit and custom. "Nature has not left this to his [the sceptic's] choice" (T 187). As in regular causal reasoning, in which impressions of both cause and effect are found in the memory, the imagination takes the mind from one to another resembling idea (T 193, 198, 202-204, 208-209, 212-213; E 41, 46-47, 51-53, 55, 162); "...men are carried, by a natural instinct or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses" (E 151). The basis, again, is custom and habit (T 197-198; E 43-44, 45, 48, 73-79), which provides for the free and easy transition from one idea to another, and to the forceful and vivid feelings that characterize belief (T 204-208, 220; E 48-49, 52, 76-78, 106).

An important aspect of the kind of reasoning that supports these beliefs is that the causal inferences involved are irregular, or oblique, or indirect. The inferences move through intervening ideas in which the imagination is grounded in resemblance (T 195, 197-198, 242; E 34, 38, 62-63, 95-96, 151-161). The transition involves inferring from remembered ideas based on impressions to ideas not so based. In a striking passage, Hume argues

that such indirect inferences are not merely mental, but rather that they reflect physical processes in which the motion of the "animal spirits" do not "rummage" the correct adjacent cells, but "turns ... to the one side or the other," and insensibly produces substitute ideas (T 61, and see T 230, 275-276).[16] These deviant inferences derive in the main from resemblance, but contiguity and causality are often involved (T 61-62). Since belief in external objects, their uniform relationships in causal laws, including the future uniformities that support experimental testing, as well as the causally supported predictions that ground practical actions, are a product of irregular (indirect, oblique) inferences; and since scientific and practical reasoning is necessarily (conceptually) dependent upon such beliefs; then scientific and practical reasoning is or rests upon irregular, indirect, oblique, reasoning. And thus it follows that scientific and practical reasoning is, at least in part, careless (and indolent, indifferent)!

Attempts to deny these beliefs produce the same kind of uneasiness that is consequent on attempts to deny certain rational inferences (E 157, 7-12); "...the mind must be uneasy in that situation, and will naturally seek relief from the uneasiness" (T 206). Resistance to these basic beliefs, beliefs that appear to be founded on sensation, then, evokes the same cluster of elements, collected under the term 'carelessness,' that we found in connection with skepticism about reason -- the same inattention (and negligence) (T 214, 216, 218, 222-223; E 40); indifference (T 223); indolence (T 269-273; E 12, 40-41). In the concluding sections of the works Hume tends to attribute these features to reason and the senses taken together. "This sceptical doubt, both

with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cured..." (by reason). And, thus, "Carelessness and in-attention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason I rely entirely upon them..." (T 218; and see E 156).

The necessities of action militate against skepticism in regard to the senses just as they do in relation to skepticism concerning reason -- action provides reasons to be skeptical of skepticism. Suspension of belief in the basic tenets of the senses would lead to fatal consequences, cause the human species to perish and go to ruin (T 225, 267). And Hume is quite clear about this topic in both the Treatise and the Enquiry. He realizes that matter of fact reasoning involved in actions directed at choosing means to ends presupposes the general validity of inference, and the uniformity of nature, independent existence, and so on (T 176, 225; E 55). the "great subverter of Pyrrhonism or the excessive principles of scepticism, is action, and employment, and the occupations of common life" (E 158-159). No good can come of unmitigated skepticism (E 159).

And so Hume concludes, in relation to the evidence of the senses as well as reason, that he should, in a careless (indolent, inattentive) way, be skeptical of skepticism (E 158-159). And, "the conduct of a man, who studies philosophy in this careless manner, is more truly sceptical than that of one, who feeling in himself an inclination to it, is yet so over-whelm'd with doubts and scruples, as totally to reject it. A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts, as well as of his philosophical conviction" (T 273). "...nothing can be more sceptical, or more full of doubt and hesitation, than this scepticism itself..." (E 158). It is in this delightfully ironic sense, if I may

cast ahead, that Hume can in the Dialogues claim that the true believing Christian must first of all be a skeptic. Hume's final and parting shot at such abstruse affairs is that although the arguments of the unmitigated (or 'careful') skeptic "admit of no answer and produce no conviction" (E 155 f.n.; and see E 6-8; T 138, 183-197, 204, 268-269), further arguments against the pull of natural instinct exemplify the type of 'abstract reasonings' that become mired in verbal disputes (T 262; E 61). Nature, in the form of careless skepticism, normatively corrects philosophical demonstrative reason (T 182, 269, 273; E 9, 55, 161; D 128, 131, 228).

In sum, it seems clear that in the Treatise and the Enquiry the careless skeptic is a person who attempts in the abstract what is impossible in reality, that is, to doubt the efficacy of reason and the deliverances of the senses. He is unable to carry through on these skeptical demands with respect to causation, uniformity, external reality, and persistence of the self. He is allowed by his indolence and inattentiveness, and forced by his imagination and the demands of action, to (often insensibly) infer and believe in them. As Hume puts it in the Treatise at the end of his skeptical reflections, to repeat, "carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy" (T 218). And, as we have seen, this is echoed in the Enquiry (E 156-157). In response to the malady of skeptical doubt the true philosopher joins the vulgarian. The same debilitation of the force and vivacity of skeptical ideas, the same indifference, indolence, and compulsion of practical demand, is reached, it is true, by different avenues, whether the stupidity of

the vulgar, or the moderate skepticism of the true philosopher (T 223-224, 269).

It is clear, I believe, that we have Hume identified with careless skepticism in the Treatise and the Enquiry. And it is interesting to notice that in this posture Hume has a distinguished precursor. In the First Meditation Descartes remarks that the attempt to employ doubt universally is a task that is a "laborious one, and insensibly a certain indolence leads me into the course of my ordinary life" (M 95).[17] Nature, instinct, custom, imagination, resemblance, indolence, inattention, the necessities of action, combine to produce the careless skeptic, the mitigated skeptic. Since in the Treatise and the Enquiry the mitigated skeptic is the careless skeptic, and in these works Hume subscribes to mitigated skepticism, then it follows that Hume is a careless skeptic. Indeed, he explicitly endorses careless skepticism.

III

It is my view that this concept of the careless skeptic is also a basic feature of the Dialogues. Hume's final masterpiece shows many profound ties with the earlier works, in particular the Treatise, and I believe that a detailed analysis of these materials shows that in the Dialogues Philo is driven to the position of mitigated skepticism, that he is a careless skeptic, and that he is therefore quite properly and uncritically characterized as such therein. There is the same preoccupation with skepticism, and the same early introduction of it into the discussion that is found in the earlier works. In the Dialogues, of course, the skepticism pertains almost wholly to religious beliefs, but with

respect to them, there is the same concern with epistemological and metaphysical problems. To be sure, theological issues were dealt with in these works, but in the Dialogues these epistemological and metaphysical difficulties are elaborated in more subtle and complex ways. Thus key skeptical arguments of the earlier works are used in order to show that the design argument fails to prove the existence of an intelligent cause of the world. Suspension of such beliefs is called for. Then, as was the case in the earlier works with respect to reason and the senses, it is argued that although the refutation accords with the logical and epistemological requirements of demonstrative and causal reasoning, its constituent arguments fail to forestall the irresistible push of imagination that forces belief and assent. Further, the discussion turns on the same cluster of elements found in the Treatise and Enquiry: instinct, custom, resemblance, uneasiness, irregular (oblique, indirect) reasoning, indolence, inattention, the necessities of action, and so on.

Thus unmitigated skepticism is introduced early on, and the related failures of both reason and the senses are underscored (D 131), as are the requirements of accurate and regular causal reasoning (D 127). Imagination, by a natural, instinctive, 'irregular' argument, produces a vivid, forceful, irresistible, idea of a designer-god, of (limited) similarity to the mind of men (D 135, 154-155). The belief is a reaction to a complex of ideas initiated by uneasiness (D 132-133, 200, 216). And the instinct is conceived as a propensity associated with or derived from custom (D 216, 221, 144, 149). In Part III we find, as we found in the other works, that the response of the reasonable skeptic is to adhere to such elements of common sense and the plain

instincts of nature, and assent where "reasons strike him with so full a force that he cannot without the greatest violence prevent it" (D 154; and see T 194). Upon recognition of the structure and contrivance of the eye, the idea of a contriver immediately flows in upon one "with a force like that of sensation" (D 154). Here, as in the earlier works, belief is a function of forceful and vivid sensation (D 150, 154-155). Even reason is a species of experience. It is important to understand that Philo does not attempt to refute this argument by Cleanthes; and that he accepts it in two later places (Parts X and XII). At the end of X, Philo notes that Cleanthes' earlier arguments (Part III) are powerful. "In many views of the universe, the beauty and fitness of final causes, strikes us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms (D 201-202). And in XII he repeats that the idea of purpose and design is so striking that "no man can be so hardened in absurd systems as at all times to reject it" (D 214). As in the Treatise the analogies "lead insensibly" (inattentively) to beliefs under skeptical attack, in this case belief in a first intelligent author (D 214). Suspense of judgment is impossible (D 215-216).

The repetition in the Dialogues of another key feature of the Treatise, the concept of irregular reasoning, is quite important. Even if the argument for theism (like those for external objects, uniformity, etc.) contradicts the principles of logic: "its universal, its irresistible influence proves clearly, that there may be arguments of a like irregular nature" (D 155). And this comparison with the experience of the beauties of literature, shared with earlier works in relation to the forced and

vivid character of belief, which seems "contrary to rules," significantly notes that such ideas "animate the imagination" (D 155). The linkage is clear -- irregular reasoning involves inferring objects which do not rest on an impression or its memory, and thus violates a fundamental principle of causal reasoning, and violates as well the epistemic requirement that ideas terminate in impressions.

Statements by Philo, and Cleanthes as well, repeat other of the cluster of ideas associated in the earlier works with "careless scepticism." Unmitigated skeptical arguments critical of the design argument produce no conviction (D 131-132). They puzzle, but never convince (D 81). The attempt to resist the instinctive, the natural, is impossible (D 216), and ultimately the "bent of [the] mind" will relax into inattentiveness, indolence (D 133). As in the Treatise and the Enquiry, carelessness and indolence serve to reduce the melancholy produced by attempts at unmitigated skepticism (D 132; T 264-269; E 160). And, of course, carelessness is specifically related to the irresistible character of the design argument in Part III, discussed above, where it is said (by Philo) that "a purpose, an intention, or design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker" (D 214) -- in other words the mitigated skeptic and the vulgar, respectively. As we have seen above, Philo is explicitly linked to careless skepticism early in the Dialogues (D 128). And the linkage between the mitigated skeptic and the vulgar, the true philosopher and the stupid, is repeated in other places (D 162-163). It will be recalled that in the Treatise Hume had linked Peripatetic philosophers with inattention and indifference, true philosophers with moderate skepticism (and inattention and indifference), and

the people (the vulgar) with stupidity (T 224; E 130-136, 162, 214). A similar reference is in the Dialogues (D 162). True philosophy for Hume approaches more nearly the sentiments of the vulgar.

As in the earlier works, the most powerful consideration in support of these irresistible beliefs related to the demands made upon people by the necessities of action, the beliefs that support the predictions associated with the choice of means to desired ends. As Cleanthes says to Philo:

> Whether your scepticism be as absolute and sincere as you pretend, we shall learn bye and bye, when the company breaks up: We shall then see, whether you go out at the door or the window; and whether you really doubt, if your body has gravity, or can be injured by its fall... (D 132).

This attitude is repeated at other places (D 134, 137). Hume's conception of the logical character of the relation between the beliefs that involve prediction, and those propositions that express the uniform laws upon which predictions and experiments are based, is unclear. Contemporary thinkers would likely consider it a form of presupposition, and thus conceptual or in some sense a priori.

Thus, again, in the Dialogues as in the earlier works, and for very similar reasons, the philosophical skeptic is skeptical of skepticism with respect to irresistible ideas. To be a philosophical skeptic is "the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian" (D 228). A philosophical skeptic is therefore skeptical about being skeptical about religion. Such skeptics, from "a natural diffidence of their own capacity, suspend, or endeavor to suspend all judgment with regard to

such sublime and such extraordinary subjects" (D 227). And the subjects include the subject of skepticism.

Finally, the Dialogues repeats a suggestion made by Hume in the Treatise that we might regard further argument concerning such abstruse questions as related to verbal issues, as indicating perhaps unremovable ambiguity and vagueness (T 262; E 61; D 217, 219). And this position is linked to a further one, which also appears to be shared by the works, that the difference between the mitigated skeptic, and the non-skeptic, in this case the theist who is a dogmatist to the extent that he accepts the modestly formulated design argument, is often one of attitude (D 169, 216-217 f.n.).

In all three works, then, the absolute skeptic is forced to concede that at a certain point abstruse and refined arguments reduce to cavils and raillery -- and are to be rejected in relation to the point of the irresistible character of belief in external objects, the uniformity of nature, and an intelligent designer. Skepticism fails to breach the wall of the irresistible (T 138, 183-187, 204, 204 f.n.; E 6-8; 155 f.n.; D 132-133, 154).

The conclusion is clear and substantial: Philo is identified with moderate or mitigated skepticism, which in the Dialogues is identified with the design argument; and to be a mitigated skeptic is to be a careless (indolent, inattentive) skeptic. Thus Philo is a careless skeptic and careless skepticism is the view embraced by Hume in the Treatise and the Enquiry. Cleanthes often embraces important aspects of careless skepticism -- as Philo says, the differences between them are essentially verbal and attitudinal.

For our purposes, the main consequence for the interpretation of the Dialogues is that Mossner, (and those who hold to the received interpretation), loses the contradiction necessary to his (Pamphilian) irony, between the paradoxical explicit attribution of carelessness to Philo, and the real implicit carefulness, derived from analysis and interpretation of the text. Our analysis shows that Philo, according to Humean doctrine consistent in his major philosophical works, is a careless skeptic. More important is the point that there is no deception here with regard to Hume's position. To call a philosopher a careless skeptic is not to belittle him, rather it is to reflect sympathy with the necessities of life, shared by the truly philosophical as well as the vulgar. Certainly Hume's position is not hidden.

What are the deeper ironies obscured if not blocked out by Mossner's interpretation of the Dialogues? I would speak in the main to two. According to Hume's view in the Treatise and the Enquiry causal reasoning of the 'regular' kind is employed by scientific thinkers and practical agents as well. Both abide by the rules (when thinking correctly), and predict on the basis of beliefs (ideas) formed by past experience of constant conjunctions of impressions reflected in observation and experiment, and act on the basis of such rules and beliefs. In other words rational scientific agents and practical agents procure and weigh evidence systematically, attentively manipulate experimental data, etc. In the most common senses of the words, then, such thinkers are careful, attentive, non-indolent. Further they employ Hume's criteria for normative causal reasoning (T Part III, Section XV; E Section VII, Part II, 58-61). In

relation to demonstrative philosophical reasoning, however, such causal reasoning, the arguments in which it is embedded, and the consequent beliefs, are contradictory, and are 'irregular' in that they are incorporated in inferences whose constituent propositions refer to unexperienced similar objects, including those predicted for the future, and provide the reasons for actions that select the means that bring about desired ends. Hume notes that "all our reasonings concerning the probability of causes are founded on the transferring of past to future" (T 137). Although they abide by the normative rules for causal reasoning, such inferences go beyond impressions, and therefore are irregular, oblique, indirect inferences. For this and other reasons they do not in the sense of demonstrative reasoning constitute knowledge, (but rather probability), and thus with respect to skepticism (the principles of demonstrative philosophical reasoning), they result from carelessness, inattentiveness, indolence. And so, as noted above, a careless skeptic may be (in, say, Hume and Newton) a careful practical agent, a careful scientist, and, indeed, a more accurate philosopher (T 182-183, 267-269, 273; E 55, 161; D 131-133, 136-138).

One aspect of the interplay of ideas in this material is the continuing presence of an ambiguity in the use of the term 'reason.' It is used in at least two main senses, one descriptive and one normative (see T 79, 82-92, 96-97 f.n., 139). It is inconsistencies between asserted and implied propositional contents, based upon such ambiguities, that produce the nest of ironies with which we are concerned. Thus a practically and scientifically careful reasoner may be, indeed must be, philosophically careless. In regular scientific reasoning

inferences rest on causally related ideas, and the causally related ideas rest on past impressions. Therefore insofar as they in prediction and action go beyond ideas founded in impressions, scientific and practical reasoning are irregular, oblique, and indirect. Note again that the irony relates to conceptual instabilities in Hume's concept of causal reasoning and its relation to experience, and not in an external relation between comments made by Pamphilus about the ideas or arguments in the body of the Dialogues, and the ideas and arguments themselves.

The deepest irony, however, is rooted in the empirical criteria employed by Cleanthes in his support of the design argument, and by Philo in his skeptical assaults on it. Some of the constituents of his arguments -- those relating to the causal reasoning employed in predictions and generalizations, some of whose ideas of necessity do not rest on impressions -- are themselves defective by the same criteria. Thus in the Dialogues experience both supports and does not support the design argument, and Philo's principles can be turned on him, and are turned on him, by Cleanthes. This paradox results from the following situation. There are (at least) two constituents in Hume's empiricism, and they are uncomfortable philosophical bedfellows. First, there is the concept of experience upon which the normative rules for causal reasoning rest. In this sense the experience is in the form of past impressions which form the evidence for generalization and prediction. Inferences of this kind also ground practical actions and the related decision making. Scientific or practical thinking which does not rest on generalizations and predictions which in turn rest on such impressions is incorrect. The

well-known problem is that generalization and prediction involve reference to ideas not resting on impressions. Thus causal reasoning incorporates inferences that are, by skeptical standards, irrational. By standards of demonstrative and causal reasoning these inferences are mediated through general propositions relating to ideas not connected appropriately to impressions, and thus are irregular, oblique, and indirect. By such standards the inferences are irrational. As we have seen above, the main culprit is resemblance, which, at the behest of imagination, comes between the ideas and impressions, with the result that the ideas do not make a direct transition one to the other (T 61, 202). The rules that support correct causal reasoning require regular conjunctions of impressions in past experience. And they are met by correct scientific and practical reasoning. Unfortunately the epistemic requirement that constituent ideas be based on impressions is not met by the predictions and generalizations themselves. Despite these complications, it is appropriate to say that for Hume, experience in the form of impressions is a necessary presupposition of reasoning, directly in relation to present states of affairs, and indirectly insofar as the reasoning involves predictions of future states, and insofar as it involves generalizations from samples. It is of course quite difficult to think of practical or (experimental) scientific reasoning that is not of the indirect sort. Indeed, Hume himself noted, as pointed out above, that all probable reasoning involves reference to the future.

But there is a second kind of appeal to experience in Hume's philosophy. It relates to belief (or assent) (T 86). This is a constituent of

the natural inferences by means of which the imagination instinctively (that is, by custom or habit) moves from an idea to those associated with it in the past. Belief is a function of the vivid and forceful sensations that relate to such ideas. Hume says in the Treatise:

> Thus all probable reasoning is nothing but a species of sensation. 'Tis not solely in poetry and music, we must follow our taste and sentiment, but likewise in philosophy. When I am convinc'd of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments over another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence. Objects have no discoverable connexion together; nor is it from any other principle but custom operating upon the imagination, that we draw any inference from the appearance of one to the existence of another (T 103).

In the Dialogues Cleanthes reminds Philo that the word reasoning is used for inferences which go beyond sense impressions. In the Treatise, causal or probable reasoning involves inferences from a present idea to the existence of another not present. If both impressions (objects) are present, Hume tends to call the movement of the mind "perception" rather than reasoning. It is evident that there are problems here. "Reason can never shew us the connexion of one object with another 'tho aided by experience..." (T 92). And this is true even given the observation of their constant conjunction in all past instances. When the mind passes from one to the other, thus, it can appropriately do so by virtue of certain principles: constant conjunction, contiguity, temporal priority, resemblance. The applications of these principles in causal reasoning, therefore,

involves the processes of the imagination in "a very irregular motion in running along its objects" (T 92). According to the skeptical Hume this is a weakness in these three relations. Nevertheless it is only these principles that support inference from causes to effects. And yet he says (T 137), as we have seen, that all of our reasonings concerning the probability of causes (all our matter of fact reasoning, therefore) are founded on transferring the past to the future. 'Reasonings' (causal) are not rational; they are not the product of philosophical reason, which demands impressions. On the other hand they are rational in that they are the product of correct causal reasoning. Yet, as we have seen, they appear appropriate as truly philosophical. It appears that the term reason operates in a number of substantially different ways. There is demonstrative reasoning from impressions or ideas based on impressions, and one cannot get causal reasoning or probability out of that. This is 'reason' in the a priori normative sense; good demonstrative reasoning. There is causal reasoning in accordance with the rules for good causal reasoning -- a normative sense. Then there is the natural, instinctive, and irregular association of ideas, and the related vividness and forcefulness which characterizes belief. Hume sometimes seems to treat this as if it is descriptive, a matter of non-normative natural law; and sometimes he treats it as normative, as the cure of the disease called skepticism; that is, as irresistible and necessary to science and to practical life, and therefore the beliefs which feature it are appropriate, or reasonable. As we have seen above, such inferences correct excessive skepticism. We appear to have (at least) two

differing criteria of rationality, relating to related but differing senses of experience.

Causal reasoning, therefore, can be 'just' or appropriate or correct. Causal reasoning whose constituent ideas rest on impressions of instances of both of the classes of objects (ideas) related or associated as causes and effects is valid or appropriate or 'just' causal reasoning. And this means that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that two sorts of 'irregular' reasoning are involved in Hume's theories. Inferences may result in belief in external objects, in the uniform relations of objects, in future objects following past relations, in the persistence of the self. All fail to rest on the required conjunction of objects, (ideas) both of which are derived from impressions. There is always belief in objects (ideas) for which we have no impressions. All causal reasoning is defective from this standpoint.

However, causal reasoning concerning inexperienced objects (generalization, prediction, the basis of practical reasoning concerning actions) is valid or 'just' when the inferences rest upon ideas which have been associated in <u>past</u> experience (impressions). Thus my beliefs that the food I now consume will be nutritious in the future, or that if I step out into space from a second story window I will fall, are regular and just in that they involve ideas which have a high degree of similarity to ideas copied from past impressions. The beliefs, thus, rest on the normative rules for causal reasoning: constant conjunction, contiguity, spatiotemporal priority. Causal reasoning can, of course, be defective in a number of other ways: "when we have not observ'd a sufficient number of instances...; or when these [constituent ideas] are contrary to each

other; or when the resemblance is not exact; or the present impression is faint and obscure..." (T 154).

Causal reasoning is thus regular when the related ideas are derived from correlated impressions in past experience, and none of the other defects obtain. In this sense, then, the inference to a designer cause of the world is irregular in that it does not fulfil the normative criteria. But, of course, the irony is that causal reasoning, even when fulfilling the normative criteria, and thus 'regular' and just, is 'irregular' and unjust in that it rests upon generalization and future reference, which go beyond impressions.

The deep irony, therefore, lies in the dual uses made by Hume of the concept of experience. In (at least) one sense 'experience' means a kind of foundationalist epistemic requirement that ideas must rest on impressions. Demonstrative reasoning, and rational proofs in one of the senses of rational set out above, work out the necessary implications, the relations of ideas, involved in these ideas. According to this requirement, causal reasoning relating to claims concerning the existence of external, uniformly conjoined ideas (objects) and inferences to the existence of an intelligent designer of the world, are not products of 'just' reasoning. They are instances of 'irregular' reasoning; inferences expressed in 'irregular' arguments. The inferred ideas (a world designer, external objects, uniformity) are produced neither by sense impressions nor by demonstrative reasoning, but rather by the imagination, and they have no connected impressions, either in the past or the present. It is this sense of experience that fails to obtain in the design argument. And with respect to it and the other claims listed above, the careful skeptic would

withhold judgment. The design argument is an attempt at a causal argument, and therefore comes under the scope of the second sense of irregularity set out above: the normative requirement that the causes inferred rest on ideas which rest on past impressions, in effect on causal correlations both of whose constituents rest on past impressions -- hence classes of experienced objects sharing a high degree of similarity.

However, as we have seen, there is another sense of experience operating in Hume's theory. And that is the experience of force and vivacity which constitutes belief. It ranges over the metaphysical and inductive types of reasoning discussed above, of course, but is not limited to them. A number of key beliefs fulfil this experiential criterion, but do not fulfil the epistemic or causal criteria; and it is at this point that the notion of the careless skeptic arises. The imagination, on grounds of coherence and resemblance, produces ideas of external objects, their uniform relations (including reference to the future) which are so forceful and vivid that belief in the propositions which express them are irresistible. And this is true of belief in the intelligent design of the world.

It is of the utmost importance that one keep a strong purchase on the proposition that unless this normative experiential criterion is a requirement of all beliefs about the world a key irony in Hume's Dialogues is lost. In the Dialogues, and in the Treatise and Enquiry as well, the experience of an irresistible force and vivacity legitimizes beliefs which on both rational and causal grounds are illegitimate. It is also important to keep before our minds the point that for Hume this experience of force and vivacity is a necessary constituent of

rational demonstrative as well as just causal reasoning; and thus one cannot explain away its uses in relation to the design argument and belief in external objects as a mere descriptive ingredient in metaphysical and theological contexts. It is also of utmost importance to recognize that the paradoxes involved in the two notions of experience cannot be reduced by Hume's removing or excising the second. As we have seen, the feeling of assent in relation to the force and vivacity of ideas is as much an impression as any other; and it serves to correct the excesses of skepticism. This conception is therefore necessary to Hume's doctrine.

Given these preliminaries, the paradoxes upon which the deep ironies rest are relatively clear. It is also clear that they obtain in the earlier works (with respect to external objects, etc.), but my main interest herein is in the Dialogues. In the first sense of experience, belief in an intelligent cause of the world rests on irregular inference and argument and is thus irrational: it fails to fulfil the norms of either demonstrative or causal reasoning. Thus a careful (absolute or unmitigated) skeptic would withhold belief. In the second sense of experience, however, a different situation obtains. Belief in the objects inferred by the design argument is irresistible: it rests on (is) a natural, instinctive, vivid and forceful idea. As in the case of the true philosopher (and the vulgar) of the Treatise and the Enquiry with respect to belief in the existence of external objects, the uniformity of nature, the persistent self, Philo in the Dialogues must recognize a similar force and vivacity for an intelligent cause of the world (albeit a limited concept; a cause remotely similar to the mind of man). Experience in the sense of requisite

impressions and appropriate application of causal rules is absent; but experience in the sense of vivid and forceful (indeed irresistible) assent is present. Thus the apparent contradictions: belief in, assent to, an intelligent designer of the world, both is and is not validated by experience, and both is and is not rational and 'just.' According to the first sense of experience and of reason one must be an absolute skeptic; according to the second, one must be a mitigated skeptic. Given the variant senses of the words experience and reason one in the Dialogues is both a skeptic and not a skeptic, is rational and irrational. Philo, applying the first experiential criterion, destroys the design argument. Cleanthes, applying the second, forced Philo to accept it.

This deep irony can be viewed in both Hegelian and Kantian terms. It is Hegelian in that it reflects conceptual instabilities in Hume's concept of experience, dialectically developing in the adversarial relationships exemplified in the give and take of the argument of the Dialogues. It is Kantian in that it can be used both to prove and disprove the existence of an intelligent cause of the world. The instabilities or confusions in Hume's concept of experience still shake the ground of modern empiricism.

The conclusion: Mossner's thesis that some main ironies of the Dialogues rest on contradictions between surface or explicit statements of Pamphilus, and implicit propositions derived from interpretation of the text, has been shown to be in error. The requisite contradictions supporting the ironies rest on mistaken interpretations of the text. Further, these 'Pamphilian' ironies obscure some of the main, and philosophically interesting, ironies of the Dialogues, and the Treatise and the Enquiry as well.

IV

It might be well to provide at this point a brief elaboration of aspects of the more important instances and types of irony in the Dialogues. One interesting way of doing this is to distinguish them in terms of (some of) the linguistic or speech act functions involved. Emphasis has been placed on assertive and cognitive categories, those which relate to the propositional content and beliefs imbedded in the ideas expressed in the Dialogues. Since the work is a literary work, it is in my opinion no less important to take account of the ironic dimensions of the expressive, attitudinal, evocative, and directive functions of the sentences in the Dialogues. It can be shown, I think, that they are no less ironic. This is understandable, since they are non-contingently related to the propositional content. I will begin with the assertive aspect.

As we have seen above, the ironies of the Dialogues involve contradictory and paradoxical relations between primary and secondary meanings, or between explicit (surface) and implicit propositions and related beliefs. The explicit propositions are those stated by the contestants. The implicit ones are made up of the unrefuted claims made by the contestants and those entailed or implied by them. In the Dialogues the ones with which we are mainly interested are constituted by the intersection of the unrefuted statements of Cleanthes and Philo. The implied statements are credited to an implicit speaker, who is taken to be Hume. On the surface (in talk about the arguments, and in remarks of praise and blame in relation to them) the design argument is not refuted, and by implication it is refuted. On

the surface, experience provides scientific evidence that there is an intelligent designer of the world, and it does not provide evidence that there is such a designer. Scientific experience in the form of 'just' reasoning in terms of the rules of causal reasoning is absent (Part I and II). However, supporting experience in the form of irresistible vivid and forceful ideas is present (Parts III, IX, XII). The implicit speaker thus asserts that experience both proves and does not prove a divine cause of the world.

Now it is often possible to remove a contradiction, (and thus a paradox or an irony) by specifying intentional objects. And this may be done by means of adding to the relevant term a prepositional phrase which indicates the relational property involved. This move may further specify an ambiguity or vagueness that supports a contradiction, and may thereby make it possible to remove the contradiction. Thus reformulating one of our pairs of propositions into the two sentences 'experience of past impressions of purpose and contrivance' which become the basis for the ideas (of intelligent design) inferred by analogy, and 'experience of an irresistibly vivid and forceful impression of an intelligent designer along with ideas of design in the world' serves to remove the contradiction, at least on the surface level, since the term 'experience' has taken on two meanings. And thus the proposition 'an intelligent cause of the world is not proved by the experienced impressions of an intelligent cause of the world' does not contradict the proposition 'an intelligent cause of the world is proved by the irresistibly vivid and forceful idea of an intelligent designer along with ideas of design in the world.' Hume would face, of course, a number of

difficulties with this resolution of the paradox; and that is because for him the rationality of the beliefs in connection with causal reasoning also must satisfy the criterion of vivid and forceful belief.[18] It is important to keep in mind that the sentences which express this irresistible idea of design and its related beliefs designate purposive or means-ends relations, and these are quite soundly rooted in experience (they satisfy the standards of good causal reasoning), and they are necessary to the predictions which ground our practical reasoning and the related actions. So much for our limited analysis of the cognitive or propositional ironies in the Dialogues. Each character appears to both affirm and deny a number of propositions.

The ironies of affiliation in relation to the give and take of the adversarial interplay in the Dialogues rest, of course, on the paradoxes of propositional content explored above. Affiliations are shared beliefs and attitudes, which rest on propositional content. Briefly, in relation to the design argument, Philo is supportive of Demea, and Demea of him, in its first formulation. He is not supportive of Demea, nor Demea of him, in relation to the second formulation of it: nor is he supportive of Demea's abortive production of the ontological argument. Here Philo joins with Cleanthes; and he maintains this liaison in relation to the second formulation of the design argument, and in the difficulties in connection with the problem of evil. These are probably best seen as elements of an Aristotelian complex plot, in that they are changes in action and emotional response that turn on recognition scenes -- in these cases changes in emotional response to the acceptance or rejection of the soundness or validity of arguments, and the

related conclusions. (These, of course, relate to the propositional contents of the beliefs.) The uneasy alliances of Philo the (mitigated) skeptic with Demea the mystic believer, and with Cleanthes the believer in the design argument, are exceedingly tenuous, and rest on the fragile ambiguities and vaguenesses in relation to the concepts of experience and reasoning, belief and truth, explored in the Dialogues.

These formal interrelationships, exemplified most obviously in the adversarial structure of the dialogue, a literary form, are also powerfully tied to the expressive elements. The other main source of expressive elements relates to the positive and negative attitudes held by the characters towards the ideas and concepts under discussion. The formal aspects of the adversarial flow of a dialogue non-contingently relate to satisfactions and dissatisfactions and other relevant emotions and moods, including those tied to winning, losing, or coming to a draw. Things (ideas, beliefs) are seen under differing positive and negative descriptions. When a contestant appears to win a round, when his ideas appear to be validated, the situation and language express happiness; when he loses, there is pain and frustration. Thus the dialogue form, when it embodies an adversarial structure, carries its own expressive and emotive force; it is part of the commitment to playing the game, and the reader of a dialogue is a participant in the game in that one has the requisite feelings (in standard contexts, of course). We may say, then, that the dialogue form makes it possible for the same texts to be expressive in a number of ways. One is tied to the ebb and flow of winning and losing arguments. Another relates to the positive and negative emotive factors constituent

to the beliefs and claims expressed in the arguments. Thus Philo, Cleanthes, and Demea, are pleased or displeased in relation to the ebb and flow of the successes and failures of the arguments, as well as their emotional involvement with the beliefs expressed therein. Demea has the worst of philosophical worlds: he both rejects and affirms the use of reason; he is a mystic, and yet he sets out the ontological argument. He rejects the possibility of rational proofs in relation to religion and theology, and yet is uncomfortable when Philo appears to have destroyed them. The implicit speaker, Hume, is sometimes Philo and sometimes Cleanthes; and sometimes he is even Demea. We may say this because Hume's choice of the dialogue form is an intentional act, and thus implies the presence of the appropriate feelings. He is the persona who maintains the intersection of the unrefuted claims, and suffers or enjoys the associated feelings. As a result, the basic ironies turn on ambivalence, and the emotions are those of ambivalence -- the unpleasantness of frustration and exasperation typically associated with intentional activities in which one neither wins nor loses, and in which none of the major competing beliefs receives clear proof or clear refutation. The implicit speaker both approves and disapproves the use of experience in the argument from design; and both approves and disapproves the belief in an intelligent designer. He both wins and loses, and neither wins nor loses. The dialogue as a whole powerfully expresses the emotions, moods and attitudes which relate to the vagaries and frustrations of philosophical investigations, in particular those that struggle with the 'perennial' problems of philosophy. Nothing is finally settled; there is little in the way of final satisfaction, and

considerable in the way of dissatisfaction. The involved reader, carried along with Hume and his representatives, is unable to get on his emotional feet.

As with the others, the ironies of evocation and direction are related to those of propositional content and expression. The successes and failures of the adversaries evoke positive and negative feelings and attitudes on the part of readers, depending on the attitudes they carry into the experience. On the surface experience provides scientific evidence that there is an intelligent designer of the world, and it does not provide evidence that there is such a designer. Scientific experience in the form of 'just' reasoning in terms of the rules of causal reasoning is absent (Parts I and II). However, experience in the form of irresistible, vivid and forceful ideas is present (Parts III, IX, XII). The implicit speaker thus asserts that experience both proves and does not prove the existence of a designer-god. If we here invoke, as I think we should, the idea of Hume as the implicit speaker of the Dialogues, we view him as attempting therein to mold the attitudes of the reader. The cognitive (propositional) and expressive elements, briefly detailed above, serve to effect his beliefs, and through them his emotions. In this sense Hume wishes the reader to reject the attempt to exploit Newtonian science and its methods for theological purposes; this attempt, the first formulation of the design argument, is rejected. On the other hand he indicates that the projection of the concept of intelligent design upon features of the world is irresistible, perhaps as irresistible as belief in an external world, uniformity and causality, and in the general efficacy of reason and

the senses. Ontological arguments are to be disdained. It is appropriate to be skeptical about abstruse arguments, in particular those that seek to undermine the irresistible beliefs just cited. And it is thus appropriate to be skeptical of skepticism itself. The implicit speaker, over the course of the argument, both approves and disapproves grounding belief in design in experience, both approves and disapproves skepticism, both approves and disapproves reason, both approves and disapproves scientific inference, etc. There is a powerful message of emotional and cognitive ambivalence towards certain kinds of philosophical concepts. For Hume abstruse philosophy is inconclusive; and, further, it not only should not determine our actions, indeed, a recommendation to do so is nonsensical in that it is impossible from the standpoint of both belief and action. The common consequence of philosophical debate on certain kinds of issues is cognitive and emotional ambiguity and frustration. The problems and arguments appear to be unresolvable, by means of a posteriori reasoning (here taken to include the experimental sciences and 'just' practical reasoning), or by demonstrative or a priori reasoning. Hume does not, therefore, indeed cannot, give his readers decisive directions or recommendations with respect to belief in the design argument.

These are some of the riches of irony we miss, if we are, as in Mossner, preoccupied with the 'Pamphilian' ironies. The latter are, if I am correct, mere surface ironies, and of no particular philosophical or biographical interest.

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1. E.C. Mossner, "Hume and the Legacy of the Dialogues," in David Hume: Bicentenary Papers, ed. by G.P. Morice (Edinburgh, 1977).

2. David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, edited by Norman Kemp Smith (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1947). Page references will be cited as 'D' followed by the relevant page number(s).

3. Mossner, op. cit., p. 5.

4. Ibid., p. 4.

5. Ibid., p. 6.

6. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, second edition with text revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). Page references will be cited as 'T' followed by the relevant page number(s).

7. David Hume, Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) p. 485. Page references to the Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding will be cited as 'E' followed by the relevant page number(s).

8. For further analysis of irony in the Dialogues see the Supplementary Essay "The Dialogues as a Work of Art," in my Hume, Newton and the Design Argument, revised edition (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

9. Mossner, op. cit., p. 6.

10. Ibid., p. 6.

11. Supplementary Essay, op cit.

12. This mystifies me. It appears to be a bootstrap effort to make the interpretive schema consistent and complete.

13. Supplementary Essay, op. cit.

14. Robert F. Anderson, "A Dilemma in Hume's Account of Force and Vivacity," Hume Bicentenary Conference, Edinburgh, 1977. Professor Anderson helped me by commenting on this paper.

15. See Terence Penelhum, "Hume's Skepticism and the Dialogues," in McGill Hume Studies, ed. Nicholas Capaldi, David F. Norton, Wade Robinson (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1976).

16. In a book manuscript in preparation, Hume: Phenomenalist or Realist, Robert F. Anderson discusses these physical aspects of inference.

17. Rene Descartes, First Meditation, in Vol. One, Philosophical Works of Descartes, Dover Books, pp. 148-149. John W. Davis has kindly pointed out to me that my reading of the term 'careless' in Hume's work fits the OED characterization.

18. Robert F. Anderson, op. cit.