



Some Sources for Hume's Opening Remarks to Treatise I.IV.111

Graham Solomon

Hume Studies Volume XVI, Number 1 (April, 1990) 57-66.

Your use of the HUME STUDIES archive indicates your acceptance of HUME STUDIES' Terms and Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.humesociety.org/hs/about/terms.html>.

HUME STUDIES' Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the HUME STUDIES archive only for your personal, non-commercial use. Each copy of any part of a HUME STUDIES transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

For more information on HUME STUDIES contact humestudies-info@humesociety.org

<http://www.humesociety.org/hs/>

Some Sources for Hume's Opening Remarks to *Treatise* I.IV.III

Graham Solomon

Hume opens Book I, Part IV, Section III of the *Treatise* with these remarks:

*Several moralists have recommended it as an excellent method of becoming acquainted with our own hearts, and knowing our progress in virtue, to recollect our dreams in a morning, and examine them with the same rigour, that we wou'd our most serious and deliberate actions. Our character is the same throughout, say they, and appears best where artifice, fear, and policy have no place, and men can neither be hypocrites with themselves nor others. The generosity, or baseness of our temper, our meekness or cruelty, our courage or pusillanimity, influence the fictions of the imagination with the most unbounded liberty, and discover themselves in the most glaring colours.*¹

Who were these moralists? One looks in vain in the work of Malebranche, Locke, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson for such a recommendation. Did anyone make that recommendation?²

One moralist who did was "John Shadow," in a letter to Joseph Addison published in *The Spectator*, no. 586, 27 August 1714. Addison introduces Shadow's letter with the remark that it "is built upon a thought that is new, and very well carried on; for which Reasons I shall give it to the Publick without Alteration, Addition, or Amendment." I quote at length, for easy comparison with Hume:

Sir,

It was a good Piece of Advice which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars. That every Night before they slept they should examine what they had been a doing that Day, and so discover what Actions were worthy of Pursuit to Morrow, and what little Vices were to be prevented from slipping unawares into a Habit. If I might second the Philosopher's Advice, it should be mine, That in a morning before my Scholar rose, he should consider what he had been about that Night, and with the

same Strictness, as if the Condition, he has believed himself to be in, was real. Such a Scrutiny into the Actions of his Fancy must be of considerable Advantage, for this Reason, Because the Circumstances which a Man imagines himself in during Sleep, are generally such as entirely favour his Inclinations good or bad, and give him imaginary Opportunities of pursuing them to the utmost; so that his Temper will lye fairly open to his View, while he considers how it is moved when free from those Constraints which the Accidents of real Life put it under. Dreams are certainly the Result of our waking Thoughts, and our daily Hopes and Fears are what give the mind such nimble Relishes of Pleasure, and such severe Touches of Pain, in its Midnight Rambles. A Man that murders his Enemy, or deserts his Friend in a Dream, had need to guard his Temper against Revenge and Ingratitude, and take heed that he be not tempted to do a vile thing in Pursuit of false, or the Neglect of true Honour ...

I think it has been observed in the Course of your Papers, how much one's Happiness or Misery may depend upon the Imagination: of which Truth those strange Workings of Fancy in Sleep are no inconsiderable Instances; so that not only the Advantage a Man has of making Discoveries of himself, but a Regard to his own Ease or Disquiet, may induce him to accept of my Advice ...

Shadow has been identified as the poet John Byrom by various of the later editors of *The Spectator*.³ Of these, D. F. Bond footnotes Byrom's reference to Pythagoras, noting the publication in English of André Dacier's *The Life of Pythagoras, with his Symbolism and Golden Verses; together with the Life of Hierocles, and his Commentaries upon the Verses*.⁴ Bond notes Hierocles' comments on the following Verses:

Never suffer Sleep to close thy Eye-lids, after thy going to Bed,
Till thou hast examin'd by thy Reason all thy Actions of the
Day

Wherein have I done amiss? What have I done? What have I
omitted that I ought to have done?

If in this Examination, thou find that thou hast done amiss,
reprimand thy self severely for it: And if thou has done
any Good, rejoice.

Dacier cites Porphyry and Marcus Aurelius for support of his opinion that the Verses should be amended to include "When drowsie Sleep to morning Thoughts gives way, Think what thou has to do

th'ensuing Day." We should "reflect in the Morning on what we are to do in the Day." There is no mention of dream examination in the comments of Hierocles, Porphyry, Marcus Aurelius or Dacier.

Bond also notes a reference to this Pythagorean doctrine in Cicero's "On Old Age," where Cicero says that "I follow the practice of the Pythagoreans and run over in my mind every evening all that I have said, heard, or done during the day" (*De senectute* 11.38). This intellectual exercise is helpful, he says, for keeping the mind vigorous as the body ages and weakens. Cicero elsewhere does refer to Pythagorean doctrine relating to dreams. He notes in "On Divinity" that "Plato's advice to us is to set out for the land of dreams with bodies so prepared that no error or confusion may assail the soul. For this reason, it is thought, the Pythagoreans were forbidden to indulge in beans; for that food produces great flatulence and induces a condition at war with a soul in search of truth" (*De divinatione* 1.30.62). Cicero sneers at this prohibition: "as if thereby the soul and not the belly was filled with wind! Somehow or other no statement is too absurd for some philosophers to make" (*De divinatione* 2.58.119).⁵

Epictetus, as reported by Arrian, recommends keeping the Verses quoted above on hand in his discourse on how we ought to bear illness. Lucian, in his satire "Philosophies Going Cheap," has Pythagoras offer a variety of reasons for avoiding beans, none to do with their purported effect on dreaming. Pierre Bayle, in his dictionary article on Pythagoras, also discusses the reasons for avoiding beans and suggests that Cicero was less than charitable. None of these commentators on Pythagoras links dream examination with progress in virtue.⁶

Byrom's letter is one likely source for Hume. Hume certainly read *The Spectator*, though he did not think highly of Addison as a philosopher.⁷ In the *Enquiry*, he classed Addison with Cicero and La Bruyere, rather than with Aristotle, Malebranche and Locke, as popular, easy and obvious, rather than profound, accurate and abstruse.⁸

Addison and other contributors to the periodicals he edited often constructed essays around dreams. In *The Guardian* there are two essays that may have been suggestive to Byrom. Thomas Parnell reported a dream in which a guide named "Reproof" took him to a watch tower from which he saw that "where-ever any one took upon him the inferior and unworthy Qualities of other Creatures, the Change of his Soul became visible in his Countenance. The strutting Pride of him who is endued with Brutality instead of Courage, made his Face shoot out into the Form of a Horse's":

As I was taking a View of these Representations of Things,
without any more Order than is usual in a Dream, or in the

Confusion of the World it self, I perceived a Concern within me for what I say; my Eyes began to moisten, and as if the Virtue of that Water with which they were purified was lost for a time, by their being touched with that which rose from a Passion, the Clouds immediately began to gather again, and close from either hand upon the Prospect. I then turned towards my Guide, who addressed himself to me after this manner. You have seen the Condition of Mankind when it descends from its Dignity: now therefore guard your self from that Degeneracy by a modest Greatness of Spirit on one side and a conscious Shame on the other. Endeavour also with a Generosity of Goodness to make your Friends aware of it; let them know what Defects you perceive are growing upon them; handle the Matter as you see Reason, either with Airs of severe or humorous Affection; sometimes plainly describing the Degeneracy in its full proper Colours, or at other times letting them know that if they proceed as they have begun, you give them to such a Day or so many Months to turn Bears, Wolves or Foxes, &c. Neither neglect your more remote Acquaintance, where you see any worthy and susceptible of Admiration; expose the Beasts whose Qualities you see them putting on, where you have no mind to engage with their Persons.⁹

Addison reported a dream in which he was “conveyed ... to the Entrance of the Infernal Regions.” Here Rhadamanthus passed judgment on the dead. He questioned newcomers about what they had done while alive. Those who had led virtuous lives were rewarded and sent to Elysium. The others were punished and sent to Erebus. For example, one twenty-five year old woman said “I have endeavoured ... ever since I came to Years of Discretion, to make myself Lovely and gain Admirers.” As punishment “her Colour faded, her Face was puckered up with Wrinkles, and her whole Person lost in Deformity.” She was then sent to Erebus. Upon waking, writes Addison,

I lay some time, reflecting in my self on the Oddness of this Dream, and could not forbear asking my own Heart, what I was doing? I answered my self, that I was writing *Guardians*. If my Readers make as good a Use of this Work as I design they should, I hope it will never be imputed to me as a Work that is vain and unprofitable.

I shall conclude this Paper with recommending to them the same short Self-Examination. If every one of them frequently lays his Hand upon his Heart, and considers what he is doing, it will check him in all the idle or, what is worse, the vitious

SOME SOURCES FOR HUME'S OPENING REMARKS

Moments of Life, lift up his Mind when it is running on in a Series of indifferent Actions, and encourage him when he is engaged in those which are virtuous and laudable. In a Word, it will very much alleviate that Guilt which the best of Men have Reason to acknowledge in their daily Confession, of **leaving undone those things which they ought to have done, and of doing those things which they ought not to have done.**¹⁰

J. C. Stephens, in his edition of *The Guardian*, notes that Addison's recommendation refers to the General Confession made in morning and evening prayers. The recommendation is, of course, Pythagorean.¹¹

Another likely source for Hume (and perhaps for Byrom) is Plutarch's "How a man may become aware of his progress in virtue."¹² Plutarch refers there to Zeno of Citium:

Note also the significance of Zeno's statement. For he said that every man might fairly derive from his dreams a consciousness that he was making progress if he observed that during his period of sleep he felt no pleasure in anything disgraceful, and did not tolerate or commit any dreadful or untoward action, but as though in the clear depth of an absolute calm there came over him the radiant thought that the fanciful and emotional element in his soul had been dispelled by reason ... So in the case of persons blessed with dreams so pleasant and bright and untroubled, who experience in their hours of slumber no revival of anything terrifying or repellent nor of any act of malice or improbity, men like Zeno assert that such manifestations are bright reflections of their progress, but that torturing memories, perturbations, ignoble desertions, and childish transports of joy and sorrow, such as are experienced in dismal or abnormal dreams, are like to billows that break and toss, inasmuch as the soul does not yet possess the power to keep itself in order, but is still being moulded by external opinions and laws, and when it gets farthest away from these during the hours of slumber, it is again made free and open to other influences by the emotions.

Plutarch was undecided about the worth of Zeno's claim. After summarizing Zeno he writes, "I beg ... that you will also consider whether these things belong to progress in virtue, or to a state of mind already possessed of a constancy and strength based on reason, and hence unwavering."

According to Plutarch, Plato had implicitly anticipated Zeno. In the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates discuss “unlawful desires”; those, he says,

which awake when the reasoning, gentle, ruling part of the soul is sleeping; a beastlike, violent part, full of meat and drink, gets up on its legs then, pushes sleep away, and looks for an outlet. It will be no surprise to you that at such times there is nothing it won't do, freed as it is from all control by shame or reason. It doesn't stop short of attempting in its dreams sex relations with a mother, or with any man, beast, or god whatever: it will go in for the worst of crimes, eat any sort of unholy food. In a word, there is no limit to its doings ... But when a man's way of living is healthy and self-controlled; when before he sleeps his reason has been wide awake and he has become clearly conscious of himself; when the desiring part has not had too much or too little and will therefore sleep and not trouble with its pleasures and its pains that best part which, left to itself, can then look out on, reach towards, and take in what is unknown to it, past, present or to come; and when the spirited part of him, too, has been calmed and freed from anger; when, I say, he goes to his rest so, with two out of the three sides of his being quieted, and the third, which is reason, awake, then probably he will come nearest to seeing what is true and his dreams will be lawful ... The point is that there is a set of loose desires, much to be feared, living in everyone, even in those thought to be most respectable, and this fact becomes clear in dreams.¹³

The man who leads a virtuous life won't have certain sorts of dreams. This belief is also explicit in Artemidorus' *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*Oneirocritica*, second century A.D.). Artemidorus distinguished two classes of dreams. An *enhyponion* is “a dream that has no meaning and predicts nothing, one that is active only while one sleeps and that has arisen from an irrational desire, and extraordinary fear, or from a surfeit or lack of food.” *Oneiroi* are dreams that are predictive (either directly or allegorically). Artemidorus claimed that,

People who live an upright, moral life do not have *enhyponia* or any other irrational fantasies, but rather *oneiroi* and generally ones that are directly predictive. For their minds are not muddled by fears or by expectations, but indeed they control the desires of their bodies. In short, *enhyponia* and other

irrational fantasies do not appear to a serious person. (Preface to Book 4)¹⁴

Closer to Hume's day, Daniel Defoe argued in the late 1720s that dreams had by people who lead morally upright lives are different from those had by the morally lax. Additionally, he believed that any dreamer "is ... as guilty as if the sins so dreamed of his committing, had been actually committed"; but neither Artemidorus nor Defoe, like Plato before them, discusses dream examination (let alone recommends it) as a method for determining progress in virtue.¹⁵

Hume was well aware of Plutarch — he is cited in, for example, "National Characters," "Of Money," "Of Public Credit," "Of Some Remarkable Customs," and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Section X. I have no evidence that Byrom had read Plutarch on progress in virtue but it would not be surprising to find that he had, given Plutarch's fame as an essayist.¹⁶ Of the other discussions of dreams prior to Hume that I have read,¹⁷ only a brief essay by Sir Thomas Browne contains a recommendation like Byrom's and Zenó's.¹⁸ I have not been able to determine whether Byrom or Hume had access to this essay. Browne observes that,

However dreames may bee fallacious concerning outward events, yet may they bee truly significant at home, and whereby wee may more sensibly understand ourselves. Men act in sleepe with some conformity unto their awaked senses, and consolations or discouragements may bee drawne from dreames, which intimately tell us ourselves ... Persons of radicall integritie will not easily bee perverted in their dreames, nor noble minds do pitifully things in sleepe. (c. 1650)

After Hume, David Hartley recommended dream examination: "A person may form a judgment of the state of his bodily health, and of his temperance, by the general pleasantness or unpleasantness of his dreams. There are also many useful hints relating to the strength of our passions deducible from them."¹⁹ William Smellie, in his *Philosophy of Natural History*, recommends that "any person who wishes to know his real character, as soon as he gets up, revolve, as accurately as he can, those thoughts which made the deepest impression upon him while he was asleep, what scenes gave him pleasure or pain, what actions he approved or disapproved, and let him instantly write them in a book kept for the purpose."²⁰ William Hamilton, though, dissents. In his *Lectures on Metaphysics* he remarks that dreams "do not, however, as is commonly supposed, afford any appreciable indication of the character of individuals. It is not always

the subjects that occupy us most, when awake, that form the matter of our dreams; and it is curious that the persons the dearest to us are precisely those about whom we dream most rarely."²¹

Byrom's recommendation, while not original with him, was certainly uncommon at the time. Discussions of dreams in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Britain much more commonly dealt with the questions whether dreams are a medium of communication with the supernatural, whether they show independence of the soul from the body, and whether their existence can be explained mechanically.²² John Aubrey, for example, in 1696 published a lengthy catalogue of phenomena that he thought had not been explained, yet deserved to be, by the natural philosophers of the Royal Society. Among these phenomena are various sorts of dreams. Here is one that Aubrey thought needed explanation (from an account by St. Augustine).²³

A certain Gentlemen named Praestantius: had been intreating a Philosopher to solve him a Doubt, which he absolutely refused to do. The Night following, altho' Praestantius was broad awake, he saw the Philosopher standing full before him, who just explained his Doubts to him, and went away the moment he had done. When Praestantius met this Philosopher the next day, he asks him why, since no Intreaties could prevail with him the Day before to answer his Question, he came to him unask'd and at an unseasonable time of Night, and opened every Point to his satisfaction. To whom thus the Philosopher: **Upon my Word it was none of I that came to you; but in a Dream I thought my own self that I was doing you such a service.**

Given the range of beliefs expressed about dreams in literature available to Hume, it is curious that they are rarely mentioned in the *Treatise*, or in his later writings. And it is unfortunate: Hume would have undoubtedly made delightful mockery of "dreamers" like Praestantius' Philosopher.

Wilfrid Laurier University

1. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed., rev. ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1987), 219. Further references ("T") will be given in parentheses within the body of the text.

SOME SOURCES FOR HUME'S OPENING REMARKS

2. David Norton asked for a source for this passage. My thanks to him, Roger Emerson, Thomas Lennon, John Wright, and an anonymous referee for their suggestions.
3. See, for example, the critical editions of G. Smith (London, 1907), and D. F. Bond (Oxford, 1965).
4. André Dacier, *The Life of Pythagoras, with his Symbolism and Golden Verses; together with the Life of Hierocles, and his Commentaries upon the Verses* (London, 1707), 304-10.
5. Cicero, *De senectute, de amicitia, de divinatione*, trans. W. A. Falconer (London, 1923).
6. See Epictetus, *The Discourses as reported by Arrian*, trans. W. A. Oldfather (London, 1928); Lucian, "Philosophies Going Cheap," in *Satirical Sketches*, trans. P. Turner (London, 1961); Pierre Bayle, "Pythagoras," in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1696). Bayle's comments on dreams are, like Cicero's, primarily an attack on the practice of prognostication by dream interpretation. See also the articles on Archelaus, Artemidorus, and Maius Iunianus.
7. Incidentally, Addison's colleague Richard Steele wrote several essays urging that "reason should govern passion." See, for example, *The Spectator*, no. 6, 7 March 1711.
8. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1972), 7. Further references ("E") will be given in parentheses within the body of the text.
9. Thomas Parnell, *The Guardian*, no. 56, 15 May 1713.
10. Joseph Addison, *The Guardian*, no. 158, 11 September 1713.
11. J. C. Stephens, *The Guardian* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1982). Stephens notes that Parnell was not publicly identified as the author of no. 56 until 1780. Roger Emerson brought *The Guardian* essays to my attention.
12. Plutarch, *Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus*, in *Moralia* I, trans. F. C. Babbitt (London, 1927), 401-57, esp. 441-5.
13. Plato, *Republic*, Book 9, trans. I. A. Richard (Cambridge, 1966), 161-2.
14. Artemidorus, quoted in S. R. F. Price, "The Future of Dreams: from Freud to Artemidorus," *Past and Present* 113 (1986): 3-37, esp. 11.
15. Artemidorus was primarily concerned with dreams as instruments for prediction; Defoe with them as evidence for supernatural intervention in human affairs. See Daniel Defoe, *The Political History of the Devil* (1726), pt. 2, chap. 10. Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, in the mid-seventeenth century, took dreams to be evidence for supernatural intervention. See R. M. Baine, *Daniel Defoe and the Supernatural* (Athens, Georgia, 1968) for discussion

- of seventeenth century angelology and the Cambridge Platonist influences on Defoe.
16. See M. W. Howard, *The Influence of Plutarch in the Major European Literatures of the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1970).
 17. Greek, Roman and early Christian discussions are surveyed in R. L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London, 1986). For medieval Christian discussions, see J. Le Goff *L'imaginaire medieval* (Paris, 1985). For sixteenth and seventeenth century England, see K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971). M. T. Kelly, *God, Dreams, and Revelation* (Minneapolis, 1974), surveys the literature from the Greeks and the Hebrew prophets to Freud and Jung. N. Parsifal-Charles, *The Dream: 4,000 years of theory and practice/an annotated bibliography* (West Cornwall, 1986), is very useful.
 18. Sir Thomas Browne, "On Dreams," in *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes (London, 1964), 3:230-33; Keynes in the preface calls this a "celebrated fragment."
 19. David Hartley, *Observations on Man* (1749), section 5.
 20. William Smellie, *The Philosophy of Natural History* (1799), 2:375-7.
 21. William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, ed. H. L. Mansel and J. Veitch (1860), 458.
 22. For example, see the relevant sections of Daniel Defoe, *The Political History of the Devil* (above, n. 15), and *Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions* (1727); John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), bk. 2, chap. 1; Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, no. 487; Thomas Willis, *Two Discourses Concerning the Soul of Brutes* (1683), 93-4; and Bernard de Mandeville, *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions* (1711), 160-62. The Willis and Smellie (above, n. 20) discussions are reprinted in S. Diamond, *The Roots of Psychology* (New York, 1974), 506-8, 508-10. Diamond remarks that Smellie was offering advice in line with the recommendation mentioned by Hume.
 23. See "Miscellanies," chap. 5, in *John Aubrey: Three Prose Works*, ed. J. Buchanan-Brown (Carbondale, Southern Illinois, 1972), esp. 34, 466.